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**European Women through the Eyes of Moroccan Travelers**

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the amazing people in my life who have been extremely patient with me and my busy schedule:

To my beloved husband Abdelkarim El Haraka for his endless support, encouragement, understanding and love. He has been my light in my darkest times.

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# المرأة الأوروبية في عيون الرحالة المغاربة

## نضال الشباك

### مقتضب

تعتبر الرحلة السفارية المغربية إلى أوروبا موروثة ثقافيا قيما لما احتوته كتاباتهم من معلومات و أخبار لم تكن متوفرة من قبل عن ثقافات و شعوب أخرى، كما تعبر هذه الرحلات عن ذهنية الرحالة المغاربة الذين نقلوا لنا مشاهداتهم و انطباعاتهم حول الآخر الأوروبي التي كانت مقترنة بهويتهم و خلفياتهم الثقافية و الدينية، و لعل أكثر ما أثار اهتمامهم و حفيظتهم في آن واحد هو تواجد المرأة الأوروبية في أغلب مجالسهم مما شكل تحديا لهم و لحمولتهم الثقافية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة صورة المرأة الأوروبية في الرحلات المغربية إلى أوروبا من خلال دراسة مجموعة من الرحلات السفارية من القرن السابع عشر إلى بداية القرن العشرين. أبرز هؤلاء الرحالة وعيا بالإختلاف النوعي بين المغرب و أوروبا خصوصا فيما يتعلق بالتعامل مع النساء و بمكانتهن كعنصر أساسي لبناء المجتمع حتى أنها أصبحت ندا للرجل في مجال العمل، و قد شكلت رحلاتهم اختبارا لمدى تقبلهم و تعايشهم مع هذا الإختلاف حيث أنهم خرجوا باستنتاجات متنوعة و لا محدودة تعكس أحيانا استعدادهم لتقبل الآخر دون وضعه في قوالب نمطية محددة، وأحيانا أخرى تكون تعليقاتهم عما شاهدوه انطلاقا من خلفيتهم الثقافية و الدينية مما جعلهم ينتقدون مكانة المرأة و اختلاطها بالجنس الآخر و تحررها. يمكننا اعتبار أن هؤلاء الرحالة قد نجحوا في تكوين خطابهم الخاص عن المرأة الأوروبية و هو مستقل تماما و بعيد عن نظرة المستشرقين للمرأة العربية حيث أنه يعكس ذاتيتهم و خلفياتهم التي تداخلت في هذا الخطاب الذي يندرج ضمن خطاب الإستغراب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرحالة المغاربة، المرأة الأوروبية، التصور النوعي، الهوية، الإستغراب، الخطاب، الكتابة الرحلية، السفراء، علاقات النوع، الدين، الغيرية.

## **Abstract**

Moroccan travel accounts about Europe are a cultural and a historical legacy through which the travelers provided minute and detailed descriptions of the countries they visited. Among the challenges they faced was the presence of the women in every gathering which bewildered the travelers who did not know how to act and react in such mixed situations to which they were not accustomed. The aim of this dissertation is to study the representations and discourses of Moroccan travelers of European women as their cultural double Other through ambassadorial travel accounts written from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century about different European countries, such as: Spain, Holland, Malta, Naples, Sicily, France, England, Belgium, and Italy.

The dissertation argues that those travel accounts provided a heterogeneity of discourses about the European women that varied from one traveler to the other based on different factors, such as the traveler's background, degree of openness, fluency in foreign languages, religiosity, position within the embassy,... etc. Gender representations in these travel accounts reflect more about the travelers' mentalities and religious and cultural identities than it did about the women whose status in European societies generated different views and impressions from the conservative jurists. While some of the travelers were fascinated by their presence, their unveiled European beauty, and participation in the development of their country by joining men in the work place, others harshly criticized their liberated status, the freedom of movement, and the mixing with foreign men. The Travelers were able to provide their own Occidentalist discourse of the European women which was based on direct contact and observation and which had its own politics that were different from any other discourse of otherness. However, the discourse was not monolithic when it comes to the issue of women.

**KEYWORDS:** Moroccan Travelers, European women, gender representation, identity, Occidentalism, discourse, travel accounts, ambassadors, encounters, gender relations, contact, space, diplomacy, religion, cultural Other, otherness, exoticism.

## **Note on Translation**

Most of the primary sources used in this dissertation are in Arabic which I translated while attempting to remain as faithful as I can to the meaning of the quotes I used. I also relied on the English translations of the travel accounts that I could find like *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* by Nabil Matar which includes excerpts from Ahmed Ibn Qassim al-Hajari's account, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Mohammed Ibn Uthman al-Miknasi* by Nabil Matar as well and it includes excerpts from Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi's accounts and *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar* by Susan Gilson Miller which is a translation of Mohammed as-Saffar's journey to France. As far as the secondary sources are concerned, I used references in English, Arabic and French and I translated those in languages other than English.

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## Introduction

This dissertation examines the representation of European women in Moroccan travel accounts from 1610 till 1919 written by either Moroccan ambassadors or their scribes who accompanied them during their diplomatic missions to Europe. Throughout that period, those travelers visited several European countries for different purposes and they were among the few Moroccan travelers who left written accounts of their journeys. These historical documents reveal a discursive heterogeneous representation of European women and gender issues which in turn mirror the Moroccan travelers' own cultural load, identity and insecurities. Despite the fact that these discourses of the women were based on direct contact and observation, they were also governed by the travelers' own perceptions of women and gender roles in society. This difference created a certain inner conflict within the travelers who were challenged by the women's presence in most of what was considered "male spaces".

I have chosen to work on any accessible Moroccan travel account that deals with the issue of women and gender relations in Europe. The primary sources are: *Naser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin* by Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari (France and Holland in 1610-1613), *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* by Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani (Spain in 1690-1691), *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* by Ahmed ibn al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal (Spain in 1766-1767), *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir* by Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi (Spain in 1779), *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir* by Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi (Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1799), *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar* by Susan Gilson Miller which is a translation of Mohammed as-Saffar's journey to France, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz* by Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui (France in 1860), *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya* by Abi al-Jamal Taher el-Fassi (England in 1860), *Rihla ila Faransa* by Mohammed Bensaid (France in 1865), *Ithaf al-Akhyar bu Gharaib al-Akhbar* by Idriss Jaidi

(France, Belgium, England and Italy in 1874), *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroupia* 1919 by Mohammed al-Hajjoui (France and England in 1919).

All of the primary sources used in this dissertation are originally written in Arabic. However, I sometimes resort to available translated editions of the accounts by Nabil Matar who worked intensively on the English translation of several excerpts of Moroccan travel accounts about Europe. Most notably is *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* which includes English translations from the travels of al-Hajari and al-Ghassani. He also translated al-Maknassi's account *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Miknāsī, 1779-1788*. As far as the other accounts are concerned, I translate the quotes needed in this dissertation while trying to preserve the meaning which the traveler tried to convey.

The choice of this topic was due to two reasons. First of all, the concept of history changes when we dive into it and we discover new information and correct old "facts" which were taught to us as part of the official history. History plays an essential role in building connections between the past, the present and the future and it unravels different truths from different perspectives. Travel accounts are part of the Moroccan historical and cultural heritage that needs to be documented, preserved, and studied. Second, we often find excerpts in books or articles that tackle the issue of the image of European women in Moroccan travel accounts but there is not a whole study on that. This study sheds light on those travelers who went to foreign lands and had to deal with foreign people, especially European women which was an unprecedented encounter for them. Moroccan travelers were challenged by those mixed cultural encounters during which they had to meet, talk to, dine with and watch European women on different occasions in different places. Each one of these travelers produced a unique knowledge of European women which reflected their personalities, thoughts, and personal cultural backgrounds. These travelers were cultural facilitators on diplomatic missions to Europe which conditioned their movement, behavior, conduct and writing.

The primary sources chosen for this study are rich in terms of information and the raw material they provide for research and analysis. They give a glimpse and an

understanding of the intercultural encounters between Moroccan travelers and European women in different settings which generated different views and perceptions. As much as their accounts provided knowledge that did not exist before about gender related issues, they also provided a revelation of the travelers' cultural and religious identities that interfered in all of their observations and impressions. In reading about the European women and the European society as a whole, we also read the travelers' minds and mentalities throughout the past centuries which give us an outlook into the Moroccan societal norms and conditions. The curiosity of Muslim travelers to Europe has always been questioned by scholars like Bernard Lewis who discusses in his book *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* that Muslims had no interest in the world beyond them. He argues that Muslims were too proud of themselves and their religion that they deemed themselves to be superior to any other people outside of the Islamic world and they did not even make any attempt to know their cultural other.<sup>1</sup> However, these traveler accounts come as an answer to show the Moroccan travelers' curiosity towards "new" places and "strange" news and information worthy of being transmitted to their readers as well as their interest to know about their host countries and cultures which is manifested in their constant questions and details in their accounts. Despite the fact that the women were never the focus in the account, they sometimes fell into this category of the "new" due to their position in their societies; a position that was new to the Moroccan Muslim people and it needed to be reported in addition to their presence in most of their gatherings and outings. What also made the women a subject of narration is the fact they were a double other to the Moroccan travelers since they were not different just in nationality and religion but also in gender.

There are several keywords that have been used throughout this dissertation which pertain to the field of Occidentalism and they must be defined. "Occidentalism" is a term derived from the word "Occident" and both of which have different connotations that extend the geographical meaning to a more complex meaning that is related to culture, society and otherness. Occidentalism is often thought of to be the

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), p. 65.

counterpart of Orientalism which is defined by Edward Said as a Western discourse of the Orient that is ideologically loaded to pave the way for colonization, imperialism, the glorification of the West and the denigration of the East.<sup>2</sup> Occidentalism can be defined as a non-Western discourse, representations and perceptions of the West by the rest of the world. The non-West is not a monolithic entity as it includes several regions and parts of the world, like the Orient, Africa, Asia...etc, which results in various discourses from different nations about the West. The Moroccan discourse, that is travel accounts in this case, is one of the earliest forms of written representations about the Europe and it allows for a counter discourse to emerge that gives voice to those who were rendered voiceless in Orientalism.

I also use terms such as “the West” and “Europe” to refer mainly to Spain, Holland, Malta, Naples, Sicily, France, England, Belgium, and Italy. The “West” is a problematic term that is ideologically loaded and implies divisions between countries of the West and countries of the East regardless of their geographical positions. Not all of the European countries which the travelers’ visited belong to the West of Europe but as Stuart Hall explains in an article entitled “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” that the idea of the West is complex and complicated to define as it can imply several meanings. He explained two of them, the first one is the geographical location and the second one is used to refer to “a type of society, a level of development and so one”<sup>3</sup>. While the first meaning is based on the location of the country, the second is based on the developmental stratification of societies in terms of modernity. The travelers witnessed the disparities between their home country and the Western countries which they visited in various fields which made the cultural and developmental gap between the two worlds bigger than they anticipated. These disparities were also manifested in their encounters with the European women whose lives and conducts were a reflection of that modernity.

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Concepts of the Orient* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,” in *Formations of Modernity: Understanding Modern Societies an Introduction*, eds. Stuart Hall, Bram Geiben (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 276.

The term “*rihla*” is another term that I use interchangeably to refer to both its meanings in Arabic, the act of the journey, and the written travel account of the journey. The travel account is a written report in the form of manuscript that was written either during or after the journey by the traveler. This form of literary text has its own specificities that make it a unique literary genre by itself. It is often in the form of diary that is based on descriptions and personal observations. In the theoretical part of my research I delve more in the types of travel accounts with a special focus on ambassadorial accounts as they are the subject of the matter. I also use the term “travelers” to refer to the Moroccan travelers, ambassadors or ambassadorial scribes who were able to leave behind written accounts of their journeys to Europe, and “travel accounts” to refer to ambassadorial accounts written about Europe.

My main argument is that Moroccan travelers to Europe were able to produce a literature of their own that is characterized by heterogeneity and diversity in perceptions and views about the European women. The different encounters between them in different settings and situations in different European cities in different eras reveal a diverse set of perceptions that ranged from toleration and acceptance to rejection and renunciation. The travelers provided written reports which were a result of direct cultural contact with their cultural double Other that was impacted by their religious and historical background which affected the way they perceived and dealt with the European women. The Moroccan travelers differed from one another in offering their readers a variety of representations from different European countries: France, England, Spain, Holland, Italy and Belgium at different periods of time. In each travel account, there were two “Europes”; one which they admired and which was characterized by development in various fields and another which they condemned especially in relation to different cultural practices from their own.

The main approach used in this paper is the Occidentalist one relying on arguments and studies by different scholars in the field. I use Hassan Hanafi’s theory and reflections on “Arab Occidentalism” as a new form of expression entitled to the Arab subjectivity to express itself *vis-à-vis* the European Other and construct its own discourse of Otherness based on their own perceptions and representations of the West. This Occidentalism is questioned by Bernard Lewis who argues that Muslims

had a lack of interest in other people and cultures, at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He tries to prove the Arab sense of superiority over other religions and cultures which he believes was the main hindrance of contact between the Orient and the Occident. This dissertation also benefits from Nabil Matar's argument that comes attempt to reject Lewis' theory through a thorough study of Muslim/Moroccan travel writings that were written in earlier period and that manifested Muslims' curiosity about the West. Matar states that:

Europe was complex and challenging, and the Arab Muslim travelers knew that they had to learn and ask questions, sometimes relying on their mastery of European languages [...] and at other times relying on translators. What they wrote down was a product of measurement, observation, and evaluation –not fantasy. They were learning and correcting old misconceptions.<sup>4</sup>

What made their discourse unique and exceptional is their eagerness to acquire and produce credible knowledge of the West that was based on their own observations. They were also willing to correct their generalizations and misconceptions through their repeated questions and enquiries which reflected their cultural awareness of the necessity of cultural dialogue between different cultures beyond the polarization of religious beliefs. Matar wrote several books and articles related to travel accounts and he introduced several Moroccan travel accounts to the Western readers through his translations of those accounts. His work is a historical research in the depths of archive to document, translate, edit and analyze several of those travel accounts which enriches the field of Occidentalism.

This research has also relied on the writings of Said ben Said al-Alaoui who gave a close attention to the relationship between the Moroccan self and the European Other in Moroccan travel writings and how the journey was an opportunity of discovery of both the self and the other. This paper also benefited from the studies and

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<sup>4</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the 17th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. xxxvii.

research of other scholars like Malika Zahdi, Abdessalam Himer, Nizar F. Hermes and others who contributed to the field of Occidentalism as an Eastern production of the West that allowed for silent voices to emerge.<sup>5</sup> Each one of these scholars worked on Muslim discourses of the West that were produced in different period of time and in different forms in an attempt to shed the light on the Muslim/Arab interest in the world beyond the Islamic world.

This paper is divided into four thematically arranged parts. The first part is theoretical and is entitled "Discourse of "Occidentalism", the Production of Knowledge about the Other and Gender Representation in Moroccan Travel Writings". It focuses on how Moroccan travelers to Europe are able to construct their own discourse of the West. They provide a different discourse from Orientalism in its stylistics, politics and ideology. It can be considered a literary genre by itself that is distinguished from other literary texts due to its own pattern of writing which relies on the technique of telling their journey in a chronological order and in detail which engages the reader in the travel. This part relies on several authors who tried to theorize on the discourse of "Occidentalism" like Hassan Hanafi, Nabil Matar, Bernard Lewis, Said ben Said al-Alaoui, Nizar F.Hermes, Abderrahim El-Moudden and others who studied these texts from different perspectives and angles using different methodologies and approaches. It also examines how Moroccan travelers are able to produce their own knowledge about their female cultural Other with a study of Moroccan cultural identity as a traveling identity to the West. The travelers could not travel without carrying all of their cultural and religious "baggage" through which they saw what was "unfamiliar" and "strange" in the host countries and perceived their encounters with their cultural other. Then, it argues how the meaning of space changed when the travelers went to Europe especially in relation to gender and it deals with the travelers' attitudes towards European women's status and the shift in traditional gender roles. The last section of this part is a general review of the relevant literature in this field and it provides a survey the different books and authors who deal with the issue of Moroccan travel writings, especially in relation to European women. While some of them completely overlook the contribution of Moroccan travelers' accounts to

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<sup>5</sup> See section "A General Review of Relevant Literature".

this field, others are eager to thoroughly study, translate and republish those books in an attempt to theorize on “Occidentalism”.

The second part is a historical part entitled “Early Encounters between Middle Eastern/Moroccan Travelers and European Women from the Medieval Islamic Period till the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a Historical Background”. It chronicles early Middle Eastern travel accounts about Europe from 886 till the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and outlines Andalusian and Moroccan travelers’ contact with European women starting from Yahya Ibn Haroun’s journey to Venice and Rome in 886 till Mohammed ben Abd es-Salam as-Sayeh’s travel to France in 1922. It also provides a historical overview of intercultural marriages between Moroccan subjects and European women who come from different social backgrounds and whose relationships reflect instances of cultural clash and or/tolerance.

The third part is an analytical part entitled “The Heterogeneous Representation of European Women by Moroccan Travelers” and it discusses how the travelers were able to provide different representations of the women who came from different backgrounds and the roles they played within their societies. Their encounters varied from meeting the European queens, the nuns, the actresses, singers and acrobats, the working women whether in hotels, markets, or factories. Each category of the women was new to fathom as the travelers were not used to seeing women being involved in the public sphere. These instances challenged the travelers’ thoughts and religiosity as they tried to become involved in the mixed activities that were arranged for them. In some travel accounts like al-Hajari’s and al-Meknassi’s we find the voice of the European women who interacted with the travelers and they were granted a space within the narratives to express their views and engage in discussions with them. After all, despite their differences mainly in religion and gender, the women were given a voice to represent themselves and their ideas instead of silencing them or speaking on their behalf. This part also tries to unfold how the travelers negotiated their presence in mixed spaces to which they were not familiar and they resorted to the concept of “*jabr al-khater*” in order to satisfy their hosts and maintain strong relations with them. This mechanism allowed them to experience different facets of the visited countries and to engage in their cultural activities.

The fourth part is also analytical and is entitled “Feminine Exoticism and Masculine Discursiveness in the Moroccan Travel Accounts about Europe”. It focuses on how the Moroccan travelers, who were acting as observants of Europe and its peoples and cultures, became the subject of the female gaze that was eager to see in them the exotic Orient. The women were fascinated by the way they looked which triggered them to follow them wherever they went. This feminine exoticism of the travelers made them more aware of their cultural differences and triggered their feelings of foreignness. As much as the women were curious about the travelers, their Moorish appearances and the stories they heard about the Orient, the travelers’ interest and perception of the women varied from one to the other. Some travelers like al-Meknassi’s, as-Saffar’s and Jaidi’s and al-Hajjoui admired aspects of the life of the European women such as, their hospitality, hard work, and education. Other travelers could not help but go through an emotional and religious and fear of the “infidel” European women whom they tried to avoid on several occasions in order not to fall in such predicaments. This part also analyzes as-Saffar’s bold descriptions of the European female body which fascinated him with its revealing beauty and those descriptions contracted his religious mission for which he was primarily sent to Europe. Then, it moves to examine the representation of the woman as a temptation which has cultural and religious loads that would affect the way those travelers dealt with the female presence either in public or private mixed gatherings. It also sheds light on some of the travelers’ criticism of the European women’s freedom of movement, dress and conduct and their liberty in mixing with foreign men who are not related to them. They could not see the women outside of their cultural and religious lens that they equated their freedom to fornication, adultery and prostitution which made some of them fall into generalizations and essentializations of the women.

The Moroccan travelers’ representations of the European women were varied and heterogeneous that sometimes we would feel like each one of the travelers was speaking about a different Europe through his own lens but the women challenged their perceptions of what was familiar and normal. Their presence played an important role in revealing certain sides of the travelers that lay underneath their poised diplomatic *façade*. In the end, this dissertation is an examination of intercultural

encounters between the Masculine world of Islam and the feminine world of Christendom and how the Moroccan travelers who were often portrayed in Orientalism as the “natives”, the “other”, and the “voiceless” are now the ones creating their own discourses of the Occident.

## **PART ONE: DISCOURSE OF “OCCIDENTALISM”, THE PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EUROPE AND GENDER REPRESENTATION IN MOROCCAN TRAVEL ACCOUNTS**

### **1. “Occidentalism” as a Moroccan Discourse of the West and its Politics in al-Hajari’s (1610), al-Ghassani’s (1690), al-Ghazzal’s (1766) and in al-Meknassi’s (1779) / (1781) Travel Accounts**

Over the past centuries, several Moroccan ambassadors documented their official journeys to Europe where they left their own first hand impressions and perceptions of the European societies they visited. These journeys are important in the Moroccan history as well as in the Moroccan cultural and literary fields because they provide the root of the beginnings of a unique discourse of the Muslim world about the West which several theorists, like Hassan Hanafi and Nabil Matar, refer to as “Occidentalism”. This discourse is completely different from the Orientalist discourse which is a Western discourse about the Orient that held a colonialist ideology in its core. “Occidentalism” is a non-Western discourse about the West that provides various representations and perceptions, which has its own politics and poetics, and which gives voice to a group of people who were once marginalized and considered “voiceless”, “uncivilized” and as a nation that “cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”<sup>1</sup>.

In his seminal work *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses how the West constructs their Orientalist discourse about the Orient which is based on binary oppositions that seek to glorify the West to move forward with their colonialist agendas. He also denies that any oriental discourse can have as much power and as much academic stratagem to hold it as a well established academic discipline as Orientalism. He said: “To speak of scholarly specialization as a geographical ‘field’ is, in the case of Orientalism, fairly revealing since no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism.”<sup>2</sup> Occidentalism cannot be considered a

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 50.

counter discourse to Orientalism because it lacks the organized ideological agenda and the power of expansion and circulation. Orientalism was an imperial institution or as Said goes on to say: “[...] Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”<sup>3</sup> As much as Orientalism is an organized body of work that had specific aims and objectives, Occidentalism is a different discourse of otherness that allows other nations to express their views about the West. In the case of travel accounts, it is a set of reports by Oriental travelers about other nations and cultures; instead of being the object written about, they become the subject producing their own discourse.

Travel writing or what is called in Arabic *Rihla* can be acknowledged as a literary genre since it follows a unique literary pattern and structure. Generally speaking, travel writing is a written account that a traveler writes either during or after his journey in which he documents his perceptions, views and experiences in the new host environment and it is often based on direct observation and memory. Abderrahim Mouedden defines the travel account *Rihla* as: “[...] a documentation of what is seen, heard and written during the journey in a structural framework.”<sup>4</sup> The traveler uses all of his senses in the process of writing and documenting his accounts. They use their accounts as a report to document their observations, experiences, encounters and new concepts and ideas about Europe some of which were not known before. They try to take their readers with them on a literary journey through their writings by sharing engaging them in their experience through their way of storytelling and their minute descriptions and explanations.

In the Moroccan context, Moroccan travel writers follow a specific format and structure of ambassadorial travel writing that usually begins with an appraisal of the sultan, and then it moves to speak about the journey describing one city after the other following a chronological order until their return. Most of them seem to follow the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Abderrahim Mouedden, *Ar-Rihla al-Maghrebia fi al-Qarn at-Tasi' Ashar* (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2006), p. 42. Translation is mine.

same pattern of writing and it might be that most travelers read previous travel accounts written about Europe before taking off on their own journeys. Ambassadorial *rihla* or travel account is one of the different types of the various Arabic travel accounts. According to Mohamed el-Fassi: “An ambassadorial *Rihla* [travel account] is an account whose writer went on an ambassadorial mission to a foreign country. If the ambassador or envoy is a man of knowledge and science, he writes it by himself; if not, then a scribe accompanies them on the journey with the sole purpose of writing the account.”<sup>5</sup> The word *rihla* in Arabic can mean a journey as it can mean the travel account of a journey. Al-Fassi divides the Arabic *Rihla* into 15 types based on the motives and objectives of the journey: *Hijaziya* (related to pilgrimage to Mecca), touristic, formal, scholastic, archeological, exploratory, mystical, political, educational, poetic, descriptive, fictional, bibliographic, general (which includes two or more of these types) and ambassadorial.<sup>6</sup> All these types confirm that Arab travelers and Moroccan travelers specifically were able to provide a rich literary genre that voiced their minds and documented the various journeys they went on for different purposes. They also show how fond they were of writing and documenting their moves and providing information and knowledge about the different nations they visited and people they met.

*Ar-Rihla* has certain characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of literary narratives. Despite the fact that it has similarities with autobiographies and memoirs, it still has differences in structure and pattern of writing that makes it different from other literary genres. According to Said Jabbar:

*Ar-Rihla* is based on the act of telling and its pattern is based on the chronological order that ties its events from beginning to end. Travel narration is based on the juxtaposition of the news and information that are organized chronologically and which are connected through movement from one space to the other. Every space that the traveler

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<sup>5</sup> Mohamed el-Fassi, “Ar-Rahalat as-Safariya al-Maghribiya,” in *al-Bayyina*. 1st year, Issue 6. October 1962. p. 71. Translation is mine.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-3. Translation is mine.

reaches becomes a learning sphere which provides him with information, knowledge and news which he keeps either in his draft or in his memory. He later recalls all of that to re-arrange his travel narrative again through the timeline that combines its events and guarantees their sequence.<sup>7</sup>

The main objective of travel accounts is “to tell” about the experience of that journey and what the travelers go through from the moment they embark on their journey till the day they go back to their home country. It also includes their perceptions and impressions of the countries they visited in addition to a report of anything that is new or strange and different from what is familiar in their homeland. These characteristics make travel narratives stand out from other literary genres and pave the way to the establishment of a new one.

Several Arab scholars try to theorize on Occidentalism, such as Hassan Hanafi whose book *Muqadima fi I’ilm al-Istighrab (Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism)* provides a foundational philosophical framework to the field. He believes that the aims of Occidentalism are to break the complex of the Orient towards the West and to eliminate the Eurocentricity of discourse.<sup>8</sup> He sees Occidentalism as a tool of empowerment for the Orient who was often the subject of discourse rather the producer of discourse. It is a state where the West is observed and examined by the non-West, the Moroccan Muslim traveler in this case, and where this non-West is allowed to produce its own discourse about the Occident as its cultural Other. We notice a shift in roles where the self and the Other turn into abstract terms that are allocated to different subjects whenever we move from Occidentalism to Orientalism. The meaning of the two terms is not fixed which results in a shift of power as well; whoever has a voice and is able to express, has the power and the role of the self.

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<sup>7</sup> Said Jabbar, *Mina as-Sardiya ila at-Takhyiliya: Bahth fi ba’d al-Ansaq ad-Dalaliya fi as-Sard al-Arabi* (Rabat: Dar al-Aman, 2012), p. 181. Translation is mine.

<sup>8</sup> Hassan Hanafi, *Muqadima fi I’ilm al-Istighrab* (Beirut: al-Mouassasa Al-Jami’iya li ad-Dirasat wa at-Tawzi’ wa an-Nashr, 2000), pp. 24-28.

Nizar F. Hermes, is a contemporary scholar who studies Muslims' representations of the West, mainly Europe, and who has coined the term *Ifranjism*<sup>9</sup> to refer to "Occidentalism". *Ifranjism* is derived from the Arabic word *Ifranj*/the Franks which he uses to refer to what he calls: "the forgotten premodern Arabic corpus of writing about the Euro-Christians"<sup>10</sup>. Hermes refused to use the term Occidentalism because it is broad in its meaning and inclusive of several discourses by different nations which vary from premodern to recent and from pro-Western and anti-Western.<sup>11</sup> Instead, He uses *Ifranjism* to refer to the Arab representations of the world of *Ifranj*/Europe which he believes had no agenda. It is a discourse that is based on historical archive of what early Arab writers, historians, geographers wrote about the different countries they visited or heard about.

Occidentalism cannot be defined without reference to Orientalism either to compare or contrast. They are two discourses about otherness still they are different in everything in between. Orientalism as field of research and study paved the way for Occidentalism to emerge in academia which explains their correlation. According to Edward Said, Orientalism's main objective is to dominate, exploit and have authority over the Orient through different modes of exoticization, essentialization and misrepresentation of the Oriental Other as a "backward", and "less than human" subject.<sup>12</sup> Hassan Hanafi's theory introduces Occidentalism as a counter discourse to Orientalism which is also based on binary oppositions where power roles are reversed. He states:

Occidentalism is the other contrast and opposite side of "Orientalism". If Orientalism is the way the Oriental self is viewed by the Western Other, then the "science of Occidentalism" aims at untying the binary historical knot between the self and the Other and the controversy between the

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<sup>9</sup> Nizar F. Hermes, *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

complex inferiority within the self and the complex greatness within the Other.<sup>13</sup>

Hanafi's Occidentalism is a counter-discourse to Orientalism without necessarily having the same tools or agenda. Occidentalism in this case gives the Oriental self the chance to express its views about the Western Other. In this process, the roles and powers shift from the allegedly "great West" into the allegedly "inferior East". Geographically speaking, Morocco is located in the South of most European countries and even in the West for the rest of them but ironically enough, it is included in the East when it comes to discourse since it is an African and Islamic country. Still geography has played an important role in making Morocco more in contact with Europe and a gateway to Europeans who traveled whether for exploration, trade or diplomacy. Morocco was a linking path and passage to Africa and the Muslim world to reach bigger markets and colonies. This contact between the two worlds was doomed to result in the production of two main discourses about each other bearing their own diverse motifs, intentions, and ideologies.

Occidentalism as a discourse cannot be regarded as a counter-discourse to Orientalism because though they are both discursive representations of the Other, they are different in terms of politics, ideologies, discourses, power relations and ways of representation. For Occidentalism to be a counter discourse then it must be a defensive discourse that uses the same methods of Orientalism which it does not. Zahia Smail Sahli states: "[...] to speak of Occidentalism as the exact reverse of Orientalism leads to the illusion that both Orient and Occident are equal, which has never been the case. The Orientalist *versus* Occidental condition is one of hegemony in which one was and still is the superior 'Self' and the second was and remains the inferior 'Other'".<sup>14</sup> Sahli stresses the idea that for "Occidentalism" to be considered a reverse of Orientalism, there would a total shift of power relations between the West and the East which cannot happen. She goes on to define Occidentalism as: "that corpus of works

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 29. Translation is mine.

<sup>14</sup> Zahia Smail Salhi, "The Maghreb and the Occident: towards the Construction of an Occidental Discourse," in *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 257.

concerned with the portrayal of the Occident and the East–West encounter from the Oriental’s perspective.”<sup>15</sup> That is to say, that though they are both representations of each other, they can never be at the same level since they can never be equal in terms of power and hegemony. The fact the East is able to produce its own discourse does not automatically put it in a powerful position.

The Moroccan Occidentalism discussed in this dissertation is based on Moroccan travel accounts written about Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the Moroccan authorities, the palace and the public as they provided information that was needed about the cultural Other who was a growing power in the world. As we trace the travel narratives across the past centuries, we can notice that this discourse is not fixed and it changes depending on the historical context of each journey as well as the background of the writer. For example, the travel accounts which were written during the period of 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century were filled with sympathy towards the Moriscos and resentment towards the Christian countries which expelled and tortured Muslims, like Spain. They dreamed of “Muslim Spain” *al-Andalus* like in the cases of Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari, Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, Ahmed ibn al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi who wrote vehemently about the Islamic heritage in Spain and their hopes and prayers to Allah “to return it to *dar al-Islam* / the House of Islam”. As for the accounts that were written from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Muhammad as-Saffar, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, Abi al-Jamal Taher el-Fassi, Mohammed Bensaid, Idriss Jaidi, and Mohammed al-Hajjoui, their tone became smoother and the topic diverged from the horrors of *al-Andalus* to other aspects of the European life and history. Their accounts were filled with fascination, renunciation and surprise at the sudden and fast development of the West.

The Orientalists of that period who traveled to the Orient and wrote about it felt that they were going back in time and living in a state of “belatedness”, as Ali Behdad notes: “Traveling in the Orient at a time when the European colonial power structure and the rise of tourism had transformed the exotic referent into the familiar sign of Western hegemony, these orientalist could not help but experience a sense of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

displacement in time and space.”<sup>16</sup> While the Orientalists went into a state of “belatedness” and felt like going back in time, the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan travelers felt like they were going forward in time. They were astonished at the advancements in all fields which they could not fathom nor explain. They did not even find the right vocabulary in Arabic to describe what was going on around them. They were also displaced in time as they were experiencing a state of “acceleration” which transported them to an advanced “futuristic” space that bewildered them and confused them at the same time.

The terminological displacement is apparent in several Moroccan travel accounts. For instance, Abi al-Jamal Taher el-Fassi referred to the bomb as “*benb*”<sup>17</sup>, the factory as “*fabrika*”<sup>18</sup>, banknotes as “*kaghit as-sikka*”<sup>19</sup> and the telegraph as “*mahal as-silk*”<sup>20</sup> which literally translates to the “place of the wire”. Idriss Jaidi also found it hard to find the exact vocabulary for what he witnessed. For example, he called the newspaper a “*kazita*”<sup>21</sup>, the theater as “*teyatroi*”<sup>22</sup>, and the bank as “*dar al-banka*”<sup>23</sup>. This linguistic deficit reflects the Moroccan underdevelopment in comparison to the European revolution in various fields that the travelers could not find the right equivalent vocabulary to describe what they saw but they tried to provide description of those words in the footnotes in an attempt to explain the exact the meaning; they sometimes provided the equivalent term in Spanish.

Several scholars in the field of Occidentalism like Bernard Lewis, Nabil Matar, and Nizar Hermes questioned and researched the Arab / Muslim curiosity about the West and about the reasons that prevented them from visiting Europe like the

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<sup>16</sup> Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya, 1860*, ed. Mohammed el-Fassi (Fez: Mohammed V University Press, 1967), p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Idriss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, ed. Azz al-Arab Maaninou (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2004), p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

Europeans visited Arab countries over earlier centuries. Bernard Lewis argues in his book *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* that Muslims had no interest and no curiosity in knowing the Christian European Other who was considered an “infidel barbarian”<sup>24</sup> until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Lewis examines discourses by Ottoman, Moroccan and Iranian travelers about Europe and praises Moroccan accounts to be of a “superior quality”.<sup>25</sup> In the beginning of this book, he claims that Muslims had a “parallel discovery” of Europe as they had of them: “similar in ways, different in others, beginning earlier and continuing later, in which the European is not the explorer discovering barbaric peoples in strange and remote places, but is himself an exotic barbarian discovered and observed by the enquirers from the land of Islam.”<sup>26</sup> It is a claim that does not hold its promise of revealing that discovery. Instead, he seeks to prove Muslims’ lack of curiosity about the West and their quest to divide the world into two main categories: *Dar al Islam* / the House of Islam and *Dar al Harb* / the House of War which includes countries that do not follow Islam as a religion. He stresses that this religious categorization of the world that made the Islamic world look down on the West is what explains the lack of interest among Muslims to travel to countries that do not share the same religion and that are considered as infidels.<sup>27</sup> He states:

Muslim civilization, proud and confident of its superiority, could afford to despise the barbarous infidel in the cold and miserable lands of the north, and for the Medieval Muslim in the Mediterranean lands, the European, at least the north and west, was remoter and more mysterious figure than the Indian, the Chinese, or even the inhabitant of tropical Africa. In principal, Muslim travel to the infidel lands was not approved, but some exchanges could not be avoided.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

Lewis argues that Muslims were too proud to want to know about people whom they considered as “infidels”, especially the Christians. He assumes that they had no interest to travel to faraway lands and seek knowledge and contact with their cultural Other; that is to say, any country that was different and far was considered “barbaric” and beneath their “righteous” status. He stresses on the Muslim’s superiority complex towards people from other religions as the major hindrance of contact between the world of Islam and the world of Christendom.

Lewis examines various aspects of Muslim awareness of the West in relation to several fields. For instance, in history, he claims that Muslim historians deliberately omitted their defeat by the army of the Franks in Europe in the Battle of Tours and Poitiers in 732 which stopped Islam from spreading in Europe.<sup>29</sup> That is to say, this omission was due to their superior attitude and refusal to admit their defeat by the infidels which shows that Muslims were selective in their writings about Europe and cautious about their representation which they wanted to maintain in a lower position than theirs. In geography, several early Muslim geographers like Ibn Khurrahbeh, Ibn Faqih, Ibn Rusteh and al Masudi divided the world based on information that they gathered from Greek sources into the civilized lands of Islam and the primitive Christian lands.<sup>30</sup> This classification, in addition to the previous classification of the House of Islam and the House of War, reveals an essentialization of the West into the opposite of anything that the world of Islam is. If the Muslims see themselves as superior and civilized then Christendom will be seen as primitive and uncivilized, which are familiar images and representations from Orientalism itself.

As far as language and translation are concerned, Lewis explained that Muslims were not interested to learn foreign languages or translate foreign books that would have allowed them to know about their cultural Other. Even when they did translate some books, he argues that it was based on “the criterion of usefulness” and even that usefulness was not of importance as it was related to philosophy.<sup>31</sup> A certain nation’s language and books can be the key to know that nation, its people, culture and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 139-141.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

institutions which could lead to cultural awareness and mutual contact but, in this case, it becomes hard to write and provide a discourse of a country that you do not have access to its language and literature. Lewis portrays Muslims to have a self-inflicted ignorance of the West that would affect any discourses that they might produce about it which reduces the credibility of any Arabic sources that tackle this issue.

Lewis also believes that not only regular Arab people lacked interest in knowing about foreign lands and peoples but also Arab historians, theologians and geographers. All these factors led to an intentional ignorance of Europe. He states:

Muslim Historians were not interested in the outside world [...] Muslim theologians were little concerned with Christian doctrines. [...] there was no interest in the sciences and arts of Europe. They knew there was nothing of the one; they assumed there was nothing of the other. Only the geographers show some interest in the West, and even that a limited one. One geographer even apologized for devoting some attention to these remote and uninteresting places.<sup>32</sup>

According to him, Muslims in several fields, history, geography, theology, language and translation, economy...etc, did not care to know what was going on outside their own “superior” world. They regarded themselves to be of a higher position and better than all nations that they were not open to discover new places and peoples, especially the ones that were different in religion. He believes that their pride and sense of superiority prevented them from benefiting from the development of the West and from exchanging expertise and skills.

Though this “superiority” and “pride” that the Muslims had about their religion and culture were noticeable in their early writings, this was not the main factor that hindered their discovery of Europe earlier, as Bernard Lewis discussed. The historical relation between the European Christendom and the Islamic world has often been one

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<sup>32</sup> Bernard Lewis, *From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 206.

of confrontation and holy wars from the crusades time till the emergence of piracy on both sides or even till recent times.

On the other hand, there are other scholars who refute Lewis' assumptions and provide a thorough research and analysis about early Arab representations of the West. Some, like Nizar F.Hermes, focused on earlier accounts in poetry that date as early as the Vikings era, while others focused on earlier accounts in prose that dealt with the 1500's onward like Nabil Matar, Mohammed el Fassi, Aziz Azameh, Henri Pérès, Abd Nabi Dakir, Abdessalam Himer, Malika Najib, Malika Zahdi, and others whether in Arabic, French or English. They were able to bring into the light several accounts that were hidden in archives. They re-published, edited, translated and analyzed them giving a chance for a new discourse of Occidentalism to come into the surface of academia. It is a discourse that shakes the Orientalist writings about the Orient because it gives voice to those subjects that were misrepresented, essentialized and portrayed as uncivilized and voiceless. They also provided justifications for the lack of the Muslim travel and discovery of Europe.

In his book *In the Land of the Christians*, Nabil Matar explains that the Muslims had cogent reasons for not traveling to Europe as they did to other countries (mainly other Muslim countries), among which was their awareness and fear of captivity. Several stories were circulated of Muslim captives who were taken by the infidels, tortured, enslaved and forced into conversion. Captivity was a horrific issue that frightened travelers throughout the Mediterranean either Christians or Muslims. They believed their lives were in a permanent danger when sailing to the other shore. It was a risk that Muslims saw as unnecessary to take to discover a hostile land that is full of potentially dangerous unbelievers, Christians.<sup>33</sup> The culture of fear was a huge hindrance towards cultural interaction and dialogue, though this fear was based on personal experiences from both sides and was not just a mere illusion. Piracy was also a major hindrance for travelers and traders who heard stories about the horrors of being held captive by the "infidels".

Another reason that prevented Muslim and Arab people from traveling to Europe is that they were rarely allowed to visit and/or reside in European countries,

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<sup>33</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Land of the Christians*, p. xxvii.

and their stay was often limited to a certain amount of time. The European Christians considered them a potential threat that could create problems in the future if they were allowed to reside like some Christians resided in the Islamic world.<sup>34</sup> Nabil Matar argues that: “Europeans permitted Muslim traders and ambassadors to reside for limited periods of time on their soil, but at the beginning of the formation of European religio-national identity, difference superseded likeness, and Europeans shut their doors to the Muslims as potential subjects.”<sup>35</sup> Muslims needed permits from European countries if they ever wanted to visit them which shows that part of the Muslims’ lack of knowledge about Europe was not due to their indifference, carelessness or even pride of their religion, it was due to the systematic attempt of European countries to keep the Muslim Other away from their lands. When the idea of nation and nationhood started to form in the European society, they started to become more aware of the cultural differences between them and other nations which resulted in an attempt to preserve their “sameness” and oppose anything that might be different. The European bulk of literature about the Muslim world is incomparable in number to the Muslim production about Europe because Europeans had more access, freedom of movement and resources while visiting the Muslim world.

Despite the several reasons that prevented Arabs from traveling to Europe, there were still people who managed to go on journeys and write about the outer world and Matar believes that there was no “sudden discovery”; a few travelers does not mean no travelers at all. He states:

Clearly, there was no sudden “discovery” of Europe among the Arabs. For as these [Moroccan travelers] and other Arabic writers reveal, information about the lands of the Christendom was available and transmittable and was based on translation, research, and travel. Indeed, it was the area of travel that much of that information made its way into

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<sup>34</sup> Albert Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples: Updated Edition* (London: Faber & Faber, 2013), p. 371.

<sup>35</sup> Nabil Matar, “The Question of Occidentalism in Early Modern Morocco,” in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern*, eds. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 157.

the Arabic-speaking world of North Africa and the Levant. Travelers, merchants, envoys, ambassadors and clergymen journeyed to London and Rome, Cadiz and Malta, Madrid and Moscow.<sup>36</sup>

Matar's research proves that Arabs indeed had interest and curiosity to know about the world beyond them. He criticized Bernard Lewis' earlier assumptions that Arabs only discovered Europe in later centuries. He explained that Europe was not a moment of discovery for Arabs because they were always interested to know about other parts of the world and they were always in contact with other countries and peoples either through diplomacy, trade or travel. These three major areas had always opened the door for Arabs to discover and write that the more they knew, the more they wanted to know.

Moroccan travelers' discourse of Europe was not based on fantasy but on direct observation and contact with European cultures and peoples. Their initial intentions behind their writings were to document their journeys and provide information of the peoples and nations they visited rather than exoticizing or creating false images of them in search for profit, readership or any political or ideological agendas, at least not like in the case of Orientalist writings. Matar points out that:

The travelers wrote informative accounts that stand in contrast to many of the European descriptions of the Muslim world in the same period. Travelers from Europe to North Africa and the Levant, whether they came from countries with an extensive medieval history of contact [...] or countries of Renaissance interaction...often carried with them ideological and polemical baggage that burdened their accounts. They claimed to see what they never encountered, and interpreted authoritatively to their readers what they never understood.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. xv.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. xxxi.

The two discourses differ immensely in structure, content and agenda. Travelers to the Islamic world had a certain pattern which was directed by an empirical supremacist ideology which sought to essentialize North Africa and the Levant into one entity that would fit into the Western imagination and fantasy of those places. They knew what they were going to write about even before they set foot there. On the other hand, Moroccan travelers had no idea what they were heading to and what they were going to write about. Thus, Matar concludes that: “While European writers all too often indulged in Orientalism, Arab writers did not construct a parallel ‘Occidentalism’”<sup>38</sup> Moroccan Occidentalism cannot be seen as a parallel to Orientalism since the writers in both fields have different intentions, ideologies and agendas. The Moroccan travelers were informants of anything that was new, strange, or worth mentioning in the host countries. They give minute details and descriptions about the places they visited, the history, the development...etc. As far as their impressions of people, they provided a heterogeneous discourse which reveals a variety of perceptions about European people.

One of the main features of the Occidentalist discourse in Moroccan travel accounts is that it is based on the aspect of *al-‘ajib wa al-gharib* / the wonders and the strange in the Other’s culture or as Said ben Said al-Alaoui says that: “Europe becomes a stage for the wonders and marvels.”<sup>39</sup> The travelers were transported into a different world from their own where almost everything seemed unfamiliar and worthy of writing about. They did not need to resort to fantasy and imagination because what they saw blew their minds and they also wanted to maintain their credibility towards their readers. As far as the women are concerned, they were sometimes included in the category of the unfamiliar and the new since they were not used to seeing them in public which proved to be a challenge to the Moroccan travelers who did not know how to act in their presence.

Ahmed Ibn Qasim al-Hajari was sent to France and Holland by Muley Zidan in 1610-1613 to compensate Muslims who were expelled from Spain and robbed on their

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. xxxviii.

<sup>39</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, “Oroba ar-Rahalin al-Maghariba,” in *Ar-Rahala al-Arab wa al-Mouslimoun: Iktichaf al-Akhar, al-Maghreb Mountalaqan wa Mouawalan* (Rabat: Wizarat at-Taqafa al-Maghribiya, 2003), p. 19. Translation is mine.

way to Morocco. He was also an Andalusian citizen who fled from his own homeland by the same Christians to whom he was sent as an envoy.<sup>40</sup> Al-Hajari, who was still traumatized by the bloody history of Muslims which he witnessed in Andalusia / Spain, was aware that the Christians in France and Holland were different from the Christians in Spain. Thus, Christianity was not essentialized into one entity. He praised Holland for sympathizing with the Moriscos case and was indifferent towards France who encouraged Spain in their ethnic cleansing of Muslims. He was fluent in Arabic and Spanish and understood French, and he was also well versed in the Quran, the Bible and Torah which made his discussions with his hosts interesting and granted him listening ears wherever he went.<sup>41</sup> Although his words in his account *Naser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin* reveal more about his traumatized psychological state like when he referred to Europe as “the land of the infidels”<sup>42</sup>, but he did not let it determine the way he treated and dealt with the Christians in France and Holland. According to Nabil Matar: “What the nationality of the Christians was, and what those Euro-Christians had done or not done to Muslims, determined how Muslims viewed them.”<sup>43</sup> What determined the way he described them is not their religion per se but their nationality and what their country did for the Muslim cause in Spain. The way he dealt with them was based on how they treated him and on their historical relations with Islam and Muslims in general, and more specifically, with the Muslims’ expulsion from Spain. It is worth noting that this account is the first detailed account about Europe by a non-Christian traveler.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ahmad ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al Kafirin*, ed. Mohammed Marzouk (Rabat: Mohammed V University, 1995), p. 6. Translation is mine.

<sup>41</sup> Nabil Matar, “Arab Views of Europe, 1578-1727: The Western Mediterranean,” in *Re-Orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the West*, ed. Gerald McLean (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p. 126.

<sup>42</sup> Ahmad ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al Kafirin*, p. 45. Translation is mine.

<sup>43</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-172* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 72. It is also worth mentioning that in recent times, al-Hajari became a source of inspiration to the contemporary Moroccan author Hassan Aourid who was fascinated by his life story and how he escaped from the horrors of the Inquisition and ascended the ladder of success to become among the Moroccan sultans’ trustees in the place,

In France, al-Hajari was sometimes treated with hostility for being a Muslim and was often confused for a “Turk” since as he said “The French only address a Muslim as a Turk”<sup>45</sup>. The French people he encountered often initiated religious debates and disputations with him in an attempt to prove to him the falsity of his religion. He remained poised amid all the disputations and answered their questions and enquiries through evidences from the Quran, the Bible and the Torah which amazed and surprised them. He did not trivialize or attack any of his Christian counterparts. On the contrary, he remained civil and courteous even towards the most hostile ones. His experience in France was not considered as delightful but rather as a stressful one that he decided to change his way, and go through Holland, when going back home.<sup>46</sup>

Holland was a different environment whose Protestant people were admired and cherished by al-Hajari for their solidarity and sympathy towards the Muslim cause in al-Andalus/Spain as well as for their civility with him and the Moroccan delegation as a whole. His stay there was not free of debates but they were not as accusative and demeaning as the ones with the French, which was reflected in the way he represented them. Nabil Matar confirms that Moroccan travelers made a distinction between the different Christians they met and based on that they provided a heterogeneous representation of European Christendom: “There were good Christians and bad Christians, and the distinction was based not just on theology [...] but also on the history of relations with Muslims.”<sup>47</sup> That is why, we notice a great shift in Al-Hajari’s discourse towards “Falandas” (the Flanders)<sup>48</sup> for their attitudes towards issues that mattered to him, among which the expulsion of Muslims from Spain and he described

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such as Sultan Ahmed al-Mansour, Zidan Abu Maali, Abu Marwan Abdelmalek II and Al-Walid ibn Zidan. Aourid turned it into a fictional novel that combined real events with fictional incidents and predictions of what had happened to fill in the gaps. The novel is in Arabic and entitled *Al-Mouriski* (The Morisco), published in 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 63. Translation is mine.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 85.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Hajari referred to people in Holland as Flanders. See Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 105.

them as “They [the Flanders] do not hurt the Muslims but they do good to them”<sup>49</sup>. He was indifferent to the French but the Protestants in Holland gave him another image of tolerant and compassionate Europeans. This cultural and religious tolerance made al-Hajari more at ease and allowed for a civilized dialogue that did not degrade any part but instead paved the way for mutual understanding and appreciation of each other.

Moroccan travelers to Europe were not reluctant to get to know about that new and different culture to which they were introduced during their travels. They made sure that what they wrote was credible and factual; at times of doubt or ignorance, they were eager to ask questions about various issues that caught their interest and attention. They completely depended on their eye observations, direct contact with the Europeans and answers to their questions from the people concerned. They lived with them, argued with them, discussed and interacted with them at various levels. Most travelers heavily used different expressions to show how they acquired knowledge of what they wrote about, like “we heard”, “they told us”, “we asked”, “we talked”...etc. Matar states that:

[...] travelers, envoys, ambassadors, traders, and clerics were eager to ask questions about *bilad al-nasara* (the lands of the Christians) and to record answers –and then turn their impressions into documents. They all wrote with precision and perspicacity, producing the most detailed and empirically based information about the way in which non-Europeans viewed Europeans in the early modern period.<sup>50</sup>

This construction of a unique discourse of an Occidentalism of their own reflects the cultural awareness of most Moroccan travelers who were open to a different world and willing to engage in a cultural dialogue that resulted in understanding and knowledge. It is a state where the West is observed and examined by the non-West, the Moroccan Muslim in this case, and where this non-West is allowed to produce his own discourse

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<sup>49</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 105. Translation is mine.

<sup>50</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. xv.

about the Occident as its Other. Their eagerness and curiosity to know about the countries they visited was unprecedented. They asked questions about everything around them, not just about the present but also about the history. They invested a lot of time and effort to be as meticulous and careful as possible in their descriptions and reports of what they had been told in order to remain credible and truthful.

Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, a Moroccan ambassador, sent to Spain by Muley Ismail in 1690-1691 to ransom Muslim captives held in Spain and to try to regain valuable Arabic books that were lost during a piracy attack on a Moroccan ship and were then put in the Escorial.<sup>51</sup> Al-Ghassani was a scribe at the court of Muley Ismail and was passionate about manuscripts which is why he was chosen for this specific embassy.<sup>52</sup> He wrote a travel account entitled *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* (*The Journey of the Minister to Ransom the Captive*). The book gives a detailed description of his journey, places he visited, people he met, topics he engaged in, stories about the history and the current state of the Spanish monarchy... However, he often seems to diverge from the main objectives of his embassy. He rarely refers to the captives to be ransomed or the books to be regained. His account is full of information about the Spanish culture, history, way of life, institutions, and various aspects of the political field in Spain and the different monarchies that reigned over the past centuries which makes his account rich in terms of the information he provides. As Khaled Ziyadah notes: “Al-Ghassani presented a report that looked like an ethnographic sociological work. He was interested in the politics of the modern European countries as well as the ethics, habits and regulations. His information and descriptions are characterized by an exact precision that even some of the European references lacked at that time.”<sup>53</sup> Al-Ghassani and the other Moroccan travel writers show concern and attention to the precision and accuracy of their information and details in their accounts. He discussed and described the Spanish society in details. He gave the

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<sup>51</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, ed. Nouri al-Jarrah (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2002), p. 152. Translation is mine.

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed. Al-Akhdar, *Al-Hayat al-Adabiya fi al-Maghreb ‘ala ‘Ahd Ad-Dawla al-Alawia, 1894- 1664/ 1311-1075* (Casablanca: Dar ar-Rachad al-Haditha, 1977), p. 156.

<sup>53</sup> Khaled Ziyadah, *Tatawor an-Nadra al-Islamiya ila Oroba* (Beirut: Ma’had Al-Inmae al-‘Arabi, 1983), p. 67. Translation is mine.

names of the cities they visited, the positions and social status of the people they met, the names of the rulers of Spain, he even recounted some tales and stories from the history of Spain that were told to him by the Spanish people there. He inquired and asked them about whatever he saw and could not understand.

Seventy six years later, Ahmed ben al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal was also sent to Spain by Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah in 1766-1767 to ransom Moroccan captives and negotiate commercial treaties.<sup>54</sup> It is also worth mentioning that al-Ghazzal was not the first choice to be an ambassador. Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah appointed two officials Aba Yaala Amara ben Moussa and Aba Abdellah Mohamed ben Nasir and appointed al-Ghazzal as their scribe but as the journey took off, al-Ghazzal wrote to the Sultan “letting him know about his concerns because both people who were in charge of the embassy did not know anything about the laws and customs of the Christians and that he was afraid that this might hinder the success of the embassy. Once the Sultan was informed of al-Ghazzal’s concerns, he appointed him as ambassador to head the Moroccan delegation.”<sup>55</sup> This goes to show how serious they were in choosing the right person to lead the embassy who must have at least some basic knowledge about the country to be visited in order to have smoother communication with its people which would result in a successful ambassadorial mission.

Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah reigned Morocco from 1727-1757 during which he tried to establish international relations with Europe by sending and receiving ambassadors who would play the role of facilitators between Europe and Morocco.<sup>56</sup> According to Matar:

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<sup>54</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi Al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, ed. Ismail al-Arabi (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1970), p. 10. This travel account was translated to English as *The Fruits of the Struggle in Diplomacy and War: Moroccan Ambassador al-Ghazzal and His Diplomatic Retinue in Eighteenth-Century Andalusia* by Abdulrahlan al-Ruwaishan and edited by Travis Landry.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 9. Translation is mine.

<sup>56</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Mohammed Ibn Uthman al-Miknasi* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p. 4.

[...] Sidi Muḥammad saw the importance of learning about his adversaries, and ordered his ambassadors to write down descriptions of everything they saw. He wanted to improve relations with Euro-Christian powers and to build up Morocco's naval strength by adding ships to the fleet. He began a massive project of enlarging port cities, including, in 1765, the port of Essaouira, which became a hub for international trade. But, his most important goal was to abolish captivity and slavery in the whole region, and so he spent energy and wealth in negotiating freedom for all Muslim captives in European cities, [...]<sup>57</sup>

Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah was a leading example of a sultan who realized that the only way to go forward was to open up to the world, especially the Western world. His reformist vision in reigning the country benefitted Morocco to learn from European expertise in various domains, to strengthen the commercial ties and to abolish captivity and piracy which made both sides suffer for a long time. During his reign, he sent several ambassadors and received others in an attempt to exchange knowledge and skills in different fields which would help Morocco become more informed about different countries and cultures, especially for its strategic geographical position.

After his embassy to Spain, al-Ghazzal wrote *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* (*The Result an Endeavor in Reconciliation and Struggle*) where he also provided a detailed description of the journey. He described the people he encountered as well as the culture, customs and norms. He gave detailed descriptions of every city they visited providing specific names, places and characteristics of whether the city was civilized and modern or rural and developing, whether it depended on agriculture or trade... His way of writing showed his curiosity and interest in knowing about the different land he visited. Along with his companions, al-Ghazzal tried to socialize with the Spanish people and showed high civility and courtesy towards their hosts who invited them to several events in honor of their visit. Despite his courtesy, he could not help but mourn the Islamic history in

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Spain which was a characteristic in the writings of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan travel writers.

Among the major concerns of Muslim travel writers are the accuracy and credibility in their accounts. It was not only a moral issue for them but, as Said ben Said al-Alaoui explains, it was a “religious responsibility” and “an Islamic principle”<sup>58</sup> that obliged them to inquire as much as possible about the information or the situation they wanted to speak about in their accounts. Most of the travelers within the ambassadorial delegations were religious leaders in their own communities and they had not only a religious fear of providing lies and misleading information to the court and the public but they also had a credible reputation to maintain. Their accounts were often requested by the sultans to be written, and those embassies which did not leave behind any written documents of their journeys, were also required to give an oral report of their journeys in front of the Sultan and the notables of the palace.<sup>59</sup>

Those travel accounts were highly important for the Moroccan palace because they determined relations between Morocco and the visited European countries. They needed to provide accurate and reliable information about the institutions, the systems, and the cultures for they were the determinant factors of serious decisions related to the Euro-Moroccan relations. In this context Nabil Matar states that: “The ambassadors knew that they served their rulers best by providing precise and useful information in their final reports – many of which have survived in numerous manuscript copies attesting to their wide circulation.”<sup>60</sup> The writers, whether ambassadors or not, were aware of the seriousness of their work and they took the accuracy and precision of what they wrote seriously. There was no room for mistakes or misconceptions; these journeys were a way to correct them if there were any. Morocco had diplomatic relations with these countries that were becoming rising powers in the world which made the Sultan and the Mekhzen want to know all about

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<sup>58</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, *Oroba fi Miraat ar-Rihla: Surat al-Akhar fi Adab ar-Rihla al-Maghribiya al-Mou’asira* (Casablanca : Matba’at an-Najah al-Jadida, 1995), p. 16. Translation is mine.

<sup>59</sup> Nabil Matar, “Arab Views of Europe, 1578-1727: The Western Mediterranean”, p. 140.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

them, the culture, the people, the recent developments, trade, architecture, agriculture, the traditions and customs as well as how they go about their everyday life. All these details were important to the Moroccan palace to know how to deal with the neighboring countries.

Mohammed ben Othman al-Meknassi was sent on two journeys to Europe by Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah. The first journey was in 1779 to the king of Spain Carlos III to renew a peace treaty between the two countries, to ransom Muslim captives and to negotiate the return of Moulay Zidan's books which were seized by Spanish captives.<sup>61</sup> Before becoming an ambassador, al-Meknassi was a mosque preacher which affected the way he described the countries he visited.<sup>62</sup> He documented this journey in a book entitled *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir (The Elixir in Ransoming the Captive)*. The second journey took place in 1781-82 to Malta, Naples and Sicily to ransom more Muslim captives and negotiate peace and trade treaties about which he wrote a second travel account entitled *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir (The Unveiled Moon Guiding the Traveler in Ransoming the Captives from the Hands of the Infidel Enemy)*. Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah's policy was open to the European world. He sent different ambassadors to different European countries in order to develop strong economic and political relations and to ransom as many as he could of all Muslim captives in Europe whether Moroccans or not.<sup>63</sup>

Al-Meknassi follows almost the same pattern in writing both accounts. After the introduction as an appraisal to the sultan, al-Meknassi starts the first account by saying: "I decided to write down what I saw during my journey across cities and towns despite the fact that I am not qualified in this field and I have never been to those places before but I have decided to write it for people like me who have little

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<sup>61</sup> Mohamed ben Othmane Al-Meknassi. *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, ed. Mohamed al-Fassi (Rabat: Manshourat al-Markaz al-Jami'i lil Baht al-Ilmi, 1965), p. ٥.

<sup>62</sup> Mohammed Al-Akhdar, *Al-Hayat al-Adabiya fi al-Maghreb*, p. 334.

<sup>63</sup> Mohammed ben Othman al-Meknassi. *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, ed. Zahidi Malika (Casablanca: Al- Hassan II University, 2005), p. 41.

knowledge. I ask Allah to help me to the righteous path.”<sup>64</sup> In his second account, he said: “I decided to write what I saw during my journey.”<sup>65</sup> From the beginning of both his accounts, al-Meknassi committed himself to writing what he would see and which we find manifested when he kept saying: “I asked about that”<sup>66</sup>, “Among the strangest thing that we have seen [...]”<sup>67</sup>,...etc which unraveled the curious mind of ambassador al-Meknassi and his interest to know as much as he could about the countries and the peoples he visited. He was on a diplomatic mission, yet he took the time to visit different places in Spain, Malta, Naples and Sicily. Following the footsteps of previous travelers, he gave detailed descriptions and delved into the history of the countries he visited as well as the ruling families and how they ascended the throne. His two accounts were sources of information to the Moroccan palace and people about the rising powers in the Mediterranean that were then regarded as the enemy due to piracy.

Through his questions to his hosts and his attempt to write what he saw and heard, al-Meknassi was able to provide a discourse that was descriptive and which showed a sense of responsibility of the writer in documenting his journey. This was also the case of most of the previously mentioned travelers who used the same expressions that showed a high level of curiosity about the countries and peoples they visited and also their direct source of information which made, at least most of, what they wrote credible. It is true that they went on special serious missions still, writing about their guest countries and providing as much information as they could was of paramount importance to the travelers and the palace. They served as carriers and producers of knowledge to their home country about the West that is why they felt the duty of providing exact and detailed information to their readers. They also focused their writing on anything that was considered unusual, marvelous, strange, in order to impress the palace and their readers by original information.

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<sup>64</sup> Mohamed ben Othmane al-Meknassi. *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 6. Translation is mine.

<sup>65</sup> Mohammed ben Othman al-Meknassi. *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p.109. Translation is mine.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

Moroccan travel writers provided a heterogeneous discourse about Europe producing a unique approach in their perceptions and views. They had the opportunity to write their own discourse through direct observations and contact and they made the best of it. Gayatri Spivak asked an important question in postcolonial theory which we can apply on historical texts to see the extent to which other non-Western nations were able to produce a discourse and have a voice. The question she raised is: “Can the subaltern speak?”<sup>68</sup> The Moroccan travelers had the chance to speak, voice out and document their observations and impressions in their travel accounts. They engaged in discussions, debates and disputes and made themselves heard which enabled them to produce their own Occidentalism of the West. Most of the travelers did not speak or understand the official languages of the countries they visited, yet they interacted with the different people they met through their translators<sup>69</sup> and even when they were not satisfied with the answers, they asked for further information and explanation.

Moroccan travelers to Europe were able to create a discourse of their own which in essence is different from any Orientalist discourse. Their main aim was to write about their journey, document the events that had happened along the way and give thorough details about the peoples and cultures they visited. For them, Europe was a different atmosphere and environment, hostile at times, which challenged their level of tolerance of cultural difference.

## **2. The Moroccan Production of Knowledge about Europe and Cultural Identities in Contact in as-Safar’s (1845-1846), Amraoui’s (1860), Bensaid’s (1850) Jaidi’s (1876) and al-Hajjoui’s (1919) Travel Writings**

### **a. Moroccan Travelers as Producers of Knowledge about Europe**

Moroccan travelers to Europe were producers of knowledge about the West not just passive travelers whose journey finished once they came back home. They left

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<sup>68</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft. et al (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 25.

<sup>69</sup> Most of the translators who worked in the Moroccan palaces or who accompanied the ambassadors to Europe were converts.

behind written accounts that documented their journeys and left their trace in the Moroccan historical archive. They were able to provide an outsider's view on various issues related to culture, customs, people, industry, trade, agriculture, history, ...etc which made them one of the major sources of information at that time to any future traveler to Europe. Their credibility and seriousness in delivering and reporting information was highly recommended for they were carriers of knowledge between two different worlds that needed contact for better understanding and better political relations.

When the Moroccan ambassadorial delegations were sent to Europe, they did not know what to expect but they knew that they were going to visit cultures that were completely different from their own in most aspects. Some of them were also aware that they were cultural facilitators who were expected to provide knowledge of those people to their nation through their accounts. As Nabil Matar states: "After their arrival, delegation members often traveled to as many places, met as many people, and looked at as many museums, libraries, colleges, and churches as they could. They were always interested, curious, even intrusive, asking sensitive questions about military affairs and inquiring about a vast range of issues, from national policies to medical cures."<sup>70</sup> It was a necessary and much needed knowledge that the Moroccan officials as well as the ordinary people were eager to know. Unintentionally, the European women were part of this knowledge, especially with the liberating status that she obtained in her society that needed observation and reflection from the part of the travelers since it was a new controversial phenomenon to them. They were surprised to find women in almost every gathering they attended which challenged their religious and cultural views about women and resulted in different discourses.

Due to their diplomatic positions, these travelers were privileged to go on long journeys across Europe, which would take months and sometimes years, discovering new lands and peoples. Traveling to European countries and writing about them was a luxury that was not afforded to other common people in Morocco. It was a luxury not just because they had means of transportation at their service but also because they

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<sup>70</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 94.

were granted political immunity from any danger that might come across them during their journeys. Despite the fact that these ambassadorial delegations had political missions and duties to fulfill, writing about their encounters and experiences in the host countries was most of the times an obligation from the sultan as a means to provide knowledge about Europe. Yet, there were some scholars who argued that the concept of travel for knowledge was a Western practice which necessitated belonging to a politically powerful country. According to Rana Kabbani: “The idea of travel as a means of gathering and recording information is commonly found in societies that exercise a high degree of political power. The traveller begins his journey with the strength of a nation or an empire sustaining him (albeit from a distance) militarily, economically, intellectually and, as is often the case, spiritually.”<sup>71</sup> It is true that in this statement, Kabbani refers to Orientalist travelers who were backed up by a strong empire and they were “empirical agents”<sup>72</sup> paving the way for expansion and colonialism but nevertheless, she gives a generalized idea about travel as a means of knowledge production which requires coming from a politically strong country or an empire in order to become a producer of knowledge. The Moroccan travelers were backed by their diplomatic titles and duties which allowed them to fulfill different tasks at the same time.

The travel accounts of Moroccan ambassadorial delegations to Europe are an example of how other nations that are considered not part of an empire and not as powerful can indeed use travel as a means to produce knowledge. No one can deny the immensity of Europe’s production of knowledge about other nations for different ideological reasons and that their production is more established, consistent and sustained but we also cannot overlook how other nations used travel as a way to produce their own discourses, perceptions and visions of the outside world no matter how minimal they might seem in comparison to the Western discourse. These travel accounts serve as a corrective discourse to the Orientalist ones. They challenge and

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<sup>71</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Europe’s Myths of the Orient: Devise and Rule* (London: McMillan, 1986), p 1.

<sup>72</sup> Christopher Partridge, “Lost Horizon: H.P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism,” in *Handbook for the Theosophical Current*, eds. Olav Hammer and Mikeal Rothstein (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 316.

disturb Orientalism because they provide a wider scope of historical and cultural representations. Gesa Mackenthun, et al argued that:

More importantly, actual travelers from outside Europe have written down or communicated their experiences, often critically reflecting on European notions of cultural superiority. Their voices can be seen as significant correctives to eurocentric notions of travel and discovery. [...]For example, the corpus of Muslim *rihlas* (travel narratives) [...] makes us aware of the Eurocentric bias of much travel scholarship.<sup>73</sup>

In Occidentalism, we can hear the voices of the unheard of (the voiceless natives in the Orientalist narratives) and we have different perceptions and discourses about Western nations that were used to taking over the responsibility of writing and imagining the world. Now this world is producing their own discourse of the West and documenting their own experiences, perceptions and reactions which reveal and correct not just information about the West about also about them and their cultures. The Eurocentric bias which is one of the characteristics of the Orientalist discourse about non-Western nations and cultures is being revised under the light of the non-Western discourse; that is to say, Occidentalism.

While Europe was introduced into the printers in the late fifteenth century which accelerated the production and circulation of the written text,<sup>74</sup> the Arab world was still limited to manuscripts. The Moroccan travel accounts about Europe were not widely circulated in Morocco and the most important reason was the problem of print. In this regard, Matar says: “The absence of print produced a unique ideological effect: because there was no information about the Europeans that was printed and reprinted for sale in the market of fiction, no demonized image of the European was developed in Arabic imagination similar to that of the “Turk” or the “Moor” in Spanish novellas

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<sup>73</sup> Gesa Mackenthun, et al, eds., *Travel, Agency and the Circulation of Knowledge* (New York: Waxmann, 2017), p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*. Volumes I-II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 3.

or English drama or French and Italian epics.”<sup>75</sup> In other words, Arabs did not have the luxury of the printing business which could turn them into greedy imaginative writers who would be ready to write anything that could sell and make profit. Travelers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like Mohammed as-Saffar, Abi al-Jamal Taher al-Fassi, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, were often impressed by the printing houses in Europe and how developed they were. In the meantime, Morocco was first introduced into the printing world in 1864 when a Moroccan citizen Mohammed al-Tayyeb al-Roudani from Souss region brought the first printing machine into the country.<sup>76</sup> This lack in terms of widespread printing of books made the writings more credible as they had no ideological agenda or business aspirations behind them; the travelers were writing for the sake of documenting their journeys, reporting information to the palace and letting their readers travel with them through their descriptions and words. Their main objective was to inform and report rather than to sell.

In 1845-1846, Mohammed as-Saffar was sent as a scribe and a *faqih* / jurist in the embassy of ambassador Abdelkader Achaach to France after the battle of Isly.<sup>77</sup> His main mission within the embassy was to assist them in their prayers and other religious issues.<sup>78</sup> When they reached Paris, they were taken to different places that were new to the Moroccan travelers among which was the house of printing. As-Saffar dedicated a long section in his book in which he wrote in detail about how those machines worked. He called them “another of their amazing crafts”<sup>79</sup> and after the

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<sup>75</sup> Nabil Matar, “The Question of Occidentalism in Early Modern Morocco,” in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern*, eds. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2003), p. 165.

<sup>76</sup> Fawzi Abdulrazak, “The Kingdom of the Book: The History of Printing as an Agency of Change in Morocco between 1865-1912” (Doctoral Dissertation), (Boston University, 1990), p. 99.

<sup>77</sup> The battle of Isly happened in 1844 against France. The loss had cost Morocco a lot of debt and reparations to pay to France. It was their first defeat in front of the French military and technological development.

<sup>78</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, ed and trans. Susan Gilson Miller (Berkley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202.

visit, he said “this completely astonished us”<sup>80</sup>. It was another achievement of the French “forces” which bewildered his mind as he realized its power in disseminating information.

After Morocco’s defeat in the battle of Tetouan in 1860 against Spain, Sidi Mohammed ben Abderrahman sent two Moroccan embassies to Europe. One to England headed by ambassador Abi al-Jamal Taher al-Fassi and the second to France headed by ambassador Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui and their mission was to write about European modernity and collect loans.<sup>81</sup> They both left travel accounts of their journeys: the first is entitled *ar-Rila al-Ibriziya ila ad-Diyar al-Injliziya* (*The Golden Rihla to the English Lands*) and the second is *Tuhfat al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz* (*The Azizian Masterpiece in the Kingdom of Paris*). Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui wrote about their visit to the house of printing and he also provided a minute description of the process of printing and what it involved. He stated: “This printing machine can bring out and disseminate people’s ideas in all languages [...] and this machine which they use for printing is useful in many things and helpful in the increase of books and sciences. [...] We ask Allah with the presence of our Sultan Commander of the Faithful to complement the qualities of our Maghreb with this printing machine.”<sup>82</sup> He was fascinated by the machine that revolutionized the world of printing and press and gave ample information about how it works and its functions. He realized the power of the machine that was more than printing papers; it was a fast way to disseminate ideas and spread news among people in a short period of time. In his description, there is a subtle call for reform under the sultan’s reign to shift their interest from military supplies and loans to giving more interest to improve other vital fields like print. Morocco was weakening, especially after the two defeats against France and Spain, and the travelers were able to see the developmental gap between Morocco and Europe which was bigger than they could explain or describe. They

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>81</sup> Khalid Ben Shihir, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886*, trans. Malcolm Williams and Gavin Waterson (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005), p. 96.

<sup>82</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, ed. Zaki Mubarak (Tangier: Muassasat at-Taghlif wa an-Nashr, 1989), pp. 79-80.

realized that Europe's power was due to several factors, such as organized institutions in all fields and industrial and scientific innovations that contributed to the development of those countries.

Driss Jaidi, a jurist and writer, visited France, Belgium, England and Italy in 1874 in an embassy headed by ambassador Hajj Mohammed Al-Zbidi Rbati sent by Sultan Hassan I.<sup>83</sup> He wrote a book based on this journey entitled *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaeb al-Akhbar : Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876* (Ashtonishing the Good People with the Strangest News: Journey to France, Belgium, England and Italy, 1876)<sup>84</sup>. During their stay in Paris, they were invited to visit the printing house about which Jaidi was highly impressed and, like the previously mentioned travelers, he dedicated a long section in his book to explain in detail how the books were printed and how many people worked there.<sup>85</sup> All three travelers mentioned the presence of French women in the printing houses and the important role they played in working along with men in a public space without any restrictions or harassments.

The travelers covered various areas in the European life and institutions. They were sent to discover and reveal how Europe was suddenly becoming a great political and economic power in the world. Any information that seemed important in this regard was seen as crucial to be reported in the accounts. Knowledge and information about the West were as important as the main political missions of the ambassadorial delegations. Abderrahmane el Moudden states: "[...] the *rihla* texts are usually encyclopedic in character. Among other fields, they cover religious sciences, history, biographies, and literature. Moreover, for modern scholars, they are kind of a documentary treasure, full of geographical and ethnographic material and also

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<sup>83</sup> Idriss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 32.

<sup>84</sup> While the Moroccan sultan sent Zebdi's embassy to Europe, Italy sent their own embassy to Morocco which is documented in a book entitled *Morocco: its People and Places* by Edmondo de Amicis (an Italian journalist and writer). He dedicated a section of this book to describe the visit of the Italian embassy, how they were treated, the questions they were asked...etc. He represented the Moroccans as ignorant about the European countries and the country as a deserted unsafe space.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 190-193.

technological interest.”<sup>86</sup> It was important for Moroccan travelers to produce a knowledge of their own about the faraway lands and peoples with whom they had diplomatic and commercial relations. It was necessary to discover the ways of life, the customs, traditions, beliefs, behaviors, and looks of that developing continent that seemed to get powerful year after year. These accounts came to fill in a gap in the Muslim awareness and knowledge about the West and provided a “realistic” vision to anyone interested.

The lack of written sources about the West and its institutions and cultures made the Moroccan travelers more determined to note down everything they encountered, witnessed and experienced in Europe. They were often willing to get into new experiences and visit new places and meet new people to get as much accurate information as they could. They also were curious and asked “native” people about the things they could not fathom so as to remove any ambiguity or misconception. They kept asking for questions and urging for more explanations about every place they visited. They asked about details like names, exact numbers/measurements and years. They were curious travelers who let all their senses loose once they arrived to the host countries in order to represent as accurately as possible all their experiences in those foreign lands. Their writings were rare representations of the West. As Nabil Matar confirms:

Such contacts were clearly unavailable to them [Magharibi travelers] when they travelled in Christendom where they found themselves without any previous written models they could emulate or travelogues from which they could borrow - except Arabic material of the early Islamic conquests (and that only in the case of Spain). Where European travelers could rely on classical, biblical and pilgrimage sources – inaccurate and biased as they often were – for descriptions of North

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<sup>86</sup> Abderrahmane El Moudden, “The Ambivalence of the *Rihla*: Community Integration and Self-definition in Moroccan Travel Accounts, 1300-1800,” in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, eds. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (California: University of California Press, 1990), p. 74.

Africa and the Levant which would prepare them for their encounter, the Magharibi had no Arabic sources about Europe.<sup>87</sup>

This lack of sources about Europe is what makes the Moroccan travelers' accounts a huge source of knowledge and information about European societies in general and European women in particular. They must have regarded themselves as pioneers in delivering such information and they were weighed down by the responsibility to make their accounts credible. They could have been considered as guide books for later travelers to read before they took off on their journeys which would play an important role in informing future ambassadorial delegations about the countries and peoples they would visit, how to approach them and what to expect. These travel accounts exceeded speaking about the missions which the travelers were sent to fulfill and covered various aspects of European life and institutions, sometimes at length which served to know about their cultural Other on the other shore of the Mediterranean.

Moroccan diplomatic mobility has played an important role in strengthening political and economic ties between Morocco and Europe and it has also allowed the Moroccan delegations throughout the past centuries to have a direct contact, to observe and write about European cultures, peoples, institutions and technological advancements. In the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many Moroccan travel writers, who were either ambassadors or part of the Moroccan delegations in charge of writing, left a legacy of travel narratives that document their journeys to different European countries like Holland, Spain, France, England, Malta, Naples, Sicily, Italy, and Belgium. Nabil Matar said:

It is not a coincidence, therefore, that the first 'Islamic' book about Christian Europe in the early modern period was written in Arabic by a Magharibi, Ahmad bin Qasim. Neither Native Americans, Persians, sub-Saharan Africans, Ottomans nor any of the peoples of the Far East, who

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<sup>87</sup> Nabil Matar, "Arab Views of Europe, 1578-1727: The Western Mediterranean," p. 142.

traded with Europeans, wrote as much about Europeans as did the Magharibi. The Magharibi were the first non-Christians to write about early modern Christian Europe.<sup>88</sup>

This is to show the importance that the Moroccan traveler played in documenting historical events and gave historical information about countries that are completely different from his own. Over the last centuries, many travelers left accounts of their journeys that enrich not just the Moroccan archive but the world archive as a whole since they were the first to write about Europe and massively contribute to the tradition of *Adab Rihla*/ travel literature.

Moroccan travelers were able to create a discourse of their own and become producers of knowledge about European women and thus they were able to establish a new literary genre that followed, more or less, the same pattern of narration and the same structure. They wrote it in the form of a diary which brings the reader even closer to the experiences lived by the travelers. They also followed a chronological order of the events and they spoke about each city they visited one after the other. Though they faced linguistic problems in documenting the names as they are but they did their best to write them as they heard them; sometimes, they even resorted to Spanish translation or transliteration of the needed words. They provided information that was new and rare at that time and which the palace depended on for their future relations with those countries. According to Matar: “ambassadorial accounts are of paramount importance for expounding, in writing, the official Magharibi view about Europeans. Travel accounts by Magharibi ambassadors or royal envoys provided a rich source – the richest in writing – of information about Christendom.”<sup>89</sup> Their written accounts are testaments of their curiosity, openness to the world and willingness to learn about new cultures and share that knowledge with their countrymen. In their hunt for information, each one of them provided different aspects of European life and cultures that were new to them.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

Bernard Lewis was among the scholars who harshly criticized Arabs and Muslims specifically, for failing to create any contact with the West and of showing no interest to get to know people who lived in other countries and who were different in religion, language and culture. However, he commended Moroccan ambassadors who were sent to Europe for their interest to know about the new cultures they visited and the lengthy travel accounts that documented their journeys and can be considered a threshold to knowledge about Europe. He compared them to Ottoman travel accounts of the same period starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He said:

The Moroccan envoys show an interest in European affairs extending beyond the surface movements of personalities and events. They seek and obtain often good information about political and religious as well as commercial and military affairs, not only to the countries to which they are sent but in other European countries too; not only immediate and current events, but sometimes extending back into the history of the previous century.<sup>90</sup>

Lewis sees Moroccan travelers as an exception in the Arab world whom he considers lacking in terms of curiosity about the world. The details and precision in the Moroccan accounts make them unique and reveal how interested and curious they were that they took the time and effort to search for more information than what they were provided and to look deeper into the histories of the places they visited. They showed a sense of care and intrigue towards the host countries and cultures more than other Muslims of the region.

In writing about their cultural Other, Moroccan travelers' intention was to write down whatever they saw and heard, and they were ready to ask questions if they were ever curious about anything. The information which Moroccan travelers produced about their female cultural Other was based on direct encounters, observations and dialogues which resulted in various forms of knowledge. Mohammed as-Saffar was

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<sup>90</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 118.

assigned directly by the sultan to write an account about the journey.<sup>91</sup> As-Saffar was aware that his account was of high importance to his nation and especially to his ruler who was eager to know about the secrets behind the fast development of Europe, France in particular, and how they were able to shift from being a struggling nation to a developed powerful one. The hidden reason for this embassy was to explore the reasons behind the fast development in France which paved the way to Morocco's loss at the battle of Isly in 1844 against the French army.<sup>92</sup> This loss came as a shock to the Moroccan sultan and officials who underestimated the French forces and military power which made them curious to know how it happened and why. As-Saffar's account was produced to give answers to the Moroccan officials and people about the cultural Other across the Strait. According to him:

It is wise for those who go far from home to record everything they see and hear, since they may find some knowledge and value in it. There is no better way of obtaining useful information than by mixing with people. According to a wise saying of the Ancients: the eye never tires from seeing, nor the ear from hearing. Therefore, I decided with the help of God to blacken these pages with what I saw and heard during this voyage, be it clear or obscure.<sup>93</sup>

In this quote, As-Saffar insisted on the importance of travelling and the significance of documenting one's journey. He considered "mixing" with people the best way to know them. Mixing in this instance does not mean the mixing between the sexes, which he will witness for the first time in France, but mixing in terms of getting to know them through direct contact and engaging in direct conversations. He did not get involved in long discussions with European women, except greeting them; however, he observed them enough during the comedies, the dinners, and the parties he attended and the institutions he visited. He promised his readers that his account would be solely based

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>92</sup> Yahya Boulehya, "Bayn Mohammed as-Saffar wa Fukuzawa Yukichi nahwa Dirasa Mouqarina," in *al-Manahil*. Issue 88 (Rabat: Moroccan Ministry of Culture, 2011), p. 177.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

on what he saw and heard whether clear or obscure which reveals that he already knew that he was going to encounter things that were different from what he knows and which he would not understand but he would write about them anyway. This realization was important for every traveler because it allowed him to have an open mind in trying to understand cultural differences between the self and the Other.

From the 17<sup>th</sup> till the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Moroccan travel writers provided a unique knowledge of Europe that each traveler was able to record the main aspects of the European life and institutions during the period he visited it. According to Abdessalam Himer:

Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari's journey was coeval with the Mercantile period of the Capitalist European development, while Ibn Othmane al-Meknassi's was coeval with the end of that period. Abi al-Jamal Taher al-Fassi coincided with the Industrial period which was characterized by an intense competition between the Europeans to divide the world [...] Then Al-Hassan al-Ghassal's journey in 1902 was coeval with the Imperial period.”<sup>94</sup>

As-Saffar's account was the first travel account to document modern France in the industrial period.<sup>95</sup> He witnessed firsthand the changes and developments which France reached during that period which fascinated and blew his mind that he sometimes ran out of words and lexicon to describe what he saw. He described the hotels, means of transportation, agriculture, bridges, industry, buildings, organized markets, parks, the zoo, the theater, libraries, the army, the palaces, the architecture, the steamships, the house of science, the printing house, the law chambers...etc. He was amazed by the rapid development in all these fields and how they were able to elevate themselves through science and education to become one of the most powerful and developed countries in the world. As-Saffar expressed his wish on several

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<sup>94</sup> Abdessalam Himer, “Surat al-Akhar min khilal Taqarir al-Rahalat al-Safaria ila Oroba,” in *Bassamat: Al-Khitab al-Nahdawi bi al-Maghreb*. Issue 5. (1990), p.134. Translation is mine.

<sup>95</sup> Mohamed el-Fassi, “Ar-Rahalat as-Safariya al-Maghribiya,” p. 79.

occasions to have some of the developments he witnessed being implemented in his own country, though he was careful in expressing his wish in the most appropriate manner. After all, it was an account that was requested by the Sultan who was eager to read it.<sup>96</sup>

In *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui admitted to having read Rafi' Rifa'a Tahtawi's travel account<sup>97</sup> to France and that it had helped him in both preparing for his journey and writing about it. He produced a discourse that is completely different from that of as-Saffar as he was critical about the people, their manners, customs and culture in general. Though he praised the industrial development which France was going through, he also saw it as the reason behind their loose morals.<sup>98</sup> He attacked European norms that were foreign to him but he documented them in addition to his harsh judgments in an attempt to show that though the West was developing in several domains, it was also stooping into immorality due to a lack of religion. More or less, the same sentiment is detected in Abi al-Jamal Taher al-Fassi's account about England's development which he could not fathom and attributed to the lack of religion. In their shock and bewilderment, these travelers tried to resort to that factor in order to diminish the importance of the European development that was achieved by the "infidels".

Lhaj Mohammed Bensaid was another Moroccan ambassador who was sent on a dual embassy along with Ambassador Mohammed Cherqi to France in 1865.<sup>99</sup> He left a short manuscript of his account which Moustapha Bouchaarae edited and published in the second volume of his book *at-Taarif bi Bni Said Slaouiyyine wa noubda 'an Wata'iqihim* (*An Introduction to Ben Said Slaouiyyine and a Summary of their Documents*). Despite the shortness of his account which did not exceed 33 pages, it included valuable information about his progressive thoughts and observations of France. He engages his readers by giving minute lengthy details about everything

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<sup>96</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters*, p.76.

<sup>97</sup> *Takhliis al Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* is a travel account written by Rafi' Rifa'a Tahtawi about his stay in France from 1826-1830.

<sup>98</sup> Driss ben Driss al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 93.

<sup>99</sup> Mohammed Bensaid, *At-Taarif bi bani Said as-Slaouiyyin wa Nobda 'an Wataaiqihim*. Vol II, ed. Moustafa Bouchaara (Rabat: Matbaat al-Maarif, 1991), p. 5.

around them in order to bring them closer to 1865 France. The ambassador was extremely impressed by the sense of organization and modernity in the country that he felt an obligation to make a direct call for reforms to Sultan Mohammed ben Aderrahmane at the beginning of his account. He gave a series of reforms which he thought would move Morocco forward in the fields of marine, politics, monetary, agriculture, industry...etc. He also gave examples of reforms that were implemented in Egypt and Tunisia and which proved to be a success.<sup>100</sup> In his descriptions of France, he talked about the weapons factory, the banks, the circus, the theater... At the end of his manuscript, he wrote down the titled of the books he bought among which were books about Paris, France and its cities, and books about electricity, agriculture, medicine, Christianity and Rafa' Rafi'al-Tahtawi's travel account *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*.<sup>101</sup> He took the opportunity to bring back books that would help in the reforms he demanded which reflected his eagerness for a similar wave of modernity which he witnessed in Europe to be assimilated back home in Morocco.

The knowledge that Moroccan travelers were able to acquire included also the way European women imagined Moroccans and their images in their fantasies. Al-Amraoui was surprised at the incident and the way some French people thought and imagined Moroccans and Muslims in general.<sup>102</sup> It was due to the lack of contact between the two cultures that led to misconceptions and false views generated by fantasy in imagining the cultural Other. According to Nabil Matar:

Furthermore, in an age when writers did not verify their sources, numerous chroniclers reproduced extant material without checking its accuracy. A misconception about Muslims, or a deliberate slander of Islam, would thus be repeated without verification-even if it was most egregious or outrageous. [...] Ignorance legitimated prejudice, and prejudice turned into exclusion, derision and hostility.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-13.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., pp. 38-39.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 88. Translation is mine.

<sup>103</sup> Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World, 1558-1713* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 31-32.

European people only knew Arabs and Muslims through Orientalist writings and they had to rely on writers for a portrayal and representation of the world that were written for political ideologies and for business. In their search for profitability, they felt they need to incorporate what would draw people's attentions and play on their fantasies of the Muslim East. People wanted to read about an Orient of the *Harem*, of the primitive barbarous Other, of the backwardness of the Other's culture which triggered Orientalist writers' imagination to fulfill these wishes and desires. The Moroccan travelers' presence in Europe was essential not just for Euro-Moroccan relations but also in shifting Orientalist misconceptions and stereotypes about the Orient. They were living proofs for the Europeans to meet and know beyond literary fantasies and constructions which made them have distorted images about anything foreign to them.

In 1876, Driss Jaidi's main job during the journey was to document everything that happened and his mission was clearly specified to him by the Moroccan ambassador he accompanied. He started his book stating:

He [ambassador Al-Zbidi] suggested that I should spend my days and nights writing a travel account about my journey and that it must include any strange information and any wondrous thing that we might see in that country. [...] I wrote back to him [...] but I will in, God's will, write an account which will be informative about strange news and anything that people might find wondrous in those lands. [...] He kept writing to me every now and then to remind me that I should keep my promise of writing the account.<sup>104</sup>

This goes to show how insistent the Moroccan ambassador was about writing of the travel account about the European journey and to document anything that was either new or strange. He knew the importance of providing such knowledge to the palace, especially at such a critical time in the Moroccan history where Europe was a rising

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<sup>104</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876*, pp. 102-103. Translation is mine.

power searching for new lands to colonize. He was aware that a written document would serve as a reference which needed a special person whose sole mission would be to observe and write.

Following the footsteps of previous Moroccan travel writers, Jaidi based his account on what he saw and heard, in addition to the answers he received for his constant questions. Throughout his account, he used expressions like “I asked about it and they told me”<sup>105</sup>, “a person who sees something is not like someone who hears about it.”<sup>106</sup>, “I asked about its [domes of stores] height and width through an interpreter.”<sup>107</sup> He confirmed the importance of traveling and seeing other countries with one’s own eyes which is an encouragement for other people to travel and explore outside the confines of one’s country. He also paid meticulous attention to asking about detailed information and explanations through an interpreter. Whenever there was a lack of information or he did not ask, he would mention that to his reader. For instance, when he says “We did not ask about how many weapons were stored there [at the arms factory]”<sup>108</sup> As a foreign traveler, he did not feel the need to fantasize or predict to provide false information as they were seeking to keep their integrity and responsibility in documenting Europe.

During their journeys, most of the travelers relied on translators, among who was Jaidi. They were eager to know about the different countries and cultures they visited so they kept asking questions all the time. According to Matar:

“[...] travelers, envoys, ambassadors, traders, and clerics were eager to ask questions about *bilad al-nasara* (the lands of the Christians) and to record answers –and then turn their impressions into documents. They all wrote with precision and perspicacity, producing the most detailed and empirically based information about the way in which non-Europeans viewed Europeans in the early modern period.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 136. Translation is mine.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 148. Translation is mine.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 292. Translation is mine.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 321. Translation is mine.

<sup>109</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. xxii.

Jaidi did not speak the languages of the countries he visited and thus relied on interpreters for information. He was too demanding for details in order to preserve the accuracy of what he documented. He said on several occasions: “The information I was given was not enough so I asked the translator to inquire for more for me and so he did.”<sup>110</sup> Sometimes the information he was offered was not enough so he asked for more explanation. He tried to write what he was told and he looked for information about anything strange or new in order to fascinate his readers as well. The travelers tried to portray and to bring Europe closer to their readers through their writings which they tried to maintain in terms of credibility.

Jaidi, like other travelers, wrote about different fields and experiences in Europe with a special emphasis on how the female cultural Other, the European woman, was engaged in the development of their nations. He gave minute descriptions of the work which women conducted in the factories with extreme precision either at the sugar factory and the printing house in France, the wool factory and the huge glass mirrors factory in Belgium, or the hospital and the pottery factory in Italy. His views were often neutral and objective. He described and rarely commented though he praised the beauty of some of the women he met on different occasions, mostly dinners.

Mohammed ben al-Hassan Al-Hajjoui was also a writer in an embassy which was sent by Sultan Youssef ben al-Hassan to France and England in 1919.<sup>111</sup> He wrote a travel account entitled *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia 1919* in which he portrayed an image of early 20<sup>th</sup> century France and England and the rapid modern shift that had affected their different facets of life in both countries. About the decision to write the account, al-Hajjoui said:

[...] I thought that I should write what I saw during this journey which will benefit the people of al-Maghreb who have never traveled and did not know anything about the conditions of Europe. I chose not to lengthen my account by speaking about the geographies and the old and

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 367. Translation is mine.

<sup>111</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia 1919*, ed. Said al-Fadili (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2003), p. 32.

modern histories of those countries because enough has been written about these two sciences. [...] I decided to limit my writing to what I saw and I summarized a lot of what I went through.<sup>112</sup>

It seems that al-Hajjoui was aware of the scarcity of information about Europe during that period which made him decide to document his travel account. He also decided not to dwell on the history and geography but rather to focus on the people and the culture since they were the aspects that needed to be brought closer to his home country. While other earlier travel writers like Mohammed al-Ghassani, Ahmed ben al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal, Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi focused on the history of the countries they visited and their institutions, al-Hajjoui tried to come up with new aspects like the social life of people in France and England. He based his travel account on comparisons between the two countries. For instance, he was interested in the way of dress in both countries. This present thinking of al-Hajjoui could be understood as a call for reform since he chose not to focus on the past of those countries but rather on the current developments.

The Moroccan production of knowledge about Europe can generally be divided into two main discourses. The first discourse can be traced from 1610 to 1782 which shows that the travelers saw their country as powerful and in a way equal to Europe. They were boastful about their religion, language and country. They were still not aware of the rising powers of Europe which Morocco could not catch up with later. The second discourse is from 1845 to 1919 which can be seen a modernist approach towards Europe in which they realized the huge gap that was forming between the two worlds. They witnessed how powerful, developed and advanced Europe was becoming through science. It is a discourse of amazement and confusion at how fast the outer world was rapidly developing while Morocco was still struggling from internal conflicts over power that diminished the resources of the country and the European powers that were trying to expand in Africa, starting from Morocco which a strategic

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 31. Translation is mine.

country that represents a crossover to other African and Middle Eastern countries.<sup>113</sup> Moroccan travelers to Europe provided a heterogeneous image of their European cultural Other. They were the main producers of knowledge about the West to their nation and they had the responsibility to keep it as real and credible as possible.

#### **b. Muslim Moroccan Cultural Identity as a Traveling Identity to the West**

The Muslim Moroccan cultural identity as a traveling identity to Europe shaped the way Moroccan travelers perceived the world around them and it played a central role in their acceptance of difference or criticism of their cultural Other, especially the women. This encounter between the self and the Other brought to the surface a certain awareness that had never existed before as they were able to see themselves through their cultural Other. This encounter resulted in a confused discourse of glorification and criticism of the self and Europe as a cultural Other.

Identity is one of the most complicated terms to define which only goes to show the complexity of the term itself. It is derived from the verb “to identify” which can be understood as a process of identification to certain characteristics that would shape a certain identity, such as gender, sex, class, race, ethnicity, religion...etc. It is not as easy as it seems because according to Stuart Hall identity is a construction that goes through a constant process of shaping and reshaping which renders it changeable, fluid and not fixed.<sup>114</sup> He argues that people can have multiple identities, contradictory at times, which overlap and emerge according to the circumstances and that the notion of a unified stable identity is nothing but a fantasy.<sup>115</sup> He also divides the concept of identity into three major levels: the individual identity, the collective identity and the

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<sup>113</sup> Abd Al Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouroba 1610-1922* (Rabat: Mohammed V University, 1995), p. 32.

<sup>114</sup> Stuart Hall “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 222.

<sup>115</sup> Stuart Hall “The Question of Identity,” in *Modernity and its Futures*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held and Anthony McGrew. Cambridge: Polity Press & Open University, 1992. pp. 274-280.

national identity. He claims that individual identity is based on the individual characteristics which are often challenged in the mirror of the Other who reflects everything that the self is or is not and which is a relationship that is based on dualities and oppositions, and the collective identity which has more to do with belonging to a certain community, culture, religion... while the national identity is a broader notion of belonging to a bigger “imagined community”<sup>116</sup> in the form of a nation that could include various communities, cultures and religions.<sup>117</sup> This identity gives the person the feeling of belonging and it also affects the relationship and contact with the Other. Once a person leaves the space and since he is by nature a “sociological subject”<sup>118</sup> to which he belongs and engages in contact with people from a difference space, his identity becomes challenged and goes through a process of awareness of difference. The encounter between the self and the Other is essential to the recognition of oneself in the mirror of the Other. This encounter makes both parts aware of who they are and gives them a sense of existence. People describe themselves in relation to, and sometimes in comparison to, the Other; the Other who is the complete opposite of the self.

The traveling identity under scrutiny in regard to travel accounts is the combination of the individual, collective and national identity which the traveler unconsciously packs with him during his journey. Through this traveling identity, they can see, judge, perceive and interact with the world. It travels with them and within them and it also changes along the journey as their cultural scope widens. Once in Europe, the Moroccan travelers became more aware of who they were which made them recognize the importance of their cultural as well as religious background that emerged throughout their accounts. While in contact with the European Other, their identity kept intervening and surfacing in every discourse about the Other and it played a central role in the representations they provided of the visited countries and peoples. Their initial intention to restrict their writings to what they saw and heard seems naïve in a way as their identity kept emerging throughout their travel narratives

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<sup>116</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), p. 46.

<sup>117</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Question of Identity”, p. 275.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.

and it governed their discourse of Otherness. For example, As-Saffar stated: “I decided with the help of God to blacken these pages with what I saw and heard during this voyage.”<sup>119</sup> Al- Amraoui also said: “After my return from my destination and since I could still remember some of the wonders of that side of the world, I decided to write [my *rihla*] following the footsteps of people who travelled before me.”<sup>120</sup> In addition, Al-Hajjoui said at the beginning of his account: “I thought that I should write what I saw during this journey.”<sup>121</sup> Most, if not all, Moroccan travel writers promised in the beginning of their *Rihla* that they would write just what they saw and heard, which means they promised objectivity and neutrality in their writings. However, they could not control their identity from interfering. Said Jabbar states:

This large amount of information and news, which the traveler provides all at once in his narratives in a special patterned representation, cannot stop just at the act of telling. The traveler does not just deliver news and information purely objectively; his identity plays a role in the production and pattern of the travel account. He establishes a critical and special knowledge about a compilation of issues through his comments, comparisons, conclusions, acceptance and rejection.<sup>122</sup>

Travel accounts were not solely based on the act of telling and reporting about “the wonders and marvels of the West” as the travelers want it to seem. They went beyond that into exposing the identity of the traveler which interfered in every comment, impression, comparison, conclusion, acceptance or rejection he made about certain situations in the foreign lands of Europe. The travelers were also selective in terms of what “deserved” to be told and what qualified as “strange”, “new”, or “wondrous” in

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<sup>119</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters*, p.77. Translation is mine.

<sup>120</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 34. Translation is mine.

<sup>121</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia* 1919, p. 31. Translation is mine.

<sup>122</sup> Said Jabbar, *Mina as-Sardiya ila at-Takhyiliya: Bahth fi ba'd al-Ansaq ad-Dalaliya fi as-Sard al-Arabi* (Rabat: Dar al-Aman, 2012), p. 183. Translation is mine.

order to talk about it in their accounts. The system of selection also reflects the extent to which cultural identity played an essential role in their writing which made their discourse not as objective and neutral as they aspired for it to be. Cultural and religious identity was a mechanism of representation in these travel accounts through which the knowledge about the cultural Other was produced.

When a traveler set out to go on a journey, he did not only pack his clothes and physical luggage with him but also what Ali Behdad refers to as the “cultural baggage”<sup>123</sup> which includes the traveler’s beliefs, cultural values, religion...etc. This “cultural baggage” was part of the traveler’s identity and it served as a lens through which he saw, judged and perceived the world around him. The traveler’s cultural identity became a filter through which we do not just learn about foreign peoples and cultures but also about the travelers’ self and consciousness vis-à-vis the Other. The act of traveling and visiting a foreign land unraveled layers of the cultural identity which would not have appeared without the contact with the “strange” and “new” elements in the host countries. The travels were not only journeys to foreign lands but also journeys to the travelers’ psyches and consciousness of themselves and everything around them. They did not produce knowledge only about Europe and its peoples but also about themselves and the Moroccan consciousness.

When different identities meet, there are often grounds for comparisons where differences arise. These differences could become a space for contention like in the case of religion which was the major element that affected the travelers’ discourse of the European Other. Several of the Moroccan travelers to Europe were religious leaders back home so their religiosity was one the standards of their evaluations of their Other. This led the travelers to make a division between “us” and “them” which was based on binary oppositions between the two. As James J. Carrier says: “National, ethnic, and racial identities revolve around an opposition between an us and a them, and in many parts of the world those identities reflect in part an assumption or rejection of ‘the West’ in one or another of its guises.”<sup>124</sup> The result of this encounter

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<sup>123</sup> Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, p, 26.

<sup>124</sup> James J. Carrier. Ed, *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 12.

between two conflicting identities was either a glorification of their technological and economic achievements or a rejection of their social norms and customs which did not correspond with the travelers' religious and cultural identity. Most of them could not overlook certain aspects in the European societies they visited, especially those in relation to women.

The religious identity of the travelers blurred at times their vision towards their developing cultural Other that instead of focusing on the real reasons behind their development, they rather tried to find a religious justification for it. Ahmed Mekkaoui stressed on the fact that the Moroccan travelers' religious identity controlled the discourse they produced about the West that though they became aware of the European power and development, most of them tried to diminish and degrade their achievements.<sup>125</sup> Cultural and religious identity played an important role in determining the traveler's approach and discourse of Europe. While some travelers were more open and tolerant towards the new visited countries, others could not stop describing anything they saw in relation to Islam and the Islamic Moroccan culture. For example, Mohammed as-Saffar and Driss Jaidi kept reminding themselves and their readers that they were visiting a foreign culture whose norms and customs might differ from their own but it did not mean that they were wrong. They tried to explain that cultural difference was a normal thing that required understanding. On the other hand, other writers like Driss al-Amraoui and Mohammed al-Hajjoui could not grasp that being in a different country meant that this difference should not make anyone more or less ethical than the other, and that even though there were some practices which were unfamiliar to them, they did not mean that the people were immoral. Their tolerance of their cultural Other's difference was minimal in comparison to other other travelers. They could not detach themselves and their identity from interfering in their contact and representation of the Europeans.

Driss al-Amraoui harshly criticized his cultural Other, French men and women. He did not approve of the amount of liberty that was granted to women and the passivity and weakness of men when dealing with them. In the case of al-Amraoui's

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<sup>125</sup> Ahmed Mekkaoui, *Ar-Rahaloun al-Maghariba wa Oroba*. (Rabat: Judur an-Nashr, 2007), p. 29.

view, Said ben Said al-Alaoui stated that: “Religion is a determinant factor in spotting the difference between the Other and the self.”<sup>126</sup> Indeed, that is what happened with al-Amraoui who saw the cultural Other from his own religious perspective and failed to observe the outside world away from his Islamic beliefs which made him fall into generalizations and stereotyping of French people. He considered the liberty that was granted to women as destructive to the morals and values of the country and it only gave way to prostitution to be deeply rooted in the French society that every woman who seemed liberated was a prostitute because she behaved like one through mixing with the men and their revealing clothes. He attributed that to the lack of jealousy among men who were controlled by the women and could not stand strong in front of their women’s desires and wishes who were exploiting their freedom. Al-Amraoui said:

A man is not allowed to marry two wives even if he is the king; and this is one the reasons why men are not jealous and why their wives are granted so much freedom, which they exploit to give in to their sexual desires. Prostitution is not considered as a vice in this country. Married men, however, are blamed for it, while those who are single are proud of it and speak about it publicly.<sup>127</sup>

Several concepts can mean different things in different cultures, among which is the concept of freedom whether of movement, dress or behavior. Al-Amraoui was not familiar with the liberated status that women had in France that was not the case in Morocco and could not see the cultural Other as a different being who is entitled to his difference. Instead, he assumed that the French was a corrupt other that stoop into immorality and disgrace through the excessive freedom they enjoyed in their society.

Al-Amraoui was aware of the cultural differences between the Muslim self and the Christian Other and though he admired the development that France was

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<sup>126</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, *Oropa fi Miraat ar-Rihla*. p. 13. Translation is mine.

<sup>127</sup> Sadik Rddad, trans, “Driss ben Driss Al-Amraoui: Moroccan Ambassador to Europe,” in *Other Routes: 1500 years of African and Asian Travel Writing*, eds. Tabish Khair, et al. Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2006. p. 355.

undergoing, he had a lot of reserve over the cultural issues, especially the ones related to women and their relations with men, whether husbands or other. This topic in particular aroused al-Amraoui's religious consciousness which made him attack and criticize what did not adhere or seem familiar to his religious teachings. His identity was triggered and emerged in sensitive issues, such as gender relations. At the end of his travel account, he noted: "We apologize to any critic of any slippage of the pen [...] I have never deviated nor digressed from righteousness though I praised them for few things while describing them and their places and I hailed some of their actions. I only meant to embellish what adhered to the Islamic law and was accepted by reason and good character."<sup>128</sup> Despite his criticism of the status of women in the French society and his attack on her liberty and freedom of movement, al-Amraoui admired the French developments in various fields and praised their innovations and organization. When he returned back home, he apologized for that admiration and felt compelled to apologize to his readers for admiring the "infidel West" but he assured them that anything that he praised was in accordance with the Islamic laws and manners. Even after returning from his journey, al-Amraoui could not detach himself from his identity that kept imposing itself on his discourses not allowing its cultural Other be in an equal position as the Moroccan self.

Otherness is the result of the interference of identity in the travelers' discourse about Europe. The process of othering creates a distance between the self and the other and brings to the surface things that differentiate them and rather than the things that unite them. The other remains the opposite of anything that the self is. According to Lajos Brons:

Othering is the simultaneous construction of the self or in-group and the other or out-group in mutual and unequal opposition through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out-group lacks and/or some undesirable characteristic that the other/out-group has and the self/in-group lacks. Othering thus sets up

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<sup>128</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, pp. 125-126. Translation is mine.

a superior self/in-group in contrast to an inferior /other/out-group, but this superiority/inferiority is nearly always left implicit.<sup>129</sup>

There cannot be a self without the other and vice versa as both components are important for the identification of each other. The binary opposition of self/other, superior/inferior, civilized/uncivilized is not fixed and it changes depending on the producer of that discourse and this is what makes the concept of identity and otherness problematic. This notion becomes clearer when we compare Orientalism and Occidentalism as two completely different discourses. While otherness in the Orientalist discourse was more established as an empirical tool for profit, expansion and power, Otherness in the Occidentalist discourse is merely discursive; the Moroccan Occidentalists were not even aware of the power of discourse and the construction of otherness.

The journey to Europe was like a window to a completely different world that bewildered the travelers through which they discovered their cultural Other and revealed their identity in their travel accounts. Farid Zahi described the ambassadorial *Rihla* as a “special existential experience, especially if it is the traveler’s first journey of discovery.”<sup>130</sup> Visiting Europe gave the Moroccan travelers a chance to see themselves in the mirror of their European Other. The European developments only reminded them of their own deficiency and backwardness in terms of technological advancements. They realized that the reason for Europe’s power and progress was their reliance on science and education while Morocco’s weakness and belatedness was due to ignorance.<sup>131</sup> They believed that their written documentations of their journeys were going to be a revelation of Europe but they revealed more about their own country’s struggles, their personalities, anxieties, challenges and backgrounds.

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<sup>129</sup> Lajos Brons, “Othering, an Analysis” in *Transcience*. Vol 6. Issue 1, 2015. p. 70.

<sup>130</sup> Farid Zahi, “Al-Moumana’a wa al-Fitna, al-Jasad wa ad-Dat wa as-Sora: Moutakhayal ar-Rihla as-Safaria al-Maghribiya ila Ouroupa,” in *al-Koufa*, year 2, issue 2, Spring 2013. p. 129. Retrieved on June 17, 2014 from [http://www.uokufa.edu.iq/journals/index.php/Kufa\\_Review/article/view/62/pdf\\_48](http://www.uokufa.edu.iq/journals/index.php/Kufa_Review/article/view/62/pdf_48).

<sup>131</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, “Oroba ar-Rahalin al-Maghariba,” in *Ar-Rahala al-Arab wa al- Mouslimoun: Iktichaf al-Akhar, al-Maghreb Mountalaqan wa Mouawalan* (Rabat: Wizarat at-Taqa al-Maghribiya, 2003), p. 31.

Al-Alaoui confirms that: “The *Rihla* informs more about the mentality of the traveler and depicts the components of his own ‘cultural awareness’ than about a discourse about the country under scrutiny or information about its people.”<sup>132</sup> The *rihla* or travel account revealed more about the travelers than about the visited countries and peoples. Their discourses, representations, perceptions, rejections and/or acceptance reflected the travelers’ cultural awareness and mentality. So, while they thought they were informing their readers about other countries, they were informing them about themselves as well.

European women can be considered as a double Other to the Moroccan travel writers. For them, the cultural Other was not framed and essentialized to the male European Other, but it extended into the female European woman who consisted a major challenge to most travelers who did not know how to act and behave in her presence. Her presence was imposed on them in every occasion due to the European societal norms that were based on the mixing of the two sexes which forced the Moroccan travelers to respect those norms. Al-Alaoui explains: “The Other is what the self sees as different to it and the opposite of what it is. The Other is what the self determines as the opposite to it and decides its difference from it in all life systems: habits, traditions, tastes, language, religion. [...] The Other always stays a subject of wonder and surprise.”<sup>133</sup> This double Other in terms of sex and culture created surprise and wonder in the Moroccan travelers’ minds who had conflicting views about them and their status in the French society. They also were a subject of knowledge through whom Moroccan travelers came to realize the deep differences between the Western world and the Islamic one. European women as a cultural Other were often seen through an eye of surprise at the status she was granted in society as well as the freedom she cherished. She was occupying roles that the Moroccan travelers never knew a woman could fulfill.

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<sup>132</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. *Oroba fi Miraat ar-Rihla*, p. 15. Translation is mine.

<sup>133</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, *Oropa fi Miraat ar-Rihla : surat al-Akhar fi Adab ar-Rihla al-Maghribiya al-Mou’asira*. pp. 11-12. Translation is mine.

While in Europe, Moroccan travelers retained and preserved their cultural identity through their language, for those who did not speak European languages, as well as their appearances and clothes. This preservation of identity often put them in the spot light for Europeans attention. They mentioned that they were the center of attention to the women, men and children in Europe who gathered around them to see them whenever they went out. The Europeans were amazed by the Moroccan visitors who looked a lot like the Orient which they read about in Orientalist writings. The travelers carried their identities with them in a literal way through their Moroccan traditional clothing. For example, al-Hajjoui mentioned: “woman came to us surprised by our clothes: are you Jews? And another one said: Do you play in the theater? meaning the entertainment houses, that some of the members in our delegation got bored of the dullness of the question and the excessive observation at us.”<sup>134</sup> Their cultural identity traveled with them reflecting their background that was not understood to the opposing identity that they encountered. The confusion that this “travelling identity” created made them get defined with associations that had nothing to do with their real identity that was thought of as in disguise.

European countries were “contact zones”<sup>135</sup> where the Moroccan traveler met his/her different Other. They interacted, quarreled, discussed, observed admired and criticized each other. The European theaters, the factories, the dinners, the palaces, the hospitals... represented a space of contact zones where different identities intermingled with each other resulting various perceptions and views where most of the time, these identities were in dialogue rather than in disputation or clash. This goes to show that when cultures -that are different mainly in religion- meet, clash is not the only outcome of the encounter but there could be exchange of various reactions that could vary from acceptance, understanding, tolerance, dialogue and at times just the

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<sup>134</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroupia 1919*. (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2003), p. 333. Translation is mine.

<sup>135</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 8.

opposite of all of that.<sup>136</sup> This variety in responses towards the Other is vital in building civilizational dialogue between the two. Matar reflected:

“Disputations forced many Muslims to learn about Christianity and to prepare to encounter the Other intellectually and theologically. Although such disputations were often intense and belligerent, Ibn Qasim’s attitude to the *nasara* changed when he met with Protestants in Holland, who were not too eager to dispute and, who, importantly, enjoyed a legacy that was innocent of anti-Muslim violence.”<sup>137</sup>

Travel writing is not a literal and objective record of journeys undertaken no matter how much their writers tried to achieve it. It carries preconceptions that, even if challenged, provide a reference point. It is influenced, if not determined, by its authors’ gender, class, age, nationality, cultural background and education.<sup>138</sup> In their direct contacts, identities undergo a constant process of shaping and reshaping in their interaction with each other, since identity is not a fixed entity but it goes through an endless process of becoming as a result of all the contacts that it had with the outer world.<sup>139</sup> The Moroccan identity often implicitly compared itself to the other’s identity in every encounter. With every conclusion, there was either a glorification of the self and a criticism of the Other, or a subtle criticism of the self and glorification of the Other’s achievement, mainly in infrastructure and technology.

To conclude, the travelers’ accounts are not innocent descriptions of Europe but they are a discourse that is affected by several factors among which their identity that plays a major role in constructing their perception of their cultural Other. The Cultural

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<sup>136</sup> Samuel P. Huntington. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 312.

<sup>137</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 85.

<sup>138</sup> Tim Youngs, “Introduction: Filling Blank Spaces,” in *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*, ed. Tim Youngs (London & New York: Anthem Press, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>139</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 225.

and religious baggage of the travelers is a load that weighs in their travel accounts and their discovery of the Other becomes a discovery of the self through the Other.

### **3. Gender Representation in Moroccan Travel Accounts: Mixed Spaces and Gender Relations under Scrutiny**

#### **a. Rethinking Gender and Space in al-Hajari's, al-Ghassani's al-Ghazzal's and al-Meknassi's Accounts**

Gender representation is not the dominant subject in Moroccan travel accounts. It was an unintentional act of writing as the travelers did not have a prior intention to observe and write about this topic as they were not even aware of what the concept of gender is but the cultural load manifested itself when writing about European women. In the field of Moroccan travel writing, gender representation is often overlooked and underestimated by scholars on Occidentalism who focused more on the broader issue of the representation of Europe as a whole. This focus on studying and examining the representation of Europe rather than the women specifically could be due to the scarcity of primary material that deal with the issue of women since most of the travelers focused on other aspects of Europe, such as the history, the culture in general, architecture, the industrial and technological developments... etc. However, even the small sections in which they wrote about the women are essential in examining the travelers' discourse in regard to gender issues and the cultural Other.

Both concepts, gender and representation, are problematic as representation is the process of the construction of meaning through language,<sup>140</sup> while gender is the social and cultural construct of what is male and what is female. Stuart Hall argues that there are two approaches that can be used while studying representation:

the *semiotic* approach is concerned with the *how* of representation, with how language produces meaning- what has been called its 'poetics'; whereas the *discursive* approach is more concerned with the *effects and consequences* of representation – its 'politics'. It

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<sup>140</sup> Stuart Hall, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE, 1997), p. 3.

examines not only how language and representation produce meaning but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces, connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied.<sup>141</sup>

These two approaches show how difficult it is to interpret representation on both the semiotic/poetic and the discursive/politic levels. Representation is never an innocent portrayal of reality because it is affected by several factors like race, gender, sex, work... all of these elements are interwoven to result in a representation that reflects its producer. The travelers provided cultural representations of the countries that they visited and they unconsciously delved into a “spontaneous ethnography”<sup>142</sup> of Europe. They were observers of those countries and provided their own representations of the encountered realities. In gender representation, there was a variety of discourses that differed from one country to the other from one traveler to the other.

Despite the fact that gender representation did not have ample space in Moroccan travel accounts but it revealed a lot about the travelers and their perceptions of women and gender relations. Their cultural and religious identity governed their representations of the world around them or what Bouchaib Saouri refers to as “the authority of culture”<sup>143</sup> that interferes even when the traveler tries to be objective in his descriptions. Some cultural and religious differences can provoke the writer and make him diverge from the pattern of writing to unfamiliar issues. Saouri goes on to say that: “a certain image might be normal; still it might surprise the traveler and bewilder him because it falls within what is unfamiliar to him.”<sup>144</sup> The presence of the women in public and in mixed gatherings was indeed a surprise to the Moroccan travelers. Their presence allowed for a gender representation to take place within the Occidentalist discourse and which was heterogeneous as each traveler perceived it through his own

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>142</sup> Bouchaib Saouri, *Surat al-Akhar fi Rahalat Arabia min al-Qarn al-Ashir al-Miladi ila al-Qarn al-Wahid wa al-Ishrin* (Beirut: An-Naya li Dirasat wa an-Nashr, 2014), p. 27. Translation is mine.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 17. Translation is mine.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 17. Translation is mine.

lens. While some of them mentioned women in a brief way, others gave more details about the way they appeared, lived, talked and behaved as well as their relations with men whether spouses or other. There is also a category of travel writers who deliberately did not include any discourse about the women like in the case of Abi al-Abbas ben Mohamed Al-Kerdoudi.

Travel and travel writing in the Muslim world had been a gendered activity over the past centuries. Thus, all of the known Moroccan travel accounts to Europe were written by men whose gender, cultural and religious identity played a central role in their encounters and representations of their double cultural Other. European women's presence in public spaces often created confusion to the Moroccan Muslim traveler who was accustomed to gender segregation and the division of spaces between men and women. Mohammed ben Qassim al-Hajari, Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi traveled to France, Holland, Spain, Malta and Sicily in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and they had different experiences in relation to the female presence whether in the streets, the dinners, the theaters... etc. Their accounts reveal certain dissimilarities that are affected by each traveler's background and cultural and religious identity.

Studying the notion of space is crucial while examining the travel accounts because the travelers are transported from their familiar space -that is their "comfort zone"- to a new unfamiliar space to which they had to adapt. The new space had different regulations that necessitated a certain compromise from the part of the travelers as they were trespassing into the Other's culture. Space is not just a physical space but also a cultural product through which people exert their cultural beliefs. The new environment in which the travelers found themselves exposed the different modes of gendering space in both the host and the guest cultures as space moved from being a physical environment to a cultural and social construct through which gender differences are exposed and exerted. According to Fatima Mernissi, the world of Islam is divided into two spaces based on gender: the public male space and the private

domestic female space.<sup>145</sup> There are boundaries that govern both spaces and that separate the world of men from the world of women. The travelers travelled with these perceptions of the division between the sexes but they were confronted with new cultures where this definition of space did not exist and where women were granted the freedom to move freely between those notions of space. Most of them were uncomfortable in the women's presence in what they considered a male space and they had to renegotiate and reconsider their own perceptions of cultural practices in regard to gender and gender differences.

As soon as they reached Europe, the Moroccan travelers became aware of the inevitable presence of the women in public and around them wherever they went. This presence represented a "difficult challenge"<sup>146</sup> to them as they were put in situations which they did not expect and their cultural division of the male public space as opposed to the female private space was shaken. The line between the two spaces was blurred in Europe as there was no such concept. The duality of the public space and the private space is a culturally loaded "social product"<sup>147</sup>. According to Henri Lefebvre, space is a product of social and cultural constructs which affects the way people perceive it and which could lead to different modes of control, domination, and power.<sup>148</sup> The notion of space changes from one culture to other and the poetics and politics of gendered spaces change as well according to the specificities in each culture; that is why, the travelers who were used to a certain understanding of the male and female space, were often surprised to find both sexes sharing the same space in Europe.

When they arrived at the ports of the European cities they visited, the travelers would often refer to the presence of the women either on the rooftops or in the windows looking at them or following them in the streets, with the exception of al-Hajari. He was born and lived in Spain before fleeing to Morocco which made his

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<sup>145</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1991), p. 100.

<sup>146</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes*, p. 106.

<sup>147</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nickolson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 26.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

journey back to Europe more interesting, especially in relation to the women as he was used to seeing them in public and was more informed about the cultural differences between Islamic countries and Europe.<sup>149</sup> In his account *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, al-Hajari did not mention European women's presence from the moment he reached the country as other travelers did. He only mentioned the presence of specific women with whom he interacted and discussed various topics over the dinners he was invited to. He did not consider women's presence outside of the house to be an unusual or unfamiliar custom as he was used to their presence while growing up; however, he was not intimidated or challenged by the women's actual presence in public and mixing with them as much as he was challenged by being left alone with one of them.

When al-Hajari and his retinue were in Olonne, France, he met a girl at his host's house who fell for him and offered to teach him French but as he said "Love grew between us and I was greatly afflicted by her love"<sup>150</sup>. During those private classes, al-Hajari fell in what he was afraid of, temptation. At the beginning of the account, he thought that he was immune to the European unveiled beauty that he kept preaching his companions but forgot himself and the difference that space could make in gender relations. In reality, he was only immune when he was in a group publically interacting with the European women but once they were a private setting, he was afraid of the whispers of the *shaytan*/satan.<sup>151</sup> As a religious Muslim man, he believed that a private gathering between a man and a woman would eventually lead to *fitna* / temptation and this fear was manifested in the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s saying: "When a man stays alone with a foreign woman to him, their third companion is Satan."<sup>152</sup> Al-Hajari was always afraid of those moments of isolation with the "infidel" woman in an isolated or private space. This is one of the images in his account of the

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<sup>149</sup> Gerard Weigers, "A Life between Europe and the Maghreb: The Writings and Travels of Ahmed b. Qasim ibn Ahmad ibn al-Faqih Qasim ibn al-Shaykh al-Hajari al-Andalusi (born c. 977/1569-70), " in *The Middle East and Europe: Encounters and Exchanges*, eds. G. J. H. van Gelder and Ed de Moor (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), p. 94.

<sup>150</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 69-70.

<sup>152</sup> Mohammed al-Said Zaghloul, ed, *Maousou'at Atraf al-Hadith an-Nabawi*. Vol 7. (Beirut: Dar al-Koutoub al-'Ilmiya, 1996), p. 369. Translation is mine.

seductive infidel woman who lures the religious Muslim through her revealed beauty and her eagerness to know about the mysterious Oriental visitor. He portrays her as a woman who does not have any notion of space and boundaries between men and women as she acts freely but this image only tries to consolidate the travelers' fear of trespassing the borders of the division between the sexes and falling prey to the European seduction.

Unlike al-Hajari, when Mohammed al-Ghassani reached the port in Cadiz, he noticed Spanish women among the welcoming groups of people who joined the governor of the city at their arrival.<sup>153</sup> For him, this was the beginning of his contact with the women who attended every welcoming ceremony of the ambassador in every city or village he visited and he kept mentioning that as he traveled. However, he did not make any further comment about the women's presence as he was more interested in the historical Islamic remnants in Spain than about the gender mixing. Despite his neutral position towards women's presence in public, he was fascinated that they were able to break work barriers and join men in the markets, hotels, restaurants and hospitals. Those work places were still considered by the Moroccan Muslim travelers to be male spaces but they witnessed the women who invaded them and worked hand in hand with the men in order to provide for their families, which was unprecedented for them.

Like al-Ghassani, Mohammed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal's first encounter with Spanish women was in Ceuta's port when they arrived in 1766 and he described what he saw: "The rooftops of the houses were full with women, men and children."<sup>154</sup> This image is reiterated in most of the Moroccan accounts as the travelers' initial encounter with the women in the cities they visited. While still in Ceuta, he continued to say: "Their women cling to the windows greeting passersby and their men are extremely nice to them. [...] They [the women] can go wherever they want without any objection."<sup>155</sup> Al-Ghazzal was not used to seeing women being in public and interacting with foreign men with the blessing of their husbands. He found it strange

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<sup>153</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 36.

<sup>154</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 47. Translation is mine.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52. Translation is mine.

that the women had an “extreme” freedom of movement that she would go wherever she wanted whenever she wanted without any objection or control. This freedom shook the Moroccan traveler’s perception and definition of gender, space and spatial divisions between the two sexes. They traveled with preconceived notions of certain cultural values and customs that they did not expect the Other’s difference which was an eye-opening experience towards various forms of difference between the self and the Other.

Al-Ghazzal was presented with a different concept of “space” not just as a physical entity, but also as an abstract construct. He was introduced to a space that could hold both sexes and where the cultural loads and divisions of the private and public spaces were blurred. On different occasions, al-Ghazzal mentioned that they were excused for the women to come in to see them and greet them which he welcomed in order to satisfy his hosts.<sup>156</sup> Then when he witnessed that men and women would often go out in walks along the rivers and the gardens, instead of criticizing this invasion of the public space, he explained the benefits of going out in relieving the soul.<sup>157</sup> He tried to diverge from the topic of gender separation which could be interpreted as a certain degree openness towards cultural difference that instead of attacking them for what is unacceptable in his country, he tried to reflect on the positive side of the mixed activities.

Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi’s advantage was that he went on two ambassadorial missions to Europe; first to Spain in 1779 and then to Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1799. However, he was no different than al-Ghassani and al-Ghazzal in witnessing the women’s presence from the moment he arrived to Ceuta. He stated: “Then we entered the city and we found its streets and roofs filled with women and men.”<sup>158</sup> This phrase was also reiterated whenever they arrived to a new city or village since it was his first experience in a foreign land that he gave particular attention to new unfamiliar practices. On his second journey, in Malta he mentioned that the

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>158</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 9. Translation is mine.

women “looked at us from their rooftops”<sup>159</sup> but he never mentioned their presence in every city like before as he became accustomed to their presence among the welcoming groups and did not think it was worth mentioning. Some of what was strange and unfamiliar to him in the first journey became normalized in the second as he became aware of the cultural differences between the European countries he visited and the Muslim world in terms of the significance of spaces in its relation to gender. The women’s presence became a normalized activity that they did not catch his attention as much as they did during his first journey. That is to say, the private/public spaces which for women in his own culture meant permitted/forbidden spaces<sup>160</sup> were different in the new visited cultures that their idea of space did not hold the same cultural and religious weight.

The travelers met the women in the streets, theaters, circus, convents, restaurants, hotels, hospitals, houses, factories... etc and these social spaces were contact zones<sup>161</sup> for those men with their female cultural Other. Their interactions with the women in mixed spaces varied from one traveler to other which also contributed to the variety of discourses they produced about the women. Their perceptions of space in relation to gender affected their discourses and representations of the women as they were unfamiliar subjects invading their own male space.

## **b. Perceptions of Gender in as-Saffar’s, al-Amraoui’s, Jaidi’s and al-Hajjoui’s travel accounts**

19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Moroccan travelers to Europe provided a variety of perceptions in relation to the issue of gender and gender roles which reflected more about them and their cultural and religious background than it did about their subject of observation. Their discourses were different from those produced in earlier

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<sup>159</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi. *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 159. Translation is mine.

<sup>160</sup> Tovi Fenster, “Space and Cultural Meaning,” in *A Companion to Gender Studies*, eds. Philomena Essad, David Theo Goldberg and Audrey Kobayashi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 468.

<sup>161</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.

centuries as we notice two main ways of representations. Some of them, like Mohammed as-Saffar and Driss Jaidi, were more open-minded towards the cultural differences they witnessed in regard to the women while others, like Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui and Mohammed ben al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, were completely taken aback by the women's status and the shift in the traditional notions of gender roles within the European society.

In their pursuit for what is "new" and "strange" in the host countries, the Moroccan travelers sometimes shed light on the issue of women and gender issues as part of the strangeness of Europe. The women represented a state of bewilderment and confusion to them because they did not expect their presence wherever they looked as well as the status that they were granted within society. At a time when women in Morocco were reserved into the confines of the house away from the male gaze, European women were out and about engaging and mixing with the men and moving freely wherever they wanted. This stark difference in the status of women between the two worlds, Morocco and Europe, struck the travelers. As Bernard Lewis said:

The Muslim visitors who have left records of their travels to Europe were, until the nineteenth century, without exception, males. Most of them, however, have something to say on the subject of women and their place in society. For seekers after strange and wonderful stories, there were few more fruitful topics. The Christian institution of monogamous marriage, the relative freedom of women from social restrictions, and the respect accorded to them by even exalted personages never failed to strike visitors from the lands of Islam with wonderment though rarely with admiration.<sup>162</sup>

During their journeys, the travelers could not overlook the position of European women and the striking social and cultural differences that they encountered. The women represented a new material of observation and reflection in a comparative way to the women in their home countries. No matter how small the passages about them

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<sup>162</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 284.

are, they still gave ample information about their status and the travelers' own perceptions of them. This variety of perceptions towards gender is what enriches their accounts as to each traveler his own discourse and views.

The travelers also reflected on gender roles and gender relations within the European societies and how they were shifting from their traditional meaning of dividing what is feminine from what is deemed masculine into a spectrum of new notions and ideas like women's freedom and emancipation. They observed gender relations from their own religious and cultural perspective and criticized the men as much as the women because they assumed that the men were enabling the women to become more powerful and authoritative in their relations. This encounter of discovery of the Other triggered them to expose and lay out their own views and judgments of the Other.

Mohammed as-Saffar was among the travelers who showed a certain unique openness towards the women he encountered as he admired their physical beauty as well as their professions outside the house. He visited France in 1845-1846 during which he witnessed the various manifestations of the French industrial revolution among which was the women's involvement in what was considered "manly jobs". as-Saffar noticed that women were introduced into the outside world professions and they started competing with men in what was perceived as their domains. In Paris he mentioned that most of the workers in the factories were women as they were "the mainstay of the crafts"<sup>163</sup> and that they were "tireless in their pursuit for wealth [...] the women like the men in this regard, or perhaps even more so."<sup>164</sup> He was a Moroccan Muslim jurist traveling to a completely different world where men's work is separated from a women's; while men were supposed to work outside of the house, the women were restricted to working inside. Whenever he mentioned French women's work, he could not help but compare them to men and he used the expression "just like the men"<sup>165</sup> which reveals that despite the fact that he appreciated their contribution

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<sup>163</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters*, p. 112.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

outside of the house, he was still governed by preconceived conceptions of what was feminine and what was masculine.

As-Saffar was also aware of the difference in gender roles within the confines of the French house where the women were granted a special position. The woman was regarded as the head of the house and the male guests were obliged to pay her their respects by talking to her, asking her about her family and thanking for the hospitality. As-Saffar was among the travelers who did not see anything wrong with this particular custom and tried to be as understanding as he could of any cultural difference without jumping into religious conclusions about the Christian Other. He wanted to assure his readers that this societal status of the women did not affect their modesty or chastity. He stated: “[...] for women talking to men is not considered shameful or harmful to one’s virtue. On the contrary, it is encouraged, as long as it is done with modesty and discretion, even if the woman is alone. Talking to women should be polite, gentle and subdued, with questions about her children their names, and so on.”<sup>166</sup> Gender relations were often criticized by several Moroccan travelers whose subjectivity interfered in their descriptions of Europe but as-Saffar’s discourse in this regard was more tolerant of the Other’s difference as they were entitled to their difference. He was more tolerant towards the Other’s difference and did not judge them as other travelers did. He was aware that women’s mixing and interaction with the men did not affect their chastity and modesty as it would have done if they were in Morocco. His emphasis was on the idea that different cultural contexts hold different perceptions about gender social interactions.

Another traveler who expressed openness and tolerance towards the different cultures he visited is Driss Jaidi who traveled to France, Belgium, England and Italy in 1876. Like as-Saffar, he witnessed women joining the work force along with men in the factories, the hotels, printing houses, prisons, theaters...etc which he described without any criticism or renunciation of women’s work outside the house. As he realized that European development was in need of both sexes coming together in all industries for the benefit of their nation. Ahmed Mekkaoui explained that the Moroccan ambassadors to Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided a “discourse of

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

amazement” about the European achievements in different fields which included both genders.<sup>167</sup> This amazement was apparent in Jaidi’s meticulous description of the organization of work between men and women inside the factories. He realized that the development was not based on what they achieved but was based social and organization changes that led to more effective productivity. Gender roles were changing in Europe in comparison to Morocco that the women were becoming more active outside their houses working in different jobs that were once regarded to be masculine. The travelers were not only witnessing an industrial revolution in Europe but also a gender change in the visited societies, especially in the dynamics of the house and work.

Despite the fact that there were some travelers who took gender issues lightly, there were others who could not refrain from expressing their own views and impressions in this regard which led to a complete renunciation and criticism of women’s status within the European society and the shift in gender roles between men and women inside and outside the house. The hardest critic of gender issues in Moroccan travel accounts was Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui whose cultural and religious identity interfered in the way he analyzed and observed the French society more than any other traveler. Ahmed Mekkaoui referred to al-Amraoui’s discourse of French women to be “a satisfaction for the self”<sup>168</sup> and that after all the industrial achievements he praised in France, he needed something to criticize in order to gratify his religious self that could not deal with the power of the Christians and was in a dire need for something that is falling apart to criticize them for. The religious ego of the traveler was not prepared to let go of the religious superiority which he believed he had and which was challenged by the Christian development and superiority in other fields.

Al-Amraoui harshly criticized French women for mixing with the other sex which he interpreted to be a sign of immorality and fornication and he also attacked French social customs which he considered to be granting women more authority over

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<sup>167</sup> Ahmed Mekkaoui, *Ar-Rahaloun al-Maghariba wa Oroba* (Rabat: Judur an- Nashr, 2007), p. 49-50.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 68. Translation is mine.

men. He mentioned that “women ruled over men”<sup>169</sup> and that “the Christians obeyed women and followed their wishes.”<sup>170</sup> These concepts were unfamiliar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan Muslim man who was the product of a patriarchal society that believed in the supreme power of men over women and that wives must obey their husbands not the opposite. His beliefs about gender roles within society were shaken by the new environment where women had a freedom and an authority that the Moroccan traveler could not approve of. He depicted the men to be enslaved by the women’s desires and wishes.

Al-Amraoui tried to project what he considered to be the negative side of the French rising power. When he finished talking about things that bewildered his mind like the weapons, the printing house, the telegraph and all the technological advancements, he turned to his readers to preach them about the drawbacks of such development. He said that “those were but ornaments and a faded illusion of life”<sup>171</sup> and that “Allah has saved us from their infidelity and fornication”<sup>172</sup>. In order to devalue the cultural Other’s achievement, al-Amraoui wanted to convince his Moroccan readers that they were better because of their religion which had a clear cut separation between the two sexes which according to him guaranteed the hereafter. Al-Amraoui blamed French men for their lack of jealousy about their women and for granting them too much freedom which, according to him, destructed their family values.

Mohammed ben al-Hassan al-Hajjoui who visited France and England in 1919 joined al-Amraoui in his criticism of the gender mixing. Despite the fact that al-Hajjoui was a reformist who used his travel account as a call for reform in his own country but when it came to the women he was more reserved. It seems that the women and their status were too much to handle for the travelers were open for new developments to take place in their country but did not approve of any cultural change, and especially in terms of gender relations. Al-Hajjoui also believed that the excessive

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<sup>169</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 93. Translation is mine.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 93. Translation is mine.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 92. Translation is mine.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 92. Translation is mine.

wealth which the Europeans achieved was the cause for their moral decadence which was manifested mainly in the position of women.<sup>173</sup> Women's freedom and emancipation was regarded as a step towards immorality which makes the travelers discourse of reform and modernity contradictory.

The status of women in the European society, excessive freedom and men's lack of jealousy over their women were among the things which the Moroccan travelers could not tolerate in the European societies they visited. They believed that while the Europeans reached the top of technological and industrial development, they also achieved their low point in values and morality which was manifested in gender relations.

#### **4. A General Review of Relevant Literature**

Moroccan travel writings about Europe are an old heritage of important texts on Euro-Moroccan relations at all levels. They are also a recent area of study and research that many Western and Eastern academics have tried to bring into the surface and give it the credit that it deserves in unveiling a whole new world of representations and discourses of Euro-Moroccan Christian-Muslim relations and encounters through the past centuries. Several authors wrote and tried to theorize on this topic of "Occidentalism" and Arab/Muslim travel accounts about Europe like Nabil Matar, Ahmed Idrissi Alami, Said ben Said al-Alaoui, Malika Najib, Abdennabi Dakir, Bernard Lewis, Khalid Ziyadeh, Ibrahim Abu Loghud and others. They all worked on various historical texts from different parts of the Arab/Muslim world from different centuries. They discussed several topics related to these texts but they rarely tackled the specific issue of the representation of European women in Arab or Moroccan travel writings; when they did, they would dedicated only a small sub-section of few pages to discuss this topic. There was only one Moroccan writer, Malika Najib, who wrote a book that dealt with the representation of European women in Moroccan travel accounts.

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<sup>173</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia 1919*, p. 74.

One of the major books that challenged the concept of Occidentalism and Muslim discourses about Europe is *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* is a book by Bernard Lewis that was published in 1982. In this book, Lewis discusses how Muslims had no interest in Europe and in knowing about the outside world and he gave reasons that consolidated his analysis. He claims that early Muslims geographers divided the world according to their belief that the world of Islam was superior to other nations of “unbelievers”.<sup>174</sup> He also claims that Muslims made no attempt to translate Western literature or to learn foreign languages because of the religious and cultural difference. He states: “While the Muslim world rejected the study of non-Muslim languages and showed no interest in any works that might be written in them, Muslims were, nevertheless, obliged to communicate with Westerners for a variety of noncultural purposes.”<sup>175</sup> As far as Moroccan travelers are concerned, Lewis mentions al-Ghassani whom he referred to as “a man of intelligence and discernment”<sup>176</sup> and his account as being “of quite extraordinary interest”<sup>177</sup>. He also mentions al-Ghazzal and al-Meknassi and praises Moroccan travelers for being interested in knowing about Europe that they travel accounts go beyond mere descriptions of the their diplomatic missions but they seek to learn about the history, the culture and the people of the countries they visited.

Middle Eastern writers and scholars wrote heavily on the topic of travel writing and Arab travelers to Europe but the common feature among some of them is their neglect of Moroccan travelers and travel accounts in their analyses. Algerian scholar Zahia Smail Salhi shares this observation and states:

In most studies conducted on the Middle East or the Arab world, be they in humanities or in social sciences, the Maghreb is often overlooked. In literary studies, for example, very few include one or two authors from the Maghreb, and even so they will be approached in a somehow

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<sup>174</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Arab Discovery of Europe*, p, 60.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 118.

cautionary manner, not totally engaging them in the general study of Arabic literature.<sup>178</sup>

In this respect, I will give the example of two writers: Khalid Ziyadeh and Ibrahim Abu Loghud. Khalid Ziyadeh wrote two books in Arabic about how Muslims view Europe over the past centuries. His first book is entitled *Tatawor an-Nadra al-Islamiya ila Oroba* (*The Development of the Islamic View of Europe*) and it was published in 1983. In this book, Ziyadeh tries to show the difference between how the West has seen the Islamic world and how the Islamic world has seen the West – mainly Europe. He focuses on the latter and tries to frame its development from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the preface of the book, Ziyadeh admits that Muslims' experiences in this regard had been numerous which makes it hard on any researcher to incorporate them all, which might be the reason why he did not give ample analysis of the Moroccan travelers he briefly mentions.<sup>179</sup> Ziyadeh looks at the development of the Islamic view of Europe mainly through Ottoman and Egyptian travel accounts about Europe. He wrote heavily about both and gave important information about the context in which they were written and how some of these travelers and their texts served as agents of change in their own communities. These texts helped not just in shaping Muslim travelers and historians thought about Europe but they also brought social, cultural, political and economic changes to the travelers' homelands.

According to Ziyadeh, earlier Muslim writings of the world were not as “authentic” as one might think which he claims that they were based on earlier Greek sources that helped them in their categorization of the world.<sup>180</sup> He discusses that the Euro-Islamic relations took a different direction starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> century due to the dominant power back then of the Ottoman Empire who had the power but little knowledge about their neighboring rising European powers, which encouraged the Ottoman travelers to discover those countries and provide as much information as

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<sup>178</sup> Zahia Smail Salhi, “The Maghreb and the Occident: towards the Construction of an Occidentalist Discourse”. p. 256.

<sup>179</sup> Khaled Ziyadah, *Tatawor an-Nadra al-Islamiya ila Oroba*, p. 67. Translation is mine.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p. 27. Translation is mine.

possible about them in all fields. Then, he moves on to speak about a similar evolution of the Egyptian thought about Europe and how they managed to discover Europe and maintain mutual relations starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While Ziyadeh speaks in detail about Ottoman and Egyptian travel figures, he briefly mentions the embassies of four Moroccan ambassadors: al-Ghassani's to Spain in 1690, al-Ghazzal's to Spain in 1766-1767, al-Maknassi's to Spain as well in 1779 and Abi al Jamal Taher al-Fassi's to England in 1860. He praises the Moroccan travelers for the amount of the precise and minute information that they were able to provide about Europe despite their strict views that were governed by their religious identity as Muslims which made them perceive everything around them through their Islamic lens.<sup>181</sup> Several, if not most, scholar make this point a reference in their examination of Muslim travel accounts about the West.

Khalid Ziyadeh wrote another book in Arabic entitled *Al-Muslimun wa al-Hadatha al-Orobiya*, which can be translated as *Muslims and European Modernity*, and it was published in 2010. In this book, Ziyadeh discusses the Muslim discovery of European modernity after centuries of “believing they were the center of the world and better than the rest.”<sup>182</sup> Though the title reads as “Muslims and European Modernity”, he focuses mainly on the Ottoman discovery of European modernity and development in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in order to refute the claim that Muslims came to know about European modernity only during the Napoleonic mission in Egypt in 1798.<sup>183</sup> In exactly just one paragraph, he mentions in a passing way the Moroccan embassies to Europe of al-Ghassani's to Spain in 1690 and Ibn Aicha's to France in 1699, then he moves to speak in detail about the Muslim Ottoman discovery of Europe. He gives an important and zealous analysis of Euro-Ottoman relations in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and how this contact shaped the Ottoman state and led to several changes and reforms on different levels. This book should have been entitled “Ottomans and European Modernity” because the word “Muslims” includes other nationalities and ethnicities

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 6. Translation is mine.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 6. Translation is mine.

that had as well an earlier contact with Europe like India, North Africa and other Middle Eastern countries.

Another writer who dealt with the issue of European modernity but in relation to Moroccan travelers in the 19<sup>th</sup> is Ahmed Idrissi Alami whose book is written in English and entitled *Mutual Othering: Islam, Modernity and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Encounters in Pre-Colonial Moroccan and European Travel Writing* which was published in 2013. In this book, Alami deals with the Moroccan travelers' perception of European modernity in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the writings of three Moroccan travel accounts: *Rihlat as-Saffar ila Faransa* translated by Susan Gilson Miller under the title *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France 1845-1846*, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz ila Mamlakat Bariz –The Marvel of the Beloved King to the Kingdom of Paris-* by Driss ben Driss al-amraoui in 1860 and *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya ila ad-Diyar al-Injliziya –The Golden Travel to England-* by Mohammed ben Taher el-Fassi in 1860 and three European travel accounts by European travelers about Morocco during the same period of time: *Sous la Tente: Souvenirs du Maroc, récits de guerre et de voyage* by Charles Yriarte in 1863, *Au Maroc* by Pierre Loti in 1889, and *Une Ambassade au Maroc* by Charles Charmes in 1889.

In this book and especially in the section devoted to Moroccan travelers, Alami discusses how these travelers played an important role in providing the Moroccan court and the general public with new and original information about European modernity. He also analyses how these travelers had different reactions and impressions towards French and British modernity and technological advancements in various fields which had an impact on the social and cultural values of European societies. He also discusses the different discourses of difference and how each one of these travelers tried to explain first their travel to “the land of the infidels”, and second, the development and advancement that were happening there. This discourse differed in perceptions, reactions, and impressions and in the intensity of the tone used by the writer towards a certain situation or phenomenon. While as-Safar was more laid back, tolerant and accepting of the differences he witnessed in France that he tried to speak in detail about some of them, related to any type of progress in the fields of

architecture, transport, the press, and agriculture, with the hope that this would be similar reforms and development in his homeland. Other writers condemned and criticized European modernity which they view as the work of “the dark evil mind”<sup>184</sup>, like al-Fassi did. However, al-Amraoui who was very fascinated with the European development in agriculture, architecture, the military and economy... he harshly criticized French cultural values. According to Alami:

[...] modernity is not just seen in analyses of geographic landscape, urban spatial organization, and the engineering of metropolitan terrain, but also in interpretation of ideological and cultural differences. Travel from royal cities and palaces of Morocco to the capitals of Europe foregrounds not only physical displacement but more importantly shifts in ideological perspectives. [...] Modernity is therefore inherently constituted through reflexes of cultural crisis. Interactions with alien cultural terrains accentuate and bring into focus a sense of anxiety as expressed through discursive strategies and rhetorical negotiations of cultural value and subjectivity.<sup>185</sup>

The Moroccan travelers were faced with various differences which they tried to capture in their accounts. They were introduced into a new world that amazed them with all the technological “marvels” around them. They were overwhelmed by all of that that they made sure to give precise details of everything that caught their attention but the real marvel in these accounts is how these travelers thought had been challenged with all the cultural and religious differences that they had to deal with in a diplomatic way even if it was completely contradictory with what they believed in. This diplomacy and poise of mind had enabled several of them to really grasp the differences that went way beyond all the physical and material advancements. We can

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<sup>184</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya 1860*, p. 28. Translation is mine.

<sup>185</sup> Ahmed Idrissi Alami, *Mutual Othering : Islam, Modernity and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Encounters in Pre-Colonial Moroccan and European Travel Writing* (Albany: State of New York University Press, 2013), p 6.

notice that some of them were challenged with the discipline that the Europeans and the work ethics they cherished in order to move forward in all field which encouraged some writers like as-Saffar and al-Hajjoui to implicitly call for a reform of that sort in their home country.

Alami also dedicated few pages to speak about the three travelers' representations of European women. Alami says: "Their different outlooks concerning otherness become prominently fore grounded in the discursive stratagem they use to examine the status of women in French society."<sup>186</sup> The travelers produced different discourses about European women and the divisions of gender roles within European societies which they noticed were extremely different from the situation in Morocco. The status of women was also a challenging matter for the travelers that generated heterogeneity in their reactions and perceptions. Some of them were able to acknowledge the normality of the difference and focus on the positive side of it which is granting women more freedom and authority within the households, while others couldn't fathom all these changes that they encounters which went in contradiction with their religious and cultural beliefs that is why it generated much criticism and contempt. According to Alami, Moroccan travelers were "ethnographers" who documented European lifestyles, customs and cultural differences including those related to the women.<sup>187</sup>

Another author who wrote about Muslim travel writings to Europe is Ibrahim Abu Lughod who wrote a book entitled *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A study in Cultural Encounters* which was published in 2011. Abu Lughod provides a thorough analysis of travel accounts in which he discussed the Arab Muslim awareness and discovery of the West. He believes that the travelers who wrote accounts about Europe during the French expedition in Egypt were some of the best writings that allowed the Arab world to truly know the West and Western civilization. He says: "Their accounts represent the highest degree of articulate awareness of the West that the Arab world

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 70-71.

had reached by that particular time, at least in written form.”<sup>188</sup> In his analysis, Abu Lughod focuses on Middle Eastern travelers and in a way ignored North African travelers and their important contribution in this literary genre and in the amount of information that were able to bring to the Arab world about Western civilization.

One of the authors who gave a huge credit to Moroccan travel writings and wrote different extensive books on Moroccan embassies to Europe, Euro-Moroccan diplomatic relations, and who also brought to the light some interesting Moroccan archives in this respect is Nabil Matar. He wrote numerous books and articles about the topic always bringing new perspectives and new stories from history in an attempt to re-write history. Two of his major works among which I will be relying on in my research are *In Lands of the Christians* and *Europe through Arab Eyes*. The first book was published in 2003 in which Matar gives the first English translations on some of the most important Arab travel writings, three of which were Moroccan: selections from *Kitab Nasir al-Din ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin* by Ahmed Bin Qasim al-Hajari 1611-1683, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* by Mohammed Bin Abd al-Wahab al-Ghassani 1690-1691 and *Letters* by Abdallah Bin Aisha 1699-1700. This book is a huge reference for researchers in the English department who are working in the field of traveler literature, foreign diplomacy or Euro-Moroccan relations. The second book was published in 2009 and it is an informative book about numerous instances of contact between the Islam world and the Western one. This book is a comprehensive reference and documentation of cultural encounters from 1578 to 1727. In this book, Matar discusses why Muslims didn't travel as often to the West while they traveled relentlessly to the East and gives several convincing and well-documented reasons. He also gives an intensive analysis of different historical texts that documents this contact with the West. In addition to that, he dedicates a chapter to talk about European women and Moroccan ambassadors and discusses why this particular encounter represented a huge challenge to those Moroccan travelers and how each one of them dealt and reacted under such a pressure.

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<sup>188</sup> Abu-Lughod, Ibrahim, *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe: A Study in Cultural Encounters* (London: Saqi Books, 2011), p. 35.

In *Europe through Arab Eyes* which was published in 2009, Matar refutes and criticizes the argument of other academics, mainly Bernard Lewis', regarding the lack of interest of Muslims towards Christendom. He delves into historical archive to trace and document the history of Muslim-European relations from 1578-1727 through the representation of Europe in *Maghribi*, *Mashriqi* and Ottoman accounts either through travel or captivity. He also addresses the issue of the reasons behind the scarcity of Arab writings about the West and what prevented Arabs from travelling to Christian lands. He states:

The reason Europeans did not want Muslims to visit their lands, and when and if Muslims did, did not facilitate their return, was their fear that Muslims would learn – and write- about the host countries. Evidently Europeans noted the 'curiosity' of visitors and travelers – and were uncomfortable about the extent of information that Muslims could gather. [...] Muslims wrote little about Europe not because they were not curious but because Europeans prevented them from visiting and subsequently describing their lands. Europeans too would have written little about Dar al-Islam had Muslims applied the same restrictions and xenophobic prohibitions.”<sup>189</sup>

Despite the systematic prevention of ordinary Muslims from traveling freely throughout Europe, there was a minority of ambassadors, their delegation members and merchants who were granted access and who left written reports of their journeys. The scarcity of the reports is justifiable, according to Matar, and not just a result of a lack of interest as Bernard Lewis claimed. In this book, he criticized the works which other academics conducted about the “Muslim interest of the West” and how they have rarely or never included Morocco and Moroccan archival contributions in this field. He mainly criticizes Bernard Lewis' *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, Ibrahim Abu Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, Stuart B. Schwartz's *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting, and Reflecting on the Encounters between Europeans and*

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<sup>189</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes*, pp. 11-12.

*Other Peoples in the Early Modern Era*, Anthony Bagden's *Facing Each Other: The World's Perception of Europe and Europe's Perception of the World*. These works were among others which systematically excludes or briefly mentions Moroccan travel accounts as among the pioneers of Muslim encounters, representations and discourses of the West.

In *Europe through Arab Eyes*, Matar dedicates a small section which he entitles "Ambassadors and European women" in which he discusses the difference between the Orientalist discourse about Muslim women and the Moroccan discourse about European women. He stresses that while the Orientalist one was based on fantasization and sexualization of the native women, the Moroccan travelers considered the European women a challenge which disturbed their visits by their presence. He references Edward Said when he said: "Islamic travelers to the West [did not] usually speak of lascivious [Christian] women."<sup>190</sup> He argues that among the reasons why this representation of the women was far from sexualization is due to the religiosity of the travelers who traveled carrying with them strong notions of what is *Haraam* (religiously forbidden) which affected the way they dealt with, perceived and represented the women.

In 2015, Matar published a new book which was a translation of Ibn Othman al-Maknassi's journeys which is entitled *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Muhammed ibn Uthman al-Miknassi*. In this book, Matar translated sections from three travel accounts by al-Meknassi: *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir* and *Ihras al-Ma'la wa ar-Raqib fi Hajj Bayt Allah al-Haram wa Ziyarat al-Quds ash-Sharif wa al-Khalil wa at-Tabarak bi al-Habib*. The first journey was to Spain, the second to Malta, Naples and Sicily and the last was to Turkey, al-Hijaz<sup>191</sup>, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia, and Algeria. Matar is one of the academics who gave ample analysis and research in this field and translated several sections of different Moroccan journeys to Europe, especially during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition to the

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<sup>190</sup> Edward Said, "Scholars, Media and the Middle East," in *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward Said*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 294.

<sup>191</sup> Saudi Arabia.

previously mentioned books, Matar wrote several other books and articles that dealt with Muslim-Christian encounters either in Europe or in the Muslim world.

Despite the fact that Nabil Matar's contribution to the field of Moroccan travel literature cannot be denied but this contribution is often limited to the period from 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century which leaves out other travelers of later centuries whose writings of the West are as important to be researched, studied and analyzed as any travel from previous centuries. He wrote one article entitled "Arabic Travel Writing, to 1916" in which he reflects on the term "*rihla*" and its importance in the Arabic literary life. He states: "Arabic travel writing reflects the happy combination of piety and curiosity that marked the civilization of Islam. Large numbers of Arabs wrote what we would now dub as travelogues, some of which are masterpieces of Arabic literature; others are encyclopedic works about the medieval world."<sup>192</sup> He also divides Arabic travel writing into two major periods, following the way Said ben Said al-Alaoui's division: the period of self-assurance from the beginning till 1798 and the period of defeat, discovery and awakening from 1798 till 1916. Matar discusses Arabic travel accounts that were written about journeys inside and outside the Islamic world and which can be considered as a brief chronological stratification of these travels as various as they are throughout history.

Nizar F. Hermes wrote a book entitled *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture, Ninth-Twelfth Century AD* in which he studies different travel accounts from different eras and from/to different countries. He gave a comprehensive study of the "Occidentalism/Islamist" discourse and tries to trace it back in early history. He gives a well researched data and thorough analysis of historical texts in which the East met West with during the medieval period. The texts he examines varied between geographical texts, travel accounts and poetry. The part which discusses medieval Arabic poems about encounters with the cultural Other could be considered an innovative research in the world of academia, especially in English. His book can also be considered as a historical encyclopedic chronicle of Muslim travelers to Europe as well a valuable addition to the other studies in this field.

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<sup>192</sup> Nabil Matar, "Arabic Travel Writing, to 1916," in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 148.

The main question which he tries to answer in his book is: “Can the Oriental gaze?”<sup>193</sup> He translates mostly early poems written by Arabs about their travels and encounters with Westerners, both men and women. These poems that date back as far as the Vikings are testaments that Arab had contact with other nations and they were interested in knowing them and writing about them. The historical texts he provides also refute Bernard Lewis assumptions about Muslims’ lack of curiosity towards other peoples, cultures and religions especially in earlier centuries mainly the medieval period. In an article entitled “The Orient’s Medieval ‘Orientalism’: The *Rihla* of Sulayman al-Tajir”, Hermes states:

Medieval Muslims were not interested solely in the Far East; through a number of textual and physical journeys, many medieval Muslim writers, geo-cosmographers, travelers, envoys, and captives from the *Mashriq* and the *Maghrib*, with their curious pens and inquiring eyes, ventured into different parts of medieval Europe as well and left us with extraordinary accounts of what they saw and experienced.<sup>194</sup>

His argument consolidates Matar’s since he investigates historical texts that date back centuries ago, before the texts studied by Matar. Both works complement each other since they cover different period in the Christian Muslim encounters and Muslim productions of discourses about the West. Ibn Battuta’s travel account which documents his journey from Morocco to other African countries to Asia and far Asia from 1325 to 1354 is one of the most famous and acknowledged travel accounts that it seems like he was the most curious Muslim about foreign lands and peoples,<sup>195</sup> yet the archival documents discussed by academics like Nabil Matar, Nizar F Hermes and

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<sup>193</sup> Nizar F. Hermes, *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture*, p. 1.

<sup>194</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, “The Orient’s Medieval ‘Orientalism’: The *Rihla* of Sulayman al-Tajir,” in *Orientalism Revisited: Art, Land and Voyage*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 219.

<sup>195</sup> Samuel Lee, trans, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta in the near East, Asia and Africa, 1325-1354* (New York: Dover Publications, INC, 2004), p. 2-3.

others open a whole new area of research regarding Muslims' curiosity, contact and written documents about the West.

In addition to these groundbreaking books in the world of "Occidentalism", Matar wrote several academic articles as contributions in other books, such as "The Question of Occidentalism in Early Modern Morocco" in *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern* in 2003, "Arab Views of Europe, 1578-1727: The Western Mediterranean" in *Re-Orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the West* in 2005, and "Europe through Eighteenth Century Moroccan Eyes" in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* in 2006 which complements his work on specifically Moroccan travel accounts about Europe. He combines between providing rare archival material and deep analysis of these encounters between West and East. In the first article, he tries to theorize on the concept of "Occidentalism" explaining the reasons why Moroccan travel writers did not "occidentalize" their Western Other in the same way that the European Travel writers Orientalized the Orient. In the other articles, Matar provides historical texts through which we explore Europe and European in the eyes of Moroccan travelers.

In his book *Rahala Maghariba fi Oroba bayn al-Qarnayn as-Sabi' A'ashar wa al-'Ishrin* (Moroccan Travelers in Europe between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century), Tayeb Biyad tries to chronicle and briefly discusses the different travel accounts written by Moroccan ambassadors or members of the ambassadorial delegations to Europe from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He gives a brief summary of the travel accounts, a brief biography of the authors, a brief historical context of the embassies, the main reasons behind them, in addition to small excerpts from the accounts with a brief analysis. According to Biyad, this chronicling of the travel accounts allows us to witness a shift in the Moroccan self-consciousness that moves from a state of power and self-confidence to a state of bewilderment and amazement at a Europe that was developing faster than anticipated which made them conscious of their position of weakness<sup>196</sup>. This book is a comprehensive reference that includes most of the published travel accounts but the only downfall is that it lacks thorough analysis.

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<sup>196</sup> Tayeb Biyad, *Maghariba fi Oroba bayn al-Qarnayn as-Sabi' A'ashar wa al-'Ishrin: Tamathoulat wa Mawaqif* (Kenitra: al-Matbaa as-Sari'a, 2016), pp, 202-203.

Henri Pérès provides a bibliographical study of travel accounts to Spain from 1610 to 1930 in a book entitled *L’Espagne Vue par les Voyageurs Musulmans de 1610 à 1930* (Spain as Seen by Muslim Travelers from 1610 to 1930) which was published in 1937. He deals with travel accounts written in Arabic by Moroccan, Egyptian and Ottoman travelers who range between ambassadors and regular people. The book provides historical facts rather than a thorough analysis of the travels. The Moroccan travelers he discussed are Mohammed al-Andalousi al-Ghassani, Ahmed ben Al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal, and Abi al-Abbas ben Mohammed al-Kerdoudi. He also mentioned Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi whose account he considered to be among the embassies “sans importance”<sup>197</sup> (without importance). According to Pérès, Moroccan ambassadors who left written accounts of their travels to Spain after al-Ghassani and al-Ghazzal follow the same pattern of their tradition of writing. He criticized them for failing to be innovative in their writing and relying on details already mentioned by those two travelers.<sup>198</sup> As far as the women are concerned, he reflected briefly only on al-Ghazzal’s representation of Spanish women and how astonished he was at the liberation which was granted to them which allowed them freedom of movement and freedom of mixing other men either in the presence of their husbands and parents or in their absence. This liberation bewildered al-Ghazzal who could not fathom it from the moment he set foot in Spain.

Malika Najib’s book is entitled *Al-Maraa fi ar-Rahalat as-Safaria al-Maghrebia khilal Al-Qarnayn 18 wa 19* (*The Woman in the Moroccan Ambassadorial Travel Accounts during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries*). It was published in 2014 in which Najib attempts to study Moroccan ambassadorial travel accounts written during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and how these travelers viewed and represented European women. She also discusses how these encounters reflected the interference of the travelers’ religiosity in their discourses of the women which resulted images of inferiority and subordination of the women. She argues that language is not innocent and that though the travelers promised to report only what they saw and heard, they

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<sup>197</sup> Henri Pérès, *L’Espagne Vue par des Voyageurs Musulmans, de 1690-1930* (Paris: Faculté des Lettres d’Alger, 1937), p. 195.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

could not help but project their own beliefs, judgments and attitudes towards the women in particular in their discursive productions.<sup>199</sup> She worked mainly on Al-Ghazzal's, al-Meknassi's, as-Saffar's, al-Amraoui's and al-Fassi's travel accounts. She dedicates more than half of the book to speak about *Rihla* in general and in relation to representation, discourse, and semiotics then moved to analyze some passages from the accounts. When she moved to talk about the representation of the European women in these accounts, she provides several quotes from the accounts which address the women but there was no thorough analysis to them which was a setback in the book as an academic work that was dedicated to gender representation in ambassadorial travel accounts.

In contemporary academia, several authors wrote about the topic of travel writings to the West and tried to analyze and discuss Muslim-Western encounters of over the past centuries. There were several attempts to theorize on and analyze the discourse of Occidentalism and bring into academia Muslims views and representations of Europe and the knowledge they were able to construct during their journeys, whose complex identities usually interfered in what they were writing, how they view the world around them and how their perceived what was regard as unfamiliar and unusual. Though several writers wrote about this topic, only a few of them give a space to speak about the representation of European women in those accounts. Moroccan travelers' accounts on Europe gave detailed descriptions of European institutions, cultures, and traditions; among which European women's encounters with these Moroccan travelers have raised perceptions of wonder and surprise due to their status and conduct in their societies. They reveal a knowledge that was produced by Moroccan travelers and they are not based on speculations and fantasies, but rather on direct observations and encounters with European subjects.

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<sup>199</sup> Malika Najib, *Al-Maraa fi ar-Rahalat as-Safaria al-Maghrebia khilal Al-Qarnayn 18 wa 19* (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2014), pp. 54-55.

## **PART TWO: EARLY ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN MIDDLE EASTERN AND NORTH AFRICAN TRAVELERS AND EUROPEAN WOMEN FROM THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC PERIOD TILL THE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY, A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **1. Middle Eastern Travelers to Europe and their Perceptions of European Women**

Western-Eastern relations and Christian-Muslim relations have often been a controversial topic within the academic sphere that has generated many debates and studies over the past years. In order to understand the complexities of such relations in recent times with all the rising topics, such as Islamophobia and religious and cultural discrimination, cultural awareness and tolerance...etc, and in order to understand the roots of these divisions and differences, we need to go back in history and see how these relations were formed over time and space. There are several Middle Eastern travelers who provided written accounts of their travels and they are of equal importance which makes it hard to be selective but there will be a special focus on the people who did indeed travel beyond the world of Islam.

Among the earliest Arab travelers to Europe that we can trace is Haroun Ibn Yahya, whom after his ransom from Byzantine pirates in Constantinople in 886, decided to go on a European journey of discovery<sup>1</sup>. He documented his journey but the manuscript was lost except for some excerpts that were included in a book entitled *Al-'laq al-Nafisa (Precious Relationships)* by Abu Ali Ibn Rusta. In those excerpts, Ibn Yahya gave a detailed description of Constantinople and then of Venice and Rome. He was mainly fascinated by the architecture of the palaces and the churches and how enormous they were as well as by their agricultural system. According to him, Rome was a city of knowledge and wisdom which prided itself to have more than 150 scientific institutions that were open to anyone who had the desire to study and learn.<sup>2</sup> After Italy, he traveled to France and England which allowed him to have contact with

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<sup>1</sup> Nizar E. Hermes, *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture*, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Abu Ali Ibn Rusta, *Kitab al-'Alaq al-Nafisa* (Leiden: Brill, 1893), p. 119-122

different people from different European regions.<sup>3</sup> However, in the retrieved excerpts, he did not provide any representation or discourse about the women he encountered. He spoke about the people in general and observed their way of life without focusing on the women or their presence. Ibn Yahya has been completely overshadowed and rarely acknowledged for his contribution to the field of Arabic travel literature and whose account can be considered as one of the earliest travel accounts about Europe. His descriptions of the different cities he visited are similar in style, structure and details to later travel accounts and they can be regarded as a genuine asset to understand the Arab travelers' view of medieval Europe.

Abu al-Hassan al-Masudi, born in 896 in Iraq, was one of the early travelers who traveled across the world for the sake of knowledge<sup>4</sup>. He was referred to as "Herodotus of the Arabs" and he travelled to Persia, India, China, Zanzibar, Madagascar, Mozambique, Sudan, Palestine, Mecca, Syria, the lands of the Slavs as well as several central and eastern European countries<sup>5</sup>. He included his travels and descriptions of the countries and peoples he visited in a book entitled *Muruj al-Dahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar (Middows of Gold and Metals of the Gems)* in which he also harshly criticized Arab geographers and historians who wrote about the world while they had never travelled to the places they described, and called them to travel, discover and observe with direct contact in order to provide accurate information and knowledge in their books about other nations instead of speculating and copying the writings of other geographers. This approach is a testament of the awareness that early travelers had about scientific, literary and academic honesty while writing about anything and anyone. He stressed the fact that science is above all a matter of morals and credibility in providing the right information through firsthand experiences.

Muslims' documentation of their encounters with European women dates as early as the Crusades time. Those encounters were either through direct contact in

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<sup>3</sup> Nasser Abderrahman al-Mouwafi, *Ar-Rihla fi al-Adab al-Arabi : Hatta Nihayat al-Qarn ar-Rabi' al-Hijri* (Cairo: Dar An-Nashr li al-Jami'at al-Misriya, 1995), p. 238.

<sup>4</sup> Zaki Mohamed Hassan, *Ar-rahala al-Mouslimoun fi al-'Ousour al-Wousta* (Cairo: Sharikat Nawabigh al-Fikr, 2008), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Nizar E. Hermes., *The [European] Other in Medieval Arabic Literature and Culture*, p. 18.

Muslim countries or through the travels that Muslims used to go on to discover neighboring or far away countries. One of the famous Muslim writers and travelers who lived during the Crusades time is Usama Ibn Munqidh who wrote a book called *Kitab al- I'tibar (The Book of Contemplation)* which was translated into several languages, among which is English<sup>6</sup>. Ibn Mounqidh was a Muslim Syrian warrior and writer. He was born in 1095 to a royal family in Syria.<sup>7</sup> In this book that was written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century as a gift to Salah ad-Din al-Ayoubi<sup>8</sup>, he described how Muslims and Christians lived in Levantine Syria during the Crusade campaigns. In one of the passages related to Frankish women, he referred to the lack of jealousy among the Franks over their own wives. He stated:

The Franks are without any vestige of a sense of honor and jealousy. If one of them goes along the street with his wife and meet friends, this man will take the woman's hand and head her aside to talk, while the husband stands by waiting until she has finished her conversation. If she takes too long about it he leaves her with the other man and goes on his way.<sup>9</sup>

After this statement, he gave an incident from a personal experience that would “solidify” his claim. He went on to mention that one of the Frankish man he knew found his wife with another man in the bed. His first reaction was to ask the man what he was doing there. The man replied that he was tired, searched for a bed and slept. The Frankish man warned him that if he did that again, he would take him to court.<sup>10</sup> Ibn Mounqidh was outraged at the man's cold reaction towards his wife's infidelity:

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<sup>6</sup> The book was later edited and translated into English by Paul M. Cobb in 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Usamah Ibn Munqidh, *An Arab-Syrian Gentleman and Warrior in the Period of the Crusades: Memoirs of Usamah Ibn Munqidh (Kitab al-I'tibar)*, trans. Philip Khuri Hitti (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Salah ad-Din al-Ayoubi ruled Syria from 1174 till 1193.

<sup>9</sup> Francesco Gabrielli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, trans. E.J. Costello (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

“And this was his only reaction, the height of his outburst of jealousy.”<sup>11</sup> The way Ibn Munqidh saw the Franks as lacking jealousy over their women is a very common stereotype among several Muslims about Western people in general. Muslims boast their Arabian chivalry and intense jealousy when it comes to their women. The freedom of movement that Western women enjoyed in their society had been severely criticized by Muslim writers who saw it as vulgarity and a shameful attribute. Ibn Munqidh’s writing was based on his mere observations, personal experience and direct contact with the Franks who lived in Syria back then. This image of the lack of jealousy of European men is also reiterated in Moroccan travel accounts.

He insisted that it was his personal experience whenever he was about to describe the Franks and their way of life. They were his friends, neighbors, and sometimes enemies. Speaking of enemies, he recounted a short story that happened to him while he was invited to a Frankish friend’s house for a meal. When he was going back to his house, he was caught by a Frankish woman who addressed him, as he said, with “her barbaric language with words I found incomprehensible.”<sup>12</sup> This Frankish woman was extremely hostile and violent towards Ibn Munqidh because of a misunderstanding that was solved once his Frankish friend interfered to explain the situation to her, and that she had only confused him with a soldier who killed her family.<sup>13</sup> We cannot pass unnoticed how Ibn Munqidh described the language spoken by the Franks as “barbaric” which was usually attributed to Arabs by Westerners, especially by Western travel writers. In his statement, we see a reverse in the way Arabs perceived Western language as “barbaric” and hard to grasp, which makes this specific discourse as some sort of an “Occidentalism in reverse” where the East used the same discourse of Otherness though the ideologies and intentions were different. Ibn Munqidh was aware of the differences that existed between the Franks who lived in the Middle East during the Crusade. He made that clear when he said: “There are some Franks who have settled in our land and taken to living like Muslims. These are better than those who just arrived from their homelands, but they are the exception and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

cannot be taken as typical.<sup>14</sup>” He is aware that the Franks are not all the same. He distinguishes between those who went to live with the Muslims and co-existed together despite their various differences, and those who came later as part of the Crusade campaigns in the Middle East.

Another contact between a Muslim traveler and Western women was between 1613 and 1618 when the Lebanese druze<sup>15</sup> prince, al-Amir Fakhr ad-Din al-Maani al-Thani fled his own country, Lebanon, and headed with his family to Italy for protection from the Turkish attacks on his territory in Mount Lebanon.<sup>16</sup> Fakhr ad-Din’s account of the journey was written by his court scribe, Ahmed al-Khalidi as-Safadi who documented their journey in the form of a memoir of al-Amir<sup>17</sup>. Several excerpts from his account were translated by Nabil Matar in his book *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*. In his account, he provided a rich amount of information about Europe, Italy in particular. He described the palaces, the theaters, the dance balls, the museums, the churches, the coin mint and its machines, factories, gardens, hospitals, monasteries, banks, taxes, printing houses, roads, agriculture,...etc. His first encounter with European women was in Florence during a dance ball where women danced with their men and the gender mixing was considered normal. He stated:

At night, they hold games and dances for men and women inside a large house. [...] Women and men dance together but with their equals, the wife of the duke with the duke, in accordance with the hierarchy of the families. Their custom is not to veil women from men, neither in dancing nor in alleys, so much so that when a man is absent, the woman stays in the store to attend the business.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> Druze is monotheistic religion which is based on the teachings of Islam and the Greek Philosophy with the belief in reincarnation.

<sup>16</sup> Wissam Wahab, ed. *Rihlat al-Amir Fakhr ad-Din ila Italya (1613-1618)* (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2007), p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe Through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

This separation between the two sexes had usually bewildered Muslim travelers who were used to the seclusion of women from men. They had not been used to mixed places and activities which made them open to a new mode of life that is different from their own. He was surprised to see women taking part in the dance ball and dancing with their male counterparts who were not their husbands, as he was surprised to see that it was not just restricted to the high class of the society in the dance ball but it stretched to the other categories of society.<sup>19</sup> He also brought to the surface another Western practice that was foreign to the Arab Muslim culture when he spoke about marriage in the European society. He was amazed to know that women had to pay a dowry to men and not vice versa, as it happened in the Arab world. This dowry varied according to the status and means of the bride-to-be.<sup>20</sup> They spent five years in Italy which gave them the privilege to discover more about the culture more than any other traveler.



1. A portrait of Lebanese Druze prince, al-Amir Fakhr al-Din al- Ma'ani al- Thani.

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<sup>19</sup> Wissam Wahab, ed. *Rihlat al-Amir Fakhr ad-Din ila Italya (1613-1618)*, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Another traveler who spent a few years in Europe is Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi and he is an Egyptian writer and intellectual who played a huge role in the intellectual and literary life in the Renaissance era in the Arab world, and in Egypt in particular. In 1826, al-Tahtawi was sent to France on a special expedition by Mohammed Ali Pasha<sup>21</sup> of Egypt to acquire the various sciences of the West. Both Mohammed Ali Basha and al-Tahtawi had a modernizing reformist vision to Egypt which this expedition sought to achieve. He stayed in Paris from 1826 till 1831.<sup>22</sup> He documented his journey in his book which has two titles *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* (*The Redemption of Pure Gold in Summarizing Paris*) and *Ad-Diwan an-Nafis fi Iwani Bariz* (*The Precious Divan in the city of Paris*) in which we find his detailed impressions on the French society that were based on direct observations and inquiries. According to Naïma Rachdi:

That encounter between the Egyptians and the French is one of the reasons behind why the books written by earlier Arab travel writers to the Occident transmitted a rather positive image about Europe. In addition to the discovery of a country, a technology and a modern culture, those men were able to encounter and exchange with Occidentals in their own land. Rifa'a al-Tahtawi describes Paris just as he perceived it and compares Occidental customs and traditions to those in Oriental countries.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Muhammed Ali Pasha ruled Egypt from 1805 to 1848 during which he was considered as the founder of Modern Egypt due to the changes he implemented in different fields among which sending groups of Egyptian students to Europe to learn different sciences and go back to Egypt to share what they had learnt and put it into practice. More information in *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, his Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* by Khaled Fahmy.

<sup>22</sup> Rifa' Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*, ed. Ali Ahmed Kanaan (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2002), p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Naïma Rachdi, *L'Art de le Nouvelle entre Occident et Orient : Guy de Maupassant et l'Egyptien Mahmûd Taymûr : Influence de la Littérature Française sur la Littérature Arabe Moderne* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2015), p. 16. Translation is mine.

Al-Tahtawi's stay in France lasted for five years which allowed him to observe the French culture and live with French people for a longer period than other travelers who visited France. This encounter between the Orient and the Occident in the Occident for that relatively long period paved the way for a better understanding of the country and its people. We also cannot deny that he was more open-minded about this experience taking into consideration that he was a jurist and the initial goal for him was to accompany the expedition as an imam but his teacher Hassan al-Attar<sup>24</sup>, who had a great influence on him, insisted on him to try to learn as much as possible from the European sciences and development without feeling any kind of inferiority towards his own culture and country.<sup>25</sup> Taking his teacher's advice, al-Tahtawi made connections with French Orientalists like Baron Silvester de Sacy who introduced him to a variety of Arabic books that were transferred to Paris during Napoleon's campaign in Egypt 1798-1801.<sup>26</sup>

Al-Tahtawi was highly impressed by the French development and progress that pushed France's standard of life forward. He was mainly impressed by women's status in the French society which was completely different from that of Arab women in the Arab world. He based his account on drawing comparisons between Paris and Cairo, those comparisons extended also to the status of women. According to him, French women were more liberated and enjoyed more freedom than their Arab counterparts. They had freedom of movement, expression, dress...etc. He wrote about various aspects of women's life in Paris. He described the way they dressed, the way they looked, how they were treated by their husbands and men in general, their cleanness and hygiene... He was confused and ambivalent in his descriptions. He sometimes saw them as lacking decency, while he would highly admire others and even prefer them, at some cases, over Arab women. According to him:

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<sup>24</sup> Hassan al-Attar (1766-1835) was one of al-Azhar's eminent scholars and a grand Imam of the institution from 1830-1835.

<sup>25</sup> Siham al-Farih, "Rafa'a al-Tahtawi..wa al-Akhar al-Hadari," in *Al-Bayan al-Kuwaitiya*. Issue 401. December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003. p. 51. Retrieved on August 18, 2014 from <http://archive.sakhrit.co/newPreview.aspx?PID=3181570&ISSUEID=19440&AID=438044>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

Among their bad attributes is the lack of chastity in many of their women, as I mentioned before, and the absence of jealousy among their men unlike in Islam where jealousy is compulsory in cases of the mixing between the two sexes, the bantering and indulgence. One the French people of insolence said: 'Do not judge a woman by her acceptance to sleep with you and do not take that as a lack of her chastity but as an indicator of her experience.' [...] adultery and fornication are considered among their defects and vices not among the biggest of sins."<sup>27</sup>

Al-Tahtawi's description stemmed from his own cultural and religious background as an *imam*. Arab women at that time were more conservative in their way of life which was completely different from the French one. Being present with men, having conversations with them, dancing with them, wearing revealing clothes...these were things which al-Tahtawi was not accustomed to see in his home country. Despite this hostile stereotypical description of French women, he was very astonished by them. He referred to women of intellect who were independent writers, translators and travelers. He said "In education, men and women are equal. Women have great compositions, some of them are translators of books from one language to another, with good euphemism and smooth eloquent writing [...] In this country, women are judged by their minds, genius, understanding and knowledge."<sup>28</sup> Muslim travelers had always been impressed by the beauty of Western women which is different from the Arab one but in the case of Al-Tahtawi, he was also far more impressed by their genius and intellect. He spent almost five years in France which allowed him to acquire enough knowledge of the people and their way of life. He gave minute descriptions that expressed various contradictory and confused feelings and impressions that ranged from admiration, acceptance of the cultural other, confusion and rejection towards some issues.

Al-Tahtawi's travel account is comprehensive of different aspects of the French society and culture which served as a reference to some Moroccan writers who were

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<sup>27</sup> Rifa' Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*, p. 97. Translation is mine.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 133. Translation is mine.

sent to France during the same period or later. Driss ben Driss al-Amraoui is one of the travelers who admitted that he had read Tahtawi's travel account before he embarked on his journey so that he could prepare himself and to know about that foreign country and its people.<sup>29</sup> As-Saffar did not directly state in his account that he read al-Tahtawi's account but scholar Susan Gilson Miller detected striking similarities between the two accounts which shows that he must have looked through al-Tahtawi's journey before writing his own which highly impacted the way he wrote it. Miller says:

One Oblique mention of the Egyptian writer [...] is all that is made, but a comparison between the two voyages shows that as-Saffar borrowed much from the Egyptian. Whether as-Saffar read Tahtawi's *Takhliṣ* while he was still in France, or found a copy of it in Morocco after his return, is impossible to tell. But at some point the book lay open before him and he took extensive notes. Similarities in style, format, details, even turns of phrase betray a borrowing that would be deemed plagiaristic by Western standards, but in the Islamic tradition merely indicates confidence in a reliable source.<sup>30</sup>

Gilson accuses as-Saffar of plagiarism and that his account was not completely based on his own notes and observations but rather on the information which al-Tahtawi provided about France. She claims that the similarities between the two are too obvious which tarnishes in a way as-Saffar's credibility. In his account, as-Saffar does indeed mention al-Tahtawi in a fleeting way to confirm information that he used about the measurements of Paris and how wide it is.<sup>31</sup> This accusation of plagiarism might be a bit extreme as almost most of the travel accounts since al-Hajari's have the same format, structure and style. As for the details, the travelers tried to portray a more or less, factual image of Europe, which must eventually hold some similarities at the end

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<sup>29</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters*, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

so it would be hard to tell and accuse who did what. Needless to say that most of the travelers did consult different books written by Arabs on geography and history before they embarked on their journeys, the same as Orientalist writers had also read books and publications about the Orient before they traveled and/or wrote about it.

Traveling to a foreign country can be a transformational journey to any traveler, especially when they spend a long period in the visiting country. Al-Tahtawi's stay in France influenced the way he perceived the world and changed his perception about several things among which is the status of women in the Egyptian society. Once he came back to his home country, he called for women's liberation and a reconsideration of their position within the Egyptian household which he thought subjugated, inferiorized and rendered the women into sex objects and means of reproduction.<sup>32</sup> He called for women's rights to education, work, and political participation all while adhering to the Islamic teachings.<sup>33</sup> Traveling to France opened his mind to practices in his own culture which used to seem normal to him but after his contact with the European other, he was able to criticize not just the other culture but also his own culture.

Ahmed Faris al-Shidyaq was a Lebanese linguist, translator, author and journalist who lived in several European countries like Malta, England, and France from 1834 to 1857 before he moved to Tunisia and converted from Christianity to Islam.<sup>34</sup> It is also worth noting that during the period he lived in England, he became naturalized as a British citizen.<sup>35</sup> He was considered one of the first pioneers of the Arab Renaissance and the writer of the first Arabic novel which he entitled *As-Saq 'ala as-Saq fi ma houwa al-Firyaq* (*Leg over Leg on what is al-Firyaq*) which he published in Paris in 1855.<sup>36</sup> This novel was written in a humorous way in which he tried to project his experiences in Europe on the main character al-Firyaq. He also wrote two books in which he documented his European travels. The first one is

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<sup>32</sup> Siham al-Farih, "Rafa'a al-Tahtawi..wa al-Akhar al-Hadari," p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> Radwa Achour, *Al-Hadatha al-Moumkina: al-Shidyaq wa as-Saq 'ala as-Saq.. al-Rowaya al-Oula fi al-Adab al-Arabi al-Hadith* (Cairo: Dar Shourouk, 2009), pp. 11-12.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed Faris al-Shidyaq, *Khashf al-Moukhabaa 'an Founoun Ourouba*, ed. Ismat Nassar (Alexandria: Maktabat al-Iskandariya, 2011), p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Radwa Achour, *Al-Hadatha al-Moumkina*, p. 17.

entitled *al-Wasita fi Akhbar Malta (An Intermediary in Malta's News)* and the second is *Khashf al-Moukhabaa 'an Founoun Ourouba (Uncovering the Hidden of the Arts in Europe)*. In these books, al-Shidyak was not overwhelmed by Europe as other travelers were. Whenever he came across the European development in any field, he could not help but feel agony and pain over what lacked in the Arab world. He combined both books in one book and in its introduction, he stated: "Allah knows that as much as I have seen of the wonders of those lands and the desires that I realized, I had always been living in distress and grief like someone who had lost his purpose and was afflicted by a hardship [...] for I kept thinking about the lack in our lands of what they have of modernity, mastery and proficiency."<sup>37</sup> He went on to explain his distress over the Arab countries who could not keep up with the growing industries and development of Europe and drew comparisons between the countries he visited and the Arab world and these comparisons are the basis of both his accounts. He provided detailed descriptions of the people, their customs, traditions, history, agriculture, animals, infrastructure, the wonders and marvels of each country, their industries, atmosphere, religion, manners, military, crimes, laws, security, sciences, ...etc. His accounts give a comprehensive view towards 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and what makes them more valuable is the fact that he lived several years in each country and worked and dealt with their people on personal and professional levels.<sup>38</sup>

As far as the European women are concerned, al-Shidyak dedicated several chapters to speak about the status of women in Europe and to discuss several issues related to them like women's freedom, education and marriage and also to compare between women in those countries. He praised British women for their simplicity and high morals while he criticized French women for being more extravagant, arrogant and more interested in material things.<sup>39</sup> He compared them in terms of lifestyles, beauty, and manners and it was apparent that he favored British women, especially women from rural areas. Meeting unveiled women represented a challenge to him as

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<sup>37</sup> Ahmed Faris al-Shidyak, *al-Wasita fi Akhbar Malta wa Khashf al-Moukhabaa 'an Founoun Ourouba* (Constantinople: Matba'at al-Jawa'ib, 1850), p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Radwa Achour, *Al-Hadatha al-Moumkina*, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Ahmed Faris al-Shidyak, *al-Wasita fi Akhbar Malta wa Khashf al-Moukhabaa 'an Founoun Ourouba*, pp. 105-106.

well but since he lived in Europe, he learnt how to accept the host culture with all its differences as it also made him appreciate several things about his own country among which the modesty and “chastity” of the Arab women.



2. Ahmed Faris al-Shidyaq

Souleyman ben Siyyam was an Algerian notable who was sent to France in 1852 along with other Algerian notables by Marshal Jacques Louis Randon<sup>40</sup> to attend a military festival.<sup>41</sup> Their journey lasted 35 days which ben Siyyam documented in a written report entitled *Kitab Rihlat as-Sayed Souleyman ben Siyyam ila Bilad Faransa* (*Book of the Travel of Mr Souleyman ben Siyyam to the Country of France*). He was fascinated by the French wonders and marvels as he was impressed by the safety and freedom of movement which women enjoyed in France. He stated: “Some friends told me that if women traveled by land or by sea from the East of the country to the West,

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<sup>40</sup> Marshal Jacques Louis Randon was a marshal in the French army, minister of war and a governor-general of Algeria from 1851-1858.

<sup>41</sup> Ali Tablit, ed, *Khams Rahalat Jazairia ila Bariz* (Algiers : Jami’at al-Jazair, 2012), p. 15.

no one would object or rob them even if they had bags full of gold and rubies. No one would think of stripping people of their belongings on the road.”<sup>42</sup> He praised this freedom of movement which showed a certain degree of safety and security for people, women in particular. We should also keep in mind that Ben Siyyam was pro-colonialism and he wrote his travel account in order to convince the Algerian people of the benefits of colonialism. He wanted to convey a message that France would bring safety, security, development and modernity to Algeria. He praised Louis Napoléon Bonaparte whom he referred to as “our great master”<sup>43</sup> and “the great sultan”<sup>44</sup> and glorified French officials for their developmental and organizational efforts in turning France into one of the leading powers in the world. He met French women in different settings – in theater, palaces, streets...- and was impressed by their involvement in the modern world.

One of the notables who accompanied Ben Siyyam in his journey to France is Mohammed As-Said Ben Ali Sharif who was head of Shalata Zawya in Zwawa City in Algeria.<sup>45</sup> He was also among the notables who considered French colonialism to be a “blessing” for Algeria that would bring about changes, reforms and modernity and he was given a medal by Napoléon Bonaparte for his efforts and collaboration with French officials.<sup>46</sup> He also documented his journey to France which is included in a book entitled *Khams Rahalat Jazairia ila Baris (Five Algerian Travels to Paris)* by Ali Tablit. Like Ben Siyyam, he praised Bonaparte and his officials for their efforts and explained that their success in reaching modernity is due to their justice and care for their people. However, while Ben Siyyam was fascinated by the women and did not criticize them, Ben Ali Sharif harshly criticized the women despite his glorification of France and its officials. He said:

Their women are the masters of their men and they are like slaves under their command. They cannot oppose them whether they are beautiful or

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 23. Translation is mine.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 24. Translation is mine.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 24. Translation is mine.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 38.

not. I think the French do not know the science of women, Allah knows best. They do what the women want and they are under their control despite the fact that they are lacking in mind and religion. Anyway, if Muslims were to see this, they would be surprised and astonished. Women are a temptation that plays with the mind of people.<sup>47</sup>

The women have often been a point of reflection for the travelers because it touches on a sensitive issue to the Muslim thought in earlier centuries. Ben Ali Sharif is no different in this regard. He criticized the women for being controlling, liberated, and ready to mix with other men and engage in mixed social gatherings. He also criticized the men for enabling the women to exercise such power on them and for being submissive to their orders. Despite this harsh criticism, he admired their beauty which reflects his ambivalent discourse of the women.

One of the youngest Arab travelers to Europe who left a written account of his journey is Salim Bustrus, a 16 year old Lebanese young man of Syrian descent who traveled to several European countries in 1855 about which he wrote an account called *An-Nuzha ash-Shahiya fi ar-Rihla as-Salimiya (The Pleasant Excursion in Salimiya Journey)*. Salim was a young merchant from a wealthy family who took off on a journey that started from Beirut on March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1855 and ended on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1855 which included Palestine, Egypt, Malta, Italy, France, England, France, Belgium, Prussia, Germany, Czech, Austria, Greece, Turkey, Syria and then back to Lebanon.<sup>48</sup> He traveled for tourism, pleasure, knowledge, experience in trade and to discover the European countries' sophistication and modernity. Bustrus gave detailed descriptions of all the places he visited in a good Arabic language and an eloquent style for his young age. He described the churches, the palaces, the theaters, the factories, the libraries, the museums, the hotels, the telegraph, the galleries, the means of transportation, the roads, the gardens, the windmill, ...He was amazed and bewildered by the "marvels" he witnessed. When he reached Lyon, he said:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 55. Translation is mine.

<sup>48</sup> Salim Bustrus, *An-Nozha ash-Shahiya fi Rihla as-Salimia 1855*, ed. Qassim Wahab. (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2003), pp. 13-14. Translation is mine.

We stayed there [Lyon] for three days in a house where we have found stability and comfort. And from here we started watching those marvelous things we always heard about with our ears and then they were all before our eyes to see and I wished I had numerous eyes so that I can see them as they deserve and fill my eyes in with their sights and my heart with joy and my mind with astonishment.<sup>49</sup>

Bustrus was astonished by the European civilization and development in several fields that he seized the opportunity to know as much as possible and see as much as he could of the marvelous Europe. He was amazed and impressed by European modernity that later on after his visit, he established a trade business in Liverpool in 1866 which he later moved to London<sup>50</sup>. In his encounter with European women, Bistrus was mainly fascinated by women actresses at the theaters and how well they performed their parts to the point where the audience would sympathize with them. He dedicated lengthy paragraphs to describe one of the plays he attended in Paris and to praise the actors and actresses for their performance.<sup>51</sup> As for the general women, he did not stop during his whole account to criticize or attack them. He seemed to be open-minded towards the cultural differences between the position of Arab women and European women.

Khayr al-Din Pasha al-Tounsi was a brigadier general for the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul before he was appointed as Minister of Marine in Tunis.<sup>52</sup> He was sent to France in a political exile in the 1860's during which he had the chance to discover Europe and its developments.<sup>53</sup> He wrote a book entitled *Aqwam al-Masalik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamalik* (*The Surest Path to Knowledge Concerning the*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 73. Translation is mine.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 94-98.

<sup>52</sup> Gerald Zarr, "On the Surest Path," in *Saudi Aramco World*. Retrieved on September 2, 2018 from <http://archive.aramcoworld.com/issue/201103/on.the.surest.path.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> L. Carl Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 93.

*Conditions of Countries*)<sup>54</sup> which was published in Arabic in 1867 and translated to French a year later<sup>55</sup> in which he provided a written call for reform that is based on learning from the achievements of the West. He was fascinated by Europe and its modernity and believed that Muslim countries could also achieve the same level of modernity because it had nothing to do with religion but everything to do with being open to the world. He became a militant for change in his country and used his position to for this purpose in order to modernize Tunisia.

Among the Tunisian travelers who traveled to Europe and came back with a changed mentality towards modernity and development is Mohammed Bairam al-Khamis who was a Tunisian historian, traveler, and was appointed by Minister Khayr Din Tounsi as the director of the official printing house of the country which issued *Ar-Raid at-Tounsi* Newspaper in 1875.<sup>56</sup> Bairam started frequent travels to Europe for therapeutic reasons. First, he went to Italy and France in 1876, and then he went back to France in 1878 and later to France, Italy and England in 1879.<sup>57</sup> Like Khayr Din, he was fascinated by European modernity and development and was adamant in his insistence to adopt European political, social and economic organization in Muslim countries.

Bairam published several articles and books among which is *Safwat al-I'tibar bi Moustawda' al-Amsar wa al-Aqtar* (*The Finest Consideration of Countries and Regions*) which was published in five volumes. He documented his journeys and his observations and impressions of Europe. He encountered women in different European countries and expressed his views about their liberation which he found, like other travelers, excessive and destructive. About the women in Italy, he stated:

Shyness is not part of their custom like for us. You would see a girl talking and joking with her husband or fiancé in front of her parents. She

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<sup>54</sup> There is an English translation by L. Carl Brown.

<sup>55</sup> Zeyneb çlik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam in Nineteenth Century World's Fairs* (California: University of California Press, 1992), p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> Mohammed Bairam al-Khamis, *Safwat al-I'tibar bi Moustawda' al-Amsar wa al-Aqtar*. Vol I, ed. Ali ben Taher Chanoufi (Tunis: Charikat Ourbis li Tiba'a, 1999), p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

would also dance with other men in front of them. That is what girls do, how about boys? Singing for them is not shameful for women. You would see one of their notables having a public party in which one of his daughters or wife or one of the female guests would sing in front of the public and dance with numerous men who would hug and put their arms around their waists which they do not mind but a Muslim could not but break of what he sees.<sup>58</sup>

He provides various sections in which he deals with the issue of European women and their status in the European society. Those sections show a certain similarity between his discourse and other Muslim travelers' discourses who praised Europe for the development in all fields except when it came to the women. The women often represented a red light for them as they could not understand the level of liberation and freedom they were granted which contradicted women's situation in the Muslim world. He was unable to detach himself from his religious and cultural background which interfered in the way he perceived the women. He harshly criticized the European countries he visited for their tolerance of prostitution and having children out of wedlock.<sup>59</sup> In this particular section about female prostitutes in France, we can notice a similarity with al-Amraoui's criticism of prostitution and how the state enabled women to make it a profession.<sup>60</sup>

European women were usually mentioned in Muslims accounts of the West with different attitudes. Their writings of European women differed from the Orientalist discourse of Arab women. They described European women the way they were seen and perceived according to their religious and cultural background and not based on fantasy sexualization.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., Vol III, p. 46. Translation is mine.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>60</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, pp. 93-94.

## 2. Andalusian and Moroccan travel writers' encounters with European women 1189-1920: a brief history

Andalusia was once a land that encompassed different people from different religions, cultures and backgrounds. Muslims, Christians and Jews lived together through good and bad, sometimes with a great deal of tolerance but at others with a great hostility and rejection of one another. This history of both clash and contact and the fact that what separates Europe from Morocco is a straight is what encouraged people to travel more and thus write about their journeys.

One of Andalusia's most famous travelers is Ibn Jubayr who was a Muslim traveler, geographer and writer. He was born in Valencia, Spain in 1145.<sup>61</sup> He traveled to several countries and places on his way to Mecca for pilgrimage which he documented in a book known as *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr* (The Travel of Ibn Jubayr). His journey was from 1189 till 1191 during which he visited Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Sicily...etc. This journey coincided with the Crusades campaigns in Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> Ibn Jubayr wrote about his encounter with European women when he was in Sicily on his way back to Andalusia. He differentiated the women of Sicily by their religion calling them *Nasraniyat* which is the feminine word of "Christians". Usually, once religion is involved in any travel account written by a Muslim traveler, we might assume that the differences will immerge more than the commonalities, which was not the case with Ibn Jubayr's account. He talked about them briefly but with detailed descriptions. He stated:

In this city [Sicily], the *Nasraniyat* are like Muslim women. They are eloquent, covered and veiled. They went out during the previously

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<sup>61</sup> F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the holy places* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 91.

<sup>62</sup> Abu al-Hassan Ibn Jubayr, *Rihlat Ibn Jubayr fi Misr, Bilad al-Arab, al-Iraq, ash-Sham and Siqiliya 'Asr al-Houroub as-Salibiya*, ed. Hussein Nassar (Cairo: Dar Misr li Tiba'a, 1992), p. 12. Translation is mine.

mentioned festival and they were wearing golden silky clothes with elegant covers and colorful veils and golden slippers. They appeared at their churches with all of Muslim women's adornments and perfume."<sup>63</sup>

This comparison that involved similarities between the two has slightly erased any cultural difference, except for the religious one which was apparent in the way those women were referred to. Ibn Jubayr was more concerned about what brought the two cultures together than what separated them. He was surprised to know that women were the ones who had to pay a dowry for men to get married according to their status in the society, and that Christians were forbidden by their religion to marry with their family.<sup>64</sup> In the Muslim world, Men are usually the ones who pay the dowry and take responsibility of all the necessary elements for their wedding. Muslims also did, and still do, marry their cousins and other family members if they want to. To find completely the opposite somewhere else, this could be a total cultural shock that needed time to be fathomed. That is what Ibn Jubayr did; he inquired about it and tried to understand how it worked without judgments or prejudices.

Abu Hamed Mohammed al-Gharnati was an Andalusian traveler from Granada who traveled across different countries searching for religious knowledge from learnt people; a journey of knowledge which lasted almost fifty four years of his life.<sup>65</sup> He traveled to Egypt, Sardinia, Sicily, Sudan, Iraq, Iran, across the Volga River, Uzbekistan, Bulgaria, and Hungary, Syria, and *Khurasan*, what is now known as Afghanistan and its regions.<sup>66</sup> His journey is documented in his travel account *Tuhfat al-Albab Wa Nukhbat al-A'ijab wa Rihla ila Oroba wa Asia (A Masterpiece of the Minds and the Distinct of Admiration and a Journey to Europe and Asia)* which he divided into four sections in which he talked about: people, the wonders of other

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 425. Translation is mine.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 432. Translation is mine.

<sup>65</sup> Abu Hamed Mohammad al-Gharnati, *Rihlat al-Gharnati: Tuhfat al-Albab Wa Nukhbat al-A'ajab wa Rihla ila Oroba wa Asia*, ed. Qassim Wahab (Beirut: al-Muassasa al-'Arabiya li ad-Dirasat wa an-Nashr, 2003), p. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

countries and their buildings, seas and wonders of their creatures, and tombs and cemeteries. In his account, al-Gharnati did not follow a chronological order in writing his journey which makes it somehow confusing since he kept going back and forth from talking about one country to talking about another. Concerning women, he did not mention foreign women specifically or made any differentiation between them and Muslim women. He seemed to limit his travel account to what is strange and weird about any place he visited than about the people. He is worth mentioning because this absence of descriptions of women from other cultures and nations is important because we can notice that for him the woman was not the “strange” and “bizarre” and he did not attempt to make it so. He was far more interested in other things.

Al-Hassan al-Wazzan al-Fassi al-Gharnati, also known as Leo Africanus, was born in Andalusia-Spain and raised in Fez, Morocco where he studied and later became a diplomat and traveler. He was captured by Italian pirates on his way back from pilgrimage in Mecca in 1518 and spent nine years in captivity.<sup>67</sup> Al-Wazzan’s journey and story are different from any other traveler to Europe. He was brought to Pope Leo X and baptized after 15 months from his arrival and given the name Geovanni Leone Africano.<sup>68</sup> He wrote several books, some of which were known while others were lost.<sup>69</sup> Among his surviving publications and one of the most famous of them is his three volume book entitled *The History and Description of Africa* in which he documented his observations and impressions about the countries he visited in Africa. His book was written in Italian under the title *La Descrittione dell’Africa* and published in 1550 by Giovanni Battista Ramusio<sup>70</sup>, and later translated into

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<sup>67</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: Sixteenth Century Muslim between Worlds* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> Leo Africanus, *The History and Description of Africa: and of the Notable Things therein Contained*. Ed. Robert Brown (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. li-liv.

<sup>70</sup> Oumelbanine Zhiri, "Voyages d’Orient et d’Occident : Jean Léon l’Africain et Ahmad al-Hajarî dans la littérature de voyage," *Arborescences : revue d’études françaises*, n° 2, 2012. p. 2. Retrieved on October 7, 2016 from <https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/arbo/2012-n2-arbo0110/1009272ar/>

English by John Bory in 1600.<sup>71</sup> According to Natalie Zemon Davis, al Wazzan was: “man with a double vision, sustaining two cultural worlds, sometimes imagining two audiences, and using techniques taken from the Arabic and Islamic repertoire while folding in European elements in his own fashion”<sup>72</sup> Indeed, Al-Wazzan’s experience is unique because he was able to live in the land of the “infidel” for years and even converted to Christianity which is questionable whether it was through conviction or it was just a coping mechanism with his captors after the horrors he must have heard about from his family about the torture of Muslims in Spain. What makes al-Wazzani’s case unique is the fact that he spent nine years in captivity during which he was able to form a certain bond with his captors though he was not under a typical horrific captivity. There was no indication of any documented contact with European women.

Moroccan travelers to Europe met women in different countries, different situations and with different attitudes. Some of them were confused how to deal with them, some fell in love with them, some thought they were the source of all evil, others tried to be as neutral as they can in their descriptions. Only some of them were able to leave behind written accounts of their journeys that documented their impressions and interactions. One of the early ambassadors to meet European women is Ahmed Ibn Qassim al-Hajari. He was among the Moriscos who were expelled from Spain to Morocco during the reign of Philip III. He was sent on a special expedition by Muley Zidane to France and Holland in 1610<sup>73</sup>. His attitudes varied between the two countries. While he was in France, he was more hostile and defensive because of the traumatic history of the Moriscos in the area. When he visited Holland, his attitude changed and he became more tolerant of the cultural Other and the difference that existed between them. He was more open to reasonable debate and dialogue. In his account *Nasser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, we find Ibn Qassim’s closest encounter with European women, especially that he fell in love with a Christian

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. i.

<sup>72</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels*, p. 12-13.

<sup>73</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin*, p. 6. Translation is mine.

European woman in France. This same man who was filled with anger and hostility towards European Christians was captured by European beauty that impressed him the most. He also engaged in conversations and discussions with them before that in France that were mostly about religious matters.

Mohammed ben Haddou A'tar al-Asafi was sent to England by Mulay Ismail in 1681-1682 to meet King Charles II.<sup>74</sup> Ben Haddou is one the most famous Moroccan travelers in the British archive as he was knowledgeable, eloquent and knew different languages like French and English, because his mother was European, which gave him an advantage among the English people.<sup>75</sup> All these reasons made him admired by the British and he aroused curiosity and interest in them to see him and know him. The embassy was sent in order to strengthen Anglo-Moroccan relations in foreign affairs and trade as well in their fight against piracy. Ben Haddou did not leave a written account of his journey but we know about it from a *Diary* by John Evelyn who was an English writer and a royalist. He followed closely all the events which Ben Haddou attended and reported them in detail in his diary which was published in 1818. We also know about Ben Haddou's visit in a book entitled *A'dim Mansiy min Hadirat Asfi: Mohamed ben Haddou al A'ttar* by the Moroccan historian Ibrahim Kridia who collected several English and Moroccan sources which spoke about Ben Haddou and his visit to England. His visit to England played an important role for England to open up to the Muslim world. Matthew Birchwood states:

In 1682, the celebrated visit of the Moroccan ambassador, Kaid Mohammed ben Hadu, marks the early stages of English interest in North Africa. The foreign visitor seems to have made a deep impression upon London society and reports of his stay are extremely suggestive of the nature of representations of Islam in the last years of Caroline

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<sup>74</sup> Ibrahim Kridia, *A'dim Mansiy min Hadirat Asfi: Mohammed ben Haddou A'ttar al-Asafi, Safir Sulat, Mawla Ismail Ila al-Malik Charles II* ( Marrakesh: Matba'at Walili li teba'a wa Nashr, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

monarchy. [...] and the ambassador's visit was a valuable opportunity to assert the nation's interests in the region.<sup>76</sup>

Though Ben Haddou was not the first ambassador to England but his visit was successful on many levels that it was widely reported in the English newspapers. His eloquence and mastery of the language made it easy for him to be accepted and celebrated within the British society.



### 3. Mohammed ben Haddou A'ttar painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller and Jan Wyck

Ben Haddou was later painted by the court painters Sir Godfrey Kneller and Jan Wyck, and was made Honorary fellow of the Royal Society and was taken to visit and give lectures at Oxford and Cambridge Universities. From the painting, we can notice

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<sup>76</sup> Matthew Birchwood, *Staging Islam in England Drama and Culture, 1640-1685*, eds. David Colclough, et al. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), p. 45.

that Ben Haddou had a charismatic personality and dressed in Moorish clothes which made the English people admire him. He was also well-mannered and was able to have direct conversations without need for a translator which made him more approachable and more accepted by the people.<sup>77</sup> Ben Haddou was able to give the West a completely different image of how they perceived a Moroccan or a Muslim in general. They had negative stereotypes and misconceptions which Ben Haddou managed to break. His European mother played an important role in shaping his personality which allowed him to integrate easily within the English society during his visit. About Ben Haddou's delegation and their encounter with English women, John Evelyn said:

at the Dot: of Portsmouth glorious Appartment at W.hall, where was a greate banquet of Sweetemeates, & Musique &c but at which both the ambassador & Retinue behaved themselves with extraordinary Moderation & modestie, though placed about a long Table a Lady between two Moores: viz: a Moore then a Woman, then a Moore and more of these were the king's natural children...they drunk a little Milk & Water, but not a drop of Wine, [...] did not look about nor stare on the Ladys, or express the least of surprise, but with a Courtly negligence in pace, Countenance, & whole behavior, answering onely to such questions as were asked, with a greate deale of Wit and Gallentrie.<sup>78</sup>

Ben Haddou and his retinue are portrayed as civil and modest in the company of women. They were unbothered by their presence and were able to contain themselves and not show any surprise or interest in them which Evelyn found surprising. It seems that he was expecting them to admire the women and indulge in discussions and be surprised by their liberation but to his surprise, they did not. They presented an image that disturbed the Orientalist stereotypical ideas which the West had about Arabs and Muslims in general.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibrahim Kridia, *A'dim Mansiy min Hadirat Asfi*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>78</sup> John Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. E.S de Beer. Vols 6 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 269.

Fifteen years later, in 1690, Muley Ismail sent another delegation to Spain for two reasons: to demand a Moroccan library<sup>79</sup> back that was captured by Spanish pirates, and to free Moroccan prisoners who were held captives during the wars between Morocco and Spain.<sup>80</sup> In his account *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* (*The Journey of the Minister in Ransoming the Captive*) and as most of the Moroccan travelers, al-Ghassani was fascinated by the unveiled European beauty which captured his attention the moment he landed in Spain. This fascination did not distract him from appreciating the life that the nuns led in the Spanish monasteries. He was impressed by their reserve and conservatism in the middle of the freedom which the other women enjoyed. He gave minute details about how women got involved as nuns as well as the needed requirements.

In 1699 Muley Ismail sent ambassador Abdallah ben Aisha to France to negotiate a treaty between the two countries. Ben Aisha was an exceptional representative of Morocco because he spoke Spanish and English fluently and mastered the art of conversation.<sup>81</sup> What is interesting about his story is that years earlier he was caught by the English and spent several years in slavery until he was freed and returned to his country.<sup>82</sup> He did not leave behind any written account about his journey but we know about it from his exchange of letters with his French hosts and from the newspapers which were eager to cover every detail about his stay in France. Slavery can be a horrific experience for most slaves and it could build up feelings of resentment and enmity in the slave's psyche; however, in Ben Aisha's case, he enjoyed his journey to the "land of the Christians" and was open to engage in civil conversations with them, form new contacts and friendships and also to engage with them in their cultural life and activities. Nabil Matar translated his letters into English and included them in his book *In the Land of the Christians*. He said:

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<sup>79</sup> Muley Zidane's Library was captured by Spanish piracy and was preserved in the Biblioteca Real of the palace of El Escorial outside Madrid.

<sup>80</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 12. Translation is mine.

<sup>81</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

On the road, which took him through Rennes, Nantes, Angers, Tours and the Loire, he was welcomed by official parties that included women who flocked to engage him in conversation-something at which he was a master. [...] Such social excitement did he create that whenever he dressed up in here Moroccan clothes and went for a stroll, Parisians flocked to look at him. For his protection, soldiers were stationed around his residence. Despite his openness to the *nasara* (Christians), Aisha remained obedient to his Islamic codes, and from the start ensured that the meat he and his delegation were eating was *halal*.<sup>83</sup>

Ben Aisha realized that he was a traveling cultural icon of the East which would trigger French people and their curiosity and interest about him. He played on Orientalist tropes to drive attention to him which he seemed to enjoy. Though he was open to the Christian environment he visited, he made sure to remain faithful to the Islamic teachings in his daily life in France. Ben Aisha formed special friendships with his host Jean Jourdain, his wife Marie-Nicole Guillebon and his friend Madame Charlotte Le Camus Melson with whom he kept writing letters even after his return to Morocco.<sup>84</sup> The letters he sent to the ladies were full of expressions of *mahabba*<sup>85</sup> (affection) which he used as a way to maintain his friendship with them and thus his political interests in the Franco-Moroccan relations. Ben Aisha was a smart ambassador who knew how to maneuver his ways around his French connections.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 197-198.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>85</sup> “*Mahabba*” is a word which Ben Aisha kept reiterating in every letter he sent to his French hosts and friends to describe his love for them.



#### 4. Abdallah ben Aisha in Paris in 1699

In 1766, Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah sent a delegation to Spain to investigate the living standards of the Muslims captured by Spanish pirates and also to meet and discuss these matters with King Carlos III.<sup>86</sup> Al-Ghazzal was in charge of the documentation of the journey, writing down his observations and views of the intriguing neighboring country, Spain. He entitled his travel account *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* (*The Result of the Endeavor in Peacefulness and Struggle*). The observations included the status of women in the Spanish society. He was impressed by the extent of freedom Spanish women enjoyed, as wives, mothers and daughters. They were open to the world, speaking to strangers and walking outside without any constraint. As much as he was fascinated by European women, those women were fascinated by them as Muslim visitors who arouse in them much

<sup>86</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 9. Translation is mine.

curiosity and interest, which sometimes made them flock to the places where they were to see them and how they looked like.

As previously mentioned in the first part, Mohammed ben Othman al-Meknassi was sent to Spain in 1779 and to Malta and Napoli in 1781-82 about which he wrote two accounts: *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir (The Elixir in Ransoming the Captive)* and *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir (The Unveiled Moon guiding the Traveler in Ransoming the Captives from the Hands of the Infidel Enemy)*. In *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir (The Elixir in Ransoming the Captive)*, al-Meknassi gave a detailed historical background of the Spanish monarchy and how they ascended to the throne with a specific attention to their rules and regulations. He was also still saddened by the history of the Muslims who were expelled from Andalusia which was reflected in his writing as well.<sup>87</sup> He was impressed by the cheerfulness and warm welcome by which the inhabitants of each Spanish city received them. At first he was taken aback by the way European women mixed with them in their revealing clothes but later he grew accustomed to this cultural difference that he rarely mentioned it again. He was also impressed by the system of the nuns and the secluded life they led in the monasteries. We can notice that al-Meknassi appropriated some linguistic terms from Spanish and which had no equivalent in Arabic like *bashador/ambassador* and *damat/ladies*. Though language was a barrier between the guests and the hosts, he tried to involve his readers within this Spanish experience by inserting those terms as they are.

*Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir (The Unveiled Moon guiding the Traveler in Ransoming the Captives from the Hands of the Infidel Enemy)* is another travel account by al-Meknassi in which the reader travels with him to Malta and Napoli on a mission to ransom Muslim captives and negotiate peace treaties. Since it is his second journey to Europe, we might assume that he is now well equipped in terms of knowledge about the other that he would be less surprised by certain practices; however, al-Meknassi was apprehended by the mixing of the sexes and both men and women were eager for dancing and partying

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<sup>87</sup> Abdelmajid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, p. 10.

“without any shyness or shame or jealousy.”<sup>88</sup> Despite this criticism, he almost fell in love with a singer who fascinated him by her beauty and voice. He also dedicated a chapter to talk about the nuns and their asceticism. In this account, he provides more information than in the first one about the history of the region, the Christian celebrations, their system of inheritance, orphanages, monasteries, churches, cemeteries, hotels...etc.

The defeat of the Moroccan army by the French at the battle of Isly in 1844 made Muley Abderrahman curious about the technological development that France had achieved which helped in the defeat.<sup>89</sup> He sent a delegation which included Mohammed as-Safar who was in charge of documenting the journey. As-Safar provided detailed observations and descriptions of France inserted in the book *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846* edited and translated to English by Susan Gilson Miller. His encounters with European women varied from royal gatherings, dance balls, theaters, French streets... etc. He was fascinated by their Western beauty, their elegance and manners. He praised the way they dressed and gave detailed descriptions of that. As-Saffar can be considered among the few Moroccan travelers who admired European women more than he criticized them. He was more outspoken about their beauty and their bodies that he sometimes sexualized them and fantasized about them. At moments when other travelers would feel shy and lower their gazes, he would gaze and observe and recite flirtatious poetic verses flattering their external beauty and praising specific physical attributes. It seemed as if he could not control and contain himself in the presence of the women which contradicted his position as a religious man who was supposed to be more reserved.

In 1860, another defeat hit the Moroccan army against Spain in Tetouan which required Morocco to send another ambassador to the West to investigate the reasons

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<sup>88</sup> Mohamed ben Othmane al Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 182.

<sup>89</sup> Khalid Ben Srhir, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886*, p. 247.

that made the West powerful and hard to defeat.<sup>90</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui was sent to France in 1860 on a journey of exploration and discovery of the powerful West which he documented in his book *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz (The Masterpiece of the Beloved King in the Kingdom of Paris)*. Al-Amraoui's description of French women was out of his religious and cultural background. Unlike many Moroccan travelers, al-Amraoui was not fascinated or amazed by French women appearances or life style. He was convinced that women were given too much freedom which spoiled their manners and turned them into "prostitutes". He defined them and described them according to his own society and its religion and norms. He wrote lengthy paragraphs which documented his impressions and judgments about the status of women in the French society. He criticized women for being "loose" and free and men and for lacking jealousy which, according to al-Amraoui, only made France go down in immorality.

At the same time of al-Amraoui's journey, Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben abdellah sent Abi al Jamal Mohammed Taher al Fassi in an embassy to England to queen Victoria. His account is *al-Rihla al-Ibriziya ila diyar al-Injliziya (The Golden Journey to the English Lands)*. The story of this embassy is completely different from Ben Haddou's. While Ben Haddou went to England when Morocco was powerful and the English needed its help, al Fassi went to England at a time when Morocco was weak and England was developing fast in all fields. Al Fassi was sent after Morocco's loss at the battle of Isly in 1844 and in the battle of Tetouan in 1860. This loss was a shock to Morocco and it showed them their weakness while Europe showed how powerful they became. The sultan decided to send his delegation in order to know what made Europe powerful.

Al Fassi wrote about how modern and developed England was. He was amazed by everything that he saw because he had never seen anything like that. He described the barometer, the zoo, steam power, ships, railways, a weapon factory, a weapon museum, a plants exhibition, a bank, a glass factory, a post office, bridges, ports... He was fascinated by them all and by how organized and developed they were. He also

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<sup>90</sup> Abd Al Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, p. 32. Translation is mine.

spoke about the English army, their organization and their developed weapons. He understood why Morocco lost the two battles which opened his eyes to the weakness of Morocco in comparison to the rapidly developed Europe. He was frustrated to see this because he thought that as Muslims they were better than the Christian West so he could not understand why they developed while they weakened. This narrative gives details about England to the Moroccan sultan and officials in order to show them that Morocco is not in the same level as England and that they need to make some reforms to catch up. Since the Sultan is the one who asked for it to be written then this shows his willingness to make changes in his country.

In 1874, Driss Jaidi led an ambassadorial delegation to France, Belgium, England and Italy to know where those countries stood in front of the Spanish provocations and intrusions in the Moroccan political affairs.<sup>91</sup> He wrote his observations and views of his journey in a book entitled *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaeb al-Akhbar*, in which he described European women as a working force that helped in the development of the European nations. They were involved in the process of progress as working women in factories, post offices, printing offices, prisons... He visited different European countries which gave him an advantage for an overview of European women and their positions in their countries.

In addition to ambassadors, there were educational expeditions that were sent to England in the era of the Sultan Muley Al-Hassan. Zoubeir Skirej is one of the students who had the chance to go and study various sciences for three years in England from 1877 till 1879<sup>92</sup>. In the account, which he wrote about his stay in England, we see a great objectivity in his writing. He described the military machines and the various sciences that they studied. He talked about the land and educational institutions without mentioning any intimacy with the English people or describing them in any way. There were other two Moroccan students in that expedition: Mohammed al-Gabbas and Idriss ben Abd al-Wahad al-Fassi<sup>93</sup>. When we read his

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 34. Translation is mine.

<sup>92</sup> Abd Al-Ghani Skirej, "The Diary of Al Zoubeir Skirej (1850-1932)," *Majallat dar An-niyaba*. No. 8, Autumn 1985, pp. 28-29.

<sup>93</sup> Khaled ben Srhir, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay*, p. 260.

diary, we don't feel that he had been in England for three years because of the short and concise reference on his stay there. He only mentions what was very essential in his stay there which was studies and learning the sciences that could benefit his country when he came back to Morocco, in order to help in the development of the country without the need for foreigners.

Sultan Hassan I sent another embassy to Spain in 1885 headed by ambassador al-Hajj Abdessadeq ben Ahmed al-Rifi and chose Abi al-Abbas Ahmed ben Mouhammed al-Kerdoudi as his scribe during this journey.<sup>94</sup> Al-Kerdoudi documented their journey in a travel account entitled *At-Tuhfa as-Sunnia lil Hadra al-Hasania bi al-Mamlaka al-Isbanolia / The Sunni Masterpiece of the Honorable Hassani in the Spanish Kingdom*. This embassy was sent to King Alphonso XII but he died on the same day of the arrival of the Moroccan embassy and they were later received by his widowed wife, the queen Donna Maria Cristina.<sup>95</sup> The reason behind this embassy was not revealed as it must have been regarded as one of the secrets of the country but he said he wrote "what I saw or heard"<sup>96</sup>. Following the footsteps of previous travel writers, he started his account from when they left the country from Tangier till they came back. He provided detailed descriptions of every place they visited. He explained that after the death of the king, his wife will take guardianship of the reign until her son becomes of a certain age which he appreciated as things went smoothly with no riots or objections from the people.<sup>97</sup> The only women al-Kerdoudi mentioned in his account are the queen and the notables' wives who received them along with the other officials and diplomats. His description of the women was minimal that he did not go beyond their official titles and how happy they were in welcoming the Moroccan delegation in Spain. He was more interested in describing the architecture, the factories, the roads...etc.

In 1902, the Moroccan Sultan Muley Abd al Aziz selected an ambassadorial envoy to go to attend the crowning ceremonies of the King Edward VII of England.

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<sup>94</sup> Abi al-Abbas Ahmed ben Mohamed al-Kerdoudi, *At-Tuhfa as-Sunnia lil Hadra al-Hasania bi al-Mamlaka al-Isbanolia* (Rabat: al-Matba'a al-Malakia, 1963), p. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 23. Translation is mine.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-44.

The chosen ambassador was Abd Rahman As-sadiq and among the envoy was Al Hassan ben Mohammed Al-Ghassal who was responsible for the documentation of the ambassadorial journey<sup>98</sup>. In his account *Taqayid Ar-rihla At-tatwijiya li A'asimat Bilad al-Injliziya (Documentation of the Crowning Journey to the English land)*, we find how amazed Al-Ghassal was at England that was growing and developing at a very fast rate. During their journey, they visited many places like the canon factory, the king's palace, the ports, the stores, the theatres...Al-Ghassal gave minute descriptions and details of everything that he saw and we can also notice that he did not make any judgments but instead, he asked questions, inquired and wrote based on the answers that he got from the English people themselves. He also provided a description of the political system of the country and how it functioned.

In 1919, Sultan Youssef ben al-Hassan sent a Moroccan delegation headed by minister Hajj Mohammed al-Maqari to France for the celebration of its national day.<sup>99</sup> Mohammad Ibn al-Hassan al-Hajjoui was a writer in the delegation and he wrote a book about their journey entitled *al-Rihla al Ouroubia 1919 (The European Journey 1919)*, in which his perceptions of Western women were hostile and degrading. He saw European women through the lenses of his own culture as “ill-mannered”, “corrupt” and “shameless” leading a life of extravagance and unnecessary splendor. Though he was a reformist, his views and impressions were different than those who were amazed by women's liberation and women's rights. His travel account is like a combination between al-Amraoui's views about women and Jaidi's comparisons between people in Britain and France. However, he was amazed by the industrial development in both countries and he tried to document as much information as possible in the hope that there might reforms in Morocco that would elevate it to Europe's modernity. He referred to London and Paris as “the sources of wisdom in Europe”<sup>100</sup>. On the one hand, al-Hajjoui admired and was fascinated by the power of science and education in Europe but on the other hand, he was disappointed by the

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<sup>98</sup> Abd Al Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, p. 66.

<sup>99</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroubia 1919*, p. 16. Translation is mine.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 135. Translation is mine.

liberated status of women which allowed them a certain amount of freedom which he saw as excessive and destructive.

Another encounter between European women and Moroccan travelers was in 1922 when the delegation of Mohammed ben Abd es-Salam as-Sayeh was sent to France to identify the *Kiblah*<sup>101</sup> in a mosque in Paris.<sup>102</sup> He wrote his observations of his journey in his book *Ousbou' fi Bariz* in which he referred to his encounter with French women whom he admired for their beauty and grace which is surprising since he is an *Imam* who traveled to France for a religious duty. He considered himself to be the center of admiration and exoticism for the women who were fascinated by his Moorish attire while he was fascinated by their beauty. He fell within the Orientalist trap of embodying Orientalist tropes about the East which were manifested in his Moorish style and lascivious gazes.

Throughout the years, Moroccan travelers to Europe met European women, engaged in conversations with them, and observed their daily life and the status they enjoyed in their societies. Some of the travelers were amazed by those beautiful foreign women, while others were reserved in their judgments or even linked them to the corruption of society. They provided heterogeneous discourses that were different in the way they portrayed women and how they interacted with them which showed us more about the travelers than it showed about the women.

### **3. Intercultural marriages between Moroccan men and Western women**

The encounter between Moroccan men and European women was not limited to passive encounters at theaters, official dinners or dance balls; there were some incidents when this encounter led to a lifelong agreement that was manifested in intercultural marriages. Some of these marriages succeeded and got over most of the cultural, ethnic and religious differences, while others were doomed to failure because

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<sup>101</sup> The *Kibla* is the direction towards which Muslims pray.

<sup>102</sup> Mohammed ben Abd es-Salam as-Sayeh, *Ousbou' fi Bariz* (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Soueidi, 2004), p. 12. Translation is mine.

either one or both of them were not able to transcend the cultural gaps between the two cultures.

Piracy and captivity played an important role in the rise of intercultural encounters between Moroccan men and European women which sometimes resulted in cases of marriages and conversions. According to Nabil Matar: “While rich women were sometimes protected by the privateers who recognized their high ransom value, the poorer women were sold into slavery where they ended up as maids, concubines, members of the harem, and sometimes wives.”<sup>103</sup> The European female captives were often divided into two categories: rich women who could be ransomed for a large sum of money and poor women who ended up with in Moroccan households. Matar goes on:

These women were forced to integrate quickly and to adjust to a society where their sexual and domestic roles were quite different from that in London, Plymouth or Edinburgh. If they returned to their homes, they carried with them stories, memories and experiences which they shared (or may not have wanted to share) with their families and parishes about the strange new world of the Muslims. If they never returned, their relatives remembered them, reflecting about their kin who had turned Muslim and settled among the “infidels.”<sup>104</sup>

Some of the European women captives were gifted to the sultans to be part of their harem; few of them became their wives. In 1685, an English girl along with her mother were held captives by Moroccan pirates while on their way to Barbados and later presented as a gift to Mouley Ismail.<sup>105</sup> He married her and changed her name to Lalla Balqis and became his favorite. She bore two sons to the Sultan, one of them was a successor to the throne, which upgraded her status in the harem which allowed her a

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<sup>103</sup> Nabil Matar, "Britons, Muslims, and American Indians: Gender and Power," *The Muslim World*. 91: 3–4 (2001), p. 373.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

<sup>105</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives in North Africa: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 25.

great influence on him and affected his relation with other European countries, mainly England.<sup>106</sup> Though she was married to a Muslim Sultan and living in Morocco, she maintained her English dress and style and was also known as “the English woman” since her real name is unknown.<sup>107</sup> Intercultural marriages between European women and Moroccan sultans were beneficial to the concerned European country as it was a way to consolidate diplomatic relations. Nabil Matar states: “In these cases, Christian women attained social status through captivity. They also attained political status as they facilitated exchange and trade, and cemented strategic alliances and commercial agreements between their adopted country and their original homeland.”<sup>108</sup> Marrying a sultan changed the lives of female European captives who came from unknown backgrounds into a new world of authority and power which granted them recognition from their own homeland.



5. A portrait that illustrates Marianne De Conti's refusal to marry Sultan Mouley Ismail which was offered by his retinue on his behalf.

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<sup>106</sup> Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2005), p. 100.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

In 1787, the Moroccan sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah married a Corsican girl whose name was Marthe and after her conversion to Islam, they named her princess Dawya. She was the daughter of a Corsican man whose name is Jack and he was a slave caught by the Barbary pirates then given to the sultan along with his family to serve him. He worked in the royal garden before he decided to tell the sultan his story and to ask for his freedom which he was granted. He left with his family to Corsica leaving behind his daughter at the palace where she received a good education and later married the sultan and converted to Islam.<sup>109</sup> According to Abdelhadi Tazi: “He [the sultan] used to ask Dawya about her opinion about national affairs. He also used to let her hand his correspondences with the European kingdoms. He used to take her views into consideration...She had a great impact on the national and the international politics of Morocco.”<sup>110</sup> Marrying a European woman had its perks and played in the favor of the sultan who could rely on her for his international relations, especially with Europe. She played an important role in the political sphere of the country which shows that women used to have a powerful position within the harem of the sultan. They were not mere “sex objects” as fantasized by Orientalists but they were respected, listened to and being involved in the reign of the country.

Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah also married a Scottish woman in 1796<sup>111</sup>. This lady’s name was Helen Gloag who was a simple Scottish girl from a simple Scottish family. She ran away from her home along with some female friends on a ship to reach America, but they were captured by the Moroccan corsairs in Salé. Her beauty attracted one of the country’s notables in the slave market and decided to present her as a gift to the Sultan. The Sultan became infatuated by her Western beauty and decided to marry her and make her a Moorish empress<sup>112</sup>. She had two sons from

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<sup>109</sup> Abdelhadi Tazi, *Al-Maraa fi Tarikh al-Gharb al-Islami* (Rabat : Dar Abi Raqraq li Teba’a wa Nashr, 2013), pp. 215-217.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>111</sup> John Shearer, *Antiquities of Strathearn, with Historical and Traditionary and Biographical Sketches of Celebrated Individuals* (Crieff: D. Phillips, 1881), p. 60.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

him whom she tried to ascend to the throne after his death.<sup>113</sup> This intercultural marriage was successful because Helen Gloag who became the Sultana, was naturalized with the new foreign atmosphere and environment. Most the cultural differences were overcome and turned into an atmosphere of co-existence that was filled with tolerance and acceptance of the other, to some extent. The Sultan was not only the political leader of Morocco but also a religious and spiritual figure. To be able to take such a huge step as this one, Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah's marriage to Helen Gloag represented a manifestation of Islamic tolerance towards Western people. It opened up the doors to further intercultural relations and diplomatic and trade relations between the two worlds. according to Nabil Matar: "Interreligious relations may explain the surprisingly high number of plays from the Elizabethan period on that depicted the possible or actual marriage between Turkish or Moorish men and Christian (continental, specifically Catholic Italian and Spanish but also in the Restoration period, English) women."<sup>114</sup> These real life events of intercultural marriages between European women and Muslim rulers inspired several writers to produce literature based on these stories but imagined according to the Western desire, such as *The Tempest*, *Othello: The Moor of Venice* and *The Merchants of Venice* by William Shakespeare, *Lust's Dominion* or *The Lascivious Queen* by Thomas Dekker, *The Battle of Alcazar* by George Peele, *The Fair Maid of the West* by Thomas Heywood, *The Renegado* by Phillip Massinger, *The Turke* by John Mason, *All's Lost by Lust* by William Rowley.<sup>115</sup>

Not only early European writers were interested in turning these stories into fictions but also contemporary writers who try to revive these historical events, such as Debbie Taylor whose novel *The Fourth Wife: A Novel*, published in 2003, follows the story of Helen Gloag in the harem of the Moorish sultan<sup>116</sup> in 18<sup>th</sup> century Morocco. This novel plays on Western fantasies of the harem life as it portrays Helen as an innocent Scottish girl who was captured by Moorish pirates and then offered as a gift

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<sup>113</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, *White Women Captives in North Africa: Narratives of Enslavement, 1735-1830*, p. 26.

<sup>114</sup> Nabil Matar, *Britain and Barbary, 1589-1689*, p. 105.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>116</sup> Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah.

to the sultan. Realizing that she had no way to escape, she succumbed to the fact that she will never leave and decided to take advantage of the situation by competing with the other concubines to become the fourth wife of the sultan and his favorite.<sup>117</sup> Another author Jane Johnson wrote a novel entitled *The Sultan's Wife* which was published in 2012 and it revolves around an English female captive who was brought to the harem of Sultan Mouley Ismail in 1677, became his second wife and was forced to convert into Islam.<sup>118</sup> This work, which combines real events and fiction, is based on stereotypical images of the *harem* and the Orient as a whole. It represents the Sultan as a tyrannical sex-oriented person who enjoyed torturing his captives and his first wife is represented as a sorceress who masters black magic and did everything in her power to torture the new wife. These images are recurrent in Western literature about the Orient<sup>119</sup> and it only goes to show that it still extends to the Modern period and writings of contemporary authors.

There were also Moroccan acrobats who toured the world and some of them married Western women, such as Si Hadji Tahar. He was a Moroccan manager of Moroccan acrobats in Europe and America. He got married three times. In the third time, in 1918, he married a Hungarian actress named Julia Bekesy residing in America<sup>120</sup>. This marriage was a failure because Julia waited till Hadji Tahar went on a trip to Australia and divorced him. When he got back and after some time, he was arrested because he couldn't pay the alimony. Apparently their cultural differences were kind of barriers between the couple that they couldn't cope with. The young Western woman couldn't adapt with the Moorish way of life that Tahar was having that he reported that he never wore Western clothes; he always was his Fez and Moorish clothes<sup>121</sup>. It seems that divorce was a solution, especially when Tahar requested of never getting married to a girl out of one's religion. He said that his marriages with Muslim women were far better, especially the first one. He accused his

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<sup>117</sup> Debbie Taylor, *The Fourth Wife: A novel* (Danvers: Crown Publishing, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Jane Johnson, *The Sultan's Wife* (Canada: Doubleday Canada, 2012), p. 128.

<sup>119</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*. p, 27.

<sup>120</sup> Marjorie Dorman, "Marry a Girl From Your Own Religion, Advises 86-Year-Old Prince Tahar, as He Tells of His Three Romances; Only First Was Happy," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (New York: Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1928). p, 10.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Western ex-wife of marrying him for his money because he was many years older than her; she was 24 years old while he was 76 years old<sup>122</sup>. We can clearly notice that though Tahar was a Moorish man, he lived in America and abided by its law concerning the alimony and divorce laws. He was a public figure who was of high interest to the public to know about that his news have always filled the American newspapers. He co-existed within this Western culture but a Western woman couldn't cope with his Moorish style.

In his book *Moroccans in Europe: Fassi Merchants come to Manchester*, professor Khalid Bekkaoui traces the presence of Moroccans in England and precisely in Manchester city. He provides archival material from the British and Moroccan archives throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> to document and bring into the light the hidden stories of Moroccans who traveled for work and then settled and married in England. These stories are testimonies to the openness of these migrants towards the Christian world. This book can be considered a counter argument against Bernard Lewis' claim that Muslims did not travel to Europe because they lacked curiosity and thought that they were superior to other people and nations. The people addressed in this book are not official envoys which means they did not have or benefit from any privileges or special official treatment. They traveled under different circumstances which made their journeys even more unique. There were merchants, peddlers, acrobats, performers, students, physicians...etc. About their journeys, Bekkaoui states:

Clearly, the initiative of the Fassi merchants to travel and conduct trade in Manchester should be considered as part of a reconfiguration of the encounter between Islam and Christendom. Britain was no longer to be seen as Dar al Harb, dreaded and avoided. Rather it was a place for economic opportunities, political missions, entertainment and sight-seeing, encountering a different culture and civilization, acquiring new

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

commercial techniques and technological knowledge, and discovering wonderful innovations.<sup>123</sup>

He emphasized the importance of these travelers in changing the dynamics of movement between the East and the West, Morocco and England in this instance. The Fassi merchants flocked to Manchester at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and they settled and established their lives and businesses in England and sought integration and naturalization within the English society for their contributions in different fields in the country.<sup>124</sup> This new wave of migration demonstrated Moroccans' willingness to go beyond the borders of their country to discover new places and become more open to the world of difference.

Bekkaoui mentions in his book that despite the widely circulated image of the Oriental other being fascinated by Western beauty, Moroccan merchants showed little interest in this matter. He states: "In British literature, Othello's countrymen are routinely portrayed as having an uncontrollable fondness for white women. However, when real Moroccan merchants actually came to British land, they evinced little interest in white women. Most of the Moroccans who immigrated to Manchester were accompanied with their native spouses."<sup>125</sup> Their presence formed a disturbance to the imaginative discourses about the Orient. They went on business not pleasure and most of them brought their wives with them to settle together in that foreign land.

He also talks about several cases of intercultural marriage between Moroccan men and English women. Among the merchants, there was Hadj Larbi Guessous who married English citizen Alice Agnes McAyoy in 1886 and had two children.<sup>126</sup> Another case is of David Bensusan who was a Moroccan Jewish businessman who married Miss Violet Cameron who was an actress he met during one of her

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<sup>123</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, ed, *Moroccans in Europe: Fassi Merchants Come to Manchester* (Fez: Moroccan Cultural Studies Centre, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., pp. 64-65.

performances. Their marriage did not last and their separation was scandalous and all over the press as she accused him of violence while he accused her infidelity.<sup>127</sup>



6. A photograph of miss Violet Cameron, a British actress married to David Bensuade

Another example of a Moroccan man who married a European woman is Joseph Sumbel who was a Moroccan Jew who met and married the British actress Mary Wells in the Fleet prison. She was imprisoned for debt while he was there for refusing any settlement about his father's heritage with his brother. They got married in a Moorish-Jewish splendor after Mrs. Wells converted to Judaism and changed her name to Leah Sumbel in 1797. Mr. Sumbel was a young rich man whose father was the prime minister of the Sultan of Morocco<sup>128</sup>. When the two met, Mr. Sumbel and Mrs. Wells, he was amazed at the Western beauty while she was fascinated by his Moorish

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>128</sup> Charles W Collins, *Great Love Stories of the Theatre* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1911), p. 255.

splendor and wealth. In her memoirs, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sumbel. Late Wells of The Theatres Royal Drury-Lane, Covent Garden and Haymarket*, Mary Wells represented Mr. Sumbel as a savage, eccentric and violent Moor who could not control his outrageous temper or his extreme jealousy from which she had often suffered. He became very outrageous every time a servant got near her or a man saluted her by kissing her hand. She also mentioned that he used to get very jealous when she was performing on stage and her sights went to someone.<sup>129</sup> He was a person who was controlled by his “Moorish temper”. By “Moorish temper”, Wells wanted to convey that this characteristic is a Moorish one. He was a violent man who did not believe in logic or any logical dialogue.

While talking about Mr Sumbel, Mrs Wells refers to him with many labels, rarely as “my husband”. Among the labels that she calls him with are: “the Moor”, “The furious Turk” (Vol I, p 220), “the Turk” (Vol I, p 47), “ the *noble* Moor” ( Vol I, p 54), “the turbaned Turk” (Vol I, p 207), “the furious Turk” ( Vol I, p 220), “my imperious husband” (Vol II, p 16)...etc. We can notice that she could not differentiate between a Moor and a Turk, she calls him both because he is an Oriental. According to Jonathan Burton: “Islam and ‘Turkishness’ were often considered synonymous in early modern English parlance. Thus, one seventeenth-century dictionary lists for the term Mussulmans, ‘the Turks or Mahumetists,’ while numerous histories of ‘the Turks’ begin with the story of the Prophet Muhammad or refer to the Qu’ran as ‘Turkish Policy.’”<sup>130</sup> The words “Moor” and “Turk” are often used as an adjective that reveals all the Western stereotypes about the Orient. The Orient is considered as violent, furious and in this particular case, ironically “noble”. She calls him “noble” only because as long as he is a wealthy Moor who lives among English people, then he is supposed to be noble but apparently he is not and she uses the word only as a means of mockery.

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<sup>129</sup> Marry Davis Wells, *Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Sumbel, Late Wells, of The Theatres Royal Drury-Lane, Covent Garden and Haymarket*. Vol I (London: C. Chapple, Pall-Mall, 1811), p. 201.

<sup>130</sup> Jonathan Burton, *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 13.

In the first volume of her memoirs, she described the way Mr. Sumbel sat cross-legged and the Moorish atmosphere around him. She states:

The graces of his person were not visible in the European habits. The circumstance augmented his chagrin; and he did not recover any portion of his placidity till he sat cross-legged in all the magnificence of his Moorish paraphernalia. [...] I had the supreme felicity of seeing my illustrious partner, once, during every twelve hours, decked in the splendors of a second Othello.<sup>131</sup>

The whole atmosphere around him is an eastern one that reminds of the Arabian nights and all the magnificence and grandeur that surround them. He is “orientalized” according the Western standards and understanding of a Moor’s way of life. After various heated disputed the couple fail to live and co-exist together due to the barriers between the two cultures that couldn’t be crossed. The violence in this marriage was in continuous that one day, Mr. Sumbel wanted to kill his wife and then himself but she moved and the shot missed her. With the help of some servants, she managed to escape from him and strongly demanded divorce from the court. At the end of her memoirs, she provide us with the letters that Mr. Sumbel was sending her in an attempt to have her back but she didn’t yield till they got divorced in 1798<sup>132</sup>.

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>132</sup> John Fyvie, *Comedy Queens of the Georgian Era* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1907), p. 347.

A GENTLE LADY MARRIED TO A MOOR.



7. Joseph Sumbel and Leah Sumbel (Mary Wells)

Mary Wells' marriage with the Moroccan Jew Joseph Sumbel was definitely a turning point in her life, which had made a lot of hustle and bustle among the public that was very eager to read about this eccentric marriage. As any Western person, she was very overwhelmed by all the Moorish grandeur that was around the Moor in the Fleet prison which had made her fall in love with that Eastern person and then married him. It turned out this marriage was not as promising as she may have thought because of all the "misfortunes" that had followed her even in that marriage. She did all this only to prove that she is indeed an "unfortunate" lady; at least that is what she has been claiming throughout her memoirs. In her memoir, she confirms Western stereotypes of the Moors as lacking manners, angry, abusive, violent, and evil. She mentioned that he used to be very jealous of her that he forbade her from going anywhere and that she was always afraid about her safety whenever she was with him. She describes him like

an angry beast. She said that she was afraid he was going to kill her so she decided to divorce him and return to her faith.

It has always been hard and rare for prominent religious figures in Morocco to marry Western women and more specifically the non-convert ones. The Shareef of Wazan Muley Abdeslam ben Alarbi is a great example of that instance. He met the British governess Emily Keene in Tangier in 1872 and they got married a year later despite the oppositions from the *Zawyas* and some British people, including her own family<sup>133</sup>. In this case, The *Shareef* of Wazan and Miss Keene accepted each other despite their various cultural and religious differences without any change from any of them. Emily Keen wanted to keep her Christian faith which the *Shareef* of Wazan accepted but Moroccan people didn't, especially the Sultan<sup>134</sup>. Many people had doubts about their marriage and the real intentions behind it. Khalid Ben Srhir states:

The question arises as whether this Moroccan-British marriage was the fruit of a conventional love story or part of the groundwork for Britain's future plans in Morocco? Although this can be neither proved nor refuted, it is certain that Drummond Hay made the wife of the *Sherif*, a trusted correspondence, who would keep him regularly informed of the *Sherif's* movements and his relations with the French and the Spanish.<sup>135</sup>

Whether this was a true love story or a marriage of mutual interests, we cannot tell but what it is sure is that they both benefited from this marriage in a way or another. Their marriage had created many tensions between the Shareef and the Moroccan palace for a long time. Despite all that, the marriage was relatively successful, especially when the Shareef became a French *protégé*. The cultural and religious differences were not big barriers in the couple's life because they were aware of them and they accepted them as they were and tried to coexist with each other's differences.

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<sup>133</sup> David Woolman, *Stars in the Firmament: Tangier Characters 1660-1960* (Colorado: Passeggiatta, 1998), p. 75.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>135</sup> Khalid Ben Srhir, *Britain and Morocco during the Embassy of John Drummond Hay, 1845-1886*, p. 201.

Emily Keen wrote an autobiographical book called *My Life Story* about her life in Morocco and marriage to the Shareef of Wazan. She lived in Morocco and became familiar with the people and the land; we see her in a picture wearing Moorish clothes at times and English ones at others. She tried to fit in with the Moorish women around her, though the Shareef always insisted on her to keep her European attire in order for the people to get used to her “Europeanness”. Her children also wore Moorish clothes as a step to be followers to their father in his Zawya. She stated that she was completely in love with the Shareef of Wazan leading a happy life with him that everything else seemed to be of unimportant value:

To my mother the shock was very great when this decision was arrived at; for she had remained with us to accompany me to my new home in Europe and assist me in arranging it. As for myself, it was a matter of indifference. I had a husband who seemed to worship the ground I walked upon, affectionate and attentive to all my wishes and I enjoyed all the prospects of a happy life with him. The choice of residence seemed quite a secondary consideration, for I was very much in love with my handsome partner.<sup>136</sup>

Her family did not approve of her marriage and they hoped that would at least settle in Europe that’s why they were surprised when she did not. They were more rational thinking about her future and how she was going to abandon her Western luxuries to live that new Oriental life, while she was in love and all she cared about was to be near her husband wherever he was. In her memoirs, Keene continued praising her husband and the way he took good care of her and her family. She described how different he was in his manners and behaviors in comparison to the rest of the Moroccan people. She found in him the exotic look of the Orient and Western-like manners which pleased her and consolidated her decision to marry him.

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<sup>136</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, ed, *The British Bride of Tangier: The Extraordinary Love Story of Emily Shareefa of Wazzan* (Fez: The Moroccan Cultural Studies Center, 2011), p. 57.



8.Shareef of Wazan  
 Abdeslam ben Alarbi



9.Shareefa of Wazan  
 Emily Keene



10.Shareefa of Wazan, Emily Keene, in Algerian costme



11.Shareefa of Wazan, Emily Keene in a family picture, 1911

Moroccan acrobats used to tour all around Europe and thus they had contact with European women, some of which led to marriage.<sup>137</sup> Mohammed Bencacem<sup>138</sup> a Moroccan acrobat, who performed across Europe, met 17 year old Clara Casey who fell in love him, and then she converted to Islam and got married in 1905.<sup>139</sup> In 1905, British newspapers started writing about a British girl Clara Casey who was allegedly kidnapped to Tangier and forced to marry a Moroccan acrobat Mohammed ben Bencacem<sup>140</sup>. In an article published in *The Grey River Argus* in August 12, 1905, the newspaper interviewed Clara Casey about her marriage to the Moroccan acrobat and the elements that led to her return to England. Casey admitted that she had a troubled life with Bulkhsan but at the same time, they had moments of happiness. Her return

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>138</sup> Ahmed Bencacem's name was sometimes misspelled as "Bulkhsan".

<sup>139</sup> Khalid Bekkaoui, ed, *Moroccans in Europe: Fassi Merchants Come to Manchester*, pp. 67-70.

<sup>140</sup> "Back from the Harem : English Girl Wife's Return to England" in *The Grey River Argus* (New Zealand: 12 August 1905), p. 3. Retrieved on June 7, 2011 from <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=GRA19050812.2.34>.

was after she sent an appeal letter for help to her family after a strong quarrel with her husband. The British counsel interfered and due to her young age, she was returned to her family. The troubled life between the couple was a result of the various differences with the two that neither of them was able to cope with. Their marriage was all over the media and several speculations circulated about him abducting her against her will and holding her hostage against her will.<sup>141</sup> These speculations consolidate the stereotypical image which the West has about the East. The Western media and audience could not fathom that a European “white” girl could actually fall in love and want to marry a “Moor”. Clara was later convinced to return back home under the pretext that her marriage contract was not valid since she was underage.<sup>142</sup>

There were several cases of intercultural marriages between Moroccan men and Western white women. Some of these marriages were quite successful while others were doomed to failure. The success or failure of these marriages was due to whether the couple had any acceptance of the cultural other with all the differences that exist between them or not and whether their entourage was in good terms with their union or not. Most of them were pressured by high officials to end them while other failed because they could not go past their own stereotypes of each other. Either way, these relations and encounters provide a fertile subject of research to delve more into archive and bring those cases out into research.

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<sup>141</sup> *The Adviser, Adelaide*, July 4, 1905.

<sup>142</sup> Jamie Gilham, *Loyal Enemies: British Converts to Islam, 1850-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 104.

## **PART THREE: THE HETEROGENEOUS REPRESENTATIONS OF EUROPEAN WOMEN BY MOROCCAN TRAVELERS**

### **1. The Different Roles Played by European Women as Portrayed by the Travelers**

#### **a. Diplomatic Neutrality in Describing European Queens in the Travel Accounts by al-Ghassani, al-Meknassi, al-Fassi, al-Amraoui and Jaidi**

Moroccan travelers to Europe, who were sometimes ambassadors on diplomatic missions to European palaces, often had the chance to encounter European queens on several occasions. Their written impressions about the queens were mostly neutral with objective descriptions and observations which could be understood as a form of diplomatic respect and civility towards them. It was the first time that any of them had the chance to be in the presence of women who held powerful authoritative positions; so while some of them decided to dwell in describing them, most of them chose to briefly mention them without further descriptions or commentaries. This diplomatic neutrality is one of the main characteristics of the Moroccan travel writers' discourse in regard to the European queens.

Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani's travel account *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* about Spain is considered the first Arabic description of Spain after the expulsion of Muslims and Jews.<sup>1</sup> His name "al-Andalusi" reflects his Andalusian roots which made him identify more with Adalusian Muslims expelled from or captured and tortured in Spain. We expect his discourse to be more aggressive and hostile towards not just the people of Spain but more precisely towards the Kings and Queens of the country. Yet we are surprised with a softer tone than we expect, and while he reflected on the remains of the Islamic history in Spain, he was also intrigued by the Christian contemporary life and culture. He provided an ambivalent discourse that rejected the Christian other's religious difference that was the reason behind the expulsion and

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<sup>1</sup> Nabil Matar, "Al-Ghassani (d. 1707): A Moroccan Ambassador," in *Literature of Travel and Exploration: G to P*, ed. Jennifer Speake (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 485.

torture of countless Muslims yet he admired their achievements in different fields and domains.

During his journey to Spain, Al-Ghassani did not meet any queen of Spain but he spoke about the late Queen Isabella I of Castile<sup>2</sup> a great deal in his account, especially that he reserved some sections in his books to dwell on the Spanish history, especially the Spanish monarchy and the process of succession to the throne. He described how she took power after her deceased husband, Ferdinand II. He was amazed by what he heard and read about her, especially when he said: “When that tyrant, King Ferdinand, died; he left a son named after him Ferdinand II who died few years later without leaving a son. His wife Isabella of Aragon reigned after him for years. She used to go out and in, ride the horse, run, and act like men do.”<sup>3</sup> Al-Ghassani mistakenly refers to Queen Isabella of Castile as Isabella of Aragon, who was her daughter, which reflects his confusion when dealing with similar names in the Spanish history but this confusion cannot divert from his efforts in showing interest in this regard. The idea of a Queen leading the country was a new one to a Moroccan traveler who was used to seeing women of his culture confined into the house and separated from strange men. The fact that she did all the “manly” activities made her distinguished from the rest of the European women, and all women in general, as she broke the typical image of the “soft” vulnerable woman who often needs the protection of men. The expression of “act like man do” shows that the Moroccan traveler’s identity was always a lens through which he perceived anything that he encountered in the host countries. His reflection on the freedom which the queen enjoyed in earlier centuries was a way to show his readers that women’s liberation was not a new phenomenon in Spain but it was rather an old cultural practice since either a son or daughter of the king could have the opportunity to inherit the throne, and he provided a lengthy chronological report about the history and the method of succession to the throne in Spain.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Queen Isabella I of Castile, wife of King Ferdinand II of Aragon, reigned Spain from 1474 until her death in 1504.

<sup>3</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 71. Translation is mine.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 70-71.



11. A portrait of Queen Isabella of Castile, Spain.

In Mohammed ben Othmane and al-Meknassi's account *Al-Iksir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, we notice a certain similarity between his writing and al-Ghassani's when he reflected on the history of the Spanish monarchy. Al-Meknassi stated that "She [Queen Isabella] reigned for many years and she used to go out, and travel, ride the horse and act like men."<sup>5</sup> The same expression with almost the same style of writing and words is mentioned in al-Ghassani's travel account which shows that al-Meknassi might have "borrowed" these information from him since as Matar confirmed that he studied as much references about Spain as he could before embarking on his journey.<sup>6</sup> He does not admit this in his account but when he explains the history of the Spanish monarchy, we could see clearly the stark similarities in style and language with al-Ghassani's account. This shows the importance that these travelers' accounts played in providing knowledge and information to future travelers in order to familiarize them

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<sup>5</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 89. Translation is mine.

<sup>6</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 12.

with the host countries' history, customs and culture. In other words, they showed the travelers what to expect in their encounters with foreign nations and peoples.

In 1782, al-Meknassi arrived to Naples which was his second destination that year after visiting Malta, and his second ambassadorial journey after visiting Spain in 1779.<sup>7</sup> He wrote his second travel account *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*. After meeting King Fernando IV, al-Meknassi's embassy members were escorted to greet Queen Marie-Caroline who was waiting for them along with the notables' wives.<sup>8</sup> She welcomed them in her country and according to al-Meknassi: "She reassured us that she will help us attain what we came here for. She told us that she will help us with whatever we need. She said she will talk to the King to help us. We thanked her greatly and thanked Allah for easing our way."<sup>9</sup> In his description of the Queen, he remained neutral and objective and only limited himself to the way she welcomed them. He did not delve into details of how she looked, dressed or any further comments about her that would reflect any judgment or stereotypes. This stance shows al-Meknassi's diplomatic skills and his vigilance in dealing and writing about people of higher ranks.

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<sup>7</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-171. Translation is mine.



12. A portrait of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples and Sicily by the French portrait artist Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun

Diplomatic neutrality played an important role in most, if not all, of the Moroccan travel representations of the European queens. The travelers realized the critical position in which they were put in addition to their inherent belief in the sacredness and sanctity of the people in command. This neutrality is noticed mostly when they wrote about the queens; however, they were more open and eloquent in their representations of other women. Unlike Western travel writers who were eager to see, write and fantasize about Muslim rulers' *harems* which they saw as what Heather Madar calls "a libidinous zone"<sup>10</sup> in which the Western writers poured all of their sexual imagination and fantasies about the Orient. Muslim travelers were not "voyeuristic" in their perceptions of the women. They did not intend nor seek to sexualize or objectify them; instead, they, as ambassadors and representatives of the Sultan, showed nothing but civility and manners in the presence of the European

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<sup>10</sup> Heather Madar, "Before the Odalisque: Renaissance Representations of Elite Ottoman Women," in *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol 6. (2011), p. 1.

queens in particular and also in their descriptions of them. None of the Moroccan travelers provided a sexualized representation of the women in the European palaces and they did not show as much interest in the women as Orientalist travel writers did in their encounters with the Orient. The women were never the center or the subject of the travel accounts. They were more interested in providing detailed descriptions of the architecture of the palaces than of the queens living in them which reflects their diplomatic, religious, and cultural interferences and influences on their writings and impressions.

After completing the mission of his embassy in Naples, al-Meknassi and his retinue had to meet King Fernando IV again to bid farewell in a formal way after which they were escorted again by a messenger to the Queen's palace as she was waiting along with the notables' wives and other women in her entourage to greet them. Al-Meknassi describes the meeting by saying:

We were guided to her house and we entered a dome where she was standing and the notables' wives were on her right and her left. She greeted us like her husband did but the women leaned to the ground more than the men did. She did it three times and we thanked her for their generosity and hospitality in hosting us and facilitating our mission for us. [...] Then we bid farewell and she did the same with utmost civility.<sup>11</sup>

In his second and last meeting with the Queen of Naples, al-Meknassi remained poised and civil in his description of this diplomatic encounter with the women of the palace. Diplomatic neutrality in his representation of the Queen marked his account in both encounters. He provided minimal information about her and the other women with no physical description or fantacization. The representation was neither positive nor negative as he tried to be as civil and diplomatic as he could in his exchange of greetings with the Queen.

In 1860, Sultan Mohammed ben Abderrahman sent two embassies to Europe and he also appointed scribes to write reports about the visited countries in an attempt

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<sup>11</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, pp. 222-223.

to understand the secrets of Europe's sudden excellence and rising power. He sent Abderrahman al-A'aji and Mohammed al-Chami, whose scribe was Mohammed Taher al-Fassi, to England and Idriss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui to France.<sup>12</sup> Politically speaking, Morocco was going through a critical period in its relations with Europe due to its two defeats in the battles of Isly and Tetouan<sup>13</sup> and also due to treaties which the Moroccan sultan signed with England, France and Spain which suffocated the Moroccan economy.<sup>14</sup>

These travel opportunities allowed the Moroccan embassies to England to have a direct contact with a one particular European Queen, Queen Victoria, who welcomed them into her palace and made sure that they enjoyed their stay in her country and they saw all the "wonders and marvels" of her "great nation". During her reign period, Queen Victoria of England<sup>15</sup> received two Moroccan embassies, al-Fassi's and Jaidi's, that left written accounts of their journeys to England which documented their meetings with the Queen. Both travelers were neutral, civil and highly objective in their descriptions of the encounters, and they respected her Highness' position that they did not indulge in details of her physical appearance or any further comments about her. The first one was Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi who was sent along an ambassadorial expedition to England in 1860 by Sidi Mohammed ben Abderrahman.<sup>16</sup> The second embassy was sent in 1876 when Sultan Hassan I sent a Moroccan embassy to France, Belgium, England and Italy headed by the Moroccan ambassador Mohammed Zbidi and appointed Idriss Jaidi to document the journey.<sup>17</sup> He wrote a travel account which he entitled *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi 'Ajaeb al-Akhbar*. They both

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<sup>12</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya*, 1860, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> The Battle of Isly was against France in 1844 while the battle of Tetouan was against Spain in 1860.

<sup>14</sup> Abdel Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>15</sup> Queen Victoria of England reigned from 1837 to 1901.

<sup>16</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya*, 1860, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inghlaterra, Italia*, 1876, p. 28.

provided descriptions of European women and mainly of their meeting with Queen Victoria.



13. A portrait of Queen Victoria by Franz Xavier Winterhalter in 1859.

As far as al-Fassi is concerned, he wrote a short travel account entitled *Ar-Rila al-Ibriziya ila Diyar al-Injlizia* about his journey to Britain. He gave a detailed description of his trip and addressed Queen Victoria in his account as “the Queen”. When they were received at the royal palace, the Moroccan visitors were amazed at the beauty of the architecture and the furniture that al-Fassi described everything exactly as he saw but when it came to the Queen, he was minimal and brief in his description. Regarding the reception by the Queen, he wrote:

When we entered the Queen’s place, she was sitting on a chair and when she saw us, she descended to greet us with a cheerful smile. All this was in the presence of her chief of protocol, her ministers, her husband and her general; in addition to her two daughters. She has good features and

an agreeable nature. She showed us a great deal of *mahabba* (affection) and delight with the blessing of *Mawlana* al-Mansour.<sup>18</sup>

This was the only description in which he briefly involved her physical traits and conduct without going into details about her demeanor and appearance out of respect for her position as a Queen and for her gender as a woman. She came out of her seat and approached the members of the delegations to greet them and welcome them in her country as her guests with “extreme cheerfulness”<sup>19</sup>. Al-Fassi was also delighted by the Queen’s direct concerns about them, their safety, their comfort and their stay in the country. She asked them about Sultan Sidi Mohammed ben Abdellah’s condition, their conditions, and whether they suffered from any dizziness while in the sea. He quoted her saying: “I am extremely delighted for your coming and I know of the affection of your Sultan who sent you to us.”<sup>20</sup> Queen Victoria showed a great courtesy and hospitality towards her Muslim Moroccan guests who were fascinated and amazed by the beauty and greatness of her country and the fast developments which they were able to witness during the arranged visits across the city.

Al-Fassi is among the travelers who were reserved in their encounters with the European women and who respected their *hurma* / sanctity as their hosts.<sup>21</sup> Queen Victoria is no different since he refrained from giving ample description of her as a person but he limited his excessive descriptions to her palace, ceremonies, institutions and developments in her country. As a religious man, he must have thought twice before writing the few paragraphs in which he mentioned her. Queen Victoria also represented a different image of the female leader of a country which must have bewildered the Muslim travelers’ minds, especially when they witnessed the advancements in different fields like in the army, the weapon factories, the steam power, the museums, the banks, the telegraph, the roads, the bridges...etc. As a religious man who came from a culture that deeply believed in the *hadith* which is allegedly reported on behalf of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that: “No Nation that

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 12. Translation is mine.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 12. Translation is mine.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 12. Translation is mine.

<sup>21</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*, p. 108.

let women reign shall ever be prosperous.”<sup>22</sup> We cannot assume whether this *hadith* is correct or weak but it does reflect the 19<sup>th</sup> century Muslim mind which must have made it difficult for the travelers who could not fathom how a Christian Queen, who is a woman, could achieve all of that development for her country.

After the first encounter with Queen Victoria which made a great impression on the Moroccan guests’ minds. She invited them for dinner along with her ministers and the great notables of England with their wives. She welcomed them again to the dining room which completely amazed the Moroccan visitors by its splendid architecture and furniture which reflected her wealth that even al-Fassi quoted Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) that “The *dunya*/earthly world is the prison of the believer and the paradise of the unbeliever”<sup>23</sup> in reference to the life of extreme luxury and opulence they lived in that was shown in every detail which al-Fassi made sure to describe. While on the table, the hosts, including the Queen, made sure that their Muslim guests ate only what was allowed for them by their religion. According to Al-Fassi:

We entered into the dining room with her [Queen Victoria] and the great notables of her country with their wives. [...] They showed us with their hands what is permissible for us to eat, like fruits and different kinds of pastries and dried things. We ate what we could and we greeted them before leaving and so they did.<sup>24</sup>

The Queen and her entourage were aware of the cultural and religious difference between them and their visitors and they made sure they were comfortable while among them. They did not intend to tease them religiously but they provided a variety of food that could suit both Muslims and Christians and showed what to eat and what not. The Queen and her notables were considerate in this regard but when it came to politics, she wanted to make sure that they see the grandeur, wealth and power of her

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<sup>22</sup> Abu Abdellah ben Mohammed ben Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut & Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 2002), p. 915. Translation is mine.

<sup>23</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya*, 1860, p. 13. Translation is mine.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 16. Translation is mine.

country, “the growing empire”, which did indeed intimidate the Moroccan travelers who could clearly see the stark differences between Morocco and England at all levels. Before that, Al-Fassi also praised her for the competitive plans she launched among her people to enrich and develop the country. He gave the example of agriculture when they visited an exhibition of plants. They found fruits and vegetables of all seasons available during the whole year; when he asked about that, they were told that the Queen awarded those who have good unimpaired fruits which encouraged the farmers to get more passionate and competitive about producing the best fruits and vegetables.<sup>25</sup> Al-Fassi was impressed by the Queen’s efforts in involving the people of her country in the process of development which he considered as an initiative that was worth reporting in his account in as an implicit indirect message to the Sultan to initiate similar collaborative plans in Morocco as an agricultural land that only needed better organization and redirection.

The Queen guaranteed that her visitors stayed amused during their stay in England and that they see demonstrations of British power in every place they visited. She invited the Moroccan embassy members to attend the exposition of the English army before her in a formal ceremony. She demanded her servants to bring the Moroccan embassy by her side to watch the show. She greeted them and started asking them about their stay and whether they were comfortable and at ease.<sup>26</sup> She expressed civility and hospitality towards them and they were grateful for her conduct. However, it was all part of the diplomatic protocol which the Moroccan travelers tended to confuse with *mahabba* / affection. This word played a central role in several Moroccan travel accounts which reflected the travelers’ political naivety and lack of diplomatic experience towards Western powers that were ahead of them in the field of diplomacy and political intelligence and leadership.

In 1856, Morocco signed a treaty with England which included 38 articles in relation to general issues and 15 articles related to trade and navigation.<sup>27</sup> Those

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Mohammed Abu Talib, “Mawaqif Baritaniya min Maghreb al-Qarn at-Tasi’ Achar,” in *Al-Islah wa al-Moujtama’ al-Maghrebi fi al-Qarn at-Tasi’ Achar* (Rabat: Manchourat Kouliyat al-Adab wa al-‘Ouloum al-Insaniya bi ar-Ribat, 1986), p. 301.

articles granted England several privileges in Morocco which had a major negative impact on the Moroccan economy and also on the political field since the treaty had indirect political dimensions in the region.<sup>28</sup> The Queen must have realized the real intention behind this embassy, to report to the Sultan about the sudden development and power of Europe, that she planned for them to see the manifestations of the development of her country especially during a ceremony of war maneuvers during a military exhibition. He stated: “When the soldiers came out, we saw an amazing organization and a strange style which would bewilder those watching it and blow their minds. This new army is more special than the old army and has its own characteristics. [...] They have better weapons than the old army.”<sup>29</sup> Al-Fassi gave a detailed description of the queen’s army, their organization and their weaponry development. This exhibition showed the Moroccan ambassadorial delegation that the British army was far more organized, well-equipped and developed than the Moroccan army which was still battling with primitive weapons, compared to the advanced European weapons, and no military training and organization. They realized that Morocco was lagging behind European powers which were climbing the ladder of modernity and development in a fast pace that made it impossible for Morocco to compete.

Al-Fassi was clearly amazed and bewildered by England’s achievements in different fields and what made these achievements more interesting to him was the fact that this country, England was ruled by a Queen. Despite the fact that he provided one of the shortest Moroccan travel accounts about Europe, but it was informative and enlightening in its portrayal of 19<sup>th</sup> century England. In the introduction of this *Rihla*, Mohammed al-Fassi noted:

It [al-Fassi’s] is considered among the first *rahalat* that document Moroccans’ contact with the European civilization before the urban landmarks with its inventions that are based on the new energies like

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>29</sup> Abu al-Jamal ben Taher al-Fassi, *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya*, 1860, pp. 15-16. Translation is mine.

steam and electricity and their use in various machines at a time when Morocco did not know anything about this new revolution. [...] It is interesting to know the impressions of a Moroccan man who moved suddenly from the calm traditional city of Fez to a new world that started to have modern urban manifestations in their ships, trains, weapons, factories, and their military and civil organizations.<sup>30</sup>

Al-fassi was taken aback by the English developments and the huge amount of information that he had to report on that he did not describe the women in England. For him, the military and industrial advancements were far more important than anything else. Coming from a country like Morocco that was still traditional in every aspect of life into a country like England that was beaming with inventions, made al-Fassi's discourse and impressions interesting to read and analyze because they reflect the 19<sup>th</sup> century Muslim Arabic thought in regard to the English journey towards modernity.

During his journey in England, al-Fassi realized the startling gap in development between Morocco and England who was becoming one the super powers of the world. He tried to give tremendous praise to the Sultan whenever he could in order to lessen the impact of the new information. He also tried to resort to religion to try to understand what his mind could not and he gave excuses for this development to explain Morocco's underdevelopment. For example, he kept reiterating that: "Life is a paradise for the infidel and hell for the believer"<sup>31</sup> and he later tried to explain their invention of the steam power as the production of the dark mind of the infidel. He said that:

They invented the steam power for the steamship through their use of their dark mind. The mind is divided into two parts: one which is dark and the other which is luminous. The dark one enables its user of reaching dark things which makes them immerse in disbelief while the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 1. Translation is mine.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 13. Translation is mine.

luminous one enables the believer to reach moral issues like believing in Allah, His angels, His prophets and anything that brings a person closer to Allah.<sup>32</sup>

Al-Fassi could not understand the worldly inventions of the Europeans but he understood that they only made them more powerful than before. In order to reassure the Moroccan sultan and his readers, he wanted to play on the religious side and convince them that no matter when the Europeans achieve in life, they will always remain “unbelievers” but they were Muslims so they had the advantage in the hereafter. We notice that al-Fassi did not take these inventions seriously to reflect upon them and make his report a call for change and productivity to Muslims to try to innovate and invent in their turn. Though he was amazed at what he saw, he tried hard to diminish the importance of what he saw based on the ground of “religious superiority”. Throughout his account, he kept quoting expressions from the Quran and the *hadith* in order to give a religious legitimacy which would, as Ahmed Idrissi Alami states, “discursively lend an authority to his argument.”<sup>33</sup> In this instance, we notice that the traveler never travels without his religious and cultural identity that serves as a lens through which he provides his impressions and perceptions of the world around him, especially anything that is different from what he is used to in his homeland.

In the same period that al-Fassi was sent to England, Driss ben Driss al-Amraoui was sent to France and he documented his journey in *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*. During this visit, he was able to meet Queen Eugénie de Montijo, wife of King Napoleon III.<sup>34</sup> Al-Amraoui who was also a jurist, unlike al-Fassi, gave an ample description of the Queen:

His wife is a Spanish descent and she comes from the royal family. Her father moved to France and she was born there. When the King took over the kingdom, he married her. She has beautiful features but she looks

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 28. Translation is mine.

<sup>33</sup> Ahmed Idrissi Alami, *Mutual Othering*, p. 65.

<sup>34</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 104.

pale and skinny that all her beauty faded. They told us that she was sick and before that they used to give her as an example of beauty and she was skilled in riding horses.<sup>35</sup>

He provided a historical background of the Queen in addition to a physical description of both her physical traits and the way she dressed when she met them. He went on to describe her: “When we met her, she was wearing a crown of white rubies and a big white gem in the middle that touches her hair and a silver necklace and similar bracelets in her wrists. She wrapped her bare arms in white scarves. Her arms are bare to her underarms and her neck is bare to her breast.”<sup>36</sup> Al-Amraoui is one the Moroccan travelers who harshly criticized French women for the way they mixed with foreign men and the way they dressed, yet when it came to the queen, he described what he saw with no additional comment or criticism. He mentioned that she was dressed while her arms and neck are bare which must have shocked him coming from a conservative background that stresses on the modesty of the women. His diplomatic neutrality in this regard was dictated through his diplomatic role as an ambassador to the French palace which interfered with his own judgment and criticism of religious and cultural difference that were manifested when he spoke about other French women whom he met outside the palace. However, despite the fact that he felt diplomatically restrained from criticizing the Queen, his description can be considered a subtle criticism of the way she dressed and “bared” herself which was unusual to the Moroccan travelers who were used to the idea that royal women were always hidden from the public as a form of veneration and modesty.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 106-107. Translation is mine.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 107. Translation is mine.



14. Queen Eugénie de Montijo, wife of Napoleon III of France, by Franz Xavier Winterhalter in 1859

Another 19<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan traveler who was able to have a direct contact with Queen Victoria is Driss Jaidi. In 1876, Sultan Hassan I sent a Moroccan embassy to France, Belgium, England and Italy headed by the Moroccan ambassador Mohammed Zbidi and appointed Idriss Jaidi to document the journey.<sup>37</sup> In his *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi 'Ajaeb al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, Jaidi explained that they could not meet the Queen of England, Queen Victoria, the moment they arrived to England because they were informed that she was taking a break outside of London with her family and she would meet them as soon she would get back; in the meanwhile, the members of the embassy were given the chance to go out and about in London to discover the English novelties and aspects of modernity.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 276.

In his travel account, Jaidi, like other travelers, faced the problem of language and cultural differences which shows in the way he referred to the Queen. He often referred to her by two terms: “’*adimatouhum*” / “the great of their nation”<sup>39</sup> and “their sultana”<sup>40</sup> which reflects more his own cultural background. He appropriated words and expressions that he was familiar with in his own culture and projected them on what was named differently in this different culture. Of their encounter with the Queen in the Isle of Wight, he said:

First, she nodded to us in greeting, and we replied. Then the ambassador started speaking to her with what suited her position, and he *Mawlana Sharif*’s letter in his scribe’s hand wrapped in a white silky napkin made by *Ruum*. When he mentioned the *Sharifian* letter, he turned to me and I gave it to him. He handed it to her and she received it with delight and joy and she remained smiling while the interpreter was translating it to her. She welcomed us with cheerfulness and joy and asked the ambassador about *Sayidana* May Allah bless him [...] <sup>41</sup>

With both embassies, al-Fassi’s and Jaidi’s, Queen Victoria managed to leave such a great impression through her cheerfulness and hospitality towards the Moroccan Muslim visitors. Jaidi provided a very concise description of the encounter that did not exceed few lines where he talked briefly without any physical description of the Queen, the reasons of which are not specified but as the head of her nation or as Jaidi called her the “great of her nation”, Moroccan travelers did not give minute description of women in power, ruling Queens specifically. He kept his description brief and minimal and only covered welcoming them without delving into details of how she looked and what she wore and without any comments about her as a person and a woman.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 291. Translation is mine.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 276. Translation is mine.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 291-292. Translation is mine.

Jaidi and his companions only met the Queen once during their stay in England. She did not invite them to join her in any activities like she did with al-Fassi's embassy. However, she planned a full program for them where they were taken to different palaces of hers and also to visit the factories, the theaters, the banks, the museums, the parliament, the mosque, the circus...etc. Jaidi was among the travelers who admired Europe and European modernity and was more positive in his views about the development of the West.

Diplomatic neutrality was the main feature in the Moroccan travelers' discourse of the European queens. Al-Ghassani, al-Meknassi al-Fassi, al-Amraoui and Jaidi were aware of their initial and prime mission from going to Europe which was to represent the Moroccan sultan in those countries which affected the way they represented and described their encounters with the European queens which was completely different from that of other women. They provided objective, minimal and diplomatic representations and descriptions of them.

#### **b. Religious Muslim Traveler's Impressions of European Nuns: Religions in Contact or Religions in Clash in al-Ghassani's, al-Meknassi's, al-Amraoui's and Jaidi's Travel Accounts**

Coming from a completely different culture that was ruled by the teachings of Islam, the Moroccan travelers to Europe found a lot to be amazed at, especially when it came to the different roles women played in the European societies they visited. In looking for the *'aja'ib* (wonders) and *ghara'ib* (marvels) or as Dennis E. Skocs says: "The traveler becomes the collector of curiosities"<sup>42</sup>. They found their target in the European nuns whom they met either in convents during their visits or on the streets. They were eager to know about them and hear their stories about the monastic life they led which was completely different from anything they have ever known and which does not exist in Islam. The nuns represent a focal point in several Moroccan travel

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<sup>42</sup> Dennis E. Skocs, "Herodotus and the Origins of Geography," in *Earth Ways: Framing Geographical Meanings*, eds. Gary Backhaus and John Murungi (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2004), p. 5.

accounts like those written by Mohammed al-Ghassani, Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui and Driss Jaidi.

Most of the Moroccan travelers' attention was drawn to the system of nuns in Europe; some described it at length while others remained reserved. Moroccan travelers from different periods showed their interest and curiosity about this subject and they were not shy to ask questions and engage in conversations to understand the monastic life of the Christians, especially of the nuns. They went to different European countries in different centuries, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, which made it even more interesting to analyze their discourses and impressions of the nuns. According to Nabil Matar: "One group of European women who often fascinated the Muslim visitors was the nuns. As there are no monastic orders in Islam, not only had the travelers not seen convents before but they had not seen women confined in such celibacy either."<sup>43</sup> The nuns represented a mystery to the Muslim travelers who, as religious men, showed cultural openness and religious tolerance to a religious, cultural and gender Other, and they opened the ground for discussion and tried to understand those women's experiences. This different and foreign practice of religion created moments of fascination at those women who had given up on their earthly world to dedicate themselves to the service of their own religion and community. Muslim travelers could not fathom that practice and before writing about them, they visited them, inquired and asked Christian people and the nuns themselves about what the monastic system and what it means to them. They sought discussions and explanations for what they saw and heard.

So far, Al-Ghassani is considered to be among the first Muslim travelers to provide extensive information and knowledge about the nuns in his account *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*. He wrote a lengthy section entitled "*Rahibat al-Kanbinto*" (The Nuns of the Convent) and he used the word "*Kanbinto*" as he heard it in Spanish "*Convento*". When the Moroccan embassy reached the Spanish city of Linares in 1690, a group of "*farayliya*" (friars) visited them to welcome them and forwarded to them the request of the nuns to visit them at the convent. When they arrived, al-Ghassani noticed that it included nuns of different age categories and he was

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<sup>43</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 111.

fascinated to see young girls who were still children following the disciplines and rules of the convent. During their first encounter, al-Ghassani described the women as “extremely reserved, conservative and chaste women and young girls”<sup>44</sup>. At first, he provided general information about the nuns which did not include his own criticism about their religious difference but he could not hide his disapproval all along the accounts. In the beginning of his representation of the nuns, he gave a detailed description of the requirements for a young woman to join the convent:

There are young girls as young as seven years old and there are old women and they are all virgins. Any girl/women who wished to become monastic and ascetic joins the convent whether she is young or old. She takes a vow on herself that she has nothing left in the earthly world and she has no affection or desire for any man, and she is ready to fully sacrifice herself to the service of her Lord. [...] No man enters the convent and they have older nuns who supervise and guard them.<sup>45</sup>

Taking into consideration the liberation which al-Ghassani witnessed in Spanish women’s behaviors and their open nature to strangers and to the company of men other than their own husbands, he could not grasp this huge contrast in the European society. He described those religiously different women as “pious” and “reserved” and he tried not to belittle their beliefs or their religion. He explained that they were living a modest monastic life where they were giving up on any earthly desires or a one-on-one contact with the other sex, even if he was a doctor. Older nuns supervised and guided younger nuns during their stay in the convent in order to ensure that they abide by the rules of their religious institution. The mixing with the men which was allowed outside the convent and which many travelers criticized did not exist inside the convent as the separation between the two sexes was of paramount importance to them. This allowed

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<sup>44</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 55. Translation is mine.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 33. Translation is mine.

al-Ghassani to see a different category of women in Spain whose freedom was restricted.

Al-Ghassani was against the idea of Christian clerics, friars and nuns secluding themselves and suppressing their human desires for the service of their Lord as he believed that seclusion would only lead to temptation.<sup>46</sup> He specifically criticized the woman's entrance into a convent which he described as if she was burying herself alive since she will have nothing left in the world and she will be completely secluded, except the girls who joined the convent at a very young age whom when they reached puberty, they were given the choice to either continue in the convent or leave to the earthly world and lead a normal life.<sup>47</sup> In his account, the nuns' agency was apparent in al-Ghassani's insistence that after a certain age, the nuns had the choice to leave the convent any time they wanted. They were given the choice to either continue their monastic life as nuns carrying all the responsibilities that come with this position or to resume their life outside the convent and start their own family. In describing them, he tried to assume the role of a reporter with as less judgment as possible and more information about their conditions, way of life, and hierarchy.

Al-Ghassani went further to explain why some women chose to stay in the convent. According to what he was told, some women were poor that they could not afford the dowry to get married, which was another subject that surprised him, while others were put at the convent at a very young age that they got used to it and felt embarrassed to leave it once they grew up, especially if they did not have families who could support them. The convent was also used by rich families who chose to put their younger daughters there to preserve their chastity and to learn discipline and manners that only the nuns could teach. The convent in a sense was depicted as refuge for women who were poor or who needed and /or wanted discipline or for women who were seeking religious fulfillment. He said in his account: "Some families like to enroll their young daughters in the convent to protect them from the earthly harms and the shame of the self talks. They keep her there to guard, save and preserve her until

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<sup>46</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 111.

<sup>47</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi Al-Ghassani. *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 55.

she reaches the age of marriage.”<sup>48</sup> To confirm the credibility of his words, al-Ghassani recounted the story of a beautiful young girl who, when they visited the convent, was wearing different clothes from the other nuns. When he asked about her, he was told that her parents had left her there only for a certain period of time till she reached the age of marriage and then she would be returned to her family.<sup>49</sup> While recounting these information, he used expressions like “sa’altu ‘anha”<sup>50</sup> (I asked about her) and “Mimma ra’ayt”<sup>51</sup> (among the things I saw) which reflected al-Ghassani’s interest, curiosity, and attention for credibility and accuracy in transmitting information; he was an active observer of the nuns.

Al-Ghassani explained that the nuns had different doctrines and teachings as well as a hierarchy within the Christian institution. Then, he moved to talk about another category of nuns which was more reserved and more isolated from the world than the one he previously mentioned. He explained how hard it was for them to keep contact with the outer world and their own families whom they saw and talked to only from a small window in a dark place that no one can be seen from both parts. In describing the way of life of one of the strictest category of them all, he stated that: “They live a life of extreme monasticism and austerity. They are imprisoned with no way out, they do not get married, wear good clothes, enjoy their time or any other earthly matters. They are the women version of the friars.”<sup>52</sup> What is also interesting about al-Ghassani’s discourse is that he did not essentialize them into one entity of the nuns but tried to explain to his readers the different categories and characteristics of at least two types of nuns. He engaged with them in discussions and gave them a voice to speak in his account. He pitied them for the life they led as he saw it as pointless and a mere torture of the self that Allah would not want for his creatures. While one of the women at the convent told him: “May the Lord guide us and you into the road of salvation, only Him knows where we are heading”<sup>53</sup>, al-Ghassani answered in whisper:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Translation is mine.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi Al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 56.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 57. Translation is mine.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 75. Translation is mine.

“To hell –an evil refuge indeed!”<sup>54</sup> which is a clear statement that though al-Ghassani was open to learn about this new culture, he was not pleased with what he learnt and it did not make any sense to him why a person would seclude herself that way. He wanted to learn about them but he was unwilling to accept their cultural and religious difference.

Before traveling to Spain, Malta, Naples and Sicily, al-Meknassi knew that he was going to a new land to meet foreign people who were different in most aspects. In both of his travel accounts *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir* and *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, he tackled the issue of the nuns who represented a new experience for them to learn more about Christianity not just as a religion but also as an institution. That is why; he tried to inform himself about his destinations, peoples, history and religions. Nabil Matar states:

Al-Miknasi recognized the importance of his mission and so before leaving for Spain, he prepared himself by reading the New Testament carefully: he needed to know the theological background of the community among which he would travel. He also consulted Arab-Islamic writings about al-Andalus/Spain, such as accounts about the Arab conquest in the eighth century, geographical compendia, information about the Spanish Reconquista, and Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maqqari’s massive *Nafh al-tib* about the history and civilization of al-Andalus.<sup>55</sup>

Al-Maknassi was culturally and religiously aware of the differences between the world of Islam and the world of Christendom and thought that the least he could do as an ambassador was to learn and study about the countries he was going to visit, especially in areas that concern him as a Muslim man. This mental and intellectual preparation before embarking on the journey shows his interest and willingness to make it more cultural than strictly political. His aim was not just to accomplish his diplomatic

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 57. Translation is mine.

<sup>55</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 12.

missions but also to have contact with the host country, its people, history and culture included.

In *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, al-Meknassi's first encounter with the European nuns was in the Spanish village Elche where they were invited by the nuns to visit them at the convent; in the same way that al-Ghassani was invited. This cultural and religious invitation to Muslim travelers is important in the sense that it shows two different cultures and religions in contact rather than in clash. Like his predecessor al-Ghassani, he described the lifestyle of the nuns whom he called "*mokhat*" from the Spanish word "*monja*" which means a nun. He called them with the same term they were called in their country and he asked about them and described them and their encounter as follows: "That evening, we went to see women nuns, called *mokhat*. They live in a locked house from which they never leave. None visits them, and if one of them becomes sick, the physician comes to the house and the caretaker and some old women lead him in, surrounding him on all sides, and a monk enters with him. He examines the patient and prescribes the medication and then leaves." And he goes on: "When one of them dies, she is buried in a cemetery inside the building. There is a large window in the building wall with a wooden panel: if they want to send anything out, they place it on the panel and rotate it to be picked up outside by the one in authority; the same is done if they want to receive something from the outside."<sup>56</sup> His initial description of the nuns was fairly objective since he gave a factual description of their life inside the convent, how they lived, communicated with the outside world and what happened to them when they died. He did not judge or comment on their religiosity which contradicted his own faith but he tried to give an overview of their life in the convent. These nuns belonged to a Christian system which eradicated the presence of Muslims in Spain and captured others whom he was sent to negotiate their ransom, yet he was able to distance his emotions regarding the Spanish inquisition and the nuns as representatives of both the Christian faith and the Spanish torture of Muslims.

Al-Meknassi did mourn *al-Andalus* / Andalusia in his account that whenever he mentioned any city's or village's name, he would follow it with the expression

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 78. Translation is mine.

“A’adaha Allaho Dar al-Islam” (May Allah return it to the house of Islam). However, he was aware of the difference between the Christian faith and the horrors that were committed towards the Muslims that he never attacked Christianity as a religion nor prophet Issa / Jesus. Whenever he mentioned the prophet’s name he said the expression “Alayhi as-Salam” (Peace be upon him)<sup>57</sup> which is different from any Orientalist’s discourse about prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The Muslim travelers believed in Issa /Jesus as a prophet and this belief is among the five pillars of Islam which is why they did not attack him in any of their accounts and was respected in every discourse that included him.

Later on, al-Meknassi described how the nuns chose their monastic life in the convent and gave up on all the worldly desires for religious piety and devotion. This description is similar to a great extent to al-Ghassani’s report about the conditions of taking the girls/women in into the convent as nuns. Al-Meknassi, again, did not acknowledge his source of information and whether he read it or it was told to him during his visit. He stated:

The truth about these *mokhat* is that if a young girl or a woman chooses to become a nun and separate herself from people and live ascetically, or so they claimed, she enters a house that they call *alkanbant*/convent, and remains there for a year. Then, she is asked whether she wants to leave or whether she yearns for the things of the world, and if she decides to leave, then none stops her. But if she decides to become a nun and renounce the world, marriage, and everything else, she takes a vow that she no longer desires anything of the world’s transitory things and enters into this depraved contract, which deviates from the path of truth. Henceforth, she will never be able to leave, nor have a desire to leave.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 60. Translation is mine.

<sup>58</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 13.

He described the first year of the convent to be experimental for the young women who decided to join it. He did not mention that they were forced into it but they willingly joined and they were given the chance after a year to reconsider their decision if they want to lead that life forever or if they want to leave the convent and go back to their normal life. He represented them as independent women who exercised their own agency through their acceptance or refusal to remain nuns. They willingly chose whatever they wanted and they had to stick to that decision for the rest of their lives. He might not have seen their choice and life as “the path of truth” but he did not attack them.

When he met the nuns and engaged with them in a conversation, he understood the hidden reason behind their insistent invitation and that they were not as naïve as he initially thought. He stated: “[...] and then [one the nuns] complained about the people in the city who never helped them by sending them alms. In that manner, she cast her net and prepared her trap. Because we had with us many dignitaries from among the *Rum*, I made her a donation, although it was against my better judgment that I should help infidelity.”<sup>59</sup> When al-Meknassi realized that he was trapped by the nuns to give them alms or donations, he hesitated because giving alms to Christians whom he saw as infidels was against his beliefs but because he was a diplomat which forced him to be diplomatic and tactful in his actions and gave a donation which the nuns appreciated. This act is a form of cultural and religious tolerance of the other’s differences and a form of social existence and coexistence among two representatives of two different religions, the nuns and a Muslim whose father was an imam and he succeeded him after his death before he became a governor of Tetouan and later an ambassador.<sup>60</sup> He also was not surprised from this trap which the nuns set up for him to give a donation as he harshly criticized the friars whom he believed misused their position as religious Christian men and turned mission into begging people for money under the cover of religion, especially when he stated: “they are the biggest beggars in

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 13. Translation is mine.

<sup>60</sup> Mohammed al-Akhdar, *Al-Hayat al-Adabiya fi al-Maghreb*, p. 334.

Madrid, may Allah destroy them and clean this country from them.”<sup>61</sup> He was convinced that the Christian institution was a corrupt system at its core. He attacked them for using religion for their own personal purposes to satisfy their greed.

A year later, in 1881, al-Meknassi traveled to Malta, Naples and Sicily.<sup>62</sup> This journey would mark his second encounter with the European nuns in Naples whom he described in the same manner that he described the Spanish nuns. He dedicated a section in his book *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir* in which he referred to the conditions of acceptance into the convent, the life style of the nuns, the choice of some families to let their daughters in the convent to preserve them until marriage and how they are given a chance after a year to decide whether they want to stay or leave.<sup>63</sup> He then recounted a story which he was told:

I was told that the emperor of Germany drove all nuns out and forced them to marry and gave orders forbidding these kinds of houses. His deeds reached the pope, the foundation of infidelity, and the latter became extremely worried that the bases of his infidelity might be undermined [...] So he rode in person to the emperor and warned him especially against abolishing nuns, and then he left. But it was said that the emperor did not heed him and continued to dismantle the nuns’ houses.”<sup>64</sup>

Al-Meknassi was thrilled to hear this story of a Christian emperor abolishing the system of the nuns and closing the convents. He also did indeed attack the Pope and the papal institution in a different section as well and criticized them for being immorally corrupt and for permitting and prohibiting things in exchange for money

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<sup>61</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 106. Translation is mine.

<sup>62</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi., *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p.71.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 206-207.

<sup>64</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 13.

even when they are against the Christian faith.<sup>65</sup> We notice a change in his discourse from the previous account to this one which is more aggressive and critical of the Christian institutions in Europe whom he deemed as corrupt for their use of religion for money and power.

In Spain, al-Meknassi's discourse of the nuns was based mostly on what he saw and witnessed during their encounter. He spoke about them without judgment, stereotyping or sexualization. However, in Naples, he questioned their sexuality and religiousness when he said: "In their isolation, those nuns committed many sins. Having renounced men, they joined with Satan and practiced lesbian activities [*musahaqa*]. There were many houses of nuns in this city, each house having an abbess [*muqadama*]. I was told that the number of nuns was 5,000 [...]"<sup>66</sup> He criticized the nuns of disguising behind religion to exert their sexual fantasies which were forbidden in a Christian society. Al-Meknassi' considered their lesbianism a result to the nuns' seclusion from the world and from men which only made them fall in a "bigger sin". Al-Meknassi did not specify whether he heard this somewhere or it was just his own conclusion which shakes the credibility of his discourse about the nuns whom in the previous account described as "pious" and "reserved".

In his account *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, Idriss ben Idriss al-Amraoui made a brief reference to the nuns he met in France. While on a visit to one of the residences of the old French soldiers in Paris, al-Amraoui was delighted to see the cleanliness and care that was given to the place as well as to the residents. It was a place for the soldiers either who got old, or who were badly injured and could not take care of themselves or did not have anyone to take care of them, the country did that by providing this place specifically for them to cater for their needs. The nuns were there to serve the men and help them out with what they needed. According to al-Amraoui: "We saw some of them who were being sat by the side of the bed by some women and they made them eat a soft mash with a small spoon. When they saw us walking by, they followed us with their eyes and did not like the way we looked."<sup>67</sup> He described

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 14. Translation is mine.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 81. Translation is mine.

the way they were taken care of by the women and that they looked at them with hostility because of the way they dressed, then proceeded to say: “These women who cater for them wear a special dress and we were told that they were *moutarahibat* / nuns who refused to get married and devoted themselves to their service in order to become closer to their Lord.”<sup>68</sup> Al-Amraoui appreciated the way things were taken care of there at that residence. Everything was clean, neat and well organized without any further comment neither about the nuns nor about the hostile looks they gave them when they entered. Here ended the talk about the nuns and he made no reaction to what was told and he changed the subject right away. It is unusual from an outspoken observer and a religious man, *hajj*,<sup>69</sup> critical about religious and cultural issues in the French society like al-Amraoui to let this subject slide without any criticism or reflection but he did.

Driss Jaidi also dedicated few paragraphs in his account *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya* to speak about the nuns he met in Rome, Italy. When in Rome, in 1876, Jaidi visited a hospital along with the Moroccan ambassador Mohammed Zebdi where a nun came straight to them to welcome them. Jaidi stated:

When we finished, one of the city’s nuns came straight to the ambassador. She was wearing a long woolen skirt with a woolen hood that came down on her back separated from the skirt and underneath it a white dress similar to it. She was covering her head and she welcomed us cheerfully. She was a young beautiful woman who mentioned that she was originally French. She said that she gave up on her husband and family and restricted herself to the service of the patients.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 81. Translation is mine.

<sup>69</sup> Al-Amraoui performed *Hajj* before his travel to France and later he traveled to Spain about which he did not leave a written account. See *Al-Hayat al-Adabiya fi al-Maghreb ‘ala ‘Ahd ad-Dawla al-‘Alawiya, 1894-1664/1311-1075* by Mohammed al-Akhdar.

<sup>70</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 349. Translation is mine.

Jaidi gave a precise description of the nun's look that reflected her modesty and morality. The nun explained to them that she gave up on her husband and family to become a nun and she dedicated herself to the service of other people. She was their guide throughout the hospital showing them every corner of it and how they took care of their patients. The hospital was specifically for blind people of all categories where they had been taken care of and taught how to adapt and take care of themselves.<sup>71</sup> He was amazed to witness the nuns' selflessness, altruism and devotion in taking care of others who could not take care of themselves as he was impressed by that specific nun's organization in running that place.

Another Christian religious female figure whose name appeared in most of the Moroccan travel accounts about Europe is Mary or Mariam. Mary is not only a Christian figure but a Muslim figure as well who is highly revered in both the Quran and *Sunna* which is reflected in her representation by the travelers who often referred to her as "*Maryam as-Saliha*" that is to say "the virtuous Mary". There was a consensus among them in describing her as a pious person which shows a stark difference between the Orientalist representations of Muslim figures in comparison to the Orientalist one.

Al-Ghassani, al-Meknassi, al-Amraoui and Jaidi were among the few Moroccan travelers who tackled the issue of Christian nuns in their traveler accounts. They provided similar yet different representations of them which reflected more about the identity of the travelers and their degree of openness and tolerance towards their religious and culture other. These representations give the Occidentalists discourse of the West a whole different dimension from the Orientalist one which was based on the essentialization, degradation and stereotyping of the religious Other.<sup>72</sup> These differences between the two discourses confirm that "Occidentalism" can never be analyzed in the same way as Orientalism. The nuns were highly respected by Moroccan travelers for their modesty, chastity and dedication to the causes they were involved in, which served their societies and facilitated the lives of the people they

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., pp. 350-351.

<sup>72</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 27.

helped. In their search for the “strange” and “new”, the nuns fell easily into that category and they were able to accumulate valuable information about them.

### **c. Fascination with European Female Performers in Accounts by al-Ghazzal, al-Meknassi, Bensaid, as-Saffar and al-Amraoui**

The theater was among the places which the Moroccan travelers to Europe visited for the first time and which they had never seen before and was considered to be among the *'aja'ib wa ghara'ib* (wonders and marvels) of the West. Their European hosts often arranged for them to visit the theaters and enjoy the plays and operas performed by both men and women and attended by both sexes as well. They also visited the circus whose performers blew their minds with their acrobatic movements. Some of the travelers accepted those invitations out of curiosity, others out of courtesy and a few declined the offer as it contracted their beliefs of the separation between the sexes. Those who attended enjoyed the performances by female European singers, musicians, actresses and dancers in some of the most prestigious theaters in Europe. They attended events to which they were not accustomed, especially where the women were the performers; some travelers enjoyed the performances while others did not. However, the theater represented a cultural space and a contact zone<sup>73</sup> where the East met the West and also where the travelers were able to engage in the European culture.

In the theater, they were introduced to a new world of theatrical performances that amazed them and blew their minds as they were a “magical” imitation to the real world from the costumes to the decor. This amazement was meticulously captured in a painting by Antoine Coypel in 1682 of the Moroccan ambassador Mohammed Tamim<sup>74</sup> and his retinue while they were watching *Comédie –Italienne* in Paris.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ambassador Mohammed Tamim was sent by Sultan Mouley Ismail to France in 1682. He did not leave a written account of his journey but the European newspapers gave an exclusive coverage to his embassy.

<sup>75</sup> Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide; Bertrand Rondot, *Visitors to Versailles: From Louis XIV to the French Revolution* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018), p. 151.

Mohammed Tamim mastered foreign languages like Spanish and Italian which allowed him to fully immerse and engage in the cultural events that were programmed for him by his hosts.<sup>76</sup> This painting could be a projection to all the other Moroccan travelers who came in contact with Europe because it chronicles the moment of contact and bewilderment with the European cultural Other with everything that that Otherness entailed. Their eyes were fixed at what they saw and their jaws dropped of amazement at the wonders and marvels of Europe. As Nabil Matar states: “For the Magharibi would were not accustomed to theater, it may not have been possible to separate fiction from reality.”<sup>77</sup> As the painting did indeed depict a moment of fascination where for the travelers’ reality merged with fiction that they could not tell which is which.



13. Ambassador Mohammed Tamim (on the right) next to Hajj Ali Maanino governor of Salé (on the left) and his retinue during a theatrical performance in Paris in 1682.

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<sup>76</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 110.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Ahmed ben Mehdi al-Ghazzal who wrote *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi alMouhadana wa al-Jihad* about his journey to Spain in 1766-1767, attended a musical performance in Manouar city which he highly admired. The performance was a singing evening by a young girl who captivated the audience with her soft powerful voice. Al-Ghazzal praised the girl's talent whom he described as:

Among the most wondrous things I saw there is a young girl whom I thought was only nine years old. She performed the whole evening singing with people of music, and then she started dancing in an unusual way. She played with *al-ud* with her hands. When done with it, she silenced the musicians and started speaking to the audience while they were all ears. Once she started to cry, then hit her chest with her hand [...] she continued that way for about an hour. Then we realized that she was reciting a written text and performing what they call "comedy".<sup>78</sup>

Al-Ghazzal was introduced into a unique experience that fascinated him and during which he could not make sense of what it was. He was impressed by the girl's audacity and confidence in front of the audience as well her talents whether in singing or in acting. He could not understand what she was performing but he enjoyed the musical part because he did not need to understand the language to enjoy the music, but he definitely needed to understand the language while watching a play to understand its events. When the girl started acting, he did not know what she was doing which confused him. Then it was explained to him that this performance is known as "comedy" in Europe. Most Moroccan travelers did not understand the host country's language which was a hindrance mainly in understanding events such as plays and comedies. Al-Ghazzal did not go on describing the girl nor did he comment or give his own opinion about women's performance in front of men. He tried to limit himself to

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<sup>78</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 174. Translation is mine.

describing what he saw without any personal feedback or criticism on the events he attended.

During Al-Meknassi's journey in Spain in 1799, he was not invited to the theater as his hosts planned other cultural activities for him and his retinue like the bullfight, the parties at his residence...etc. On their way back to Morocco and when they reached the city of Cartagena where they spent twenty days, al-Meknassi was amazed by an acrobatic performance that left him speechless. He said:

Among the most wondrous things I saw there is a man who had two daughters; one fourteen and the other seven years old, who came from Italy and were performing on ropes. I have seen many people play this game but no one can do it like this wonder. You would not believe their performance until you see it with your own eyes.”<sup>79</sup>

He then moved on to describe in detail their movements on the ropes, how they jumped, flipped, stood on one leg, danced and walked on them while folding their eyes. Both al-Ghazzal and al-Meknassi described the female performers as “wondrous” beings performing “wondrous” acts.

When they visited Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1881-1883, al-Meknassi was able to visit the theater / opera house on several occasions, in addition to the circus. He had conflicting views about the acting in the comedies they attended and he was impressed by the acrobatic performances he saw either in the streets or in the circus. The first time was in Naples about which he gave a long detailed description about the architecture of the place, how big it was, the people who attended ...etc. He stated: “All was the work of the imagination except the human beings: they were real. And if you could see how they presented a battle scene at sea with sailing ships and horses on land: it was stunning.”<sup>80</sup> He was fascinated by the depiction of reality which the theater and actors provided which stunned him as he was bearing witness of the

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<sup>79</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 166. Translation is mine.

<sup>80</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 110.

European innovation and creativity in Art. As he watched the play, he became immersed in its events because they were close to reality.

Later on in Naples, al-Meknassi was invited for dinner to the house of one of the notables who invited many people over including an opera singer to perform after the feast. The singer captured al-Meknassi's heart and mind from the moment he saw her. He said:

A girl appeared from her quarters, dressed in white, like a halo around the crescent. She swayed around, from one place to another, reappearing as bright as the crescent. The crowd associated her [with God] and blasphemed. [...]When she struck that instrument, which resembled the *oud*, she made you forget the psalms of David; and when she sang without instrumental accompaniment, she made you forget the world and all that was in it.<sup>81</sup>

*Al-Faqih* / The jurist al Meknassi could not help but fall in love with the singer. He flattered her and was cast under her spell and temptation; a temptation which many travelers feared in their contact with European women. He admitted that the singer could make any religious man forget about his religion, beliefs and the world around him. He referenced several poems from different Arabic poems in order to praise her beauty and seduction. He went on flattering her:

She was a masterpiece of the masterpieces of time, not to be found in Damascus or Yemen. Nothing was like her or even came close. When she sauntered, she was like a spear, and when she parted her lips in a smile, she divided hearts, and if she looked from the corner of her eye, she left hearts broken with sorrow. When she approached, she killed, and when she withdrew, she conquered the hearts and prevailed, having dissipated minds and dreams.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

In both his travel accounts, al-Meknassi portrayed a certain image about himself that reflected his reserve, firmness and composure. In this section, we notice the poised religious man had been shaken by the Christian female singer who managed to catch his attention, mind and heart. She revealed the emotional weakness of the Moroccan traveler towards European beauty that could soften even the coldest of hearts with their revealed clothes.

During her whole performance, he kept praising her and admiring her beauty until he realized that he was falling in love with her. Then, he decided to leave before it was too late. He said:

I was afraid to be one of those whose eyesight would lead his heart astray so that the innocent would be punished for the sin of the guilty. [...] I decided to leave at sunrise before we were bewitched, and to leave while still unharmed before we became corroded. I did not want to be her friend lest I be wounded by her glances. [...] I determined to leave before I fell in the snares of passion and possession.<sup>83</sup>

Al-Meknassi is one of the ambassadors who never turned an invitation from his hosts to attend any event. He always agreed to participate with them in their festivities and to join them in their social and cultural gatherings in order to strengthen his diplomatic ties with the countries he visited. He never regarded the European women in both his accounts to form a threat to him or to his faith because he considered himself to be a well-established religious person. Meeting the tempting singer, changed all his assumptions and made him realize that as a human being, he was vulnerable towards her and this realization made him eventually leave the house of the notables as soon as he could.

Later on, in the city of Palermo in Sicily, they had another chance to attend a comedy at the theater which al-Meknassi described in detail as well. This time, he was not impressed by the comedy and the performers. He stated: “They performed various

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 111-112.

acts, each in a different manner, until they grew tired.”<sup>84</sup> He could not understand the language which made it hard for him to enjoy the comedy. He continued: “Their follies have no meaning or goal, neither limit nor purpose.”<sup>85</sup> He failed to understand the meaning and the purpose behind the comedy due to the problem of language that formed a barrier towards his understanding of the importance of cultural events. He assumed that it was just a form of entertainment and a waste of time but in fact it was an entertaining medium through which several morals, issues and messages were discussed and transmitted. In such instances, the fact that most travelers did not know foreign languages and relied only on translators during their journeys must have been a cultural hindrance for them to fully engage with their host cultures and to understand the true meaning behind certain practices and traditions.

Theatrical plays seemed challenging for al-Meknassi to absorb and understand but he admired acrobatics as they were an easier form of expression that did not involve the necessity to know the language. About one of the acrobatic performances that he admired he said: “A girl stood on it, one foot on each plank. Then they put a coin behind her and slowly, she bent backward until her head reached the table and she caught the rial in her mouth and straightened up. This is so extraordinary that the mind has to see it to believe it.”<sup>86</sup> He enjoyed those performances which he thought that the mind could not comprehend and as a lover and seeker of the wonders and marvels of Europe, al-Meknassi also visited a circus and was stunned and impressed by their performers. A female performer caught his attention by her athleticism and physical flexibility. He described her:

[...] a girl came out on the back of a horse that ran swiftly around in the space. Then she stood up on the back of the running horse. They brought out another horse onto which she jumped and rode sidewise with the other horse. The horses continued running swiftly for a while and then she lay on the backs of the two horses while they ran. It was said that she

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

would put her head on the back of the horse and raise her legs up, but she did not do that that night. There is nothing extraordinary in that for they are devils that can perform the impossible.<sup>87</sup>

Al-Meknassi is one of the Moroccan travelers who wrote the most about female performers in Europe who impressed him. During their performances, he was so amazed that he could not stop to attack or to criticize the women for being unveiled or for mixing with other men. He was immersed in the performances which he constantly praised for being “extraordinary” and “surreal”. His openness towards his hosts’ invitations allowed him to see different sides of the European life and people and gave him original context for his readers in Morocco, those who had never set foot outside country and those who were to be sent later to Europe as ambassadors as a reference to know what to expect when they embark on their journeys.

The circus had been a space of marvelous performances that blew the Moroccan travelers’ minds. Mohammed Bensaid’s ambassadorial mission to France allowed him and his retinue to experience things they had never seen before, among which was the circus. The women were always present in every performance. He said:

We saw in a place called the theater many wonders.[...] then a girl came out riding a horse. She made it run while she was dancing above it and standing on one leg while holding the other in the air. Then three girls started fencing each other to take something made from red silk by force from one of them. The horses were running in accordance with the music.<sup>88</sup>

Then he described another female performer who was doing acrobatic movement on a horse as well.<sup>89</sup> His minute descriptions of the women’s movements are the only

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>88</sup> Mohammed Bensaid, *At-Taarif bi Bani Said as-Slaouiyyin wa Nobda ‘an Wataaiqihim*. Vol II, p. 31. Translation is mine.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

evidence that what he saw was indeed among the “wonders” of France. He did not go further to express his amazement as other travelers did.

The circus was among the places that amazed the Moroccan travelers in Europe despite the fact that in Morocco there was another equivalent to it which was *al-Halqa* (square) which is an open space that included storytellers, performers, acrobats, snake charmers, fortunetellers...etc. People, whether rich or poor, would gather around them to see the performances while standing and often for free. According to Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson: “It [*al-Halqa*] is the most overtly theatrical amongst artistic spaces in traditional market-places and fairs.”<sup>90</sup> *Al-Halqa* is a traditional form of the circus that provides a space of entertainment to the people but in Europe, the travelers were introduced to a more sophisticated form of the *Halqa* which was only based on acrobatic performance that fascinated them. The presence of the women in these performances added to their theatricality and to the sense of amazement for the travelers.

The theater was also a space that Bensaid thought was worth mentioning in his short travel account. He could not understand the language yet he was attentive about everything that went on the stage. He gave detailed descriptions of the actors, actresses, the décor, the singing, acting and he even tried to make sense of the story just based on what he saw. Clearly, he mentioned the women’s presence as actresses and singers in the play and put an emphasis on their dresses: “They wore strange dresses through which you could see their whole bodies and when they danced, the dresses would flare above their knees.”<sup>91</sup> His shock is expressed in his descriptions but they never go beyond that. Whether in writing about the female acrobats or the actresses and singers, he refrained from stating his own beliefs and commentaries about what was going before his eyes. What is for sure, is that he did not consider to be a normal things; otherwise, he would not have given it ample space in his short account.

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<sup>90</sup> Khalid Amine; Marvin Carlson, *The Theatres in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia: Performance Tradition in the Maghreb* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> Mohammed Bensaid, *At-Taarif bi Bani Said as-Slaouiyyin wa Nobda ‘an Wataaiqihim*, p. 33. Translation is mine.

In the account *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, as-Saffar spoke a great deal about the theaters he visited during his journey to France. Unlike, al-Meknassi who regarded the play to have no meaning or goal, as-Saffar knew what a play as a genre meant as well as the different art forms presented in the theater. According to as-Saffar:

Among their spectacles are the “theater”, the “comedy”, and the “opera”, where they put on plays that may be bizarre, humorous, fantastic, or heroic. It is seriousness in the form of levity, for the play may be a lesson in proper conduct, or a rare and marvelous story, or a dilemma of a special sort that leads them to a more perfect knowledge of things.<sup>92</sup>

To as-Saffar, the play was usually more than just weird incomprehensible movements; they tackled serious issues in a subtle manner. He gave a minute description of every aspect of the theater. He was amazed by the theater as a space as well as an art display. By then, as-Saffar had already seen much of French women’s liberation in the French society and how free she was in her behaviors and manners; that is why, he was not surprised to see women on stage and did not have a negative feedback on their performances.

From his account, we can detect that as-Saffar attended and heard about different theaters that left a great impact on him. Unlike other travelers, he tried to explain to his readers that the theater was more than just a means of entertainment. He spoke about the difference between the different plays and that they were bearers of certain values and morals that were transmitted through this form of Art.<sup>93</sup> As far as the female performers are concerned, he said:

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<sup>92</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846*, pp. 142-143.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-143.

Sometimes their plays include women dancing. They clasp each other by the hands and begin a marvelous dance, intertwining their limbs and bending their joints until their mouths nearly touch their heels, then leaping on one leg and weaving in and out until it seems they are not human. At other times, one of the men takes hold of a woman and the two dance together.<sup>94</sup>

The description of the dance that as-Safar gave, indicates that it was a ballet concert. Most probably he did not know its name or its function but still he enjoyed the “marvelous” show and gave attention to every move the women made during their dance. He also spoke of the mixing between the sexes during some European dances on stage but he did not dwell on that since he already gave it ample space while speaking about dancing parties that were held in their honor.

Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui also spoke about the comedies he attended in France and their importance to French people in the entertainment field. He recited the importance of music and dance for reducing stress and fatigue. The ambassadorial delegation attended two comedies. In one of them, there were two of the women performers who were riding horses and playing different acrobatic games on the back of the horses, running over them, flying and stretching. In describing one of the female performers, al-Amraoui said:

A woman came out on the back of the horse which she pulled into the center of the stage and she jumped in the air on one leg, switching it while the horse running very fast. While jumping on the horse, she started taking her clothes off one after the other and then returned them back on while the horse is still running and she was still jumping above it doing wondrous things.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>95</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 91. Translation is mine.

Al-Amraoui was surprised to see how those acrobatic performers risked their lives with such games and people enjoyed that. He criticized French people for caring too much about the earthly world and all the vanishing glare around it. It is important to note that when al-Amraoui was first invited to the comedy, he declined the offer and replied that it is forbidden in his religion to see women dancing.<sup>96</sup> He considered the theaters and artistic performances by women to be a form of temptation.

The theater was a new space which the travelers discovered in Europe and which bewildered and fascinated most of them. The problem which they encountered during those visits to the theaters was the problem of language which is noticed from the way they referred to it. Al-Meknassi referred to the theater as “*dar alfourja*”<sup>97</sup> (the house of the spectacle) and “*wabra*”<sup>98</sup> (Opera) and Jaidi referred to it as “*bayt alfourja*” (the house of the spectacle) and “*fourjat theatroi*”<sup>99</sup> (spectacle of the theater). Ahmed al-Mekkaoui explains that the travelers tried to overcome this problem of language through their attempt to use the terms which reflected things that they were not familiar with in their civilizational frame so they looked for meanings in Arabic that could convey the meaning of the word in the visited culture.<sup>100</sup> The theater also challenged the travelers as they struggled to understand the meaning behind the comedies they watched but it was also an opportunity to observe the European people inside the theaters and how they interacted.

The theater is mentioned in most of the Moroccan travel accounts about Europe as it was considered to be among the “wonders and marvels” of the West. Each traveler had his own experience while attending the plays and the comedies. Mohammed ben al-Hassan al-Hajjoui was among the travelers who were confused by the concept of theatrical performances that he did not how to act in such setting, especially with the problem of not knowing the language. He did not like the theater as

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>97</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 23.

<sup>98</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 184.

<sup>99</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 356.

<sup>100</sup> Ahmed Mekkaoui, *Ar-Rahaloun al-Maghariba wa Oroba*, pp. 62-63.

he considered it to be “inappropriate and unfamiliar to us”<sup>101</sup>. After the performance, he said: “People clap at the end of the performance and it was appropriate that we do the same so we did. I was clapping without understanding anything and I do not even know what I liked since clapping was a sign of liking for them. Yes indeed, that theater was among the biggest and most prestigious theaters in the world.”<sup>102</sup> The problem of language again hindered the bridges of communication with the host country as they were unable to communicate or to know about the Other’s culture. Al-Hajjoui was impressed by the place in itself but not about the performances which according to him did not adhere to social norms that he was used to in his own country which made him unable to appreciate them.

Responses towards female performers varied from one Moroccan traveler to the other. While they enjoyed some parts of the performances, there were other parts that remained strange and foreign to their religion and culture which they could not understand, and sometimes tolerate but they were amazed by the women’s performances, especially in the circus.

#### **D. Representing European Women as a Working Force during the Rise of the Industrial Age in Europe in Accounts by al-Ghassani, as-Saffari, al-Amraoui and Jaidi**

During their visits to different European countries, the Moroccan travelers noticed and wrote the women who worked in different places. While women in Morocco were restricted the confines of the house, European women entered the job market, which was usually dominated by men. This economic participation of European women for the well-being of their families and their nations intrigued Moroccan travel writers to reflect upon and write about, especially Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, Mohammed as-Saffar, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui and Driss Jaidi.

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<sup>101</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroubia 1919*, p. 73. Translation is mine.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 73. Translation is mine.

In 1690 Spain, when Mohammed al-Ghassani and his retinue reached Cordoba, he referred to its merchants as being mostly women.<sup>103</sup> This was his first encounter with women as a working force in Spain, yet he did not make any further comment about it. Later on, when they reached Chicla city, they stayed at a hotel which was a new experience to the Moroccan travelers who appreciated it since it allowed travelers to travel without packing much luggage. He mentioned that usually women worked with their husbands on such projects. He said: "When a person wants to check out of the hotel, the owner's wife or his daughter comes, as she is in charge, and she tell you how much you should pay for the food, the fodder, the rent of the room and the bed. The guest has to pay whatever she counted without any argument."<sup>104</sup> Al-Ghassani commended them for this "house" that gathered travelers under one roof and provided them with protection from the outside world at night and secured both food and shelter. He thought that these places encouraged travelers to go on trips since they provided everything that they might need.

Al-Ghassani also witnessed the role women played in providing for their families through their work outside the house. They worked along with men in some of the biggest markets in Madrid to which they came from all the nearby villages to sell their products. According to him:

The markets in this city are wide and big full with men and women who practice trade, crafts and industry. Most of what it is eaten in Madrid comes from the villages nearby by women who come riding their animals and sell what they brought. Some of them take bread to specific houses according to how much these houses ordered as the *nasara*/Christians do not bake bread at home, and are dependent on the market for whatever they need.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 45.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 59. Translation is mine.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 88. Translation is mine.

Spanish women were able to take their household work off into a higher level by meeting the needs of the Spanish market. He noticed that the Spanish families depended heavily on those big markets for every day needs of food and crafts, and the women were there to work and get paid for it. They also worked as managers, cooks, cashiers, waitresses at restaurants and hotels to help their husbands and fathers manage their businesses. He goes on to say: “There are several stores in the market that cook food for strangers, guests and travelers who have nowhere to go. A man would go in and tell the woman whether he would like to eat meat, chicken or fish. Then he would eat, drink and pay the woman for all of that, then leave.”<sup>106</sup> Al-Ghassani was impressed by how organized the Spanish merchants were at the market and how both men and women worked coherently in the same place, each doing what they do best. European women were given a chance to work and be productive beyond the borders of the house and the European society encouraged its women to succeed which is confirmed by al-Ghassani who mentioned that the women were provided a wide space in the center of the market to sell their produce.<sup>107</sup> The Moroccan traveler, who usually believed that the best place for a woman was her house, was able to notice this shift in gender roles concerning the European society. They were introduced to new ideas and concepts that challenged their preexisting beliefs and which would have been hard to fathom in their home country.

While in Spain, al-Ghassani had the chance to visit the hospitals which he called *Maristanat*<sup>108</sup> which he described in details and was impressed by their services. The fact that he thought that he should provide a lengthy description about them means that they were lacking in Morocco back then, or at least not functioning as well as the European’s. The *maristanat* or *bamaristanat* / hospitals were established for the first time by Muslim Caliphs who turned them into big buildings where not only all people are allowed to receive medical services but also a place where Muslim scientists could

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 88. Translation is mine.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>108</sup> *Maristan* is derived from the Persian word “*Bimaristan*” which means “the house of the sick” and it is used in Arabic to refer to hospitals which Muslims created in earlier centuries than on Europe. (see *Tarikh al-Bamaristanat fi al-Islam* by Ahmed Issa)

develop their medical cures and share their expertise.<sup>109</sup> It is assumed that the *maristan* was created by Amawi Khalifa al-Walid ben Abdelmalek in Damascus in 706, and in Morocco by Khalifa Abu Youssef Yaaqoub al-Mansour in Marrakech in 1189.<sup>110</sup> Those hospitals flourished the previous century but declined later on and were turned into mental institutions.<sup>111</sup> Al-Ghassani mentioned that the city has fourteen *maristanat* / hospitals which were big, clean and well-equipped. He visited one of them which was open for both men and women. He said: "In Spain, there are countless *maristanat*. In Madrid, there are fourteen. [...] They employ women to take care of old women and men to take care of old men. They are all extremely reserved and they take care of their patients without neglecting anything they might need."<sup>112</sup> He was impressed by the seriousness and sense of organization which those men and women exhibited in doing their job of taking care of the patients and he appreciated that though Spanish people did not mind the mixing between the two sections, in the hospital each gender took care of their own.

Shortly after, when a member of his retinue got sick, his hosts asked al-Ghassani to let them take him to the hospital but he refused.<sup>113</sup> This refusal is either because al-Ghassani was afraid that the man might be tempted since by the European women at the hospital, or he was afraid that the friars would take care of him or because he was afraid of the cultural meaning of the hospital /maristan in Morocco which was associated with a mental institution to restrict and tame mental illness through a series of experiments. Either way, this refusal shows the Muslim traveler's fear of their cultural other that they decided not to be divided or isolated from one another no matter what.

Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal traveled to Spain in 1766-1767 during which he also noticed that the women had hospital that was reserved for them and was

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<sup>109</sup> Ahmed Issa, *Tarikh al-Bamaristanat fi al-Islam* (Beirut: Dar ar-Raed al-Arabi, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.280.

<sup>111</sup> Mohammed Benchekroun, *Madhahir at-Taqaqa al-Maghribiya mina al-Qarn at-Talit 'Achar ila al-Qarn al-Khamis 'Achar* (Rabat: Matba'at ar-Rissala, 1982), p. 225.

<sup>112</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 91. Translation is mine.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

managed by other women as well. In his book *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, he stated: “On our way, we saw the window of a hospital that was wide and big and which consisted of many rooms and long benches and in the middle there were orange trees and pure water. It was designed was female patients whose caretakers were women like them who had no family and no money.”<sup>114</sup> Al-Ghazzal referred to the hospital as “*isbital*” which he must have heard it and used it as it is to refer to a place that is a health institution that did not exist in his country with the same characteristics that it did in Spain. Having a whole building for the women that was managed by the women must have impressed him that despite their openness towards the mixing of the sexes, they still separated between them when needed and provided a work opportunity for women who had no family or money and gave her the opportunity to become an active member in the Spanish society.

In 1779, Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi was escorted on a visit to a hospital in Toledo, Spain where he encountered women working as caretakers of other women. He said: “They showed us a hospital which looks like a *Maristan* in our country but it is cleaner and bigger and has people who hold different positions in it. [...] Women have their own section in this hospital which is run by old women who take care of them and mine have their own.”<sup>115</sup> And then when they reached the city of Cartagena, al-Meknassi mentioned that the people in this city were more involved in crafts, workmanship, and trade. He was impressed to see that most of their merchants were women.<sup>116</sup> In both instances al-Meknassi did not make any further comments about the women’s work outside the house but he seemed to appreciate the separation of the sexes at the hospital and that woman took care of womn and men took care of men.

During his visit to Naples in 1782, al-Meknassi noticed that women worked in the factories but he did not give any further comment. However, he was impressed by

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<sup>114</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 86. Translation is mine.

<sup>115</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 147. Translation is mine.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

a house which King Ferdinand IV had established for orphans and widows.<sup>117</sup> He stated:

This building was designated by the despot for orphans and widows who had no one to look after them. He appointed workers to search for them in the alleys and to bring them to this building where they would learn crafts and skills. [...] Every new year, he inspected them and whoever had reached eighteen years of age and had mastered his craft so he could earn enough to sustain himself, the despot gave him the tools of the trade and sent him off on his own. The same was done for widows.<sup>118</sup>

Al-Meknassi who referred to King Ferdinand as a “despot” was surprised and impressed to see the King’s achievement in his country. Taking care of the orphans and widows is a form of building a nation on a strong basis. He realized that European countries, Spain in particular, were training women and giving them a chance to be productive in their own society. The widows were a great example of women’s empowerment and emancipation within the community which lacked in al-Meknassi’s homeland. Throughout his travel account, we notice that reports on things that are more developed in the West than in his own country by giving examples of successful experiences like this one. These inputs could be considered a subtle implicit call for reform from a jurist to a conservative country where women were reduced to the house and the family.

When they reached Sicily, Palermo, al-Meknassi visited another place which was established and funded by the “despot” Ferdinand IV which was a girls’ orphanage. He stated:

One day, we entered into a big house for neglected female orphans. An old woman who is the guardian of the girls offered to show us the place.

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<sup>117</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 200.

<sup>118</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 121.

[...] She introduced us to the teachers who were all women who teach the girls some crafts like textile, sewing , spinning, embroidery and cooking and others' of women's crafts. The despot pays for their expenses, gives them clothes every year, and pays the women for teaching them. The girls stay in that house until they get married. [...]<sup>119</sup>

He was surprised that the “infidel” “despot” king of the Christians was attentive to the needs of some of the most vulnerable categories of any nation, the orphans and widows. Those visits opened the ambassador's eyes into a different level of humanity among the Christians. As Abdelmajid Keddouri reflected: “In writing in detail about Europe's achievements in different fields, they [Moroccan travelers] reflected their discrete grief and sorrow of Morocco's inability to keep up with the European development.”<sup>120</sup> The Moroccan travelers to Europe were able to experience the European development in all fields firsthand, among which is the participatory relationship between men and women as far as work is concerned. The European woman broke into different professions and competed with men outside the house which was deemed “masculine” in Morocco. Al-Maknassi was able to witness how girls and women are trained in different crafts in order to join the workforce along with the men. In this case, he elaborated in his descriptions but did not give any further personal comments regarding this issue that contracted with the situation of Moroccan women back in Morocco.

Moroccan ambassador Mohammed as-Saffar was sent to France in 1845-1846 which is a critical period in the history France that witnessed a rapid development on several levels Among which the industrial revolution, especially from 1789 to 1860.<sup>121</sup> This rapid shift in the French economy required a solid base of workers not just of men

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<sup>119</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, pp. 243-244. Translation is mine.

<sup>120</sup> Abd al Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, p. 78. Translation is mine.

<sup>121</sup> James McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 65

but of women as well who were employed as “*des ouvrières*” / factory workers.<sup>122</sup> Es-Saffar described French women as one of the pillars in some industries in France. Their work was essential to the nation’s economy and development and it was undeniably highly demanded. He said that in Lyon: “women are usually employed in the workshops both here and elsewhere, for they are the mainstay of the crafts.”<sup>123</sup> The country was also aware of the women as a working force that it did not hesitate to employ them and encourage them to excel in their works. He spoke of Lyon as a fast-growing industrious city which was being filled up with new infrastructures, buildings and factories which made them need women’s involvement in this challenge.<sup>124</sup> He was amazed and felt like he was inside a completely different world from what he normally knows. This journey allowed as-Saffar to witness women’s involvement in the work place and their work hand in hand with the men in the French factories and workshops. The female “*ouvrière*” was a new concept to any conservative Muslim traveler to mid-nineteenth century France.

While he was in Paris, es-Saffar came to realize how serious French men and women took their jobs. Women were working as hard as men did and they also cared about their wages and work conditions. According to him:

The people of Paris, men and women alike, are tireless in their pursuit of wealth. They are never idle or lazy. The women are like the men in this regard, or perhaps even more so. You will never see them at loose ends. Even though they have all kinds of amusements and spectacles of the most marvelous kinds, they are not distracted from their work, and give every moment its due.<sup>125</sup>

French women, and men, had all the distractions that could keep them away from work. They had the fancy theaters, the marvelous parties and all the places and activities of amusements, still nothing could distract them or pull them away from their

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>123</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters*, p. 112.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-113.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

focus on hard work and the accumulation of wealth. Es-Saffar mentioned that probably women are more eager for wealth than men; it is because women had a lot to prove and they were finally recognized as a working force as more or less as men. They had the ability to separate work from entertainment and put it at the highest rank of their priorities. Amusement had its own time which was after getting their work done; spectacles and festivities were just a way to relax and from their hectic life.

What as-Saffar missed is that things were not as easy as he saw them and the women were not welcomed in the industry with open arms as he thought. During that period, French women workers were put under the radar of economists, intellectuals and politicians who held opposing views as to whether women's participation in the industry was beneficial or not.<sup>126</sup> In his book *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, James McMillan mentioned a book called *L'Ouvrière*<sup>127</sup> by Jules Simon as one of the most influential books about this topic during that period. McMillan states:

In *L'Ouvrière*, Simon expressed his disquiet at the degree to which individual progress allegedly undermined the ideal of wife and mother and ruined the working-class family. Even if women workers in factories earned higher wages than in other forms of female employment, the price to be paid was always the renunciation of femininity and the comforts of home and hearth.<sup>128</sup>

It is interesting that while the French people were debating whether women's participation and work in industry is commendable or not, Moroccan Muslim travelers were impressed by this emancipation of the women and regarded it as a sign of development of the nation in which both components, men and women, work for the sake of their country's economy.

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<sup>126</sup> James McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics*, p. 111.

<sup>127</sup> *L'Ouvrière* is a book written by Jules Simon published in 1861.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Es-Saffar stressed on the importance of commerce in the French economy to the extent that it became a science by itself. He commended the French for turning every craft into a science that needed to be studied in order for them to become innovative. He also mentioned that women excelled in commerce. He pointed out: “The science of commerce is one of the sciences they teach and write down on books, and there are schools and libraries for it. The women are skilled in commerce just like the men, or even more so. The majority of the people running the shops are women.”<sup>129</sup> French people in general do not take things for granted and they worked hard on themselves to improve their businesses which he highly admired.

Al-Amraoui was also able to notice women’s participation outside the confines of the marital house. In speaking about rural French women in Lyon, he said “They have plenty of vegetables, fruits and beans. They form a big market in a big space at the center of the village since sun rise. The women enter carrying their vegetables, fruits and beans in their full carts. They keep dragging some of them with their hands and others with the help of donkeys and mules.”<sup>130</sup> Al-Amraoui who is known as an outspoken jurist *faqih* who is strict and firm towards anything that opposes or comes in contradiction with his Islamic beliefs and Moroccan culture, seems to accept women’s participation in the market along with the men and male customers. He does not criticize them for that or belittles their contribution in the service of their community. He described them in a respectful manner without any judgment and without attacking them for mixing with men. Probably, working women were the only category of women whom he did not criticize despite the fact that they were mixing with foreign men.

In the same respect, al-Amraoui goes on to speak about female employees in the printing house: “One of these machines is assisted by two women. One pushes the paper from the top of the machine while the other receives it from the bottom and it comes out written. [...] then we went from there to place where they trim the papers and fold them in leather which is the responsibility of the women.”<sup>131</sup> It seems that al-

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.157.

<sup>130</sup> Driss al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi mamlakat Bariz*, p. 51.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 78. Translation is mine.

Amraoui had learnt to tolerate cultural difference in regard to gender roles that he became familiar with the changing role of women within the European society. It also seems that he regards these working women whom he met as serious respectful women despite the fact that they are going out, mixing with men and competing in the work place as well.

In his account *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar*, Driss Jaidi gave three examples of working women from three different European countries: France, England and Italy. In France, he first noticed that the women worked in hotels along with men. He mentioned that: “there are many men and women who work there and are in charged with those rooms and the people who settle there and anything that they might need.”<sup>132</sup> The concept of the hotels was a new idea for Jaidi that he was amazed by the services, the organization of that place and the alarm which they used in every room to be at the disposal of their guests’ requests. He admired the place but made no further comment about the women who worked there as if it was part of the modernity of the place to have modern aspects on gender roles as well like women’s participation in the work place along with men.

Then, they visited a sugar factory where men and women worked together and he gave a detailed description of their work. Men were concerned with a specific job while women on another one that involved machines to cut the sugar that had already been spread by the male workers. He said: “We asked about the number of people working on those machines and we were told that there were 800 men and 100 women.”<sup>133</sup> The mixed team of women and men workers was represented as an organized hard working team where the ethics of work and commitment were respected. Jaidi witnessed the same French experience during his travel to Belgium where they visited a wool factory. In the factory, there were men and women workers who were committed and dedicated to their work. They worked in organized lines while cleaning and spinning the wool.<sup>134</sup> This sense of organization and discipline in the work place was what the travelers mostly admired. Jaid was curious to know how

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<sup>132</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Inglaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 132. Translation is mine.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., pp. 142-143. Translation is mine.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp. 249-250.

the machine worked, their prices, how the workers worked and their numbers, and workers contracts and he kept asking questions about anything that seemed important. He gave minute details about their work at the factory.

In England, they visited a place for pottery decoration inside a pottery factory. According to Jaidi: “[...] Then they brought us to another place where we found many women working on decorating the dishes that come out of the fire. [...] The ambassador praised their work which made them extremely happy and grateful and then we left.”<sup>135</sup> The work was a team work between all the women there; each one had a responsibility that complemented the one of the other. Jaidi provided a detailed description of their work and responsibilities. The ambassadorial delegation admired all the work done by the women in all the factories. They also visited a prison in London which impressed the Moroccan delegation who had never seen a more organized and well taken care of prison. Jaidi noticed that women worked there also and they were in charge of the women and girls’ section.<sup>136</sup> As the embassy moved from one country to the other, we notice that Jaidi was familiarized with the image of the working woman who shared the same profession with other men. He was one of the Moroccan travel writer who showed the utmost tolerance and acceptance of the cultural Other, especially the women.

Al-Ghassani, es-Saffar, al-Amraoui .and Jaidi visited different European countries in which they encountered European women working at different places. They provided an image of European women that was not known at that time to Moroccan people. Women working as teachers, caretakers, factory workers, sellers at the markets or managers at the hotels...etc, seemed to often generate a good attention from the Moroccan Muslim travelers who were not used to seeing women at work place yet they were impressed by women leading these kinds of works unlike the performers, singers and actresses who although fascinated them with their beauty, they could not tolerate their work as performers because it involved what they regarded as “showing off their physicality” more than anything else. They emphasized the huge

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., pp. 386-387. Translation is mine.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., pp. 276-278.

roles these women played in their communities and how they contributed to the economic growth and development of their countries.

## **2. Female Agency in the Travel Accounts and the Travelers' Coping Mechanism**

### **a. Female Agency: European Women Given a Voice in al-Hajari's, al-Meknassi's Travel Accounts**

In their encounters with European women, several Moroccan travelers engaged in conversations and discussions with the women which marked moments of cultural and religious exchange and dialogue with the cultural Other. Instead of silencing the women in their accounts, they provided them with a platform to express their agency, opinions, tell about their experiences and debate their own beliefs. The women's agency and presence were apparent in several accounts whose writers allowed their female hosts to have a voice within their accounts.

In English literature, Muslim women were often silenced and rendered into a position of backwardness and oppression.<sup>137</sup> While in Moroccan travel narratives, Christian women were often given ample space to express themselves and the readers were allowed to hear their opinions and concerns. Their vocal presence in the accounts added more credibility and reliability to the travelers' production of discourse about gender. They provided various images of European women that ranged from women from royal families, women from prestigious families, ordinary women, nuns, singers, nurses, workers, mothers, wives, and daughters. They presented a comprehensive image of European women and the various roles they played in their societies. These women were either described from afar or were given a voice in the travel accounts to express their presence and voice their opinions.

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<sup>137</sup> Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of Muslims Women: from Termagant to Odalisque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), p. 11.

The Moroccan travelers did not have a systematic representation of European women that they had to follow; they described them the way they saw them which varied from one traveler to the other based on his personality, degree of openness, cultural and religious background...etc. In their turn, these women were also eager to know about and discover the new culturally and religiously different visitors which made them sometimes get involved in discussions and even disputations with them like what happened with Ahmed Ibn Qassim al-Hajari in Paris when he was invited to dine at a judge's house. There were women among his hosts who seized the opportunity of having a Muslim man on the table and started asking him different questions about his religion and drawing comparisons and differences between Islam and Christianity.<sup>138</sup> Those discussions allowed for a peaceful dialogue of civilizations and religions.

During the dinner, al-Hajari discussed with the people through a translator who was his host who knew Spanish and translated to him the questions of the other guests and hosts. Among the women was the mother-in-law of the host who kept asking him questions like: "what strength does wine have with so much water?"<sup>139</sup>, "why did your prophet permit you to marry four women but forbid you to drink wine?"<sup>140</sup>, "why did your prophet permit to marry four wives, while, God, blessed and exalted, gave Adam, peace be upon him, one wife only?"<sup>141</sup> These questions and others were among the typical questions that any Christian or Westerner in general would have for Muslim travelers to the West, yet the barrier of language must have created a certain distance in terms of engaging in deep discussions about cultural practices and religious teachings. Al-Hajari's knowledge of different languages allowed him to cut any barriers that would create miscommunication or lack of dialogue. The woman directing those questions to al-Hajari was a testament that when different cultures and civilizations meet, they do not have to necessarily clash<sup>142</sup> but they could rather

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<sup>138</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 53.

<sup>139</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. 10.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>142</sup> Samuel P Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 24.

interact, connect and discuss their differences with the attempt to understand each other. The mother-in-laws' questions centered mainly around the issue of polygamy which Reina Lewis considered it to be "a central theme in the Orientalist discourse"<sup>143</sup>. It is an issue that had often been tackled in Orientalist writings which was part of the Orientalization process of the East. The notions of *harem* and polygamy must have occurred to the minds when they encountered the Muslim visitors which increased their curiosity in wanting to know more about these specific topics that are related to women. Among the other issues they discussed were: fasting in Islam and Christianity, and the banning of alcohol and pork. The guests, including the woman, tried to prove him the falsity of his religion but his solid arguments from both holy books were convincing that they confessed to him that: "We encountered many men of your religion with whom we talked much but none of them had the ability to come up with the answers you gave."<sup>144</sup> The woman was even more satisfied with his answers that she secretly gave him an amount of gold which he appreciated.<sup>145</sup> His knowledge of foreign languages and of holy books allowed him to have an interactive interfaith dialogue with their hosts who were eager for information about Islam and anything that they thought contradicted their religion and their norms.

This shows the importance that when the Sultans sent learnt people who mastered foreign languages as their ambassadors to the Europe, the ambassadorial missions often went smoothly as they were able to easily engage in the societies and cultures they visited. On the other hand, when they sent ambassadors who relied only on translators, they would often struggle in the unfamiliar foreign environment and no matter how good the translator was, there would never be a real spontaneous dialogue between them and their hosts. There were several reasons behind the selection of the ambassadors as Ahmed Mekkaoui mentioned that one of the reasons that made the sultans sometimes choose leaders with limited knowledge to head their embassies was because they were in charge of its expenses.<sup>146</sup> While if they focused more on

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<sup>143</sup> Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism : Race, Femininity, and Representation* (London & New York: Routledge: 2013), p. 155.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 66. Translation is mine.

<sup>145</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> Ahmed Mekkaoui, *Ar-Rahaloun al-Maghariba wa Oroba*, p. 11.

diplomatic and intellectual abilities, they could have maintained and secured durable diplomatic relations with those countries, provided more written accounts of journeys and engaged more with the people and in their cultures.

Al-Hajari proved that his intellect and knowledge worked to his advantage that in another dinner with the family that hosted him and his retinue during their stay in Paris, a female visitor joined them in the dinner which included al-Hajari and three women. The female visitor was told about al-Hajari but she was hostile towards him. He said:

When she sat down, she looked disdainfully at me, and her face showed her hostility. Then she said: "Are you a Turk?", "A Muslim, praise to be God," I said to her. "How come you do not know God?" she said. "Muslims," I said to her, "know God better than you." "Better than we?" she said. "Yes," I said to her. "What is your proof?" she said to me.<sup>147</sup>

Although the woman treated him with hostility and aggressiveness at first, she was willing to engage in a "civilized" conversation with al-Hajari about their cultural and religious differences. In her first impression of him she confused him for being a Turk which al-Hajari mentioned that it was a normal thing for Westerners to confuse between a "Turk" and a "Muslim".<sup>148</sup> He was not offended by that and showed a certain degree of patience and openness towards Christian people who asked him deep sensitive questions about his religion. The way that made him win most of his arguments with them was the fact that he was well learned about both Islam and Christianity and he knew both the Quran and the Bible by heart that he preferred to answer them by relying on the Bible more in order to convince that with their own religion and to show them that the Quran came only to complement things that were already stated in the Bible. He answers pleased the women who were represented as outspoken and vocal without any fear of stating their opinions even they contracted with his.

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p, 17.

<sup>148</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 63.

Al-Hajari managed to convince the female guest after much debate which resulted in a change in her conduct towards him. He stated: “So I looked at her, and found that she looked happy and relaxed, as if a veil had been removed from her heart. She then started talking to me in a friendly way, the anger and hostility she had felt for Muslims now gone.”<sup>149</sup> This particular discussion is one of the most important discussions in the history of Moroccan travel accounts to Europe during which two completely different people: a Muslim Moroccan man and a Christian French woman who hold different beliefs and values came face to face for a discussion of those differences which started with complete hostility and then turned into a friendly atmosphere. He was not teased or outraged by her tricky questions and hostility, he rather explained and answered her questions and inquiries with utmost civility that at the end of their disputation, al-Hajari states,: “She looked at the other women and told them in their language “he defeated me and I cannot find a response to what he said.”<sup>150</sup> He convinced her with logic and reason which created an atmosphere of cultural dialogue and understanding.

The women in his travel account expressed a good intellect and a readiness for dialogue for which he was ready. Whenever he disagreed with them, he did not bring them evidences from the Quran only but from the Bible as well. He was patient and open to any controversy the women’s questions raised. During the disputations, al-Hajari did not refer to the women in any sexualized way. He spoke to them with the utmost respect and so he did while writing about them. They were not silenced in any way but they were provided with a platform, not just in real life but in his narrative, to speak their minds, discuss and debate with him anything that might come across their minds mainly about his religion and culture. Abdessalam al-Himer stated about al-Hajari’s debates with his European hosts that: “when we analyze them, we realize that both parties held in their imaginations certain residues from their collective experiences and stereotypes about the Other’s systems and customs and descriptions which accumulated through time in their minds and conscience which resulted in both

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<sup>149</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. 18.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72. Translation is mine.

parties having a certain image about their Other.”<sup>151</sup> The Muslim guest and the Christian hosts both had preconceived ideas and perceptions of each other and those debates and discussions allowed them to know each other outside any stereotypical influences. They allowed them to create a space to share their knowledge and their thought about the ultimate topics between the travelers which are interfaith issues and those discussions could only bring them closer as they discover their Other through their own speech and thoughts.

Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi did not know any foreign languages and he relied on a translator<sup>152</sup> but this did not stop him from engaging in conversation with people in the countries he visited. He kept asking questions and inquiring about anything that he needed information about. As far as the women as concerned, the nuns in al-Meknassi’s travel accounts have a voice and exert their agency contrary to the nuns in Mohammed al-Ghassani’s where they are silent and he acted as a reporter of their conditions, lifestyle and the institution to which they belong. The group of nuns, whom al-Meknassi met in Spain in 1779, were the ones who invited him and his retinue and other notables to visit them at the convent. He said:

So we conceded, just for their sake, after which the caretaker started describing to us their ascetical life and their poverty, and then complained about the people in the city who never helped them by sending them alms. In that manner, she cast her net and prepared her trap. Because we had with us many dignitaries from among the *Rum*, I made her a donation, although it was against my better judgment that I should help infidelity. She asked me about our master and lord, commander of the faithful, saying that since he cut off foods from their region, prices had soared. Having turned his face away, she implored, would he not resume his help to them?<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Abdessalam Himer, “Surat al-Akhar min khilal Taqarir al-Rahalat al-Safaria ila Oropa,” pp. 135-136. Translation is mine.

<sup>152</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 95.

<sup>153</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 79.

The writer gave the nun a voice to describe their way of life and complain about people refraining from helping him in addition to a praise of the Moroccan sultan whom she described to be as powerful as to cut food from Spain in attempt to lure the ambassador to give them a generous donation. The nun's vocal presence in the narrative gave an agency and a certain tangible humanistic value that lacked in most European travel accounts of the Orient where the Muslim women were usually rendered to shadowy, silent and submissive character or as sexual objects.<sup>154</sup> Using phrases like "she started describing", "she complained", "she said", and "she asked" show that she was comfortable in her discussion with al-Meknassi who willingly took the time of his schedule to visit them and listen to them. The convent becomes a contact zone<sup>155</sup> for a Muslim jurist and a Christian nun to who come from different background and gender, yet they are met at a moment of dialogue that says a lot about both of them but mainly about al-Meknassi's flexibility and openness towards cultural and religious dialogue.

Al-Meknassi describes the nuns as active agents in his accounts as they were the ones talking to them and explaining their life to them. They described, complained and asked for help which obliged him to give her alms despite the remorse that he felt about helping a Christian infidel. The nuns' presence in his narrative is crucial as they reflect the direct contact and dialogue which they had with the Moroccan retinue. When al-Meknassi visited Naples, he was taken to convent but he only described their way of life and reiterated the same information he gave in the first account without having them speak in the account which could be explained by his desire to avoid repetition in topics which had already tackled.

In his second journey to Europe, al-Meknassi visited Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1799 during which he met several women and some of them were visible and vocal in his account *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*. When they visited Naples, they met Queen Marie-Caroline wife of King Fernando IV who requested to meet them: "when we approached her, she said to us: 'you are welcome. We have waited a long time for your arrival. Anything that you

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<sup>154</sup> Mohja Kahf, *Western Representations of Muslims Women*, p. 6.

<sup>155</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.

might find hard to achieve of your affairs with the King, we will stand by yourself to achieve it. May your soul be in comfort as you will go back satisfied.”<sup>156</sup> He gave the Queen a voice in his account through she expressed her presence and her hospitality and warm welcome to the ambassador and his retinue which flattered him. Queen Marie-Caroline was the one in charge of the country from the behind the scenes which explains the certainty of her promises to al-Meknassi in interfering with the King to help him with his mission.<sup>157</sup> He did not comment on having a woman as the leader of the country or for interfering in what he would have thought “men’s affairs” as he realized her political strength that could indeed help him in his endeavors. As soon as he met her and left to his residence, he was informed that he was granted the freedom of thirty Muslim captives as a gift and a sign of hospitality.<sup>158</sup> This gesture must have showed him her real strength in the political affairs of her nation.

Mohammed ben al-Hassan al-Hajjoui was sent to France and England in 1919 and his account *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia 1919*, he expressed mixed feelings about Europe in general and women in particular. While he admired the European modernity, he criticized its consequences on the status of women. He also gave women vocal agency in his accounts through which she could express her own impressions of them. While they were on a visit to Alsace-Lorraine, they met French women who were fascinated by their traditional garments. Al-Hajjoui said: “A woman came to us surprised by our clothes and said: are you Jews? And another one said: Do you play in the theater? which means the entertainment houses, that some of the members in our delegation got bored of the dullness of the question and the excessive observation at us.”<sup>159</sup> These women expressed their own fascination at the travelers who was a true embodiment of the Orient which the women must have read or heard about with all the stereotypes and generalizations that it entailed. Despite the fact that al-Hajjoui and his retinue were infuriated at people’s curiosity and bewilderment about the way they looked, he still

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<sup>156</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 170. Translation is mine.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p.179.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>159</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia 1919*, p. 333. Translation is mine.

included her voice and presence as an active agent in the accounts and not just someone that he was observing and reporting about. The women were expressing their own discourses about the travelers.

Al-Hajjoui's visit to England was not an official one as when they finished their official mission in France, they were granted few free days to explore the country and he chose to travel to England to visit some family and friends.<sup>160</sup> When he reached London, he could not find a room in a hotel until he met two old English women who were also looking for a hotel and who recognized him from the way he dressed because they traveled to Morocco. He introduced those women as missionary tourists who travel to different places to spread Christianity. They joined al-Hajjoui in his search and translated for him anything that he needed until he settled in a room. He expressed a great gratitude to them for being helpful and kind to him. However, he did not make any comment on their missionary work neither did refuse their help.

The spaces in which the women were granted vocal agency might not seem enough as they vary from one traveler to the other but in comparison to the Western representation of Muslim women, we can notice a stark difference between the two. While the first left a certain space for the European women to be heard, the second silenced her and relegated her to being either oppressed by the patriarchal society or sexualized for their voyeuristic fantasies. According to Edward Said: "The Orient was therefore not Europe's interlocutor, but its silent Other."<sup>161</sup> While in "Occidentalism", the Other is interactive, expressive and present. The women in the Moroccan travel accounts have more humane characteristics through their voice and presence.

## **b. The Travelers' Concept of "*Jabr al-Khater*" as a Coping Mechanism in Accounts by al-Ghazzal and al-Meknassi**

Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi were Moroccan ambassadors who were sent to 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Al-Ghazzal was

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>161</sup> Edward Said, "Orientalism Revisited," *Cultural Critique*, No. 1 (Autumn, 1985), p. 93.

sent to Spain in 1766 while al Meknassi was sent first to Spain in 1779 and then to Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1780 to accomplish political missions yet they were faced with diplomatic protocols that necessitated that they co-exist and engage in those foreign lands that held different beliefs and followed different customs. What distinguished both of their travel accounts was the excessive use the expression “*Jabran li Khatirhim*” (to satisfy them) which reflected their attempts to cope and engage in the countries they visited. That co-existence obliged the Moroccan travelers to try to open up to the European cultures and customs which were different from their own. In order to justify those obligations to their Muslim readers and to their rulers who would read the accounts, they resorted to the concept of “*jarb al-khater*” as a coping mechanism that would allow them to get involved in the European life during their journeys and also lift some religious weight off their shoulders as religious leaders in their home countries.

The concept of “*jarb al-Khater*” is an Arabic idiom which could be translated into English as “doing something to please and satisfy someone”, in this case, their European hosts. During their journeys, they were invited to places they had never been to before and were put into uncomfortable situations which were characterized mainly by the meeting of the two sexes, men and women. To satisfy their hosts, the travelers accepted most of those invitations. Without that mechanism of co-existence, they would not have experienced the real “wonders and marvels” of Europe that most travelers were seeking. During Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal’s journey to Spain in 1766 he mentioned several instances in his book *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* when the Moroccan embassy had to “*jabr khater*” / satisfy their Spanish hosts whenever he was put in unfamiliar situations that would embarrass him as a religious Muslim man among which were mixed parties during which they had to be around the women. When they reached Algeciras, they were invited to a welcoming party which was attended by both notable men and women. Al-Ghazzal and his retinue were first excused by their hosts to allow the women in which they did. He stated: “The judge asked me: ‘would you excuse our wives, daughters and sons to come in and greet you along with the wives and daughters of other notables? I will not allow them to enter

until you give me permission. They are waiting at the door and it is your decision.’”<sup>162</sup> Al-Ghazzal was embarrassed by the abrupt request which he could not decline. He told his host that they were their guests and would follow their norms. This showed his flexibility and quick adaptation to the new unfamiliar environment and situations which he encountered.

Al-Ghazzal faced several instances which required from him to be as civil as possible towards his guests, and his embarrassment did not stop at the women's presence in the same room as he was asked by his hosts to judge the beauty of their women. He stated:

The judge asked me: ‘which one of the present women pleases you and which one is the most beautiful?’ He meant to be pleasant with this question so I answered [*bima fihi jabr khawater*] with something that would satisfy the men and women who were present and I said: ‘This gathering is like a garden and the women are different kinds of flowers and people like different things.’ They liked the answer which made the husbands and their wives happy.<sup>163</sup>

Al-Ghazzal diplomatic and linguistic skilled played an important role in helping him out of awkward situation. Though he was put under the spot, he managed to maneuver his way around tricky and embarrassing questions, especially in regard to the women whose presence he was still getting accustomed to. What is also interesting is al-Ghazzal diplomatic and cultural naivety in interpreting the question to be part of pleasantries and a mild joke while in fact it reflected Western perception of their cultural Moorish other, as Nabil Matar puts it, “sexually overdriven and emotionally uncontrollable”<sup>164</sup>. It is a description and a representation that dominated Western

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<sup>162</sup> Ahmad ben Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 56. Translation is mine.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Translation is mine.

<sup>164</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 13.

literature of Muslim characters about which al-Ghazzal most probably had no knowledge. In order to blend in with the new environment, he decided to resort to the coping mechanism of “*jabr al-khater*” in order to win his hosts and show his Muslim readers that sometimes travelers had to find ways to co-exist.

Al-Ghazzal did what he could to satisfy the hosts and the women but he could not agree with what was going on. At the end of that night and when they left, he said: “We thank Allah for the cleanliness and purity of our religion”<sup>165</sup> as he was completely overwhelmed by the mixing and dancing of the two sexes that was against his beliefs. He felt relieved that what was happening there did not exist in his country which he considered to be purified and cleansed by religion. This image reflects al-Ghazzal’s sense of moral and religious superiority over his cultural Other whom he considered to be “sinful”.

Thirteen years later, in 1779, Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi visited Spain on his first ambassadorial journey outside Morocco during which he was introduced to the Spanish culture and lifestyle like al-Ghazzal. When they arrived to Cadiz, their hosts set for them a mobile theater or as he called “*dar alfourja*” specifically for them near their residence to entertain them and they asked them to go watch the comedies but al-Meknassi refused. They kept inviting him and he kept refusing until a Christian man who was a rescued captive from Morocco came to him and told him that he hosts made a lot of efforts and spent a lot of money to set the theater next to them during that time of the year in order to show their generosity and hospitality towards them. He advised him that he should show them appreciation for what they have done and accept their invitations which would positively affect his ambassadorial mission.<sup>166</sup> When they arrived from Morocco, al-Meknassi tried to isolate himself and his retinue from any contacts or activities planned by his Christian hosts but then he came to realize that isolation was going to create more damage than success in the diplomatic relations between the two countries and that he should be more flexible in his conduct and dealings with them. This incident explains his

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<sup>165</sup> Ahmad ben Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 57. Translation is mine.

<sup>166</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane and al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 23.

immense flexibility in attending almost every event and every gathering that he was invited to and he tried to please his hosts and their wishes as much as he could, even when he did not agree with what they were doing. He came up with an important conclusion that not all the travelers knew which is “diplomatic flexibility” and which allowed him to experience things and places in the hosts countries that he would have never known about had he stayed isolated. This flexibility also allowed him to have informative content in his account.

Al-Meknassi who could not help but be flexible towards his hosts’ plans for him and his retinue, was introduced to different elements in the Spanish life and culture. When they arrived to the city of Cesar, their hosts organized a celebratory evening that involved dancing and singing as usual to welcome them during which several women were present and who demanded to see the ambassador and his companions. Al-Meknassi stated that he felt embarrassed by the request but the governor insisted which left him no choice but to agree, and he said: “I could not help but to accommodate him and I went out to find several women who revealed their beauty and bedizened themselves like the bedizenment of the pre-Islamic period. They showed us happiness and cheerfulness and we met them with what suited the occasion and they left.”<sup>167</sup> This excerpt documented his first contact with European women whom he did not want to meet but after the insistence of the judge, he welcomed them in. He was taken aback by their revealed beauty and extreme bedizenment which he compared to that of women from the pre-Islamic period and he used the word “*jahiliya*” which literally mean “ignorance”. He felt himself to be forced into that world of *jahiliya* which was going against his own religious and cultural beliefs yet in order to satisfy his hosts and to build stronger diplomatic relations, he felt the need to co-exist and be more diplomatic in his actions.

Then, when the Moroccan embassy reached Andújar city, they had to welcome the notables of the city and their wives into their residence again who celebrated their arrival with music and dance. Those were the things which the ambassador did not appreciate but he was aware of the cultural relevance of those celebrations and that

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 30. Translation is mine.

they were part of the European culture and way of life. He said: “That was the utmost generosity for them that I could not help but accommodate to them and look at what they do [*jabran li khawatirihim*] to satisfy them.”<sup>168</sup> Al-Meknassi kept using the mechanism of “*jabr al-khater*” to explain his actions and decision that were not too “Islamic” to his readers. Then he went on to describe the present notable men and women’s way of dancing together which was al-Meknassi’s first time seeing anything of that kind. This tradition of welcoming celebrations kept happening in every city that the embassy visited and they had to allow them to take place and to engage with the mixed visitors, men and women, who were present. As they kept going from one city to the other, al-Meknassi was becoming more familiarized with these events and celebrations that he mentioned briefly later on indicating just that they were mixed and filled with music and dancing. He also made no further comments later on about the women’s “revealed beauty” as he became accustomed to seeing them like that in every event.

Being flexible through that notion of “*jabr al-khater*” allowed several Moroccan travelers to dive deeper into the Spanish life and culture despite the short period of their visits. Al-Meknassi had the chance to visit a Christian convent and meet the nuns who asked the Moroccan embassy to visit them. When they did, they learned a lot about them but al-Meknassi’s openness towards his double Other was once again tested. He said: “They [the nuns] greeted us and showed us much happiness and they asked us to sit with them for a while. I could not but accommodate them to satisfy them.”<sup>169</sup> During his visit, he showed great civility in his conduct despite the fact that he saw them as “infidels”. He treated them in a diplomatic way that reflected his diplomatic position as an ambassador. In other words, he was able to detach his true feelings about the nuns, and the Spanish culture in general, and decided to “*jabr khater*”/ satisfy his hosts in the most civil way possible even if that involved him doing things he had never done and being in places he did not want to be in.

In 1799-1782, al-Meknassi embarked on his second ambassadorial journey to Malta, Naples and Sicily and once again he was exposed to new cultures and customs

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., p. 158. Translation is mine.

to which had to adhere. When they reached Palermo, they were invited to the theater which was a unique experience for most of the travelers, including al-Meknassi. About this invitation he said:

The governor of the city informed us through some dignitaries that they had prepared a performance for us that night and that they wanted us to attend. I found that difficult to accept but then I realized that the people were doing everything to entertain us and to celebrate the glory of our master, the victor, our *imam*. So I thought it best to [*jabr khatirihim*] accommodate them and not to act contrary to their practices. Otherwise they might say things that could be offensive for which we would be to blame. So I agreed and joined their company.<sup>170</sup>

Throughout his account, al-Meknassi seemed to be giving excuses for having to join the celebrations of their hosts. He explained that they were doing their best to entertain them and that those celebrations were a form of veneration to the Moroccan Sultan which was why they had to attend them. That concept of “*jabr al-khater*” played an important role in granting the Moroccan travelers a free rein to discover the countries and cultures they visited without upsetting the monarchy, the religious leaders of the country or the public in general. It also granted them the opportunity to take part in the host cultures without jeopardizing their positions in their home country. Going to the theater which was a European tradition needed to be justified in order not to be misunderstood as a process of Europeanization and Christianization from the part of the travelers. This is why, al-Meknassi tried to give solid excuses for accepting that invitation.

In Naples, al-Meknassi and his retinue were invited to a social club where the dignitaries of the country, men and women, gathered and socialized. He stated: “One day, those dignitaries invited us to visit their aforementioned house. We could not but

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<sup>170</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 34. Translation is mine.

concede just to make them happy. It is the duty of every visitor to do so to his host.”<sup>171</sup> He asserted that traveler had often to succumb to their hosts who wanted to show their hospitality by inviting them to different cultural activities in their country. “*Jabr al-khater*” of the European hosts was a form of political diplomacy that would pave the way to strengthening the Euro-Moroccan relations. Al-Meknassi was among the early travelers to Europe who were still tormented by the Muslims history in Spain which affected his discourse that he often resorted to religious differences in speaking about Christian people, yet he was aware that he must be open in his dealing with his hosts and their plans in order to establish better relations. He chose diplomacy in his conduct in order to guarantee good relations.

This mechanism of “*jabr al-khater*” led to more than the attempt of building strong political relations, it allowed al-Meknassi to engage and participate in the events he attended instead of being a mere observant of the “marvels and wonders” of the country. In Sicily, he was invited to play chess with the dignitaries and after much resistance, he finally agreed to play with them. He stated: “Soon all the people in the house gathered around us, repeating his request, and so I could not but agree to what they wanted, lest they start disbelieving me or thinking that my resistance was because of my fear.”<sup>172</sup> He mentioned that he learned how to play chess when he was a young boy which served him well that night and it was a point of contact and engagement in the culture for him. When his hosts knew that he could play chess, they insisted that he joined them. Al-Meknassi moved from being an observer of the European people and culture into a participant in their cultural events and daily life. He refused to play at first because he could not bear the thought of losing to the infidel Christian which to him was a game between religions rather than between two ordinary men. His sense of religious superiority prevented him in the beginning from playing but when they insisted he agreed.

The concept of “*jabr al-khater*” was used by several Moroccan travelers as a coping mechanism with European unfamiliar norms and customs but it was mostly apparent in Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal’s account *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-*

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

*Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi's two accounts *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir* and *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*. They were asked to join their hosts in situations which they were not familiar to but they had to adapt and be diplomatic in their dealings with them. They also had to convince their readers of why they joined them. This concept acquitted them from any cultural or religious liability for their actions.

## **PART FOUR: FEMININE EXOTICISM AND MASCULINE DISCURSIVENESS IN THE MOROCCAN TRAVEL ACCOUNTS ABOUT EUROPE**

### **1. The Moroccan Travelers as a Sight of Wonder and Exoticism to the European Women in Accounts by al-Hajari's, al-Ghassani's, al-Ghazzal, al-Meknassi's, Jaidi's al-Hajjoui's and as-Sayeh**

During their journeys to Europe, Moroccan travelers tried to write about the wonders and marvels of the countries they visited which can be classified among what they deemed exotic; “exotic” in terms of anything that was new and unusual to them which sometimes included the women. However, they were surprised of the counter exoticism from the part of the men and women in Europe which was triggered by their physical and cultural identity that was manifested in the way the Moroccan travelers looked and how they were dressed in addition to the pre-existing stereotypes about the Orient. Some of the travelers understood this state of exoticism while others were extremely bothered that they cut short their visits to certain places in the host countries as they could not tolerate their cultural Other's piercing gaze; being the center of the European attention disturbed the travelers.

Ahmed Ibn Qassim al-Hajari made a huge impression on his European hosts who were amazed by his “civilized” nature, fluency in foreign languages, mastery of the art of debate and knowledge of different religious books. He was not the typical image of a “Muslim” so he did not fit the European stereotypes of the imagined “exotic” Muslim. He engaged in conversations and debates with his French and Dutch hosts who were amazed by his countless skills that they could not believe he was a Muslim. During a visit to a Christian monastery in Paris, al-Hajari engaged in conversations with two Christian monks during which they talked about their origins, families and religion. Then they told him: “We are amazed by you. You speak different languages, read many books and traveled to many cities and countries, yet

you are a Muslim!”<sup>1</sup> The monks were amazed and surprised to see a learned outspoken Muslim who mastered European languages and traveled throughout Europe. He was regarded as a “noble savage”<sup>2</sup>; that is to say, “noble” because of all the qualities that he had and “savage” because he was a Muslim. According to the 17<sup>th</sup> century European mind who was much affected by Orientalist writings and depictions of the Orient, a Muslim was regarded as a “savage bloodthirsty barbarian”. Al-Hajari’s personality shattered and disturbed the image and perception of the Muslim man in the European imagination. He played a central role in deconstructing Western stereotypes about Islam and Muslims by exerting his agency through his presence, vocality, and diplomatic skills that went beyond politics. His outspokenness, willingness and readiness to debate with the European people either in France or in Holland about various topics which interested them about Islam and Muslims and his attempt to engage Islam, Christianity and Judaism in his debates made his hosts eager to know more from him. He created a certain communication and dialogue between the West and East to dust off cultural and religious stereotypes and generalizations.

As much as it was an opportunity for the European men, women and children to encounter their Orientalized Other, it was also a chance for the Oriental Other to represent himself and convey his “real” image by himself during these encounters. The travelers, whether they were aware of this or not, had the chance to shake the Western perceptions and fantasies about them, as they were “cultural facilitators” not just random ambassadors going solely on ambassadorial missions. Their conscious mission was ambassadorial; however, their unconscious mission was more cultural and corrective, in a sense, of misconceptions, fantasies and generalizations. During their travels during which they were exposed to the European people with whom they acted, interacted, communicated and debated. These social engagements allowed for a cultural dialogue to take place between the two worlds of Islam and Christendom and for the travelers to have a direct contact with their cultural other.

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<sup>1</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Naser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 53. Translation is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (California: University of California Press, 2001), p. 82.

Most of the travelers mentioned in their travel accounts that they were a source of attention to European people that whenever they arrived to a certain city, women, men and children would gather around them whether in their windows, rooftops, or on the streets to see the new visitors and welcome them. These welcoming rituals were appreciated by most travelers who often saw them as a form of celebration of their arrival but there were other instances in which they felt that they were the center of the observation and gaze of the Europeans due to their “exotic” looks which made them feel uncomfortable. When Mohammed al-Ghassani alAndalusi’s embassy reached Spain in 1690-1691, they were welcomed by a huge crowd of people who gathered to receive them at the port.<sup>3</sup> In Madrid and on their way to meet King Carlos II, he also stated that there was a big crowd, of men and women, waiting for them outside the palace in order to see them. Al-Ghassani did not give ample description of those situations or for being the center of attention for the Spanish people. However, in an article written by Oumelbanin Zhiri about al-Ghassani’s embassy, she mentioned that the British ambassador Alexander Stanhope who was also among the guests in Spain reflected in his own account about the Moroccan embassy.<sup>4</sup> He stated: “Our Marocco ambassador is at last fallen to an envoy. I saw him go to audience where was an extraordinary concourse of people to see him, for the rarity of the thing, and the oddness of the dress, as little known here as with us.”<sup>5</sup> Stanhope described the people who flocked to see the Moroccan ambassador who was “rarity” that attracted the attention of the Spanish people. That “rarity” was induced by the Moroccans clothes which must have been considered as a “spectacle” for the “exotic” of the East. Al-Ghassani did not speak of this incident because he either did not realize that they were a center of attention or because he did not think that those incidents were worthy to

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<sup>3</sup> Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani, *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir*, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Oumelbanin Zhiri, “Mapping the Frontier between Islam and Christendom in a Diplomatic Age: al-Ghassani in Spain,” in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 69 (2016), p. 973.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Stanhope, *Spain under Charles the Second; or Extracts from the Correspondence of the Hon. Alexander Stanhope, British Minister at Madrid, 1690 –1699*. (London: J Murray, 1840), pp. 7-8.

dwell on as they did not bother him and had more important things at hand to write about and describe about them, their culture and history.

Ahmed ben al-Mahdi Al-Ghazzal was among the travelers who had mixed feelings about people gathering around them whenever they went out. Sometimes, he interpreted the people's curiosity and gathering around them as a form of welcome and hospitality but at others, he was completely bothered and could not tolerate it. When they reached the city of Medina, many people came out to see them, as usual. He said "Many people gathered around us, the notables and the public people, who came from nearby cities and villages. There were many men, women and children as if they were scattered grasshoppers."<sup>6</sup> Among the previously mentioned Moroccan travel accounts, this is the only time that a writer resorts to comparing the people in the host country to animals. He referred to them as "grasshoppers" in order to express their huge number and it is one of the rare instances for a traveler to compare Europeans to animals, though it was nearly a normalized practice in Orientalist writings. This instance could only reflect al-Ghazzal disturbance and frustrating towards the crowds who were curious to see their "exotic" arrival. Later on, and as the journey went on and they visited several places and met many people, al-Ghazzal and his retinue grew uncomfortable about the fuss that would erupt wherever they went and the attention they would draw from the public that they started to hide from any gathering of the kind. On one of these incidents, he said: "When we reached one of their gardens [...] a lot of people gathered around us and we were only able to get rid of them after much tiredness and fatigue though their gathering was out of happiness and a desire to meet, greet and welcome us."<sup>7</sup> This is a noticeable change in his tone as he grew accustomed to seeing the people gather around them and tried to explain that their presence was out of happiness for their visit. He was not bothered by the crowd that gathered around them in large numbers in order to see them and have a look at the "Moorish visitors", he considered it to be a gesture of welcome but they struggled to find their way whenever they went out.

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<sup>6</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal. *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 61. Translation is mine.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 86. Translation is mine.

Al-Ghazzal's discourse changes as we go through his travel account and his tolerance towards European people's curiosity about them decreases. He found it unbearable to be a constant "exotic attraction" to the people who kept gathering in large numbers around them. While in Medina, they were taken to see some gardens during which he expressed his disturbance from people's curiosity and gathering around them, especially the women. He stated:

[...] we did not pay attention until we realized that there were women jostling in the place where we were, seeking to see us until it got worse due to a quarrel between them of over crowdedness. I pretended that I felt sick and we asked the ruler's son to take us back to the house. [...] When they realized that we went, they went away as well."<sup>8</sup>

The women were present among the welcoming groups in every Spanish city but in those gardens, the women gathered and fought in order to get a chance to move closer and see the "Moorish visitors" who aroused their curiosity and attention with their Moorish style and dress. Al-Ghazzal could not understand the reason behind this urgent desire to see them as he failed to see things from the perspective of those women. As much as they were a new phenomenon to him to be out in the public sphere, they in their turn were a new phenomenon as "exotic" guests in their country and they felt the need to seize the opportunity to see them in person.

The Muslim Moorish subject in the Western imagination had often been romanticized or as Edward Said called it "an Orientalized Orient"<sup>9</sup>. This process of Western Orientalization of the Orient, through works of fiction, captivity narratives, paintings...etc, resulted in a sum of conscious and unconscious residues in the Western imagination about their Oriental Other. An imagination that grew to fantasize about those images of the Orient and Orientals whom most of the ordinary European people did not have the chance to see in real life or have a direct contact with but then that the Moroccan travelers were there, they unleashed their desires and created in

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 90. Translation is mine.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 155.

them a sense of excitement to encounter the Orient through them. That is why they gathered in every city, men, women and children, to see the Oriental Other and whether those accumulated images and perception would crystallize in reality or not. According to Sophia Rose Arjana: “Fantasies of both the Orient and Oriental tend to be strongly sensualized, situated in medieval ideas about the East and typified in portrayals of Muslim monsters. Male Muslim monsters are typically hyper masculine—aggressive, overly sexual, and violent—characters that also function as tableaux of desire and fantasy.”<sup>10</sup> These images of the Oriental male Other stimulated the attention of ordinary Europeans who were also drawn to the “wonders and the marvels” of their cultural and religious Other. Most of those travelers mentioned in their accounts that they kept wearing the Moroccan traditional garment which must have added to the theatricality and exotic aura of the ambassadors and their retinues. They both became what Stuart Hall calls “a spectacle of the Other”.<sup>11</sup> To add to European people’s curiosity and to intrigue their imagination, the European newspapers usually covered those ambassadorial visits in a captivating style.<sup>12</sup> They played on the pre-existing stereotypes in the Western mind about the Orient in order to attract their attention to new the visitors.

During Mohammed ben Othman al-Meknassi’s first visit to Spain in 1779 and when they reached the city of Seville, they were bombarded by a large group of people who gathered around them to see them. He stated: “When we entered the mentioned garden, a large group of people followed us and the doormen could not stop them that they almost stumbled on us. I hinted at the governor to turn away the public.”<sup>13</sup> Like al-Ghazzal, al-Meknassi interpreted people’s gatherings around them in every city to be a sign of welcome but when they followed them during their visits to certain places in those cities, they could not tolerate it as they felt as though they were observed, scrutinized and turned into a show of exoticism instead. He was annoyed by the

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<sup>10</sup> Sophia Rose Arjana, *Muslims in the Western Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendices.

<sup>13</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, pp. 43-44. Translation is mine.

extreme attention by which they were met and bothered by people's crowdedness around them. While they were able to escape people in the garden, they were trapped when they visited Cordoba Mosque in Cordoba. He stated:

and I headed to the mosque [Cordoba Mosque] and we reached it with great difficulty due to the over crowdedness. When we entered we found more men and women than there were outside. We walked through the great crowd that you can barely see where to put your foot. [...] we could not see anything and we kept thinking how we could go out of here. The governor and his men started pushing the Christians away for us to make an exit for us.<sup>14</sup>

As soon as he reached Spain, al-Meknassi showed a lot of interest in the remnants of the Islamic history in Spain. When he finally had the chance to visit Cordoba Mosque, his visit was cut short due to the over crowdedness around them that they had to reschedule their visit. He did not understand people's extreme measures to see them.

On his second journey to Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1799, and when they reached Naples, al-Meknassi and his retinue were blocked on their way to meet king Ferdinand IV. They left their residence at noon and when women and men blocked their way with the intention to see them, they could not reach their destination until sunset.<sup>15</sup> He was annoyed that it took them so long to get to a house that was near their residence but the people who gathered to see made it impossible for them to move. They were a subject of attraction to European people who were not used to receiving such "exotic" guests who looked like they were coming out of a book about the Orient. They were a real life personification of anything that they heard or read about the Orient; in fact, they were the imagined Orient with all of its splendor walking on its feet in Europe and it was a spectacle that they would not want to miss.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 56. Translation is mine.

<sup>15</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> More information in: Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Almost a century later, during Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui's journey to France in 1860, he was upset about people's curiosity about them and how they were turned into the center of attention whenever they went out due to the way they looked. While they were discovering one of the gardens in Versailles, people gathered around them and kept following them. He stated: "We were extremely tired when we realized that many people were looking at us bewildered by the way we looked. Around 3000 people of men and women were following us there. Most of them were women. They followed us wherever we went."<sup>17</sup> Al-Amraoui realized that they were drawing people's attention because they were wearing their traditional garments which added to the curiosity of the people. He noticed women's presence and that they outnumbered the men; the fact that he made such a remark shows that he was surprised to see such a large number of women following them driven by curiosity.

As they moved on, their interpreter overheard a conversation between two women and a man which depicted the Moroccan visitors in a monstrous way, as "human eater". He continued: "The interpreter who was with us told us that he heard two women talking to each other about us when one of them asked what we eat and whether we eat what they eat. A man who overheard them answered that we eat humans and that the Sultan gifts us a woman every day to eat her which astonished them."<sup>18</sup> This anecdote reflects all the stereotypes, fantasies and *clichés* of the "imagined Oriental" who looks exotic but is savage and barbaric. This also goes to show the travelers that the people who came out to follow them and watch them had questions about them which they sought to either confirm or correct. The Orient have always been a place where Western travelers and writers let their imaginations get loose about their Oriental Other who was often portrayed as "backward and barbaric"<sup>19</sup> and whose publication have affected the general public's perceptions of "an Orient" that was supposed to be feared. The man who answered the women's questions about the travelers knew what the women were looking for to feed their imagination which made him create a fictional story similar to Orientalist stories of the Orient in order to

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<sup>17</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, pp. 87-88. Translation is mine.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 88. Translation is mine.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 151.

give them something to be amazed at and scared from at the same time. He must have noticed that the women were coming out in large numbers to admire the “Muslim Moors” which is why he resorted to cultural stereotyping in order to scare them off.

When ambassador Mohammed Zebdi’s embassy to Europe in 1876 reached Marseille, France, Driss Jaidi described in his account *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi ‘Ajaib al-Akhbar* their first encounter with European people while they were on their way to their assigned residence. He said: “[...] there was a huge crowd of the people of the country, men, women, old people and children. They were astonished at us and surprised by our dress. Then, I said to myself ‘you mock us and we mock you in the same way’.”<sup>20</sup> From the very moment that the embassy set foot on the French soil, they were aware of their foreignness and of the foreignness of their cultural Other to them. Jaidi knew that as much as they were strange subjects to the French people who went to see them, they too were a source of astonishment as well. It was a moment of a mutual recognition of the physical differences of the cultural Other of which Jaidi was aware. The travelers were the embodiment of the “exotic East” while the Europeans were the epitome of the “unknown Other” who was about to get discovered.

On their visit to the glass factory, they were interrupted by women who wanted to see them. He stated: “When their women heard that we were there, they came out to see us because they are often amazed by the way we dress.”<sup>21</sup> A similar incident happened to them in Liege, Belgium, when were also taken to visit different places in the city, especially the factories and markets but once again, they were an “exotic” attraction to Belgian people who lived in small cities as they were not used to having such foreign visitors. Jaidi noted: “We headed to some of their markets and a huge numbers of people, men women and children, gathered around us until the road was almost blocked. They were more fascinated by us than in any other place because they were not accustomed to having Muslim visitors. When we saw that we went back to our place.”<sup>22</sup> The travelers became a sight of attraction with their Moorish attires which instigated people imagination and fantasy of all the stories that they heard about

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<sup>20</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlatterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 125. Translation is mine

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 169. Translation is mine.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 235. Translation is mine.

the Orient. The fantastic and exotic Orient was brought to them through these embassies. The travelers were regarded as a spectacle that resembled what they saw on the European stage when representing Moorish and Ottoman characters in the theaters. The ambassadorial retinue was regarded as an amusement to the Western eye to see the Moorish lavishness and exotic garments in real life. Jaidi was aware that what drew people to them and made them gather around them was the way they dressed. The women were often more interested to follow and see them due to the Western representations of the Moorish sultans and harems

While in Europe, Moroccan travelers retained and preserved their cultural identity through their language (for those who did not speak European languages) and their appearances and clothes. This preservation of identity had often put them in the spot light for European people's attention. While in Alsace-Lorraine, al-Hajjoui mentioned that people would gather around them there more than they did in Paris as they were not accustomed to seeing Muslims in general and people with traditional clothes in particular. He was bothered by their curious stares and extreme measures in following them wherever they went. He stated an incident that happened to him with some French women while in the street: "A woman came to us surprised by our clothes: are you Jews? And another one said: Do you play in the theater? which means the entertainment houses, that some of the members in our delegation got bored of the dullness of the question and the excessive observation at us."<sup>23</sup> They wore their traditional clothes wherever they went which made them attract the attention of the people who were curious about them and wanted to know who they were. Their cultural identity traveled with them reflecting their background that was not understood to the opposing identity that they encountered. The confusion that this "travelling identity" created made them get defined with associations that had nothing to do with their real identity that was thought of as a disguise. Associating al-Hajjoui and his retinue with the theater in particular was not an idea out nowhere; it was based on preconceived ideas of how an Oriental looked like. The theater was a place where

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 333. Translation is mine.

the Oriental Other was often present either as characters in European plays or as acrobatic groups that emerged in Britain and then all over Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup>

The Moroccan ambassadorial members were observant of the European people who in turn put the Moroccans under their gaze and tried to project their Orientalist fantacizations on them. This encounter between the Orient and Occident in Europe marked a contact zone<sup>25</sup> in which both parts negotiated their stereotypical perceptions of each other. The Moroccans were uncomfortable by the constant staring and questioning but what they did not realize is that they were cultural facilitators who were either mending or breaking stereotypes which were forged for centuries through Orientalist depictions of the Orient. They were unable to understand or contain this curiosity of the European. In Britain, al-Hajjoui explained this curiosity as “fanaticism” and entitled one section of his books as “English fanaticism” in which he said:

And I found there [London] many men, women and children. While we were looking at the sculpture above the obelisk to know who he is, they gathered around us astonished at our clothes as if a person was born only to wear European clothes and if he did not then he must have changed God’s making and creation. They are of extreme fanaticism and intolerance. [...] This has stopped us from inspecting the sculpture so we left right away.<sup>26</sup>

The men, women and children flocked around them on every occasion to see their Moorish clothes and exotic appearances which fed their imaginative characters of what a Moor looked like. They were astonished about the travelers’ appearances and attires as much as they were astonished by theirs. They were moments of mutual exoticization which confused the travelers who did not know how to explain nor how

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<sup>24</sup> Layachi El Habbouch, “Moroccan Acrobats in Britain: Oriental Curiosity and Ethnic Exhibition,” *Comparative Drama*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Winter 2011), pp. 383-384.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Louise Pratt. *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ourouopia 1919*, p. 131. Translation is mine.

to deal with it. They seemed to forget that they were the “strange”, the “wonder”, and the “new” in the host countries and that it is normal to attract such attention and arouse such curiosity.

Most of the Moroccan travelers realized that the way they dressed was an attraction to the people in the countries they visited. Moroccan traditional clothes were cultural markers of their background which appealed to the public who followed them to see them. In a section of his book, Al-Hajjoui reflected on the issue of the tradition dress in relation to the European one and this reflection was triggered by a conversation with one of the interpreters who looked at them and asked them if they were Jews. Al-Hajjoui answered that they were Muslims to which the interpreter apologized.<sup>27</sup> However, he could not help but notice how much travelers with traditional garments had to suffer because of it. He said:

Anyone who wears a dress different from the European one is exposed to this kind of questions and is prone to lose his money. Whenever they see someone with a different dress, they increase the price of his food, the products he wants to buy [...]. A foreigner has to wear their dress and speak their language if he wants to be safe from their deceit.”<sup>28</sup>

This was the conclusion of his travels to France and England that a foreigner should never assume and show his foreignness; otherwise, he would suffer from people in the host country who would try to manipulate and deceive him. He realized the importance that a person’s attire, behavior and mastery of foreign languages played in his contact with people from other nations and that they were the way into contact with other people. The outer appearance was important when dealing with the Western world and it can be a deal breaker in contact with the cultural Other.

As a jurist, al-Hajjoui mentioned that he was asked several times by Muslim merchants in France and England about whether it was permissible or not to wear the European hat and clothes. His answer was that though it is not permissible to wear

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 119-120. Translation is mine.

those clothes in *dar al-Islam*, they can wear them in Europe out of necessity to secure their safety.<sup>29</sup> Traveling to foreign countries can open people's eyes to different experiences and facts about living in abroad. Since he traveled and experienced how a person's dress can affect the way he is treated, al-Hajjoui came to the realization that in order for a person to co-exist in a different hostile environment, he must try to tone down his foreignness, especially in appearance. He answered several other religious questions based on his experience during his journey in Europe which gave a taste of how life would be there for other Muslims.<sup>30</sup> Those answers also reflected a certain degree of open-mindedness of the Muslim jurist towards Muslims' co-existence in foreign countries by providing practical ways of adaptation.

Mohammed ben Abdessalam as-Sayeh was another Moroccan jurist who was sent as an ambassador to France in 1922 which resulted in a short travel account entitled *Ousbou' fi Bariz*.<sup>31</sup> As-Sayeh did not speak about European women like other travelers did. However, in his contact with the French women in Bordeaux, as-Sayeh was amazed by their beauty while they were amazed at his Moorish apparel. He said:

There is a big market [...], most of its sellers are women of extreme beauty and tenderness. [...] Their people admire foreign clothes, unlike people in Paris who are accustomed to seeing them that they don't look at us when we go out. Here they walk behind us and stare at us and come around us, especially women. They admire the way I look and they laugh while I admire their beauty and tenderness and the way they walk.<sup>32</sup>

This is the only paragraph in which As-Sayeh mentioned women and it is almost hard to believe that an *Imam* / jurist did indeed flirt with women in such a public way, in a travel account that was supposed to be delivered to the Sultan. He also noted that there was a huge difference between people's perceptions of their traditional clothes in Paris

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 152-153.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 140-153.

<sup>31</sup> Mohammed ben Abd es-Salam as-Sayeh, *Ousbou' fi Bariz* (Abu Dhabi: Dar as-Souedi, 2004), p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 34-35. Translation is mine.

which was becoming a major destination for immigrants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and other cities that were still relatively unfamiliar to foreign cultures<sup>33</sup>. People in Paris were accustomed to seeing many foreign people from different cultural backgrounds which made as-Sayeh's embassy less visible in comparison to when they went to Bordeaux. The women were fascinated by their traditional dress that they kept following them and staring at them. During those moments of women's admiration, as-Sayeh was infatuated by their beauty which is a statement that contradicted with his religious position in Morocco and within the embassy since they travelled for religious purposes to adjust the direction of the *Qibla* of Paris Mosque.<sup>34</sup> His discourse is a testament that Moroccan religious travelers to Europe had different experiences, impression and perceptions in their encounters with European women which resulted in different discourses.

The Moroccan travelers to Europe were often a source of attention and attraction to the European people, especially the women, who followed them and gathered around them in large numbers wherever they went. Some of the travelers were more tolerant towards these gatherings while others were extremely bothered. The travelers were like a stereotype coming into life for the European people who have been hearing about the East and its grandeur and "barbarism" at the same time. They wanted to see with their own eyes the extravagance and exoticism of the Moors. This encounter between the Moorish men and the European women in Europe allowed for a real life exoticism of the Moorish guests.

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> Mohammed ben Abd es-Salam as-Sayeh, *Ousbou' fi Bariz*, p. 12.

## **2. The Discursive Fascination by the European Female Status, Presence and Body**

### **a. Praising Aspects of the Status of European Women in al-Meknassi's, as-Saffar's, Bensaid's and Jaidi's and al-Hajjoui's Travel Accounts**

Moroccan travelers' views about European women varied from one traveler to the other. Some saw her with admiration while others were not pleased with their behaviors and conducts. Each traveler wrote about them out of his own personal encounters with them and everything they wrote was based on direct contact and observations. Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, Mohammed as-Saffar, Driss Jaidi and Mohammed al-Hajjoui admired some aspects related to the status of women in the European society and hailed her for becoming independent and educated.

During Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi's ambassadorial mission in Spain in 1779, he was fascinated by Spanish women's hospitality and celebration of them as visitors and he also admired their involvement in the economic life of the country as they were a working force in different domains. In every Spanish city that they reached, they would be welcomed by men, women and children who made their arrival a festive musical celebration. He stated: "We continued amidst a huge assembly of men and women, all showing immense signs of amity and friendliness. As for their women, God had granted them great beauty and elegance, which He had not granted any other in all the lands of al-Andalus, fair ones reserved for the beautiful eyes to see."<sup>35</sup> Al-Meknassi's admiration of the European physical beauty was often expressed in a mild way that usually did not cross the cultural or religious barriers, unlike Mohammed as-Saffar, who half a century later, indulged in his bold descriptions of French women's beauty. Like any other Moroccan traveler of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, al-Meknassi was still affected by the horrors which the Moriscos and Muslim captives lived in Spain and he kept mentioning that in his account; however, he managed several times to distance his Spanish hosts and the people he met from any feelings of resentment or anger. He expressed joy at their warm welcoming ceremonies and showed an understanding of their welcoming customs which differed from what he

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<sup>35</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 44.

was familiar with. He said: “They were accompanied by musicians and *damat*, the women of high social rank, who wanted to welcome us and entertain us with music and dance. For them, such was the height of hospitality and so I found no alternative but to go along and watch what they were doing, just for their sake.”<sup>36</sup> This description of the celebration of their arrival is reiterated throughout his account whenever they reached a new city or village. His openness towards the Other’s difference and tolerance of what was unfamiliar to him reflects his diplomatic skills which, after his two embassies to Europe, granted him several allies in the countries he visited. As a religious man, he did not denounce or criticize cultural differences; instead he chose to adhere to their wishes and respected the Spanish customs which involved dancing and music without any judgments or denunciations from his part. Though he believed that his religion was against such mixed celebration, he wanted to satisfy his hosts.

Among the things that attracted al-Meknassi’s attention in Spain was women’s work outside of the house. He noticed them first in the markets of Madrid: “Its markets were full of traders, craftsmen and merchandise, but most of its vendors were women.”<sup>37</sup> And then when they went to the village of Segovia he mentioned: “The population appeared frugal and most of them active in craft; their women worked at looms a lot and they did not have the luxury of other *Damat* in urban centers, such as Madrid and Seville and others.”<sup>38</sup> He continued: “In Segovia, they showed us the building where paper is made. [...]They then sent the linen in small quantities to old women, who separated them according to categories: the excellent, the medium, and the very bad.”<sup>39</sup> Women’s work must had been a new phenomenon to him and he wanted to show that it was not only apparent in the big cities but also the villages. He differentiated between the women in urban spaces who were more sophisticated luxurious in the way they dressed in comparison to rural women who were more modest. He realized that the women worked in different fields in order to contribute to their own families and supply other families. This image introduced the traveler to a

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

new world where gender roles were not fixed and where women were more emancipated and involved in work outside of the house.

Mohammed as-Saffar was undoubtedly one the most admirers of the French women among all of the Moroccan travel writers. In addition to their physical beauty, he also admired women's eagerness to compete with men in the work place and that they were as enthusiastic to gain wealth and become more skillful in paving their way towards it. They worked in different positions, such as: hotels and restaurants managers, waitresses, shopkeepers, nurses, teachers... These were positions that Moroccan women had never enjoyed back in their home country. This professional engagement of women into the work place made him reflect on the importance that women could play if they were ever given the chance to work in decent professions outside the confines of the house. According to as-Saffar, French women worked well in commerce and he stated:

The science of commerce is one of the sciences they teach and write down in books, and there are schools and libraries for it. The women are skilled in commerce just like the men, or even more so. The majority of people running shops are women. Another aspect of their desire for wealth is that you will never see a poor person who is capable of work begging from others. They do not allow this, considering that giving charity to an able person is a cause for laziness.<sup>40</sup>

He admired how women proved themselves in the French society taking on some vital positions to the economy of the country. They were not just passive consumers but they were active producers who helped in the building of their country. By this statement, he implicitly criticizes his own country which was suffered throughout the nineteenth century from a severe monetary crisis, debts and reparations which affected

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<sup>40</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, p. 157.

ordinary people's way of life and increased poverty rate due to taxes.<sup>41</sup> An increase in poverty would automatically mean an increase in the number of beggars. That is why, as-Saffar admired that French people whether men or women worked hard to attain wealth and develop themselves through education and science in order to get better jobs. He noticed that once the women were given the right to work, they were able to contribute to the development of their own nations instead of being relegated to the house, as was the case in Morocco. He also emphasized that ordinary jobs in commerce which only required money and skill in Morocco was turned into a science that was taught and developed in France.<sup>42</sup> This can be seen as an indirect call for reforms in the country.

The Moroccan travelers were official representatives of the Sultans in foreign countries which made them selective in choosing what to talk about and how to talk about it. Witnessing the European development in different fields first hand, while Morocco was struggling must have made the travelers eager to call for reforms but they were afraid of how to address it without offending the Sultan. Despite the fear, several of them implicitly called for reforms in their accounts. According to Abdessalam Himer: "As much as the category of writers came to realize the progress of the Other [Europe], they also realized the belatedness of the self [Morocco] which made some ambassadorial reports [...] include an implicit indirect talk about the conditions of the Moroccan society."<sup>43</sup> They admired that development and wished it existed in their home country. They hoped that in describing European achievements and how their technological innovations, the inclusion of women in the work market and their emphasis on education and science, they would encourage the Moroccan policy makers to step forward in climbing the ladder of modernity as well.

In 1865, a Moroccan embassy composed of two people Al-Hajj Mohammed Bensaid and Mohammed Cherqi were sent to France by Sultan Mohammed ben

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<sup>41</sup> Abdellah Laroui, "Morocco from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to 1880," in *General History of Africa VI: Africa in the Nineteenth Century until 1880s*, ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi (Paris: UNESCO, 1989), pp. 487-489.

<sup>42</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, p. 157.

<sup>43</sup> Abdessalam Himer, "Surat al-Akhar min khilal Taqarir al-Rahalat al-Safaria ila Oroba," p. 133. Translation is mine.

Abderahman.<sup>44</sup> Bensaid left a short written account of his journey which was published in the second volume of Moustafa Bouchaarae's book *At-Taarif bi bani Said as-Slaouiyyin wa Nobda 'an Wataaiqihim*. In this account, we notice the neutrality of Bensaid's discourse towards the unveiled women of France and their freedom. He provided descriptions of their presence among the men and that they were dressed in silk dresses that tightened at the waist and loosened at the hip but he made no comment and gave no personal opinion about them.<sup>45</sup> This neutrality has been explained by Ahmed Mekkaoui who noted that there was a difference in the travelers discourse not just of the women but of Europe in general. He claimed that those who traveled from 1865-1903 showed more tolerance and openness towards Europe due to the European development that was then transported to Morocco and which the travelers noticed in their contact with the Europeans who resided in Morocco.<sup>46</sup>

Driss Jaidi was also among the Moroccan travelers who praised European women's status in the European society; a woman who had become an adversary to man in the work place. He described women's work positions and tasks in the pottery factory, the wool factory, the glass factory, at the hospital for blind people as well as in prison. In every place which they had visited and found women working, he stressed like as-Saffar on the development that France, Belgium, England and Italy achieved when they turned their basic skills and jobs into sciences that require to be taught and which were gender inclusive. The women were "*met'elmat*"<sup>47</sup> (learners of skills) in the factories like any other man. In the nineteenth century was going through a phase of industrialization that required more labor force than ever to make the needed progress which paved the way for women to join the work force along with men in the factories and other places.<sup>48</sup> While Europeans themselves had contradictory opinions about this

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<sup>44</sup> Mohammed Bensaid, *At-Taarif bi bani Said as-Slaouiyyin wa Nobda 'an Wataaiqihim*. Vol II, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmed Mekkaoui, *Ar-Rahaloun al-Maghariba wa Oroba*, p. 81.

<sup>47</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 176.

<sup>48</sup> Theresa McBride, "Women's Work and Industrialization," in *The Industrial Revolution and Work in Nineteenth Century Europe*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (London & New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 67.

issue, most of the Moroccan travelers admired the fact that women were helping in providing for their families and at the same time contributing to the nineteenth century development in Europe.

Jaidi was also impressed by women's conduct and behavior around them. Their cheerfulness and warm hospitality left a great impact on his impressions of them which was different from how earlier and later travelers saw them. After a formal dinner of the Moroccan embassy at the residence of the French Marshall Patrice de MacMahon, they encountered his wife and other wives of the French notables. He said: "Then his wife entered and started talking to them [her guests] with cheerfulness and gaiety and after her another four or five women came in and they started talking to each other while fascinated by the way we dress."<sup>49</sup> He admired the women's openness in welcoming their guests with happiness and was not bothered at all with their fascination over the way they looked. Jaidi was different than other travelers who were sensitive towards European people's wonder and surprise about their traditional dress which created in them a sense of discomfort from the Other's gaze and observation. Jaidi had no problem in their looks as he was aware that as much as they were different and unfamiliar to him, he was different and unfamiliar to them as well which turned those moment of mutual bewilderment into moments of realization of the cultural Other's difference.

In another instance in France as well, Jaidi praised them for their extreme shyness that reflected their chastity despite the liberation they were witnessing. He wrote: "We saw in their women extreme shyness. They would look at us from afar but whenever they came closer to us, and when our eyes met, they would lower their eyes to the ground. Most of them are like that."<sup>50</sup> This image of European women is rarely found in the European discourses about Moroccan women, yet Moroccan travelers looked and observed beyond their fantasies and desires and saw shyness in European women which Jaidi admired. *Hayae* or shyness was one of the features which Driss ben Driss al-Amraoui, sixteen years earlier, thought that it lacked in the French

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<sup>49</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlatterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 176. Translation is mine.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 282. Translation is mine.

society. This shows that each traveler provided a different a heterogeneous discourse of the European women which varied from one traveler to the other.

Jaidi's representation of European women was different from other travelers as he was the most admirer of their position in the European society. According to Az al-Arab Maaninou:

This attitude [Jaidi's attitude towards the women] is a rare situation of a quick adaptation and a moral openness in describing the European women were overwhelmed with nobility, virtue and chastity unlike others who accused her of fornication and adultery, taking into consideration the situation of the Moroccan woman during those centuries and how she lived in intellectual ignorance, social belatedness and seclusion.<sup>51</sup>

Jaidi was able to travel to different European countries which gave him an advantage and allowed him to have more contact with several European women more than the other travelers who visited one or two countries. However, his discourse about them was less aggressive and expressed more fascination about them and their status. His account gives a completely different image of the women than any other Moroccan traveler. He did not associate the freedom that they were granted with immorality and fornication as he still saw them as shy and chaste.

Al-Hajjoui was a member of an ambassadorial delegation headed by minister Hajj Mohammed al-Maqari sent by Sultan Youssef ben al-Hassan to France in 1919 to participate in the French National Day which coincided with the celebration of their win in the First World War.<sup>52</sup> As for England, al-Hajjoui chose to extend his visit to London and Manchester to visit some family friends who settled there and worked as merchants and also to see the wonders he heard about in those cities.<sup>53</sup> Al-Hajjoui wrote a travel account entitled *Ar-Rihla al-Oroubia 1919* which portrays an image of

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<sup>51</sup> Az al-Arab Maaninou, ed. "al-Mouqadima," in *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, p. 76. Translation is mine.

<sup>52</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Oroupia 1919*, p. 16.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 190-110.

early 20<sup>th</sup> century France and England and the rapid modern shift that had affected different facets of life in both countries. He provided a modernist approach towards Europe in which he realized the huge gap that was forming between the two worlds. He witnessed how powerful, developed and advanced Europe was becoming through science and education. He produced a discourse of amazement and confusion at how fast the outer world was rapidly developing while Morocco was still struggling from internal conflicts over power which diminished the resources of the country and from the European powers that were trying to expand in Africa, starting from Morocco which was a strategic country that represented a crossover to other African countries.<sup>54</sup> About the decision to write the account, al-Hajjoui says:

[...] I thought that I should write what I saw during this journey which will benefit the people of al-Maghreb who have never traveled and did not know anything about the conditions of Europe. I chose not to lengthen my account by speaking about the geographies and the old and modern histories of those countries because enough has been written in these two sciences. [...] I decided to limit my writing to what I saw and I summarized a lot of what I went through.<sup>55</sup>

From the beginning of the account, we notice that he committed himself to writing what he would see and be selective in documenting what he thought would benefit people who have never travelled before. Unlike other travelers who dwelled in the histories and geographies of the countries they visited, he decided to limit himself to what was happening during that period in Europe and to be as precise and brief as he can.

Al-Hajjoui was amazed by the industrial development in both countries and he tried to document as much information as possible with the hope that there might be reforms in Morocco that would elevate it to Europe's modernity. He referred to

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<sup>54</sup> Abd Al Majid Keddouri, *Soufaraa Maghariba fi Ouropa 1610-1922*, p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 31. Translation is mine.

London and Paris as “the sources of wisdom in Europe”<sup>56</sup> . On the one hand, al-Hajjoui admired and was fascinated by the power of science and education in Europe but on the other hand, he was disappointed by the liberated status of women which allowed them a certain amount of freedom which he saw as excessive and destructive. He explained that it was the expensive tax which developed countries had to pay. His discourse seemed ambivalent as he called for an imitation of the West yet he had extreme reserve towards the freedom of the women and the lack of jealousy of the men who did not control them.

Al-Hajjoui was impressed by the system of organization in every field in Europe as he was fascinated by the importance that was given to education and science. He considered education to be the stepping stone which explained the rapid development in Europe. They cherished education and invested in schools and in people to learn either in schools or in industrial fields. He stated:

Education is compulsory in France for men and women. Every child who reaches a certain age must be enrolled in primary school. After primary school, if the person wishes not to continue their studies then they are obliged to learn a skill in one of the industries. Education is a must for every male and female, whether wealthy or poor, which made the country rise up from rock bottom in which many underdeveloped countries have fallen; they are countries where most of its people do not know anything about writing, literature, calculation and others...like the people of *al-Maghreb al-Aqsa*/Morocco.”<sup>57</sup>

He was adamant in his insistence on the issue of education and its importance for the development of any nation. Education at that time was a privilege in Morocco where only an elite knew how to read and write, mainly men.<sup>58</sup> He was impressed to see

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<sup>56</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia* 1919, p. 135. Translation is mine.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53. Translation is mine.

<sup>58</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, *Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable* (NP: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 59.

women involved in the educational system and the field work which fastened the pace of development in different fields. After his return from his journey, he gave a lecture in Rabat which he entitled “Teaching Women a Primary Arabic Education”<sup>59</sup> about the importance of education for women in which he insisted that women must study for a certain period of time until they reach puberty and then they must stay home, continue their studies there preferably, and not compete with men for work outside the confines of the house. If they were to work then they should work as teachers to female students in schools designed specifically for them.<sup>60</sup> Though he was open to the idea of teaching girls, he was limited by his cultural and religious beliefs. He called for an imitation of the West only in things that do not touch cultural and religious borders.

Al-Hajjoui’s stance towards women’s education can be considered revolutionary at that time despite the restrictions that he made but it can be considered a step forward towards women’s right for education. His account was an indirect call for reforms in Morocco by following the footsteps of those countries which will make him the target of the indignation of the Sultan and religious men of the country who considered him a “follower of the West” and thus of the “colonizer”.<sup>61</sup> His views about the reforms were too liberal and progressive for the Moroccan monarchy to even take them into consideration. In his book *Oroba fi Miraat ar-Rihla (Europe in the Mirror of Rihla)*, Said Bensaid Al-Alaoui states that through his travel account, al-Hajjoui tried to produce an intellectual, social and economic project which sought both reform and restoration. It is a vision that would not have flourished without his travel and firsthand observations of the changes he witnessed in Europe.<sup>62</sup> About the things he wished he had in his country, he said:

We took the train from Bordeaux’s train station [...] whether you look left or right, there is not a land that is neglected. Their agriculture is developed and based on many modern machines. Every roads to any of

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<sup>59</sup> Translation is mine.

<sup>60</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia* 1919, p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>62</sup> Said ben Said Al-Alaoui, *Oroba fi Miraat ar-Rihla : Surat al-Akhar fi Adab ar-Rihla al-Maghribiya al-Mou’asira*, p. 72.

their villages is well-organized, even the forests are well-taken care of. Every river has a bridge and every road is constructed well until we reached Paris.”<sup>63</sup>

He was basically impressed by everything he saw in Europe which was the opposite of what was going on in Morocco. He tried to make his demands for reforms subtle and made them in the form of an indirect call for the notables in Morocco to see that they too can achieve that degree of development if only they adopted science and education as primary pillars in the road for reforms. According to Abderrahim El-Moudden: “The traveler travels to learn. When he returns home, he produces knowledge in different forms.”<sup>64</sup> The traveler becomes a learner of anything new in the host country and when he returned back home, he becomes, in a way or another, a reformist and this is exactly what happened to al-Hajjoui whose entire perspective about development was changed by this one trip to Europe.

Hospitality, work and education were among the main things which Moroccan travelers often admired about European women. Though most of them were against the mixing of the two sexes, they praised European women for proving themselves to be a power to be reckoned at the work place competing with men to bring development to their nations. They realized that European development did not happen out of nowhere but it was a result of a whole society trying to come together for a comprehensive development in various fields. The awareness becomes apparent as move from one travel account to other chronologically.

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<sup>63</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroupia 1919*, pp. 49-50. Translation is mine.

<sup>64</sup> Abderrahim El-Moudden, *Adabiyat ar-Rihla*, p, 30. Translation is mine.

## **b. Struggling Muslim *Faqihs*: al-Hajari and al-Meknassi's Fear of Falling in Love with the Female Infidel**

Most of the Moroccan travelers to Europe were religious men and some of them were even *fouqaha*' or jurists which made their travels and encounters with European women even more challenging. Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi were among the travelers who feared falling in love with the "Christian infidel" woman whom they considered to be a temptation that would deviate them from their faith if they were to spend any more time with them.

In 1610-1611, Moroccan traveler and envoy to France and Holland Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari encountered, discussed, argued and even fell in love with European women. In his account *Kitab Nassir ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, al-Hajari noted down all these encounters, in addition to his personal struggle with the infidel woman's temptation. What distinguished al-Hajari from most of the other Moroccan travelers is that he was well versed in foreign languages which allowed him to have a better communication with European people in general, and women in particular. While he disputed about religion with most of the European women he met, there was one girl who succeeded in captivating his attention, mind and heart. During their travel to Olonne, his delegation stayed at a French notable's house where he was introduced to a female relative of that family whom he described in the following way: "In that house, there was a girl from his family [his host] who had a great wealth which she inherited from her parents. She was twenty four years old and she was extremely beautiful. Many notable men in her country asked her for marriage but she refused."<sup>65</sup> He describes the girl as someone with many qualities, such as wealth, youth and beauty who was asked for marriage by many rich men but she refused. This girl was eager to know about al-Hajari and his culture and she asked him many questions which he did not mind answering.

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<sup>65</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin*, p. 69. Translation is mine.

The French girl was taken aback by the Moorish visitor who attracted her attention and sought to become closer to him. She maneuvered her way around him in order to loosen the atmosphere between them. He said “The girl came in and asked me to describe to her the beauty standards in our country. So I told her what I could. She said: ‘you are right’ [...] The girl used to preen herself and ask me whether there were women in our country who dressed in silk like she did. Then she said: ‘I will teach you *Ifranji*’ and then I became her pupil.”<sup>66</sup> She offered to teach him French and then *mahaba*/affection for her began or as he expressed it “I was plagued in love”<sup>67</sup>. The term “plagued” is the most relevant term to express his condition as he was aware of the dangerous consequences of his feelings, even though she appeared to have the same feelings for him. Al-Hajari withdrew and refrained from meeting the girl as often as he used to and decided to take long walks instead to strengthen his faith against “Satan’s whispers”. He said: “*Mahabba* (love and affection) grew between us until it became stronger than I thought.”<sup>68</sup> He then knew that he should distance himself from her as much as he can and avoid contact. He also sought refuge in his religion in order to stir away desirous thoughts towards her. Though he enjoyed the company of French woman, he knew it was a challenge to his faith and ethics. For al-Hajari, this lady was among *al-mouharramat* (what is forbidden); that is to say, things he had often warned his companions of.

Al-Hajari and the French girl are two culturally and religiously different people who were attracted to each other through this difference. She saw him as an “exotic” being to whom she projected all the Western stereotypes of the Orient while he was attracted to her revealed physical beauty and her outspokenness. This “love” relationship between the two was governed, as Nabil Matar stated by the “concept of *Haraam*”<sup>69</sup> since al-Hajari considered her among *al-Mouharramat* as she was not only religiously forbidden for me but also because she was among the *harim* of the house in which he was hosted which made him feel uncomfortable being closer to her. Despite

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<sup>66</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>69</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*, p. 107.

her attempts to lure him, he remained persistence even in front of his companions who tried to convince him to engage with her in a relationship since she is so willing to.

Al-Hajari compared the girl's *fitna* / temptation and his desire for her as being governed and induced by Satan and he considered the whole situation to be a hard religious test to his faith and a battle with his own self. He stated his own discussion to himself when he felt that he was falling for her: "I said: 'Before meeting her, I was at odds with the Christians over money, and engaged in the holy fight for religion. But now I am at odd with myself and Satan.'"<sup>70</sup> Al-Hajari's struggle with the Christians over money refers to his ambassadorial mission which was to help the Moriscos to fled to Morocco to regain their money and possessions.<sup>71</sup> The second struggle with the Christians was over religion which was manifested in his religious debates and discussions with different people whether in France or Holland. Now, he felt that he was entering another struggle with himself and Satan which was in the form of love toward the "Christian infidel".

Throughout their journey in France and Holland, al-Hajari used to preach his companions about the dangers of Christian temptations, especially in relation to unveiled Western women who seemed to join them in every gathering and who lived with them in some of their residences.<sup>72</sup> Since he lived among the Christians in Spain and he was aware of the lifestyle of the Europeans, he knew that his companions who were never used to seeing women unveiled and in public might fall into temptation. Least he knew, he, the preacher, was the first one to struggle with this issue. It became obvious that one day, one of his companions who noticed "the girl" special attention towards al-Hajari decided to talk to him about it. Al-Hajari said: "So Satan went to the most senior of my companions, and whispered to him to go and talk to me about the girl. I had not told them how distraught I was in order not to expose my weakness to them because I used to urge them to remain steadfast against women who were forbidden to them."<sup>73</sup> He blamed Satan for inciting his companion to talk to him about her and felt ashamed that his weakness was exposed in front of his retinue which

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<sup>70</sup> Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of the Christians*, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin*. p. 17.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16. Translation is mine.

would shake his position a serious religious man and later on his reputation one they returned to their home country. He continued:

He said: ‘This girl does not disguise her feelings, rather, she is treating us so well because of her love for you. That is quite obvious. You know the custom in this country that a man stretches forth his hand and fondles the girls. No one here views such action as shameful. She repeatedly stands near you hoping for you to touch her, but you do not respond to her nor make her happy.’<sup>74</sup>

The companion talked to him about “the girl” because he wanted al-Hajari to take “the chance” of being in a foreign land and desired by a foreign woman to go ahead and seize it that opportunity. Al-Hajari was annoyed by that conversation that revealed his weakness and internal struggle between his desires and his faith. He was after all a religious man who followed the teachings of the Quran firmly so then he was put in a situation that was not suitable for a diplomat and religious man. He felt that he was letting down his religion and his companions whom he tried to keep on the “right path”.

He also felt that he was letting his hosts down because they brought them into the house and hosted them for weeks so looking at any of their women in a sexualized way would be an insult to, what Nabil Mtar called, “*hurma* of the house”<sup>75</sup>. According to Matar: “Ahmed did not describe how the girl tried to seduce him. Such description was not congruent with the *hurma* he had to maintain in regard to his hosts’ honor. [...] the writers did not even mention the names of the women they met.”<sup>76</sup> Al-Hajari was considerate and thoughtful towards his hosts whom he did not want to offend in any way. He refrained from dwelling too much on the topic, from giving detailed descriptions of the way she lured him and from displaying her name to the public.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 16. Translation is mine.

<sup>75</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes 1578-1727*, p. 106.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 107-108.

Another Moroccan traveler who was infatuated and tempted by the European beauty is Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi who mentioned in his book *al-Badr as-Safir li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yadi al-'Adouw al-Kafir* that while he was invited to a dinner party in Naples that was organized by “a vizier” in their honor, he fell in love with a singer who performed that night.<sup>77</sup> His experience is different from that of al-Hajari’s whose infatuation was mutual and lasted for a few weeks which resulted emotional turmoil for him and he also had a direct contact with the girl as they had several conversations together. However, in the case of al-Meknassi, it was momentary but revealed a lot about him. He admired her and cited poems about her beauty and love. First he gave a physical description of her appearance, he said: “Then, the curtain was lifted, and a door opened. A girl appeared from her quarters, dressed in white, like a halo around the crescent. She swayed around, from one place to another, reappearing as bright as the crescent. The crowd associated her [with God] and blasphemed.”<sup>78</sup> He was immediately infatuated by her beauty that he almost blasphemed. Before becoming an ambassador, he was a mosque preacher like his father which made his discourse rather ambivalent and confusing. He was a religious Muslim man who completely lost himself when he saw the singer on stage. He became a man driven by his own desires regardless of his religion and culture. He continued to describe her:

When she struck that instrument, which resembled the *âoud*, she made you forget the psalms of David; and when she sang without instrumental accompaniment, she made you forget the world and all that was in it. She was a masterpiece of the masterpieces of time, not to be found in Damascus or Yemen. Nothing was like her or even came close. When she sauntered, she was like a spear, and when she parted her lips in a smile, she divided hearts, and if she looked from the corner of her eye, she left hearts broken with sorrow. When she approached, she killed, and

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<sup>77</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safir li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, pp. 187-190.

<sup>78</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 110.

when she withdrew, she conquered the hearts and prevailed, having dissipated minds and dreams.<sup>79</sup>

The singer did indeed make al-Meknassi forget the world and himself that he started reciting rhythmic prose and poems about her beauty and the way she played her musical instrument. He acknowledged that the sight of her could make anyone forget about his religiosity and just enjoy her “holistic” presence. While al-Hajari could not dare describe “the girl” in a sensual way, al-Meknassi did not feel any obligation to restrain his description of the singer.

Despite the fact that they were both religious men, their discourse of their infatuation with the European woman was different from one another. They provided a heterogeneous discourse in which they both came to the conclusion that those women were a temptation that they must avoid. Once al-Meknassi came back to his senses and realized that he was falling in love with her, he decided to withdraw from the Opera. He said: “Having seen how wondrous she was, I started looking secretly at her as if she were my creed. I prayed for safety and liberation from her trap: Her eyes are instruments of destruction. [...] I decided to leave at sunrise before we were bewitched, and to leave while still unharmed before we became corroded.”<sup>80</sup> He left before the Opera ended because he was afraid of the temptation and attraction he felt which contracted with his religious and diplomatic status. When faced with this severe attraction, the travelers often chose to leave and to stay away from the women in order not to fall for them.

Both travelers, al-Hajari and al-Meknassi, were religious men who feared falling in love with European women. They were supposed to be role models to their retinues and they did their best to maintain their reputation and not fall into the temptation of the unveiled European beauty.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

### **c. The European Female Body: as-Saffar's Fascination by the Revealing Physical Beauty of the European Women**

The female body has always been a place of contested views and impressions by male travelers from around the world. The Moroccan travelers to Europe were no different in writing about the European female body which represented a cultural shock for them as something "unusual". While most of them were reserved in their descriptions of the women, others were fascinated by the European female body which was not covered and veiled, as in Morocco. The degree of fascination varied from one writer to the other which resulted in different forms of representations. Mohammed as-Saffar was an admirer of the European female body and he wrote extensively about it and provided a sexualized image of the women they encountered.

In Orientalist writings, the female body represented a muse and a discursive field for most writers who indulged in their sexual fantasies of the Oriental body. It also represented a land that they sought to colonize and conquer to pave the way for real expansion. According to Madeleine Dobie: "Western representations have produced the Orient as a compliant female body that invites penetration and possession, or in a different scenario as an impenetrable veiled body that harbors hostility and deception."<sup>81</sup> This image of the female body cannot be found in the Occidental discourse of the European female body which was more of a source of fascination than any other hidden ideologies. Very few Moroccan travelers focused their writings on the female body as most of them considered this topic to be a taboo as the female body was among *al-mouharramat*/forbidden things that could lead to temptation. However, Mohammed as-Saffar could not diverge his attention from the seduction of the female body as he was not accustomed to unveiled women. Unlike the other travelers, he showed an obsession with the beauty of women's bodies.

Mohammed as-Saffar was included in the embassy of ambassador Abdelkader Ach'ach in 1845-1846 because they needed a *faqih* who was well learned in religious

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<sup>81</sup> Madeleine Dobie, *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 31.

issues in order to assist the ambassador's retinue.<sup>82</sup> In his hometown, Tetouan, he used to teach *Hadith* and *Fiqh* at a mosque and gave public religious lectures every two days.<sup>83</sup> When they came back from their journey, he embarked on writing his travel account where he provided a unique discourse about French women which showed extreme admiration and fascination more than any other account in any era. He was captivated by their dazzling beauty and he did not miss any opportunity to describe in minute details the way they looked. First he described them lightly when he said: "These women are exceedingly beautiful, with white skin and voluptuous bodies. Blackening their eyes and eyebrows are either rare or not done at all, for it is not of their custom. Their women dress in black, which becomes them more than other colors."<sup>84</sup> As-Saffar discovered a different kind of beauty than the one known in the Arab countries. It was a fair beauty which was considered to be very European and unique that impressed most travelers, not just him. The physicality of the European women took a great deal of as-Saffar's account that showed his admiration for it at every occasion. The European female body became a spectacle for the Moroccan traveler's gaze and scrutiny. He did not use prose only but also poetry to show his extreme admiration of what he saw.

During a dinner at a palace in Paris, he noticed the women's presence and bodies "The glowing cheeks of the maidens were enough to make the hearts of young men ache."<sup>85</sup> On many other occasions, either during the comedies, the balls or the dinners, as-Saffar described the women's appearance in a detailed way, such as their physical features, their dressing habits, the way they moved and sat and walked, even the way they combed their hair and wore their jewels and whether they were accompanied by their husbands or went alone. On Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1846, the

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<sup>82</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, p. 19.

<sup>83</sup> Mohammed ben Abdellah As-Saffar al-Andalusi at-Titouani, *Rihlat as-Saffar ila Faransa, 1845-1846*, eds. Susan Gilson Miller, Khalid Ben Sghir (Abu Dhabi: Dar Soueidi, 2007), p. 70.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Moroccan embassy was invited by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, F. P. G. Guizot, to a ball in his house in addition to many French dignitaries and notables.<sup>86</sup> The first thing that surprised as-Saffar was the women's presence among them and then he described them by saying:

Some men came with their wife or daughter but there were also women alone. [...] No one sat except the women, who wore their finest frocks in a multitude of colors, white, red, and blue. Their clothing covered their breasts, which were hidden from view, but the rest of their bosom, face, and neck was bare and exposed. They cover their shoulders and upper arms in part with a filmy closefitting sleeves that do not reach their elbow. They bind in their waists beneath their dresses with tight girdles which give them a very narrow middle. It is said that they are trained into this [shape] from earliest childhood by means of a special mold.<sup>87</sup>

as-Saffar was not used to seeing women unveiled in public and mixing freely with men other than their husbands. These women revealed much than he expected in their dress and the *faqih* had no criticism about that; he rather admired what he saw. He was a Muslim religious figure whose religion called men to lower their gaze when in the presence of foreign women who are neither their mothers, wives, daughters, nor their nieces. However, he did not just gaze but he scanned the women from head to toe and admired every inch of them. Allah stated clearly in the Quran in *surat Nur*, *aya* 30: "Say to the believing men That they should lower Their gaze and guard Their modesty: that will make For greater purity for them: For God is well acquainted With all that they do."<sup>88</sup> In Islam, both men and women are forbidden from gazing and staring at the other sex and when they do, it is considered like an invitation for *fitna*/ temptation. When in the presence of the women, as-Saffar seemed to have forgotten his religious position within the embassy and back in his home country. He indulged in observing

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>88</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary*, p. 904.

and gazing at the unveiled women of France who were always around them on different occasions.

The French women provided an aspect of what was considered “new” for as-Saffar to reflect upon and describe at length. His description of them did not stop there, he continued:

Indeed you could make a circle around their waist with your fingers, it is so slender and fragile. Moreover, their clothes fit tightly over it, so that its exquisite delicacy is open to view. In the lower part they drape their clothing in such a way that the backside is greatly exaggerated, but perhaps this is due to something they put underneath. [...] If one of them is close by you, you are seized with the desire to grab her by the waist.”<sup>89</sup>

Unlike most of the Moroccan traveler writers, the Moroccan *faqih* as-Saffar provides a sexualized desirous image of the French women’s bodies. He meticulously described their necks, breasts, bosoms, and waists which were things he had never seen publicly displayed and he could not hide he desire to “grab them by the waist” that he recited erotic poems about them. He then went on to describe the women’s hair styles at length from the way they brush it to the way they style to the adornments they add to their hairs as accessories. He completely infatuated by their unveiled hairs that he described the sight to be “a lovely sight”<sup>90</sup> Throughout his discourse about the women, as-Saffar showed a certain unparallel openness towards the French women’s presence and appearance as he kept breaking religious and cultural boundaries in regard to the women in general and to Christian women in particular. His discourse and bold descriptions are unprecedented in any other travel accounts.

After the through description of the women who attended the ball, as-Saffar explained that the women would only reveal themselves when they were invited to special occasions but on ordinary days, they covered themselves and their face was

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<sup>89</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar, *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, pp. 182-183.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.183.

shown.<sup>91</sup> Unlike other travelers, he did not condemn the women for their revealing clothes or the men for allowing their women to mix with foreign men. He showed an understanding of the French culture and customs and that they were stepping into a foreign country, different from theirs in all aspects which, in his view, did not necessitate to look upon them nor to attack them for their difference. However, the female body was the main attraction for him during visits to mixed gatherings that he seemed unable to take his eyes of them. While other travelers, like al-Ghassani and al-Ghazzal from the previous century, were more attracted towards the architecture and furniture in the places they visited, as-Saffar was instantly drawn towards the women whose “fair beauty” captivated his mind. The female body became a site of an erotic discursive production for him that he seized every opportunity to gaze, observe and write about them.

Later on, the Moroccan embassy was invited King Louis Philippe I for a dinner and “a night of dancing”<sup>92</sup> at the royal palace. They night also the women were present and as-Saffar provided another lengthy description of the female guests. He stated:

We arrived there and found the palace overflowing with the most beautiful daughters of the *Rum*, wearing jewels and gowns that defy description. Their bare necks and shoulders, dainty waists, ponderous backsides, and ample bosoms were lovely enough to make the sun and the moon blush. Their naked upper arms flashed like lightning. They dazzled the senses with their honeyed curls, graceful shapes, rosy cheeks, lithe limbs and clinging folds. [...] No whores or harlots were present.<sup>93</sup>

He was completely taken by the way European women looked in public. The description was detailed and revealing which also showed his surprise and fascination by what he saw, which was unusual for him. Whenever words failed to express what

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

he wanted to convey, he moved to poetry as a better mode of expression of what he was trying to perceive. He also explained after every description that those people were of the highest rank in the French society and they were not women from the street. The way they looked and behaved was not considered shameful or disgraceful in their own culture. On the contrary, it was a way of showing one's position in society. He realized that in his own culture such women would be considered morally loose and corrupt but he defended them that despite his bold description of them, they were dignified women. He tried to explain that one's perception of what is immoral and vile is different from one culture to the other and that people should not be judged by the way they looked.

Then, as-Saffar moved on to describe how Europeans dance: a man holding hands with a woman and dancing in circles.<sup>94</sup> He gave a minute description of the dance which he ended in saying: "[...] Sometimes, the man and woman dance separately, and at other times two men may take hold of a woman and dance with her, for that is not considered shameful or indecent. A woman may even dance with a man other than her husband in his presence."<sup>95</sup> Such a event of dancing was new to him and he knew that his readers would be surprised to read about those dancing customs; that is why, he explained that in the French culture such practices were considered normal and shameless with the blessings of the women's husbands and fathers.

Dancing in public and with the other sex is considered *haram* in Islam and the female body has always been regarded as a 'awra which is a culturally and religiously loaded term that literally means a private part of the body, more specifically genitals, but it also goes on to mean a shameful and indecent body part that must be covered due to religion and culture. The woman's body is considered 'awra because it attracts attention and as Haideh Moghissi mentions: "the term 'awrah [...] implicitly ascribed to the female body in particular the qualities of negativity and shamefulness."<sup>96</sup> As-Saffar display of the female body in his travel account bares it from both the 'awra and

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp. 185-186.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>96</sup> Leila Ahmed, "Arab Cultures Writing Women's bodies," in *Women and Islam: Social conditions, obstacles and prospects*. Volume 2, ed. Haideh Moghissi (London & New York: Taylor and Francis, 2005), p. 204.

the *hurma* which other travelers tried to maintain in their description of the women they encountered during their visits. He kept reminding his readers that in European women were supposed to be as he described and that those mixed practices are part of that foreign culture which must be respected by their visitors.

As-Saffar's description of the female body revealed a lot about him as well and about his high tolerance and acceptance of the Other's differences that, as a religious man, he never involved religion in what he saw and witnessed when dealing with the women. However, at the end of travel account, he showed remorse for what he saw and said as he was heading back home, he became more aware his position as a religious man who was sent with the embassy to assist them in their religious duties. He said:

May God forgive for what my hands have committed, for the repulsive abominations my eyes have witnessed; and for the abhorrent blasphemies and confused mutterings of the misguided which my ears have heard. I ask him to lead me back to the path of the righteous, even though I am not their equal in good works, and to bring my days to a favorable conclusion.<sup>97</sup>

Only at the end of his account that as-Saffar returned back to his religion and to God to ask Him for forgiveness for his mutterings and dealings in the foreign land. It seemed as if he were going on a magical journey during which he let himself loose of any cultural or religious obligations towards the "Other" and once he journey ended, he woke up and felt as if he blasphemed through his sight and sensual thoughts of the "infidel" women. He felt that he sinned in everything that he witnessed and apologized to God to forgive him for what he had committed.

Mohammed as-Saffar's travel account provided a unique representation of the European women which we cannot find in any of the other Moroccan and even Arab travel writings. He was bold in providing a sexualized image of the European female

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<sup>97</sup> Mohammed as-Saffar. *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar*, p. 221.

body despite the fact that he was a *faqih* which completely contradicted the teachings of his religion and the visitor's manners towards the *hurma* of his hosts'.

### **3. Conservative Muslim Travelers Challenged by Women and Gender Roles in Europe**

#### **a. European Women as a Temptation in Accounts by al-Hajari, al-Meknassi and al-Amraoui and al-Hajjoui.**

One of the most intriguing issues that caught the attention of the Moroccan travelers in the previous centuries is the status of women in European societies. During their travels to Europe, Moroccan travelers faced different challenges like problems of language, contact with people from a different culture and religion, but the biggest challenge of all was their direct contact with European women and the mixed gatherings which they had to attend.

Ahmed ibn Qassim Al-Hajari and Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi and Idriss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui went on different periods to different destinations, the first in 1611-1613 to France and Holland, the second to Spain in 1779 and then to Malta, Napoli and Sicily 1781- 1783 and the latter in 1860 to France they a century apart from each other, they discourse of the women as temptation remained the same. While Al-Hajari and al-Meknassi were tempted by European women, al-Amraoui was cautious not to interfere with them in order not to fall in the trap of the unveiled European beauty. All of this makes their accounts interesting to analyze taking into consideration how different their discourse is from the Orientalists' discourse of Muslim women. Moroccan travelers in general described and represented the women in a heterogeneous way without any eroticization or sexualization, unlike European travel writers' accounts when dealing with Oriental Muslim women. According to Rana Kabbani: "Europe's feelings about Oriental women were always ambivalent ones. They fluctuated between desire, pity, contempt and outrage. Oriental women were painted as erotic victims and as scheming witches. [...] They spent their lives in sexual preparation [...] and in sexual intrigue. They dallied with each other when their

men were absent.”<sup>98</sup> In Orientalism, the women were often regarded as sexual objects and as bodies that represented the land and should be conquered as part of the colonization process but in the case of “Occidentalism”, the women represented a challenge to the Moroccan travelers who were at first perturbed by their presence which affected the way they perceived them. One thing that they shared is the “ambivalence”<sup>99</sup> of their discourse and feelings about the presence of the women wherever they went.

In al-Hajari’s *Nasser ad-Din ‘ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin* and both of al-Meknassi’s accounts, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir* and *Al-Badr as-Safir li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yadi al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, and al-Amraoui’s *Touhafat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, the European woman is portrayed as the epitome of *Fitna* / temptation and a source of *ghiwaya* / seduction that would diverge any “good Muslim” from the “righteous path”. Nabil Matar confirms this notion by stating that “the concept of *Haraam* dominated the behavior of Muslim visitors from the very start.”<sup>100</sup> Women were definitely among the issues that were considered *haram* and they had to figure a way to deal with their inevitable presence among them. Most, if not all, the Moroccan embassies to Europe included religious men and *imams* who would ensure that the members of the embassy ate only *halal* food, knew the direction of prayer, and behaved in their best conduct during their stay in Europe which could last from months and sometimes for years.<sup>101</sup> They were meticulous about carrying their religious duties in the European countries they visited, especially towards the women who, as foreign<sup>102</sup> women, fall within the category of *al-Mouharramat*<sup>103</sup> from

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<sup>98</sup> Rana Kabbani, *Europe’s Myths of the Orient: Devise and Rule* (London: McMillan, 1986), p. 26.

<sup>99</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 95.

<sup>100</sup> Nabil Matar, *Europe through Arab Eyes, 1578-1727*, p. 107.

<sup>101</sup> Driss Jaidi, *Ithaf al-Akhyar bi Gharaib al-Akhbar: Rihla ila Faransa, Beljica, Injlaterra, Italya, 1876*, pp. 365-366.

<sup>102</sup> The concept of “strange women” in Islam refers to any woman that is not a person’s mother, wife, daughter, granddaughter or niece. The other women are considered “*ajnabiyat*” which translates as foreign or strange women and they must veiled from and have limited contact with men who are *ajanib* / foreign or strange to them

<sup>103</sup> The term *al-Mouharramat* refers to things which are religiously forbidden.

whom they should distance themselves so that they do not fall prey to their impulses. The women formed a potential religious shake to the Muslim visitors from whom they needed protection.

Al-Hajari was afraid and cautious in his encounter, along with his companions, with the women. He was aware that this meeting with the revealed beauty of the women would have an impact on them as men and might trigger some emotions which were considered *Haram* and would also interfere with their diplomatic protocol as an ambassadorial delegation representing the Moroccan monarchy. When in Bordeaux and during their stay with a notable French family's house who had beautiful women within the same house in which the Moroccans were hosted, al-Hajari's first plan regarding his companions was as follows:

I used to recount to my companions some stories of what happened to good Muslim men who were standing on the edge , in order to strengthen them over their souls and my soul over the soul's and Satan's whispers about *al-Mouharramat/prohibitions*. Due to unveiled revealed women, Satan used to whisper to us a lot but we were among the patients.”<sup>104</sup>

When al-Hajari met the beautiful women of the house, he knew that as the leader of the ambassadorial delegation, he had the responsibility to keep his men focused on the mission of the embassy and not get distracted by the unveiled women. In order to ensure that, he started giving them lectures and telling them stories about what constitutes a good Muslim man and how strong Satan is at those moments of weakness and that they should strengthen their faith by clinging to it even more while there are in “the lands of the Christians”.

Unfortunately for the cautious al-Hajari, he fell in temptation even before his companions whom he preached about the seduction of the European women. He met one the host family's female relatives, who was staying with the family, whom he described as “a twenty four years old, having a great amount of beauty. She has been

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<sup>104</sup> Ahmed Ibn Qassem al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawm al-Kafirin*, p. 69. Translation is mine.

asked for marriage by many great Frenchmen, all of whom she declined.”<sup>105</sup> This beautiful young lady engaged in many conversations with al-Hajari and later offered to teach him French. Once his feelings started to grow fonder of her and felt the same from her part, as he said “She offered to teach me French and I became her students. She was too generous with my companions and *mahabba* / love grew between us until I reached a great state of love.”<sup>106</sup> He then decided to stay away from her and busy himself with reciting the Quran in the garden in order to shun away “any satanic thoughts” about her.<sup>107</sup> Though the girl had special feelings for him, as his account reveals in a subtle way, he never spoke about her or described her in a negative way and never spoke in details about his discussions with her or her behaviors and conducts in his presence. Al-Hajari considered interactions between European women as a daily challenge that needed patience, poise and strength of faith to go beyond the “whispers of Satan” in the presence of unveiled European women around the house.<sup>108</sup> He chose to spend his time taking long walks of meditation and reflection in the surrounding areas of the house instead of being around them.

This representation of the women as temptation is not limited to the Moroccan travelers of the European women. It is as old debate since both Judaism and Christianity are based on the ultimate gender representation and assumption of Adam and Eve and how Eve used sexual temptation in order to seduce Adam to eat from the forbidden tree which led to the expulsion from Heaven.<sup>109</sup> Eve was held accountable for their fate which made the women hold the burden in order to redeem themselves. However, in Islam, the representation of Adam and Eve is completely different. Allah states in *Surat al Baqara*, ayat 35-36 in the *Quran*:

We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 69. Translation is mine.

<sup>109</sup> Malika Najib, *Al-Maraa fi ar-Rihla as-Safariya al-Maghribiya khilal al-Qarnayn 18 wa 19*, p. 264.

this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression. Then did Satan make them slip from the (garden), and get them out of the state (of felicity) in which they had been. We said: "Get ye down, all (ye people), with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time."<sup>110</sup>

In Islam, Adam is the one responsible for his actions and for listening to the whispers of Satan. Eve is freed from the guilt of tempting Adam and the portrayal of Adam as a victim of the female seduction. We notice conflicting gender representations between the three Heavenly religions in regard to who is responsible for what and whether the woman as a source of temptation could lead to the man's fall and destruction.

This is in regard to the oldest gender relation in history but there are several instances in which the woman is portrayed as a temptation to men whether in the *Quran* or in the *Sunnah an-Nabawiya*.<sup>111</sup> Among the Hadiths which are reported on behalf of prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is his saying "I have not left behind me any *fitnah* / temptation more harmful to men than women."<sup>112</sup> The modesty of the women in Islam is an obligation on every adult woman. They must wear long loose clothes to protect themselves and also to avoid tempting men and inviting them to sin. According to Shaikh<sup>113</sup> Yusuf al-Qaradawi: "Islam makes it *Haram* for women to wear clothes which fail to cover the body and which are transparent, revealing what is underneath. It is likewise *Haram* to wear tightly fitting clothes which delineate the parts of the body, especially those parts which are sexually attractive."<sup>114</sup> These characteristics were followed by Moroccan women in earlier centuries that they were secluded into

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<sup>110</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary*, p. 25-26.

<sup>111</sup> *As-Sunnah an-Nabawiya* is the verbally transmitted tradition of deeds and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which constitute a set of teachings for Muslims to follow along with the teachings of the Holy Quran.

<sup>112</sup> Abu Abdellah ben Mohammed ben Ismail al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Beirut & Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 2002), p. 1299. Translation is mine.

<sup>113</sup> Shaikh refers to religious scholar, especially in relation to Islam.

<sup>114</sup> Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *The Lawful and the Prohibited by Islam*, trans. K. al-Hilbawi, M. Siddiqi, & S. Shukri. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cairo: al-Falah Foundation for Translation, Publication and distribution, 2001), p. 82.

the private space and not allowed the mixing with foreign men to them. That is why, in their contact with the liberated European women, Moroccan travelers could not help but see them as a temptation that was prohibited in Islam. They considered it a test to their faith and a *jihad* / struggle with their soul; the human soul that Allah has warned about in *surat Yousuf*, *aya* 53 in the Quran: “The (human) soul is certainly prone to evil”<sup>115</sup>. The travelers struggled with their souls and inner selves while meeting the women and were afraid to fall into temptation that is why some of them decided to isolate themselves during their travels and refused to attend mixed dinners, balls and theater performances. They realized that they were going to be exposed to a world that is completely different from what they are used; a world where women were present and unveiled.

In the beginning of their travels, the writers promised that they would write only what they saw and heard but as they wrote, there were other elements that interfered in this process affecting the objectivity they claimed. According to Malika Najib: “The traveler claimed to write what he saw with his own eye. This eye is not as innocent as he said but it is an eye that cannot see reality objectively. It sees through the viewer’s background and the observing eye that tell him what to write.”<sup>116</sup> The “observing eye” is the one that selects what to talk about and how to talk about it. Associating European women with temptation had been in the back of their minds from the moment that they took off on their journeys. They had expectations and they knew they were going to struggle in her presence as they were not used to such customs.

Although the fear of the “tempting woman” was common among most, if not all, the travelers, the way they reacted to this temptation was different from one to the other. While some chose not to engage in social gatherings where the women were present, others decided to be more open-minded, go with the flow and act in a diplomatic manner. Al-Meknassi’s first encounter with European women was in Spain in 1779 about which he stated:

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<sup>115</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text with English Translation and Commentary*. p. 571.

<sup>116</sup> Malika Najib, *Al-Maraa fi ar-Rahalat as-Safaria al-Maghrebia khilal Al-Qarnayn 18 wa 19*, p. 210. Translation is mine.

After dinner, several wives of the notables and *damat*<sup>117</sup> gather in the mentioned house with the intention to salute us but I was hesitant about going out to meet them [...] but the governor insisted and I could not help refuse his request. I went out and found a big crowd of women who showed their adornment and they dressed up and adorned themselves like the women from the pre-Islamic times. They showed happiness, delight and manners in meeting us so we greeted them and we left.<sup>118</sup>

Upon his arrival to Spain, al-Meknassi realized that there were women among the welcoming group but he decided to stall in order to avoid the meeting but it was inevitable since the governor insisted. The first thing which he noticed about the women is their revealing clothes and adornments which reminded him of pre-Islamic women who were not modest in their way of clothing. He had the intention to seclude himself from the women but as an ambassador, he had diplomatic duties which he had to fulfill among which is an interaction with the people, both men and women, on various occasions. Later on, he was invited to attend a party which they held in his honor in which there was music and dancing with the women but he withdrew from the party saying that he was tired.<sup>119</sup> In Spain, he was completely indifferent towards the Spanish way of welcoming guests because it included women and singing and dancing which are forbidden in his religion. He could not loosen his tight character and give them and himself the opportunity to know and become known. Said ben Siad al-Alaoui explains that these rejections to associate in mixed gatherings are not just due to the presence of the women but also because al-Meknassi was among the early travelers who believed that they were coming from a strong superior country and that he does not have to stoop into a world where the mixing between the sexes was

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<sup>117</sup> *Damat* is a word which al-Meknassi appropriated from the Spanish word “*dama*” to refer to women of high social rank.

<sup>118</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 30. Translation is mine.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

normal.<sup>120</sup> As a religious man, he could not tolerate and engage in practices which were not aligned with his religion.

In his second journey to Europe, Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi traveled to Malta, Napoli and Sicily in 1781-1783 and we notice that he tried to slightly change his attitude in order not to offend his hosts who invited him to different events in different cities. Since it was his second journey, after Spain, he was prepared for the female presence whenever he went; however what al-Maknassi could not predict was that he would fall in love with one of the singers in a dinner he attended in Naples. Al-Meknassi provided lengthy paragraphs in which he described the beauty of the singer and how much she captivated his heart despite the fact that he could not understand a word of what she was singing. He even quoted different verses of romantic poems written by Muslim poets to praise and admire her beauty, seduction and talent. When he suddenly realized that he was hit by love. He said: “I was afraid to be among those whose heart was victim to his sight and the innocent would be punished for another’s sin. [...] people were infatuated by her flirtation and charm so I decided to leave before I become infatuated with her and to leave safe before I become attached to her and before I become injured by her beautiful looks.”<sup>121</sup> Al-Meknassi’s openness to engage with his hosts in the mixed dinners and the parties as part of strengthening his diplomatic relations with them revealed his vulnerability towards European women. He also revealed his fear of the female temptation and decided to leave before his love grew. He was aware of his feelings towards the temptation of *al-mouharramat*, the singer, which necessitated caution and forced him to leave the party before it finished.

Among the travelers who decided to isolate themselves is Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui who decided to stick to the ambassadorial mission he was delegated and refused to participate in events which contradicted his religion. The hosts of the travelers often planned an entire program for them to enjoy their visit and to see as

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<sup>120</sup> Said Ben Said al-Alaoui, “Oroba ar-Rahalin al-Maghariba,” in *Ar-Rahala al-Arab wa al-Mouslimoun: Iktichaf al-Akhar, al-Maghreb Mountalaqan wa Mouawalan* (Rabat: The Moroccan Ministry of Culture, 2003), p. 26.

<sup>121</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safir li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yadi al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 189. Translation is mine.

much as they can of the marvels of the West among which is the theater to which al-Amraoui's delegation was invited on multiple occasions. He stated: "They [French notables] invited us to some of the comedies but we apologized for one which included singing and dancing because we do not understand the language of the singing which will be heavy on us to hear and also because in our religion, we are prohibited from looking at women while they dance. [...]"<sup>122</sup> al-Amraoui was among the travelers who can be considered the least civil and the most closed-minded with his hosts in this regard. While others chose to be more open-minded and accepted their hosts' invitations, he chose to reject them either due to problems of language or because they were against his religious teachings. He was adamant in his refusal to attend mixed gatherings in which women displayed their beauty and bodies. He regarded the French woman to be a temptation that must be avoided altogether by Muslim men whose religion is clear in this case. Almost all the travelers were religious men and religious leaders back in Morocco but they were different in the way they handled the issue of women during their visit to Europe.

In their contact with the European temptation, Moroccan travelers are allowed into a journey of self discovery and self consciousness. Said ben Said al-Alaoui stressed that: "The *rihla* is more about informing about the traveler's mindset and representing the different components of his cultural awareness than it is about talking about the visited country and the news of its people and what they saw and experienced there."<sup>123</sup> Indeed, and especially in the case of the women, the travel accounts tell us more about the travelers than they do about the women. These interactions reveal the inner identity of the travelers, their cultural awareness, mentality, flexibility as well as their coping mechanisms with their cultural other. We notice that no matter how tolerant and open-minded the traveler was, there were always limits which he could not cross when dealing with the women who were categorized as a *fitna* / temptation.

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<sup>122</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Touhafat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 90. Translation is mine.

<sup>123</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, "Oroba ar-Rahalin al-Maghariba," p. 19. Translation is mine.

European women were often seen as a temptation to the Muslim Moroccan traveler since he was not used to seeing women as liberated as they were in Europe. They were the complete opposite of anything at home which made their encounter rather difficult as they had to figure how to deal and act in mixed gatherings and events. This goes to show the importance that the “cultural baggage” plays in situations of the travel outside one’s country which could expose him to different ways of interaction in which he would have to adapt.

**b. Moroccan Travelers’ Condemning the Freedom of the Women and the Lack of Jealousy of Men in al-Hajari’s, al-Ghazzal and al-Meknassi’s, al-Amraoui, and al-Hajjoui’s Accounts**

Moroccan travelers to Europe were usually stunned by the cultural differences that existed between their Muslim culture and its Christian counterpart. Some of them experienced what could be called a “culture shock” towards the unfamiliarity of the things they witnessed. One the most controversial topics in the Moroccan travel accounts was the European women’s status in European societies which sometimes generated harsh criticism about how much liberty was given to them in the way they dressed, behaved, danced and mixed with men. Women’s “excessive liberty” was condemned by the Moroccan travelers who saw it from their own cultural and religious lens which made them fall into generalizations and stereotypes. They also accused the European men of being submissive to the women and lacking any feelings of jealousy towards them.

Ahmed ibn Qassim Al-Hajari’s journey to Europe, France and Holland in 1610-1613, was among the most interactive ambassadorial journeys because he was very well versed in the Spanish language and understood French which allowed him to engage in direct discussions and contact with European women. He had contradicting feelings towards European women which was a mixture of admiration and reserve. He respected them but he also saw them as a temptation from which he must protect himself and his entourage. According to Abdessalam Himer:

If the Europeans see the Moroccan man as a fanatic who imposes the veil on the woman who does not even get to know before he marries her, then ambassador *Afouqai*<sup>124</sup> finds the freedom of the European woman which is reflected in her exposed beauty, and the mixing and talking to the men is but an evidence of their immorality and corruption. In Afouqai's view, the European woman is temptation itself.<sup>125</sup>

In their descriptions of women, the travelers have often regarded them as temptation that they must not submit to. In order to protect themselves, they resorted to their religion and to *Allah* to keep these "satanic creatures" away from them and to strengthen their faith. Al-Hajari recounted different occasions in which he preached his companions in order to preserve themselves and not to let go to their emotions and desires. He said special *duaas* (prayers) in order to control his desires and his companions': "[...] due to exposed women, Satan started to whisper to us a lot but we were patient."<sup>126</sup> He had a constant fear that they might weaken and fall into temptation in the "lands of the Christians" where women exposed their beauty freely and mixed with men and engaged in conversations with them with no barriers.

The female presence in the public space represented a challenge to the Moroccan travelers who were used to cultural and religious boundaries between men and women. They were used to the idea that while the public space was completely male, the private space, which is the house, was reserved for the women. This separation granted both sexes a distance from being seduced by each other as they are considered foreigners to each other. In Europe such separation did not exist which left the travelers at risk of being seduced and tempted by the unveiled European beauty.

Ahmed ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal who went to Spain for eight months from 1766 to 1767 has also criticized Spanish women and men. He criticized the women for their

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<sup>124</sup> Ahmed ibn Qassim Al-Hajari was also called Afouqai.

<sup>125</sup> Abdessalam Himer, "Surat al-Akhar min khilal Taqarir al-Rahalat al-Safaria ila Oroba," p 138. Translation is mine.

<sup>126</sup> Ahmad Ibn Qassim al-Hajari, *Nasser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin*, p. 69. Translation is mine.

freedom and lack of chastity and the men for their lack of jealousy and desire to expose their women's beauty to strangers and seeking praise for it. He mentioned in his *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* his first contact with Spanish people as he descended from the ship in Ceuta: "We heard noise in the city and then we found its walls and houses' roofs filled with men, women and children whose voices were loud but we could not understand them"<sup>127</sup> His first contact with the women was through rooftops and realized that they were given the freedom to be in public and that he should expect them in every city. He continued "The houses in this city are tall which windows are like seats overlooking the streets. Their women cling to the windows greeting passersby and their men are extremely nice to them."<sup>128</sup> Al-Ghazzal was astonished to see women spending most of their time in the windows talking to whoever passed by whether men or women while their men did not disapprove this behavior but they rather seemed comfortable. This freedom confused most travelers who could not approve of it and which was a deal breaker in their encounter with the women.

He was also confused to learn that women had the freedom to appear in front of men and engage in discussions with them but he was mostly astonished to know that they can receive male guests at home alone. All these new information were unfathomable to al-Ghazzal. He said:

Women had a desire and exultation for talking and companionship with men other than their husbands whether in private or in public. They are also free to go wherever they want. A Christian might come home and find his wife or daughter or sister sitting with another men and drinking while laying on each other's shoulder and he would not mind. He would rather be happy and would feel obliged to return the favor to the other's wife, as I was told."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 48. Translation is mine.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 52. Translation is mine.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 52. Translation is mine

Al-Ghazzal was exposed to the situations which he had never believed were real that is why at the end, he added that that what they were told because he could not assume the truthfulness of the matter. In the Moroccan society in particular and the Islamic world in general, the mixing between the sexes has been an intolerable act and in the Moroccan context, it was *hshouma*<sup>130</sup> and *haram* for a woman to receive male guests whether in her husband's presence or not. A man and a woman were never allowed to meet in private for cultural and religious reasons, the most important of which is the belief that whenever a man and a woman are gathered in one space alone, Satan would be their third which would lead to *fitna* / temptation. Al-Ghazzal was confused by the husband's happiness in such a case; a case that would have infuriated any Moroccan man if it happened in his own house.

Though at first he could not believe that this mixing was truly normal, he explained that what confirmed his information was his own experience when the notables asked for his permission to let their women in at the ambassador's residence to greet him. According to him: "We arrived at their country and met their notables who excused us to let their women in to greet us. We could not but agree. Several of them came in wearing their finest clothes [...] Every man introduced us to his wife and daughter and sister, is there is any, and he was more than happier to receive praise about their beauty."<sup>131</sup> He did not take any information that he was told about the women for a fact until he experienced what proved it or not. When he became more engaged in official visits, he realized that he hosts would be thrilled if he accepted to meet their women in private. These direct first hand situations consolidated everything that he heard and said. Unlike other travelers who refused any contact of that kind with European women and usually avoided mixed events and gatherings, al-Ghazzal was a diplomatic ambassador who was aware of cultural difference even if it contradicted what he believed in. He knew that he was in a host country that had various diplomatic

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<sup>130</sup> Something disgraceful and shameful that should not be done.

<sup>131</sup> Ahmad ben al-Mahdi al-Ghazzal, *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad*, p. 52. Translation is mine.

ties with Morocco with the hope to have more and they needed to blend in with the people and tolerate any difference that might come in the way.

During his journey, Al-Ghazzal was introduced to several Spanish women on different occasions. He was asked to praise them and give his opinion about their beauty.<sup>132</sup> He was also invited to dinners in which women danced with men during parties that were held in honor of the Moroccan delegation. These dances had appalled al-Ghazzal to write: "Praise be to Allah for the cleanliness and purity of our religion".<sup>133</sup> He, as other travelers, often resorted to religion and to Allah because what he witnessed was bigger than he could understand. The mixing and dancing between the sexes was beyond anything that he could have imagined, especially in mind of the 18<sup>th</sup> century traveler and Moroccan society. According to Al-Ghazzal these parties and the expensive clothes of the women were nothing but a show off of their welfare and richness. Each of the notables tried to come in with his women wearing the latest designs of clothes and the most expensive fabrics and jewelry.<sup>134</sup> It was their way to show the development and power of their country to the Moroccan delegation.

He tried to be appreciative towards his hosts' hospitality and to satisfy them during their visits but he struggled while doing that as he was aware that it went against his religious beliefs. After a whole night of mixing and partying with the men and women, he stated: "When the people went away and we went to our residence, we started seeking refuge from Allah from these infidel people's lack of jealousy and deep penetration in infidelity. We ask Allah the Almighty not to punish us for what we committed in talking to them with what satisfied them and what was necessitated by the time."<sup>135</sup> Al-Ghazzal felt as if he sinned when he tried to mingle with his hosts during the dinners and dance parties and that his compliments for them and their women were a prohibited practice but was obliged to do it to maintain good political and economic relations with the "infidels". He asked Allah for forgiveness for his actions and openness towards them.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 57. Transaltion is mine.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 71. Translation is mine.

Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi encountered several Spanish women during his ambassadorial mission to Spain in 1779. Though he was flexible when it came to being open to go to different places in Spain, he was sensitive about the women's presence in every gathering and event. He did not mind the women in themselves as much he minded the way they carried themselves in public. He harshly criticized them at the beginning of his account by saying that: "[the women] revealed their beauty and bedizened themselves like the bedizenment of the pre-Islamic period."<sup>136</sup> Women in Spain were completely different from the women in Morocco during that period. While Moroccan women were limited to the confines of the house, the Spanish women were more involved in the outside social and cultural life of the country. They had a certain liberty in their dress, conduct and movement which the travelers found it hard to absorb.

The travelers' religious and cultural identity kept surfacing whenever he became in contact with the women who appeared and behaved in manners that were foreign and strange to them. She was an unfamiliar being that invaded their space in every gathering and imposed their presence on them. He could not see the women but from his religious lens and in comparison to women in the Islamic world. In addressing the Spanish women, he often used the word *Damat* which as Nabil Matar stated:

The appearance of women among the welcoming parties proved deeply perplexing to al-Miknasi, which is why he used the transliteration of 'dames' (*damat*), as if they were different from the *nisa'* or *harem* or *sayyidat*, of his own country. [...] He could well adjust to the innovations in technology and buildings around him; but the *damat* and comedias were more challenging."<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, p. 30. Translation is mine.

<sup>137</sup> Nabil Matar, "Europe through Eighteenth Century Moroccan Eyes," in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*. N° 26. *Wanderlust: Travel Literature of Egypt and the Middle East* (Cairo: Department of English and Comparative Literature, American University in Cairo and American University in Cairo Press, 2006), p. 205.

Using this term is a clear systematic Othering of the Spanish women who were not a usual sight for him. They were not just a double Other to him which is usually different in religion and sex; They were Christian unusual women who are completely different from the women of his country and religion. The term “damat” became a word of reference to Christian European woman who were different in every aspect from other women in the Muslim world who were still governed by the male dominance and concepts of “shame” and “honor”.

Al-Meknassi met women either when he arrived as they were welcoming them on the streets or notable women who visited them in their residence to welcome and talk to them as well, but he was completely surprised when they were invited to several dance parties that included women wearing revealing clothes and dancing with foreign men. Those parties appalled him, especially when he noticed the Spanish people’s way of dancing a foreign man holding a foreign woman in his arms and dancing in the presence of several people that included their own spouses and fathers who were also dancing with foreign men and women. Mixed dancing was also a new phenomenon that the travelers could not comprehend but they wrote lengthy paragraphs to describe how close the women were to men during such practice that their bodies touched. He stated:

Then he [the judge] stood and went straight to a woman whose beauty covered the place. He removed his hat and bowed and asked her for a dance. They started dancing while he held her between his arms and his feet kept diverging from one side to the other. He did not care about the people who surrounded him. May Allah distort them, they venture a lot yet they have no shame.<sup>138</sup>

He specified the identity of the man as a judge in order to show that this practice was common among all Spanish people, not just the lower ranks. He condemned them for

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<sup>138</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir*, pp. 154-155. Translation is mine.

being too audacious in their conduct with no regard to other people looking at them and called them out for being shameless. He criticized them for things that are foreign to his own culture and beliefs and accused them of immorality according to his own understanding of the term. The fact that both sexes were mixing and touching through dancing in a social gathering rendered them into “shameless people” in the eyes of al-Meknassi who was a previous mosque preacher coming from a culture of “shame” and a conservative religious background that was not familiar to those practices.

Al-Meknassi attended several dance parties that were held in their honor to welcome them in different Spanish cities and those parties exposed his cultural identity that interfered in his description of his cultural Other. He seized every opportunity during the dances to remind his reader of the vulgarity of the Spanish people. During one the dance parties in Murcia city:

On one night, they gathered men and women. [...] As their tradition goes, the *damat* danced that you would find a man seated while his wife or his daughter is dancing with a stranger and they secretly and shamelessly whisper to each other and no one cares about them. As it is known about them and immorality and adultery are widespread in their country and they know it but they do not care. They have no jealousy over each other may Allah distort them and clean this country from them.<sup>139</sup>

Al-Meknassi harshly criticized the social norms in the Spanish society and which centered around the women. He believed that the women were given too much freedom in their public conduct and contact with men. They had no regard towards their husband who also could not care less about what was going on. Al-Meknassi believed that this imbalance in the Spanish social familial structure was a free rein for stooping into immorality and adultery.

On his second journey as an ambassador to Malta, Naples and Sicily, al-Meknassi was more relaxed around the women and his critical discourse about them

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 161. Translation is mine.

softened in comparison to his views about them in Spain and the culture shock that happened to him at the beginning. However, he could not totally get rid of his criticism of what was wrong and contradicted his own religion and culture. He criticized different practices related to women in those countries. Their arrival to Malta coincided with one of the Christian festivities which included a carnival before the Christian fasting days during which women wear men's clothes and vice versa and cover their face with a mask in order not to know each other.<sup>140</sup> Al-Meknassi found this practice to be immoral as it allowed women and men to indulge in outrageous repulsive deeds. He continued his criticism of priests whom he thought were portraying a false image of pious Christians while they were morally corrupt:

This celebration is not what it looks like. These people are immersed in adultery. When they [the priests] join this profession, they are forbidden from getting married but instead you would find each one of these fornicators has a woman whom he rents for adultery and he has bastard children from her. Since people are disguised in this celebration, it becomes an opportunity for them to meet and indulge in fornication. [...] They are shameless and though adultery is forbidden in their religion, they do it publically whether they are young or old.<sup>141</sup>

Al-Meknassi attacked and criticized priests for misusing their religious profession to sexually exploit women in order to attend to their sexual desires. However, he did not associate their deeds with their religion. He stated clearly that their religion forbade fornication and adultery. He discussed that the prohibition of marriage for the priests and the nuns in the papal institution only led to a life of hypocrisy that led them to live a life full of sins instead of a life full of worship and devotion. This double life which religious people lived was only a destruction and wreck to the country's values and principles.

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<sup>140</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 159.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 159. Translation is mine.

While in Naples, he was invited along with his retinue to a social club for the notables of the country. This club was a union of rich people who would agree on a certain amount of money that each of them would give and they would rent a house where they would organize luxurious parties.<sup>142</sup> He was infuriated when he found castrated male singers who were close to the women. He stated:

There were boys who had been castrated to keep their voices always soft, just like the voices of women. These castrati chose to be castrated because of their poverty, and so by singing they grew rich and popular because people loved listening to them. It was said that women really liked those castrati because they could not be held suspect, since there was no danger of pregnancy, should one of the women decide to indulge herself. May God demean them and their deeds and reduce their likes.”<sup>143</sup>

Al-Meknassi could not finish the night with them as they were drinking and dancing in a euphoric state that bothered him as he could not get accustomed to such customs that according to him was full of “sins”. He witnessed an immoral decline in the people of Europe and which he attributed to the lack of morals from the women’s side and a lack of jealousy from the men’s who were unable to preserve their “honor” and “shame”. Whenever he was confronted with situations that were disgraceful and shameful to him he turned to Allah and made *dua* and supplication to “clean the infidels” and their “sinful deeds”.

During a carnival in Palermo where men and women dressed in different disguises and danced with each other while their face was masqued, al-Meknassi expressed briefly that “[...] corruption was widespread in these situations which is known in their culture but contradicts their religion.”<sup>144</sup> In his criticism of his cultural Other, there is a noticeable shift in al-Meknassi’s discourse. That is to say, he showed a certain awareness and a shift in his way of criticism of the Other. While in Spain, he

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>143</sup> Nabil Matar, *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World*, p. 107.

<sup>144</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, p. 232. Translation is mine.

called them “infidels” and returned to Allah for forgiveness for mingling with them, in this second journey, he blamed the European cultural norms and stated that even their own religion, which is Christianity, was against those immoral practices. This awareness lacked in most Orientalist texts that used to confuse cultural practices with religious teachings, namely Islam which was framed into the Orient.<sup>145</sup> People were corrupt but religion was not.

We notice that he did not lengthen his criticism of the women’s situation in those countries which might be due to his decision not to keep repeating the same statements and impressions or due to his cultural awareness of the Other’s difference. In Palermo and after the carnival, he was invited to a celebration of King Ferdinand IV birthday which was an extravagant party that gathered the notables of the country, women and men, for a night of singing and dancing. He gave a minute description of the celebrations and ended it with this statement: “It has a been a night of sins so I decided to leave before it ended and I left them mixed together, women and men, and I had no idea what they did after I left. I think they would become attached to each other like dogs.”<sup>146</sup> Al-Meknassi was among the most Moroccan travelers who used the concept of *jabr al-khater* to satisfy their hosts and show his appreciation of their hospitality by attending their events and celebrations and praising their women in their presence because that was what they wanted but would often not be able to go through some of the practices that were too excessive for him. Whenever he felt that things were going out of control, he decided to leave.

During his journey to France in 1860, Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui encountered French women on different occasions whose situation led him to harshly criticize them in his account *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*. In his encounter with French modernity and development which fascinated and amazed him, al-Amraoui was shocked at the status of women whom they met whenever they went. Their presence disturbed him that he said: “Women defeated them [their men] and went out to the world of fornications and adultery. No one could stop them or punish

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<sup>145</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 116.

<sup>146</sup> Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi, *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-‘Adouw al-Kafir*, pp. 237-238. Translation is mine.

them. The Christians obey their wives and famously exaggerate in following what they want. They say about that ‘Paris is a paradise for women and hell for the horses’.”<sup>147</sup> Women’s freedom of movement bothered al-Amraoui who could not accept that a woman should have that much freedom as he believed that freedom led to fornication, adultery and immorality. His traditional view towards women and the belief in the domestication of women by relegating them to the household was challenged by the French women’s authority and freedom. He also criticized and blamed the men for being obedient and submissive to their women whom he thought were always on the road that Paris became their paradise and hell for the horses that carry them around. Rafa’ Rafi’ al-Tatawi’s travel account *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz* in which he also referred to the same expression that “Paris is a paradise for women and hell for the horses”<sup>148</sup> was also a source of information to al-Amraoui who mentioned that he had read it at the beginning of his account before embarking on his journey.<sup>149</sup> This aphorism which both travelers must heard in Paris reflects women’s movements and invasion of the public space in 19<sup>th</sup> century Modern France. Paris is a paradise for women because they have the liberty to move wherever they wanted and whenever they wanted with no control over them neither from their parents and brothers nor their husbands; whereas it is a hell for horses because they are the ones that suffer from the excessive movement of women throughout Paris.

In addition to Arab travelers like al-Tatawi and al-Amraoui, Ottoman travelers used the same meaning behind the aphorism “Paris is the paradise of women and hell to the horse” to describe French women a century earlier. Mehmed Çelebi Efendi was an Ottoman ambassador who visited France in 1721 about which he wrote a travel account<sup>150</sup> in which he said about the women: “Women do anything that they want and

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<sup>147</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*, p. 93. Translation is mine.

<sup>148</sup> Rifa’a Rafi’ al-Tahtawi, *An Imam in Paris: Account of a Stay in France by an Egyptian Cleric (1826-1831)*. Trans. Daniel L. Newman (London: Saqi Books, 2004), p. 181.

<sup>149</sup> Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz*. p. 60.

<sup>150</sup> Mehmed Çelebi Efendi’s travel account is entitled *sefâretnâme* which was edited and translated into Arabic by Khalid Ziyadeh as *Jannat an-Nisae wa al-Kafiroun / The Paradise of Women and the Infidels*.

go wherever they want. Their orders are answered immediately and it is said that France is their paradise where they live freely and they can have whatever they want.”<sup>151</sup> This description of the women is no different from al-Amraoui’s as they both were amazed by the amount of liberty that was granted to them and which was a new phenomenon to a Muslim traveler whether in 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Al-Amraoui criticized the women’s freedom and as well as their authority within the house and at their husbands who were submissive towards their wishes. He depicted the women as being completely spoiled by their men who could not reject any of their demands. He stated:

The woman is the head of the house and the man is her follower that when someone visits them at their house, he must greet the woman before her husband and she is in charge of welcoming and entertaining the guests whether women or men while her husband is obeying her. [...] Anyone who does the opposite of this is considered to be imprudent and vulgar.<sup>152</sup>

He could not understand the level of liberation which French women reached that led them to become “morally corrupt”. He judged them and categorized them based on their behaviors. Al-Amraoui’s reaction towards French women is based on his own Islamic religious perspective. He generalized and essentialized them according to their “liberated” behaviors of unveiling and mixing with men even when their husbands were around, who in their turn show great satisfaction in that. His religious identity interfered in every representation of the women. He could not see them as a different Other that was entitled for their differences. He kept projecting his own religious beliefs of how a female should be, behave and wear rather than be aware of the cultural differences between societies and cultures.

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<sup>151</sup> Mehmed Çelebi, *Jannat an-Nissae wa al-Kafirin*, ed. Trans. Khalid Ziyada (Cairo: Roueya, 2014), p. 57. Translation is mine.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 93. Translation is mine.

Among the things that provoked Moroccan travelers regarding European women and men's relations is the total absence of jealousy from the latter. They did not mind if their women sat and mixed with other men as they did not mind if their women received male guests at the house during their absence, and other men's paying complements to their wives in their presence which they welcomed and expected to receive. These are situations which al-Amraoui had witness and which he could not fathom or comprehend. They were alien behaviors which did not make any sense to him. Al-Amraoui, as a religious man, could not accept this difference in cultural traditions and customs that he immediately called it as immoral. According to al-Amraoui:

We were told that most of them do atrocious things and jealousy is a rare attribute in their men. He would see his wife holding the hand of another man walking and talking in the wilderness and in public and that would not bother him. He might also leave his wife with his neighbor or his friend at a garden if he is too busy to accompany her.”<sup>153</sup>

French women were granted a great degree of liberation from their husband and society, not just in movement but also in associating with the other sex freely. These behaviors were foreign to the Moroccan traveler of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose culture was based on the teachings of Islam that prohibit such acts, which shows that while in France, al-Amraoui could not let go of his Muslim identity that interpreted what he witnessed from a mere Islamic perspective.

Al-Amraoui had a tendency to over generalize everything that he witnessed and experienced and attributed them to all French people. He was quick to make judgments and convey stereotypical images that were not necessarily true and applicable on all French people but the fact that he saw several women and men acting in such a way gave him this generalized idea about French women and men in general. He could not find a better understanding for their behaviors but the negative one. But that image of European men lacking jealousy towards their women is a repetitive notion in both

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 93. Translation is mine.

Moroccan and Muslim travel accounts about Europe. Abdennabi Dakir argues that: “The Muslim traveler found in the theme of the lack of jealousy a fertile topic to mock and degrade the manhood of the European men.”<sup>154</sup> In the Islamic and Arabic cultures, the jealousy of the men over their women is central key in gender relation where it is regarded as some form of protection over the women from the male gaze. That is why; several Arab and Muslim travelers reflected on this issue in their accounts and held the men responsible for their women’s excessive freedom. Their lack of jealousy was regarded as a lack of manhood and virility in dealing with their women.

Al-Amraoui’s account provides a stereotypical image of French women whom he could not see outside of his religious lens. He assumed that just because they were liberated they were loose and he described them as prostitutes. French women were portrayed as sexualized beings who went after their sexual instincts and adultery. He said:

We were told that there are 30.000 prostitutes in Paris and they all have their official documents that give them permission to practice prostitution. This number does not include those who did not publicly admit it. Once a girl reaches 18 years old, her parents can have no control over her and they cannot stop her from that if she wanted it.<sup>155</sup>

For al-Amraoui, any French woman who was granted the freedom of movement and dress was considered a prostitute which is a generalization and an essentialization of French women in general. He expressed that prostitution was becoming a legalized profession in France and gave the exact number of the declared prostitutes in Paris which is a huge number and he stressed that it does not include other women who did not declare it as a profession in an attempt from him to generalize it on all of the French women. This information was probably told to him when he asked about it

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<sup>154</sup> Abdennabi Dakir, *Al-Ain as-Sakhira: Aqni’atouha wa Qana’atouha fi ar-Rihla al-Arabia* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Maghribi li at-Tawtiq wa al-Baht al-Ilmi, 2000), p. 22. Translation is mine.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

because the exact number is confirmed by a newspaper in 1870.<sup>156</sup> This incident confirms Bouchaib Saouri's argument that when a traveler goes through a special event or heard a certain bewildering information about the Other, he often tends to generalize that image on all the people of that country "which changes it from a private situation to a public one".<sup>157</sup> Al-Amraoui was among the travelers who generalized any image that he had during his journey on the French people as he could not differentiate individual acts from certain people from the general public. He addressed both men and women in his accounts as one entity.

Al-Amraoui's views towards women's freedom and how he linked it to the process of legalization of prostitution is the first account that writes about this phenomenon in Europe but another Moroccan traveler al-Hassan al-Youssi criticized it in Egypt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In a manuscript that documented his journey to Mecca for pilgrimage, al-Youssi expressed his sorrow to find brothels in Cairo which is an Islamic city that follows the Islamic rules and teachings.<sup>158</sup> This goes to show that prostitution is not something European as al-Amraoui tried to demonstrate but it is rather a human phenomenon that is hard to trace its beginnings and that should be attributed to one nation in particular.

During his journey in France, al-Amraoui was stunned by the development that he observed in relation to the steamship, the train, weapons, printing houses, products and furniture, architecture, trade, the telegraph, journalism, and the military...etc. He praised their achievements and kept looking for ways in order to diminish the importance of those achievements. In delving into the controversial liberated status of French women, he tried to show that no matter the progress a country made, if they do not have the principles of Islam then that society will lose its foundation. This confusion reflects the traveler's confused psyche that was still under the shock of

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<sup>156</sup> Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 67.

<sup>157</sup> Bouchaib Saouri, *Surat al-Akhar fi Rahalat Arabia min al-Qarn al-Ashir al-Miladi ila al-Qarn al-Wahid wa al-Ishrin* (Beirut: An-Naya li Dirasat wa an-Nashr, 2014), pp. 8-9. Translation is mine.

<sup>158</sup> Mohammed Magaman, *Ar-Rahalat al-Maghribiya fi al-Qarnayn al-Hadi 'Achar wa ath-Thani 'Achar lil Hijra al-Mouwafiq li al-Qarnayn as-Sabi' 'Achar wa ath-Thamin 'Achar al-Miladi*, p. 311.

modernity. This discourse that represented Europe as having two sides; one that has industrial development and the other that was stooping in the immorality. In other words, there were two “Europes”, or two “Frances” in this case, that were being portrayed.

In their criticism of the women, they criticized the social and cultural norms in Europe as they considered the status of the women to be an evaluation for the European society or as what Roxane L. Eurben refers to “a moral index of the entire culture”<sup>159</sup> The morals, behaviors and appearances of the women were considered a criterion through which they judged the morals and conducts of the society as a whole. This was one form of generalization from the side of al-Amraoui in particular who could not see the women but from his religious lens. He did not leave any space for cultural difference as he deemed any woman who was liberated, mixed with foreign men and wore revealing clothes to be a “prostitute”.

In his account *ar-Rihla al-Oropia*, Mohammed ben al-Hassan al-Hajjoui criticized French women’s behaviors and demeanor. Though he was impressed by the development that France reached in terms of infrastructure and education, he still was not pleased with the amount of the morally “destructive” liberation of the French society, especially when it comes to women. After visiting the theaters and going on mixed dinners and attending several mixed gatherings which were an opportunity for cultural exchange of ideas, al-Hajjoui was struck by the decadence of the French society as well their lack of morals. Both men and women behaved in a nonchalant way whether in private or in public which made al-Hajjoui re-assess his impression about France. The France he was fascinated about started to crumble in front of his eyes once he came to the realization that it lacked the global morals of chastity, respect, modesty...etc, especially when it comes to the women. According to al-Hajjoui:” [...]That is the result of excessive welfare, total freedom and being detached from religion, especially for the women who took off shyness loop and adorned themselves in the worst unbelievable way that only sexual-intercourse among animals

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<sup>159</sup> Roxane L. Eurben, *Journeys to the Other shores: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 120.

publicly in streets could be worse than that.<sup>160</sup>” He attributed the vulgarity that he witnessed among people, especially women, in France to the excessive entertainment and luxury, absolute freedom, and their non-adherence to the teachings of religion. In other words, the more they indulged in the earthly world and its distracting matters, the more corrupt and decayed they became. He considered them a nation that lost its morals and ethics in opulence and self-indulgence that they follow their desires without any constraints or restrictions. He showed us a world about which he had an ambivalent point of view. As much developed as France and England were in economy, trade, technology, and infrastructure, as much as they were “decadent” and “immoral”. Abdennabi Dakir argues the travelers often resorted to a discourse of irony about the West in order to devalue their cultural Other’s achievements.<sup>161</sup> This devaluation and derogation of the Other only reflects the insecurities and the subtle anger of the travelers towards the situation of their own home country in comparison to the developing Europe.

Al-Hajjoui was completely fascinated but the French development in politics, social justice, education, architecture, cleanliness, organization...etc, but he was disappointed to witness the moral decadence in such a developed society. The excessive extravagance and luxury and love for money and showing off have turned France into a country of “amusement and indulgence”. He attacked French women for their immoral behaviors and the way they revealed themselves and how they were in a constant competition to wear the latest and most expensive dresses. Al-Hajjoui believes that moral decadence is the results of achieving the at most civilization and welfare. He summed up his criticism in one sentence “Every nation that increases in excessive luxury, increases in excessive extravagance.”<sup>162</sup> Every nation that achieves the extreme in one thing, must fall into the extreme of its opposite. France was one the leading powers in the world yet the freedom and money have “corrupted” society. Like al-Amraoui, he also believed that the lack of jealousy and chastity had destroyed the

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<sup>160</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ourouphia* 1919, p. 74. Translation is mine.

<sup>161</sup> Abdennabi Dakir, *Al-Ain as-Sakhira: Aqni’atouha wa Qana’atouha fi ar-Rihla al-Arabia* (Casablanca: Al-Markaz al-Maghribi li at-Tawtiq wa al-Baht al-Ilmi, 2000), p. 9.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. Translation is mine.

morals society in general and women in particular. Al-Hajjoui tried to show that a country which was highly developed was often on the verge of moral decadence.

The Moroccan travelers who visited more than one European country during their journey had the chance to visit different “Europes” and accumulate different experiences about a heterogeneous cultural Other that changed according to the visited country. They paid attention to all the details and incidents that seemed surprising and wondrous to the Muslim Arabic thought. Despite his outspoken fascination with the West, al-Hajjoui criticized French women’s behaviors and demeanor. Though he was impressed by the development that France reached in terms of infrastructure and education, he still was not pleased with the amount of the “morally destructive” liberation of the French society, especially when it comes to women. After visiting the theaters, going on mixed dinners and attending several mixed gatherings which were an opportunity for cultural exchange of ideas, al-Hajjoui was struck by what he calls “the decadence of the French society as well their lack of morals”.<sup>163</sup> Both men and women behaved in a nonchalant way whether in private or in public which made al-Hajjoui re-assess his impression about France. The France he was fascinated about started to crumble in front of his eyes once he came to the realization that it lacked the global morals of chastity, respect, modesty...etc, especially when it comes to the women. According to al-Hajjoui:

[...] That is the result of excessive welfare, total freedom and being detached from religion, especially for the women who abandoned modesty and shyness and adorned themselves in the worst unbelievable way that only sexual intercourse among animals publically in the streets can be worse than that. They have gone this far or closer which corrupted the morals and cannot be accepted neither in character, mind nor in any religious law.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 74. Translation is mine.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 74. Translation is mine.

He attributed the vulgarity that he witnessed among people, especially women, in France to the excessive entertainment and luxury, absolute freedom, and their non-adherence to the teachings of religion. In other words, the more they indulged in the earthly world and its distracting matters, the more corrupt and decayed they became. He considered them a nation that lost its morals and ethics in opulence and self-indulgence that they follow their desires without any constraints or restrictions. He showed us a world about which he had an ambivalent point of view. As much developed as it was in economy, trade, technology, and infrastructure, as much as they were “decadent” and “immoral”. In this instance, we can clearly notice that a traveler usually travels carrying not only his physical luggage but also what Behdad calls “the cultural baggage”<sup>165</sup> which consists of the traveler’s religion, culture, character, profession, social status...In short, anything that constitutes his identity interferes with the way he perceives the world. Moroccan travelers as travelling identities to Europe could not see and document their experiences with the same neutrality which they promised at the beginning of their accounts when they stated that they would only document what they saw. In the case of al-Hajjoui, his cultural and religious lens became a filter through which we detect how his identity affected his impressions which became mostly apparent when he spoke about the women.

Al-Hajjoui was completely fascinated by the French development in politics, social justice, education, architecture, cleanliness, organization...etc, but he was disappointed to witness the moral decadence in such a developed society. The excessive extravagance and luxury and love for money and showing off had turned France into a country of “amusement and indulgence”<sup>166</sup>. His perceptions of Western women were hostile and degrading. He saw European women through the lenses of his own culture as “ill-mannered”, “corrupt” and “shameless” leading a life of extravagance and unnecessary splendor. Though he was a reformist, his views and impressions were different than other travelers who were amazed by women’s liberation and rights. He attacked French women for their immoral behaviors and the

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<sup>165</sup> Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, p. 26.

<sup>166</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ourouopia 1919*, p. 74. Translation is mine.

way they revealed themselves and how they were in a constant competition to wear the latest and most expensive dresses.<sup>167</sup> Al-Hajjoui believed that moral decadence was the result of achieving the at most civilization and welfare and granting women too much freedom. Al-Hajjoui summed up his criticism in one sentence “Every nation that increases in excessive luxury, increases in excessive extravagance.”<sup>168</sup> Every nation that achieves the extreme in one thing, must fall into the extreme of its opposite. France was one the leading powers in the world yet the freedom and money had “corrupted” society. He believed that the lack of jealousy and chastity had destroyed the morals society in general and women in particular.

This negative image which these travelers portrayed of the European women reflected more about them than it did about the women. According to Bouchaib Saouri: “When the traveler represents his Other, he unintentionally builds his own identity. Discovering the Other allows them to know the self. [...] Despite the fact that the main topic is the traveler telling us about the Other, he is in fact talking to us about his own self and the Other. Thus, we should read the meeting with the Other as a meeting with the self as there is no selfhood without Otherness.”<sup>169</sup> The discourse of Otherness is not only a reflection of the Other but of the self as well. Through the harsh criticism of the women, the generalizations and the stereotypes, the travelers reveal their own mentalities, identities and lens which they all interfere in the production of their discourse of female otherness.

Al-Ghazzal, al-Meknassi, al-Amraoui and al-Hajjoui were extremely fascinated by the huge technological and industrial developments that France and Europe in general reached at that time, but they directly denounced and harshly criticized the issues that contradicted their religious upbringing and cultural background, especially regarding French women’s liberty and lack of chastity in relation to French men’s lack of jealousy and weakness. They could not tolerate the, liberation which she exercised in movement and behavior.

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 74. Translation is mine.

<sup>169</sup> Bouchaib Saouri, *Surat al-Akhar fi Rahalat Arabia min al-Qarn al-Ashir al-Miladi ila al-Qarn al-Wahid wa al-Ishrin* (Beirut: An-Naya li Dirasat wa an-Nashr, 2014), p. 9. Translation is mine.

## Conclusion

Several Moroccan embassies that were sent to Europe over the past centuries were able to produce written accounts of their journeys that documented their visits, the peoples, the cultures, the histories and the present developments in the host countries. This dissertation studied the heterogeneous representations of European women by Moroccan travelers to Europe. It examined the different images and discussed the various encounters that the two had in different European countries and on different occasions. The women represented a challenge to them as they were not used to the mixing between the sexes which resulted in heterogeneity of discourses about women and gender issues.

The travel accounts that served as primary sources for this dissertation are accounts that were written from 1610 till 1919: *Naser ad-Din 'ala al-Qawmal-Kafirin* by Ahmed ibn Qassim al-Hajari (France and Holland in 1610-1613), *Rihlat al-Wazir fi Iftikak al-Asir* by Mohammed al-Andalusi al-Ghassani (Spain in 1690-1691), *Natijat al-Ijtihad fi al-Mouhadana wa al-Jihad* by Ahmed ibn al-Mehdi al-Ghazzal (Spain in 1766-1767), *Al-Iksir fi Fakak al-Asir* by Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi (Spain in 1779), *Al-Badr as-Safer li Hidayat al-Mousafir ila Fakak al-Asra min Yad al-'Adouw al-Kafir* by Mohammed ben Othmane al-Meknassi (Malta, Naples and Sicily in 1799), *Disorienting Encounters: Travels of a Moroccan Scholar in France in 1845-1846: The Voyage of Muhammad as-Saffar* by Susan Gilson Miller which is a translation of Mohammed as-Saffar's journey to France, *Tuhfat al-Malik al-Aziz bi Mamlakat Bariz* by Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui (France in 1860), *Ar-Rihla al-Ibriziya li ad-Diyar al-Injliziya* by Abi al-Jamal Taher el-Fassi (England in 1860), *Rihla ila Faransa* by Mohammed Bensaid (France in 1865), *Ithaf al-Akhyar bu Gharaib al-Akhbar* by Idriss Jaidi (France, Belgium, England and Italy in 1874), *Ar-Rihla al-Ouropia* 1919 by Mohammed al-Hajjoui (France and England in 1919). These accounts were written in Arabic and I used the available English translations of some of them like *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century* which includes English translations from the travels of al-Hajari

and al-Ghassani. He also translated al-Maknassi's account *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Miknāsī, 1779-1788*. I also provided my own translations of the quotes used in this dissertation.

The representation of European women in Moroccan travel accounts was based on direct contact and observation between the two subjects and they were written through what Bouchaib Saouri calls "the visiting eye"<sup>1</sup>. The travelers had the chance to meet, discuss, dine with and be in the company of women in different settings which allowed them to form certain images and to develop their own opinions and perceptions about women's status in European societies. Their discourses varied from one traveler to the other; while some travelers were tolerant of their presence and status, others were uncomfortable as they were not used to mixed gatherings. These cross-cultural encounters between the masculine East and feminine West enriched the travelers' discourse of otherness.

These travel accounts lay the ground for Moroccan Occidentalism to emerge as a Moroccan discourse of the West that has its own poetics and politics. It is characterized by a variety of discourses that are determined by several factors like: the historical context of that period, the traveler's cultural and religious background, his position within the embassy and his own personal cultural background. The Moroccan travelers were able to create a discourse of their own that has its own discursive specificities that completely differ from those of the Orientalist discourse. While Bernard Lewis accuses the Muslims and Arabs of being indifferent towards other cultures, especially Christian Europe,<sup>2</sup> these accounts serve as testaments of the Moroccan interest and desire to know about their Christian cultural Other. They managed to become producers of knowledge about Europe, and European women in particular, as their accounts were not based on speculations and fantasies, but rather on direct observations, encounters and discussions with European people.

Despite their promises to document only what they saw and heard during their journeys, the travelers could not control their cultural and religious identities from

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<sup>1</sup> Bouchaib Saouri, *Surat al-Akhar fi Rahalat Arabia min al-Qarn al-Ashir al-Miladi ila al-Qarn al-Wahid wa al-Ishrin*, p. 11. Translation is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 23.

interfering in their discourse about the women, especially in situations that contradicted their own beliefs, cultural norms and religious teachings. The concept of “space” played an important role in the journeys and the accounts because the travelers found themselves in situations where they had to socialize and mix with the women on various occasions and in different settings. Their diplomatic positions obliged them to be courteous to their hosts which meant that they had to negotiate a space that was no longer male dominant and they had to submit to the rules and norms of the host countries. Their gender perceptions and attitudes varied from one to the other and they were introduced to new aspects gender roles that were different from the traditional notions they were used to in their home country.

While analyzing the previously mentioned primary sources, we notice the impact that one’s culture plays when describing foreign lands and peoples. The travelers traveled with their cultural load through which they observed and scrutinized women’s position within the European society. Said ben Said al-Alaoui states: “The culture of the traveler, which he cannot forsake while traveling, sticks to him and everything that he witnesses comes through it and all that he recounts comes out in accordance with the terms and standards that his culture dictates.”<sup>3</sup> They could not see their cultural Other, especially the women, outside of the cultural box in which they framed them. While the women in Morocco were confined to the house, the European women enjoyed the freedom of movement, dress and expression which challenged the travelers’ patriarchal notions of gender relations and gender roles. They could not grasp what they thought of as “the excessive freedom of the women”. This freedom was interpreted in various ways. While some of them, such as as-Saffar and Jaidi accepted as a foreign practice, others like al-Amraoui and al-Hajjoui opposed it and could not tolerate it.

Within Muslim Occidentalism, we find several “Occidentalisms” that differ from one to the other. There is: The Moroccan Occidentalism, the Ottoman Occidentalism, the Middle Eastern Occidentalism, South Asian Occidentalism...etc. These discourses differ from one to the other despite the fact they are all representations of the West. In the historical part of this dissertation, I examined travel

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<sup>3</sup> Said ben Said al-Alaoui, *Oroba fi Miraat ar-Rihla*, p. 15. Translation is mine.

accounts that were written by Arab travelers from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria. Those travelers had several things in common though they had different purposes behind their journeys to Europe. In Occidentalism, Europe becomes a contact zone<sup>4</sup> and a space for cultural encounters between the East and the West. It where the Oriental is the one doing the act of traveling and writing about the West and thus becoming active agents and producers of discourse. Occidentalism allows the Muslim world to create its own discourse of the Europe that would reflect challenges, anxieties, and ambivalence in intercultural relations.

The cultural and religious identity of the travelers played an important role in shaping the way they behaved with the women and the way they wrote about them. Their “cultural baggage” was their lens through which they perceived the women and gender relations in Europe. They could not keep their promises of objectivity and neutrality as most of them said in the beginning of their account that they would “write only what they saw and heard”. Objectivity in such discourses is an impossible task to achieve because the traveler is burdened by his identity, religion, culture, beliefs, norms, and profession. Most of the travelers were jurists which made their discourses about the women even more complicated as they had to preserve their religious aura.

Most of the Moroccan travel accounts were written by ambassadors, envoys or people who accompanied the diplomatic missions to Europe for the sole purpose of writing the account. They went on a political mission and they were chosen by the Sultan to fulfill them on his behalf; which means, most of them did not go by their own will for touristic reasons, except for the case of Mohammed al-Hajjoui who was assigned to go to France in 1919 and after completing his mission, he decided to visit England to meet old friends and to discover the country.<sup>5</sup> As far as the other Arab travel writers, they were not necessarily diplomats and several of them traveled with the intention to discover new lands and people like in the cases of Yahya Ibn Haroun, Abu al-Hassan al-Masudi, Ahmed Faris al-Shidyaq, Salim Bustrus, Mohammed Bairam al-Khamis and others. This difference of purpose is essential in travel writing because while the Moroccan travelers who were among diplomatic delegation were

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Mohammed ben Al-Hassan al-Hajjoui, *Ar-Rihla al-Ouroupiya 1919*, pp. 109-110.

controlled by their political missions, the other travelers were granted a certain amount of freedom that would allow them to be more outgoing in their discourses and in their experiences of the visited countries.

We also notice some repetitive notions that are common in Moroccan and other Arabic travel accounts among which is the lack of jealousy among the Europeans towards their women. In his book *Kitab al- I'tibar (The Book of Contemplation)*, Ussama Ibn Munqidh claims that Frankish men, in reference to European men, lacked jealousy and had what he calls “cold blood” in instance of women’s infidelity.<sup>6</sup> This image that was produced in the 12<sup>th</sup> century keeps reiterating in later accounts by several Moroccan travel writers, such as al-Ghazzal, al-Amraoui and al-Hajjoui who criticized men for enabling women through their excessive submissiveness to their wishes and desires to diverge from the “righteous path”.

Another common image that challenged most of the Muslim travelers is the mixing of the two sexes in social gatherings. While documenting the journey of exile of al-Amir Fakhr ad-Din al- Maani al- Thani, Ahmed al-Khalidi as-Safadi referred to the European norm of the mixing between the sexes in the streets, the theaters, the balls, and others. He explained that: “it is their norm that women do not veil themselves from men.”<sup>7</sup> While he did not give the matter much importance as it was the norm of the host country and not specific to a certain class or category of the society, other Moroccan travelers could not let this issue go unnoticed. The women’s presence was noticed from the moment they set foot in the European soil. The travelers described images of European women flocking to see the new comers as they ascended from the ship in their Moorish style. They represented the imagined and mysterious Orient which made them an intriguing subject for the European people in general.

The Moroccan Occidentalism did benefit from earlier writings and representations of Europe by other Muslim travelers. In several Moroccan travel accounts written from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, there are some similarities in their discourse about Europe and Rifa’ Rafi’ al-Tahtawi’s account about France. These

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<sup>6</sup> Francesco Gabrielli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>7</sup> Wissam Wahab, *Rihlat al-Amir Fakhr ad-Din ila Italya (1613-1618)*, p. 47.

similarities extend to the issue of women. Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui admitted to reading al-Tahtawi's account before traveling which other travelers might have done as well. His account was a source of information of what to expect when a Muslim traveler goes to Europe and it served as a tourist guide for them as well. Al-Tahtawi's five year stay in France from 1826 till 1831<sup>8</sup> resulted in an ambivalent discourse about French women whom he sometimes admired and at other times condemned. He explained the women's freedom as a lack of chastity and their freedom of movement as a lack of jealousy from their men<sup>9</sup> but he also praised them for having the freedom of education, and the freedom to travel and explore the world.<sup>10</sup> This ambivalence stretched to the discourses of other Moroccan writers like Mohammed as-Saffar, Driss Jaidi, and Mohammed al-Hajjoui. They were torn between their admiration of some aspects of women's freedom like in education and work but they criticized their freedom of movement and dress which did not adhere to the Islamic teachings.

Moroccan travelers' accounts on Europe gave detailed descriptions of European institutions, cultures, and traditions; among which European women's encounters with these Moroccan travelers which raised feelings of wonder and surprise due their status within the European societies. They are a rich cultural asset when discussing Euro-Moroccan relations. However, in studying this field of travel accounts that has long been relegated to the archives makes us wonder about other parts of the Moroccan history which are still unknown and which has not been discovered yet. Those missing pieces of history help in filling historical gaps and providing information and knowledge about certain periods of time that would reveal more about the contact between the self and the Other which would help understand present relations.

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<sup>8</sup> Rafa' Rafi' al-Tahtawi, *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Bariz*, p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 96-98.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

## Appendices 1: Illustrations of the Moroccan embassies to Europe.

1. Ambassador Mohammed ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Pasha of Tangier, visited Vienna on February 14, 1783.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> "Ambassador Mohammed ibn 'Abd al-Malik, Pasha of Tangier, visits Vienna on February 14, 1783" in "Sharing History", Museum With No Frontiers, 2019. [http://www.sharinghistory.org/database\\_item.php?id=object;AWE;at;1;en](http://www.sharinghistory.org/database_item.php?id=object;AWE;at;1;en). For more information about this embassy, check: *As-Safar wa as-Sofarae bi al-Maghreb 'abra at-Tarikh* by Abdelaziz Benabdellah.

2. Muhammed ben Abd el-Malek, Moroccan Ambassador to Vienna, 1783.<sup>2</sup>

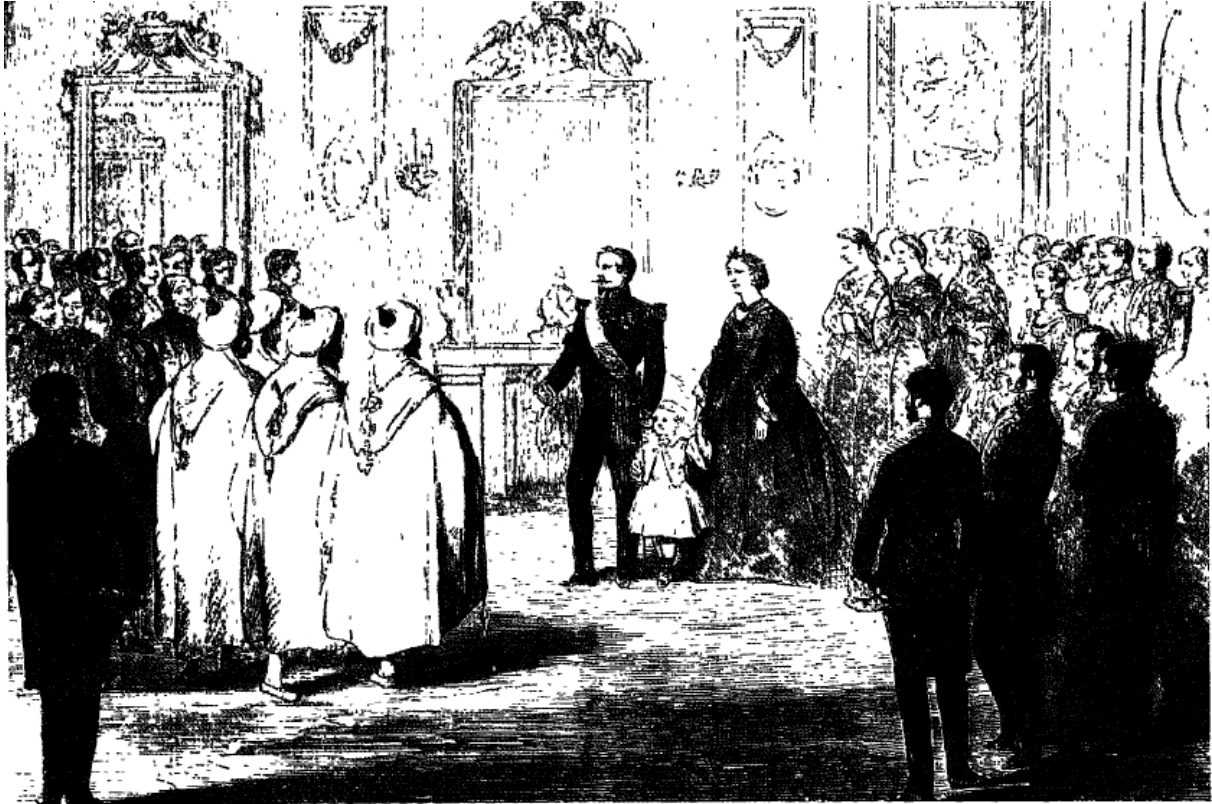


Muhammed ben Abd el-Malek

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<sup>2</sup> Jacques Caillé, "Une Ambassade Marocaine à Vienne en 1783," in *Hespéris Tamuda*. Vol III (Rabat : Université Mohammed V), pp. 43-44.

3. An illustration of the welcoming ceremony of the embassy of Driss ben Mohammed al-Amraoui to France in 1860.<sup>3</sup>



السفير ابن إدريس في بلاط نابليون الثالث الذي تصحبه زوجته وابنه (1860 = 1276)

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<sup>3</sup> Abdelhadi Tazi, *At-Tarikh ad-Diplomasi al-Maghribi min aqdam al-'Usur ila al-Yawm* : 'Ahd al-'Alawiyin (2). Vol 10 (Mohammadia: Matabi' Fadala, 1988), p. 24.

4. Mohammed Zebdi's embassy to France, Belgium, England and Italy in 1876.<sup>4</sup>



Ambassador Mohammed Zebdi (middle of the front row), his treasurer Bennacer Ghenam Rbati (on his right), his scribe Driss Jaidi (on his left).

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<sup>4</sup> *Al-Islah wa al-Moujtama' al-Maghribi fi al-Qarn at-Tasi' 'Achar* (Rabat: Manchourat Koulliyat al-Adab wa al-'Ouloum al-Insaniya bi ar-Ribat, 1986), p. 479.

5. Illustrations of Mohammed Zebdi's embassy to Italy, Rome in 1876 in the Italian press.<sup>5</sup>



L'AMBASCIATA MAROCCHINA A ROMA. — Colazione coll'ufficiale di scorta. — Sala di ricevimento dell'Ambasciatore.

<sup>5</sup> *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, year III, N. 44, August 27, 1876. pp. 193-194.

## 6. Illustrations from the Portuguese press of Sidi Tayeb Benhima's embassy to Portugal in 1878.<sup>6</sup>

**A partida de Tanger da embaixada marroquina**

Em toda esta semana tem sido objecto de curiosidade publica a embaixada que o sultão da Berberia, Mulay Hassan, envia a cumprir o tratado de Portugal e a assegurar-lhe quanto a afecção e a fidelidade soberana, herança de seus maiores e o cuidado que tem em guardar os seus e compromissos, como que se temerá perpetua, unindo-se a sagnantissima de se a aliança entre os dois povos.

A comitiva que saiu de Fez em direcção a Tanger, escoltada por uma guarda de honra, passou 30 dias na jornada, acompanhada de noite em barracas.

O embaixador, bachá Sid Tili Benhima, e a sua comitiva, fizeram a jornada em camélos, acompanhados em Barca real a realeza do Egipto e o trancido sultão, e o seu guia, um jumento para marcar o passo.

A comitiva, representada e escoltada em Tanger de pessoal da embaixada no vapor *Radio*, para Lisboa.

Entre Fez e Tanger, faz o seu viajem, que se atravesa com grande risco de ser perseguido por jacares, em emboscadas muito perigosas, que levam 3 a 5 horas para chegar ao seu destino.

Em Tanger, o illustre bachá fez pedu-se na casa do governador, esperando a chegada do seu navio português, ou a chegada, porque os seus credenciaes acreditavam equamente junto do rei de Portugal o do imperador da Alemanha.

Sid Tili Benhima teve alguma hesitação em aceitar o nosso transporte, porque havia recebido ordem de ir primeiro a Berlim.

Sendo porém o *Infante* o navio que primeiro appareceu, de accordo com o nosso consul n'aquella cidade, e com o ministro dos negocios estrangeiros que tinham ao seu lado, resolveu a embaixada vir primeiro a Lisboa.

O sultão não faz distincção entre as diferentes nações europeas e não é mais condicionalmente com uma, do que com outras.

Para se equizar a comitiva e a comitiva, nada de novidade a todo o instante, para que o seu ministro nada possa resolver.

O sultão tem procedido a appointar as lides da França e de outros países, e os estrangeiros que em outro tempo temia ali per-

a Tanger estudar diferentes linguas e procura introduzir no imperio os usos das nações mais civilizadas.

Solemnidades religiosas. Celebram-se hoje as seguintes:

Martyres: da 9 horas da manhã administração do christão por sua comitiva e se, cardeal patriarcha, as 11 horas. As 4 horas da tarde exposição do Sacramento: vespereiros, as 5 e 1/2 horas. As 7 horas, da 8. Senhora, as 7 e 1/2 horas a grande instrumental. Musica de fr. José Marquês.

Santa Joana: festa do orago.

der o reverendo Costa Pereira.

Exatidão: comitiva ao cardeal. Promovido acompanhamento de tempo, celebrada a missa de honra de 120 praças de infantaria 5.

Conceição Velha: serviço pelo reverendo Sargento as 6 horas da tarde, por serviço de mar da Mar.

Amanhã:

Martyres: festa do orago. Missa a grande instrumental. Orador o reverendo Casimiro Borges, As 5 horas segundas: vespereiros, as 7 horas segundas.

Santa Joana: festa do desagravo. Exposição do Sacramento.

S. João: novena de Santa Rita, as 6 horas. Musica instrumental de Carlos Araújo. Orador o reverendo Hieronymo de Sousa.

Ajuda: novena de Santa Rita por musica.

Ha hoje festa de igreja a Senhora do Cabo, precedida e arrabalha frequentes de Almarcon do Bispo. A musica é de infantaria 5. O orago segue com grande indole no dia 28 para o Cabo.

Por occasião de tocar a fogo na igreja do convento novo de Loca-

Com a sua reparação tem de depender-se cerca de 3500000 reis.

Se tiver de ser reformado para se fazer outro, a despesa está orçada em 2.500.000 reis.

Mandou-se suspender a elevação e entrada das aguas do Boticão e do Salongo nos apparelhos de abastecimento da capital, por haver abundancia da que pertence a companhia das aguas da Lisboa.

Está já publicada a carta do rei, que contém a nova reforma eleitoral.

Chamamos a atenção para o annuncio Novo Methodo para aprender o Francês sem auxilio do mestre, publicação da casa Propagadora dos livros de Lisboa.

A tornada de hoje, em que se decretou da publicação o notavel espada Antonio Carreira e o segundo ministro Arjona, deve afilializar bastante a brava do curso escolhido a a melhor garantia do exito da corrida.

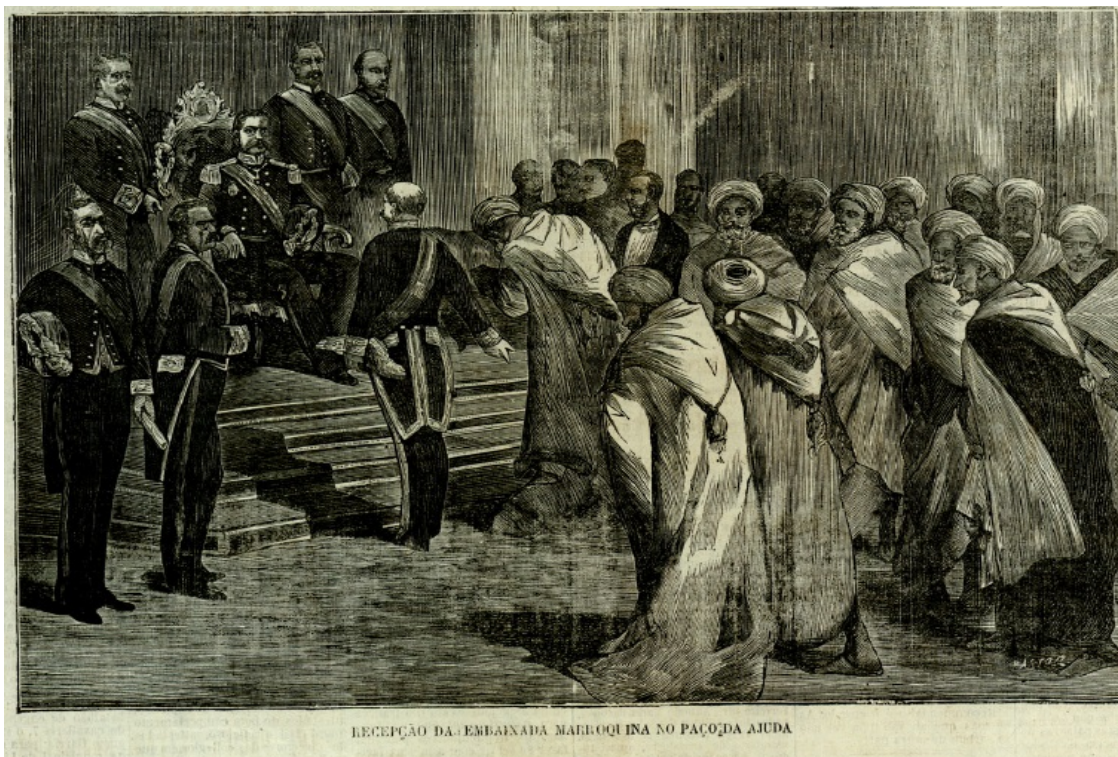
Ha o nosso correspondente de Porto que a morte do general Skvachbach fora al geralmente sentida. Quando se recebeu al telegramma, participando tão infeliz acontecimento, estava a banda da municipalidade no pavor da Coruña. Logo que recebeu o aviso, foram para o quartel, saindo igualmente quasi todas as pessoas que ali estavam, voltaram em to contristados.

Pela ultima vez carta aos meus a companhia hesitante a applicar a Moura, que tanto applausos tem recebido nas recas anteriores. Na esplanada haverá ao secro pela banda de infantaria 5, que executará se

mulheres pegos do seu repositório a noite estiver anua, nio fallara comoveram.



A PARTIDA DE TANGER DA EMBAIXADA MARROQUINA



RECEPÇÃO DA EMBAIXADA MARROQUINA NO PAÇO DA AJUDA

<sup>6</sup> *Diario Illustrado*, May 12 and 14, 1878, p. 1. Retrieved on January 4, 2019 from <http://purl.pt/14328>.

7. Benhima's embassy in Portugal.<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> Occidenti, January 1, 1878. p. 1. Retrieved on January 4, 2019 from [http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/Ocidente/1878/N11/N11\\_master/N11.pdf](http://hemerotecadigital.cm-lisboa.pt/OBRAS/Ocidente/1878/N11/N11_master/N11.pdf)

8. Two illustrations of Ambassador Sidi Mohammed al-Bahi who visited Italy in 1890 and some of his entourage (four captains, the interpreter, two servants).<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Giulia Barrera, "The Moroccan Embassy in Rome," in *Sharing History*, Museum With No Frontiers, 2019. [http://www.sharinghistory.org/database\\_item.php?id=object;AWE;it;48;en](http://www.sharinghistory.org/database_item.php?id=object;AWE;it;48;en)



9. Abderrahman Ben Abdesadeq's embassy to England in 1909 about which al-Hussein ben Mohammed al-Ghassal wrote a brief travel account entitled *ar-Rihla at-Tatwijiya ila Diyar al-Injliziya*.<sup>9</sup>



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<sup>9</sup> Abdelhadi Tazi, *At-Tarikh ad-Dibloumasi lil Maghreb min Aqdam al-'Ousour ila al-Yawm*. Vol 10 (Rabat: 1989), p. 76.

## Appendices 2: Morocco in Western newspapers.

1. *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, Saturday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1831, page 4. Retrieved on Mai 24, 2015 from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/3#>.

### ANDALUSIAN WOMEN.

That there is a very considerable difference in the appearance of the female sex in the northern and southern parts of Spain, has been remarked by most travellers. I do not know whence the Andalusian beauties—fair ones I cannot call them, have derived that warm tint, and coal-black expression of eye, which so strongly characterise them. Many have imagined that it has been occasioned by the Moorish blood in their veins, and their features certainly are often decidedly Moorish; but at the same time, they are darker in their complexions than the Moorish women even of the present day, who certainly are not lighter than the old Moors of Spain. However this may be, the women of Andalusia, deep brunettes they are, are as superior to the females of other parts of Spain as those of Cadiz shine above all the rest. The belle of the latter city is remarkable not only for her dress, and the taste with which every part of it is made, but for the way in which it is put on; and whether you look at the disposition of her mantilla, or the rest of her attire, every thing sits well and looks well. She is distinguished, as Spanish women in general are, by that peculiar neatness of her feet which the French comprehend in the term *bien chaussée*, and which, from the care and attention bestowed upon them, always look well, though the plump and fleshy swelling roundness of her foot, which is considered a beauty in Spain, would probably not be esteemed so with us; while her legs and ankles, also, though well-turned, display rather too much muscular power to come within our ideas of grace. A Cadiz lady would, however, be considered everywhere as a remarkably well-made person, not only from the beauty of her waist, but her general tournure; while her swelling bosom and snely-rounded limbs contrast very agreeably with those sharp, angular points, which one is so apt to come in contact with in our country, resulting from coldness of climate, constitution, or other causes. An Andalusian lady never looks so well as at mass; and nowhere does she look so bewitching. How can one regard her without emotion, when attired wholly in black, and enveloped in her graceful mantilla, she advances up the aisle, and kneeling down on the cold marble, offers up her silent adorations with mingled fervour and simplicity, her dark eye flashing through the rich fringe of her head-dress? How far more interesting, and how superior does she then appear to the belle of other countries, who put together in the height of the mode, repairs to her well-situated pew in the gallery of some fashionable Sunday exhibition, called a chapel, as she would to her box at the opera, and, instead of raising her eyes to an object above, casts them down upon an unworthy one below, while she freely subjects her person to the welcome gaze of empty beaux or powdered footmen, a spectacle of fashion and folly!—*Capel Brooke's Sketches in Spain.*

### CHARACTER OF THE MOOR.

"The Moor is avaricious to a degree, and in proportion as the chance is great of being

and in proportion as the chance is great of being opulent, so does his desire seem to increase of amassing wealth.—The great risk that every one who has the reputation of being rich incurs from the gripping claws of the Sultan, obliges all to affect an appearance of poverty for their own security. On this account no Moor ever boasts or talks about his own possessions, and if you have a mind to frighten him effectually, you need only tax him with being wealthy. In his religion he is cruel and bigotted in the greatest extreme, persecuting Christians of all denominations, but more particularly holding in abhorrence the members of the Roman Catholic church, whom he considers as idolaters. The feelings of the Moors on this head are remarkably strong and universal; and no figure or resemblance of the human form is ever to be seen, whether in manuscript, drawings, ornaments, ornamental designs, or in any shape whatever, it being considered a sin: and when any portrait of man, or print of the human figure, is shewn to them, it is easy to perceive demonstrations of uneasiness and aversion. From ignorance of the strong feelings entertained on this head, instances have occurred of costly presents having been made by the European Powers to the Sultan, of plate magnificently abused and embossed with figures, but which has been instantly melted down; and one of the Sovereigns of Spain having sent his own portrait, a compliment not unusual among European Princes, it was immediately sent back.—*From Sir Arskur Brook's Travels in Morocco.*

2. *The Brisbane Courier*, Monday October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1867, page 4 and *South Australian Weekly Chronicle*, Saturday 21 September 1867, page 4. This article talks about the Moorish empress Virginie Lanternier who was gifted to the Moroccan Sultan Mouley Abderrahman by the Algerian Amir Abdelkader and later married Sultan Mohammed IV. For more information, check *Histoire des Prisonniers Français en Afrique depuis la Conquête*, (Volume 2) by Ernest Alby.

**FROM A COTTAGE TO A THRONE.**—The Empress of Morocco is a native of Chaley, near Dole, in France, where she was born on the 20th November, 1820, in a poor thatched cottage. Her name was Virginie Lanternier. She went with her parents in 1834 to Algeria, and the whole family were taken prisoners by the Moroccans. Her father was killed, and her mother died a short time afterwards. The captors, dazzled by the great beauty of Virginie, spared her, and by a concurrence of romantic circumstances the Emperor's son fell in love with her and made her his wife. The Empress has since sought out and brought her three sisters to the Moroccan Court, to which they are now attached.

3. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 29<sup>th</sup> 1876, page. 343. Retrieved on June 27, 2015 from <https://books.google.co.ma>.

### **The Morocco Embassy in Paris.**

The social excitement of the season in Paris has been the presence there of Sid el Hadj Mohamed el Zebdi, the Morocco Ambassador, with his suite. The arrival of this embassy at Algiers was represented in this paper several weeks ago. We give this week an illustration of a lunch given to a Parisian journalist by the officers of the Ambassador's escort. The principal article of food was baked mutton with oil, which was served in large silver dishes, from which it was picked out with the fingers. The three individuals wearing long red castans and the pointed fez are the captain and two lieutenants of the party.

4. *Bendigo Advertiser*, Saturday July 16<sup>th</sup> 1881, page 3. Retrieved on June 27, 2015 from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/88618812>.

**DIVORCED FROM TWO HUNDRED  
WIVES AT ONCE.**

Sidi Muley Hassan, the Sultan of Morocco, has set a touching example of radical retrenchment to his subjects. Constrained to thrift by a financial crisis of no ordinary severity, he has shown the true believers submitted to his rule the way to "reform their household bills" in a highly spirited and thorough-going manner. Having completely drained the Imperial Treasury during his successful efforts to suppress the rebellion that raged throughout his dominions last summer, he has just cut down the State expenses by some uncommonly sweeping measures, the first of which was the reduction of his own domestic establishment to about one-half of its normal strength. He dismissed, at a blow, 200 hundred of his wives, bestowing their hands upon distinguished officers of his army, whose pay, in consideration of the high favor thus conferred, he docked to the tune of some five and twenty per cent. A pleasing feature of this arrangement—to all, at least, except the immediate recipients of his especial grace—is the fact that his Majesty had made his matrimonial dispositions in such sort that all his older moieties have got new husbands, while he has reserved the younger ones to gladden his own hearth. Instead of saddling the civil list with provision for these superannuated ladies, he has united them to gallant warriors at a positive saving to the public purse, for the gift of each ex-Sultana has been by him decreed to compensate her respective recipient for the loss of one-fourth of his income. Muley Hassan's popularity, it appears, has been increased to such an extent by this noble self-sacrifice on his part, that a few days ago, as he rode from his palace to the chief mosque he was greeted with enthusiastic acclamation by the whole male populace of Fez, his capital. This is quite a new experience for the Moroccan Sultan, who has been for some years past at open odds with his subjects.—*London Daily Telegraph.*

5. An article published in *Baltimore Morning Herald*, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1901 about Mehdi Lemnebhi's embassy to Britain. Retrieved on June 27, 2015 from <http://www.historicjournalism.com/h.l.-mencken-1.html>

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## Ambassador of Morocco Brought Him Rare Atlas Mountain Sheep, Arab Horses and Mules

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(By Associated Press)

London, June 7.—A special embassy from the Sultan of Morocco, bearing congratulations to King Edward on his accession to the throne, created considerable interest on its arrival here today. The embassy, which is headed by Kaid El Mehedi El Menebhi, the minister of war, numbers 29 persons, including the ambassador's two wives. When the deputation was officially received at the Portsmouth pier by Admiral Aldrich and Gen. Sir Baker Russell the reception was abruptly suspended to allow the ladies, closely veiled, to pass down the gangplank to the sumptuous special train, all Europeans being obliged to retire meanwhile.

During the drive in royal carriages from Victoria station, this city, the ladies were also carefully secluded, the carriage attendants and others turning their backs while the ladies entered and left their vehicles.

The ambassador of Morocco brings King Edward two rare Atlas mountain sheep, 20 Arab horses and 20 mules. The official reception will take place Monday.

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