

COSMOPOLITANISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN “THE PHYSICIAN” BY NOAH GORDON

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Abstract. *The main idea of this article is to explore how cosmopolitanism, cultural diversity, and religious tolerance are shown in Noah Gordon’s The Physician. The dissertation looks at how the main character, Rob Cole, grows both as a person and as a doctor by learning from different cultures—Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. It argues that cosmopolitanism helps people develop and also makes societies stronger by encouraging cooperation and understanding. The novel shows that being open to new ideas and learning from others can lead to personal and professional growth. Cosmopolitanism is very important in today’s world. We live in a globalized time, where people from different cultures are always interacting because of travel, migration, and technology. Cosmopolitanism teaches us to value tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity, which are important for living peacefully in multicultural societies. For example, in many big cities today, people from different backgrounds live together. Learning about cosmopolitanism helps us understand how to build communities where everyone can live in harmony and work together.*

Key words: Cosmopolitanism, Christian, Jewish, Muslim cultures, understanding of medicine, transformative effect of cultural diversity and etc.

Introduction

In history, cosmopolitanism has helped create societies that embrace diversity. For example, the Roman Empire allowed people from many different cultures and religions to live together, which helped maintain peace. In the Islamic Golden Age, scholars from different religious and cultural backgrounds worked together in places like Baghdad and Cordoba. They made important discoveries in science,

philosophy, and medicine. This shows how people from different cultures can work together for the common good.

Studying cosmopolitanism in literature is important because literature shows how different cultures interact with each other. Through characters and stories, we can see how people from different backgrounds come together or face conflicts. This helps us understand how cultural exchanges happen and how people can overcome differences. For example, in Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*, the main character learns from different religious traditions, like Hinduism and Buddhism. This journey shows how wisdom from different cultures helps people grow, which is a key idea of cosmopolitanism. Another example is *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, which mixes Spanish culture with ideas from the Italian Renaissance and Arabic stories, showing how literature can bring different cultures together.

In *The Physician*, Rob Cole studies medicine in Persia with scholars from different religions. He learns from a famous Persian doctor, Ibn Sina, and studies alongside Jewish and Muslim students. This is an example of cosmopolitanism, where knowledge and understanding come from learning with people from different cultures. This is similar to what happened in medieval Spain, where Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived and worked together.

Cosmopolitanism in literature also helps us understand shared human experiences. In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, we see how the Igbo culture in Africa interacts with British colonialism. The novel shows that, even though there are cultural differences, understanding and learning from each other is important to move forward, which is another key idea of cosmopolitanism. By studying cosmopolitanism in literature, we learn the importance of cultural exchange, tolerance, and the ability to grow by embracing diversity. Literature helps us see the world through other people's eyes and shows us that, through respect and understanding, we can live in a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Cosmopolitanism and Cultural Diversity in *The Physician*, focuses on how cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity are shown in the novel. Rob Cole meets Christians, Jews, and Muslims, and this changes the way he thinks about medicine and life. The first section "The analysis of encounters with Christian, Jewish, and

Muslim cultures and their impact on the understanding of medicine” is about Rob’s decision to go to Persia to study under the famous doctor Ibn Sina. Since Christians cannot go to Muslim schools, Rob pretends to be Jewish. This shows the religious rules of the time. At the school in Isfahan, Rob learns from people of different cultures. This helps him understand medicine better. The section gives examples of how Rob’s interactions with Ibn Sina and other students help him grow as a doctor.

The second section “The transformative effect of cultural diversity on worldview and the development into a cosmopolitan figure in the novel” describes how meeting people from different cultures changes Rob’s view of the world. His travels to places like Constantinople and Isfahan challenge his old beliefs. These experiences teach him to respect different ideas. The novel shows how cosmopolitanism helps people grow and become wiser. Through Rob’s learning with Ibn Sina, he becomes more open-minded and learns to appreciate cultural diversity.

The second chapter, titled **The Impact of Cultural Exchange on Worldview and Shared Human Experiences**, looks at how learning from other cultures helps the characters grow. It also shows that people, no matter where they are from, share the same feelings and experiences.

The first section “The influence of cultural exchange on characters’ personal growth and recognition of universal human experiences” analyzes how Rob learns the Persian language and customs. This helps him understand the people around him better. It is also implied that his friendships with Karim and Mirdin show how cultural exchange brings people closer.

In the second section “The analysis of religious tolerance as a shared human experience”, the thesis explains that people from different cultures share the same feelings, like love and sadness. Rob’s talks with Mirdin, especially about religion, show that all people are searching for truth are a good example of it. This section also shows how Rob’s friendships, like that between Mary and Fara, are built on understanding and kindness. In the novel, people of different religions work together and respect each other’s beliefs. Rob learns about Jewish and Muslim traditions, and this helps him grow as a person. The thesis argues that these moments in the story show how tolerance can make people better and smarter.

The theoretical basis and the methodology of the research. This research uses ideas from different fields to understand cosmopolitanism as both a theory and a real-world influence on global culture and politics. By looking at the works of scholars like Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Marin Beroš, Didier Coste, Alejandra Uslenghi, Mariano Siskind, and Esperança Bielsa, the study will show how cosmopolitanism challenges traditional national ideas, promotes global connections, and shows the role of art and literature in bringing cultures together. The theoretical basis will include historical analysis, philosophy, and literary criticism, with a focus on how cosmopolitanism changes the way we see the modern world.

In *What is Cosmopolitanism?*, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro explains that cosmopolitanism is the idea that people are part of a bigger world, not just their own country. He says, “Cosmopolitanism presupposes a positive attitude towards difference” (Ribeiro 19). This means cosmopolitanism is about accepting and respecting different cultures. Ribeiro also says that cosmopolitanism tries to bring people together, even though it can be hard because people have different politics, histories, and cultures (Ribeiro 20).

Cosmopolitanism started in Ancient Greece, where the word “cosmopolite” meant “citizen of the world” (Ribeiro 19). The Stoic philosophers were the first to develop this idea, saying that all people are connected, no matter their nationality (Ribeiro 20). This idea influenced many periods of history, from the Roman Empire to the Enlightenment, when cosmopolitanism was linked to universal ideas like human rights and peace (Ribeiro 21).

Today, cosmopolitanism is connected to globalism, where people create connections around the world. This is helped by new technologies and international organizations like the United Nations (Ribeiro 22). Some people criticize cosmopolitanism, saying it is only for rich people, but Ribeiro explains that there are different types of cosmopolitanism, including “popular cosmopolitanism”, which comes from migration and global movements (Ribeiro 23-24).

In Marin Beroš’s article *Cosmopolitan Identity*, he explains where cosmopolitanism comes from and why it is important today. The idea began with Diogenes of Sinope, a Greek philosopher, who said, “I am cosmopolitan!” (Beroš 197). At first, he meant it in a negative way because he didn’t agree with the rules of ancient cities. Later, the Stoic philosophers changed it into a positive idea. They believed all humans are connected because they can think, which created the idea of a “cosmopolitan identity” (Beroš 198).

Today, cosmopolitanism is not just about being a “citizen of the world.” It is also a way of thinking about politics, justice, and how we see ourselves. People choose to be cosmopolitans, and this means they care about all humans, not just their own country (Beroš 198). For example, the philosopher Kant had a famous idea called “Perpetual Peace,” where countries should work together for peace (Beroš 199).

Beroš also says that even though cosmopolitanism seems different from nationalism, they are connected. In the 18th century, Johann Gottfried Herder believed nations should be separate, but all humans are equal and part of the same big group (Beroš 200).

Didier Coste’s *A Cosmopolitan Approach to Literature: Against Origins and Destinations* analyzes the limits of traditional ways of studying literature in today’s global world. He argues that we should move away from thinking about literature only from a national point of view. Instead, we should adopt a cosmopolitan approach, which means looking beyond geographical and cultural origins. As Coste

says, “the autonomy of ‘the literary’ from ‘the political’ has been illusory” (184). This means literature is always connected to politics and society, often in ways dominated by Western thinking. Coste criticizes the idea of “world literature”, saying it often gives more importance to certain “dominant poles” or powerful groups (184). He suggests a better way to understand literature is by crossing borders and being open to different cultural influences.

In *A Cosmopolitan Approach to Literature*, Didier Coste looks at the problems with nationalist and Eurocentric (Europe-centered) ways of studying literature. He says that “world literature” is often used as a way to keep European and American works on top, ignoring the rich variety of ideas from other places (14). He suggests a “cosmopolitan” way of studying literature that breaks free from national competition and politics (185).

Another researcher, Alejandra Uslenghi explains how cosmopolitanism has become less about elites and more about “migrant laborers, whose race, class, and gender often left them on the margins” (195). Now, it looks at how these groups live in a global world. Uslenghi also talks about how cosmopolitanism helps us deal with cultural and political differences. It challenges the idea that people can just “feel at home anywhere” (196). Instead, she says cosmopolitanism makes us think about our own experiences and understand other people better by “reaching out and a self-reflexive awareness”(196).

Mariano Siskind looks at how the old idea of cosmopolitanism by Kant, which said we should care for others far away, doesn’t work anymore today. He writes, “Kantian cosmopolitanism... depends on the presupposition of an abstract, universal surface... which no longer exists” (206). Siskind believes modern cosmopolitanism needs to deal with the failures of trying to create a world where everyone belongs (206-207).

Now, cosmopolitanism continues to change. Some thinkers, like Martha Nussbaum, say we must care for all people in the world. Others, like Kwame Anthony Appiah, say we should care about both global and local communities (Beroš 202). Modern cosmopolitanism tries to balance caring for the world while also respecting local cultures and identities (Beroš 203).

Esperança Bielsa discusses the idea of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, which is how art and literature help connect people from different cultures. The term aesthetic cosmopolitanism is not very common, and there are some misunderstandings about it (Bielsa 71). Bielsa explains that this term should focus more on how art helps people understand other cultures, not just for political reasons (Bielsa 71).

Artistic cosmopolitanism is different from general cultural cosmopolitanism because it focuses on high culture, like literature and art, instead of popular culture. Bielsa says that artistic cosmopolitanism helps us understand what it means to be open to other cultures (Bielsa 71). Art has the power to bring people together and show different ways of living, which can help create new ways of understanding the world.

The motivation for the choice of the object of research and the chosen topic. The reason for studying cosmopolitan ideas in Noah Gordon's The Physician is because the book shows how different cultures, religions, and ideas can come together. This topic is important today because cosmopolitanism helps us understand how the world is becoming more connected. As people from different backgrounds live together, it is helpful to look at how literature shows the benefits of learning from different cultures and religions. The Physician shows a time in history when people of different faiths worked together and shared knowledge. This makes the novel a great choice to study how cultural exchange and tolerance can help people and societies grow.

By focusing on this book, the study aims to show how literature can teach us to be open-minded, accept others, and learn from different cultures. The novel's themes of medicine, philosophy, and respect for other religions make it a valuable text for understanding the importance of diversity. This research will help us see how literature can bring people together and support a more inclusive and connected world.

Conclusion .

This article makes useful contributions by studying how The Physician by Noah Gordon shows cosmopolitanism, cultural diversity, and religious tolerance. The research explains how the novel highlights the positive results of learning from different cultures. It shows how Rob Cole's experiences with Christians, Jews, and Muslims help him grow as a person and a doctor.

The study also helps us understand how literature can talk about real-world issues like global connections and cultural exchange. By looking at Rob's journey and his relationships with people from other backgrounds, this dissertation shows how literature can teach us to appreciate diversity and be open to others.

Finally, this article explains how The Physician uses history and philosophy to teach lessons that are important today. The analysis of medicine, cultural exchange, and religious tolerance in the novel shows that literature can help people from different backgrounds understand each other and live peacefully in a connected world.

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