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Desire for the Orient: Ideological and Discursive Splits in Some British Travel Accounts on Precolonial Morocco

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Abstract

*Arthur Leared, Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham and Budgett Meakin are three less-examined British travellers who made their journeys into Western Barbary or the 'Land of the Moors' in the era of 'high noon of imperialism'. They show their firm endorsement for the British Empire and its complex discursive apparatuses. Their travel texts demonstrate their 'desire for Barbary' and its people as a religiously, socially and culturally different Other. Leared's *Morocco and the Moors* (1876), Graham's *Mogreb-El-Acksa: A Journey in Morocco* (1898) and Meakin's *Life in Morocco* (1905) are framed within the Enlightenment logic that subordinated Western Barbary to the frames of presentation designed by these British Subjects. Hinged around this Cartesian perspectivalism, the underlying logic of these conceptions of the subject and representation generated the need to narratively master, dominate and control the Moors and their space. Still, these travellers are caught between a narrative mastery and a desire for Western Barbary where their different desires can be substantiated and an image of Moroccan society as an impenetrable, concealed domain of impenetrability and total invisibility. These paradoxical vantages reveal certain discursive ambivalences within these travel texts.*

Keywords: Ambivalence, Arthur Leared, Budgett Meakin, Cunninghame Graham, Colonial Discourse, Oriental Desire, Travel Narrative, Barbary



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

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Introduction

Arthur Leared's *Morocco and the Moors* (1876), Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham's *Mogreb-El-Acksa: A Journey in Morocco* (1898) and Budgett Meakin's *Life in Morocco* (1905) are three main travel texts on which this article will focus. The choice of these three travel narratives is attributed to the fact that they constitute a corpus which is virtually multifarious and complex in nature, and which reflects heterogeneity and ambivalence within travel discourse, or what I dub travel narratives' discursive heterogeneity. The latter's purpose is to dismantle the monolithic and homogenous concept of travel discourse as a purely reductive and biased discourse of power. My premise in this article is reminiscent of Ali Behdad who argues about 'the heterogeneity of the Orientalist object, whose contradictions and lack of fixity mark precisely the moments of instability in the discourse' (Behdad 1994, x). In what appears to be one of the most of the strongest critiques of the fixed binary approach to travel discourse, Lisa Lowe claims:

When we maintain a static dualism of identity and difference, and uphold the logic of the dualism as the means of explaining how a discourse expresses domination and subordination, we fail to account for the differences inherent in each term [...] the binary opposition of Occident and Orient is thus a misleading perception which serves to suppress the specific heterogeneities, inconsistencies and slippages. (7)



The Achievers Journal

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As for Ali Behdad, he does not view the European discourse on the Other as a 'single developmental tradition', but he treats it instead as a complex field of heterogeneous practices marked by a plurality of interests and critical formations even though his argument is more historically and polemically specific than Lowe's (Behdad 140).

In this article, the focus will be on the exploration of three lesser known imperial travel texts on Morocco. These travelogues are interrelated with each other; each of them came to consolidate to different degrees the other traveller's vision vis-à-vis the idea of imperialism, its rhetorics and strategies with some exceptions with Robert Cunninghame Graham, who is not only root-and-branch imperialist but also anti-imperialist. Graham cogently romanticizes and virtually demonizes Moorish locations, mores and cultural markers; he publishes an anti-conquest narrative. Still, he is gazing at this far-flung place through the filter of an imperial eye. In this vein, the first section will focus on Cunninghame Graham's travel account as a conspicuous paradigm of the British Empire's paradoxes. Second, I will deal with some ideological splits in Graham through his strong desire for Western Barbary as an elsewhere. Finally, I explore Arthur Leared's and Budgett Meakin's ambivalent travel narrative discourses and how they vacillate between getting repulsed and mesmerized in their rendition of Moroccans, their culture and their topos.

Graham's *Mogreb-El-Acksa*: A Quintessence of the Empire's Paradoxes

The choice of Cunninghame Graham as an essential travel writer is that his travel account really mirrors the heterogeneity of travel discourse and produces certain aspects of discursive discontinuity in the colonial episteme. Also his travel text puts into practice a complex of interplay of thematically and ideologically heterogeneous positions that disrupt the narrative unity and discursive order that are characteristic of the official and scientific discourses of Orientalism.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

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Cunninghame Graham came to Morocco at the end of the 19th century and journeyed in some places of the 'Shereefian Empire' such as Tangier, Asila, Larache, Rabat, Salé, Saffi, Mogador (Essaouira), Amez Miz and Morocco (Marrakech). His objective during this stay was to reach the city of Tarudant, which was verboten for the Christians at the time, and it was within and part of what colonial sociologists and historians dub as 'the land of dissidence', that is, 'bilad el- Siba'. He recorded his madcap attempt to reach the forbidden city in the best-known English language travel book on Morocco that he first published in December 9, 1898: *Mogreb-El-Acksa: A Journey in Morocco*. The author has a keen eye as regards the country, its people and their culture, and comments on everything he sees while moving from one place to another and learning from different kinds of people: Berbers, Arabs, Moors and Jews (Khalid Chaouch 12). There are about three biographies that have been written about Cunninghame Graham; these biographies are H. F. West's *A Modern Conquistador: Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham* (London, 1932), Tstiffley's *Don Roberto: Being an Account of the Life and Work of R.B. Cunninghame Graham* (London, 1937) and Cedric Watts and Laurence Davis, *Cunninghame Graham: A Critical Biography* (1979). Graham relies on and deploys many authors like Ibn Khaldoun and others' accounts and travelogues like Walter Harris, Leo Africanus, Joachim Gatell, especially his *Description du Sous* and *Bulletin de la Société Géographique* (1871), Gerhard Rohlfs' *Adventures in Morocco* (1874) and Oskar Lenz's *Timbouctou* (1886).

Graham's travelogue is a kind of textual interrogation of empire at the turn of the century. His ambiguous and self-questioning *Mogreb-El-Acksa: A Journey in Morocco* is an informing text through which to understand empire's paradoxes, and it is also about a journey that is meant to act as an antidote to the traveller's feeling of a sense of ennui and angst. In her *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt has argued that travel writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'produced 'the rest of the world' for Europeans' (5, italics in original), but creeping into the travel writing of the late nineteenth century and beyond is the fear that 'the rest of the world' is



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

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losing its distinctive otherness, and the disconcerting recognition that the lines of demarcation between Europe and Other are becoming disturbingly blurred.

Without doubt, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) has been a powerful point of departure and a starting point for postcolonial critics and readers as well as an act of divergence, of moving away from its orbits. In this context, Said's theory is of note to reflect upon before dwelling upon the main points of this article. Following Foucault's critique of 'pure' knowledge, Said demonstrates for the first time that 'Orientalist representations are not 'natural' depictions of the Orient' but they constitute the backbone of 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony' (Said 12). Said undertakes the arduous task of describing the systematically 'coherent' structure of Orientalism, the essentializing modes of its representations, and the 'internal consistency' of its institutional configurations.

This Orientalist discourse depends upon some strategies like the essentialist distinctions between the Self and the Other, the purpose of which is to create a paradigm to justify the appropriation of the Oriental Other. Armed with an epistemological mastery, the Orientalist/ the travel writer can then act as a 'judge on the Orient' and as an 'egotistic observer' who represents and appropriates the Oriental Other for the benefit of the imperial power (Said 103). Ironically, in denouncing the essentialist and generalizing tendencies of Orientalism, Said's critical approach repeats these very faults. It is exactly away from such essentialist and monolithic views of the Orientalist/ travel discourse that this article tries to travel.

Edward Said expresses compelling and cogent arguments when he notes that European discourses of the Other are exercises of power that contribute to the exploitation in all facets of the Other; still, his insistence on the monolithic and coherent aspect and character of Orientalism/ travel discourse seems paradoxically consistent with the logic of Orientalism/ colonialism. For Ali Behdad, 'to argue that all representations of the Orient are always produced according to the discriminating strategies of a hegemonic cultural discourse is to remain within the limits of the old metaphysical binary structure on which the discourse of Orientalism is



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

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predicated' (Said 11). Instead, difference, ambivalence and heterogeneity, as Lisa Lowe contends in her *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*, are fundamental attributes of orientalist representations, and they allow the possibility of multiplication and dispersion of statements (9).

It is manifest that Arthur Leared, Cunninghame Graham and Budgett Meakin are belated travellers as they sojourned in Morocco in a period (in the mid-and late nineteenth century and the outset of the twentieth) wherein there was an anxiety to head and search constantly for the 'authentic Other'. Cunninghame Graham's discursive practices are split and riven, for they are inscribed within both the economies of colonial power and the exoticist desire for the virtually disappearing Other. Besides, the postulation is laid on the idea that Cunninghame Graham is pro-imperialist as he buttresses the idea of *imperium* and as his travelogue contains within its fold some strategies and conventions that are deeply rooted in the colonial discourse. Nevertheless, he is not root-and-branch imperialist; he is also anti-imperialist.

Cunninghame Graham's very late nineteenth-century travel account is a seminal sign in the shift of Western, and mainly British, travel writing as a genre that started to be dyed with a modernist tenor like other genres, especially the novel. Graham's account is an archetype of 'the anxieties and uncertainties of the fragmented, haphazard, contentious nature of imperialism, the profound doubts of the continuation of Western progress, indeed doubts about the possibility of progress at all' (Helen Carr 73). Graham's wanderings in a verboten and dangerous part of the Moroccan territory stem from an unremitting urge to escape and criticize the sprawl of Western civilization rather than from the traveller's desire to contribute to its expansion. This shift indeed has culminated in the postcolonial travel writing as an exploration of the author's perennial and inexorable obsession with the idea of human restlessness and uprootedness. In this postmodern era, the rhetoric of nostalgia has become rampant and conspicuous. The following conditions have largely contributed to this rhetoric of nostalgia: the ubiquitousness and commodification of travel, the rise of mass tourism as an industry, the persistent globalization of a village formerly



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

perceived infinite and inexhaustible, the shrinking of time and space, the incessant mechanization of life and the reinvention of the world in terms of virtual mapping and digitalized cartography.

Within this contradictory framework, I find Herbert Marcuse's remarks on the radical qualities of art in his *The Aesthetic Dimension: toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* of note; Graham's travelogue, a work of art in touch with and alienated from the consciousness and unconscious of imperialism, '*emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse and behaviour while preserving its overwhelming presence*' (6, emphasis added). To quote Marcuse in full,

The radical qualities of art, that is to say, its indictment of established realities and its invocation of the beautiful image [. . .] of liberation are grounded precisely in the dimensions where art *transcends* its social determination and emancipates itself from the given universe of discourse and behaviour while preserving its overwhelming presence [. . .] The aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment [. . .] only as estrangement does art fulfil a *cognitive* function: it communicates truths not communicable in any other language; *it contradicts* (6-10, emphasis in original).

This duplicity and duality in Graham's attitude is due mainly to some discursive ambivalences and ideological uncertainties that we practically encounter among the belated traveller-writers of the nineteenth century. According to Behdad, these discursive ambivalences and dual attitudes have their genealogical roots in a *desire for the Orient*. The belated traveller is a duplicitous figure who appropriates the dominant discourse, but he goes beyond its contours of ideological assumptions by his perversion and by unsettling its 'order by producing noise in its system' (Behdad 12).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

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We have the impression that Graham really rebukes and debunks the discourse of colonialism and he hesitates and shows a kind of resistance to the imperial agenda in Morocco. In this regard, we can subsume his discourse within ‘a counter-discourse’, to use Foucauldian and Saidian standpoints, running in opposition to the dominant tendency in the West. At the outset of his travelogue, Graham posits that he has no theory of empire:

I fear I have no theory of empires, destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race, spread of the Christian faith, of trade extension, or of hinterlands; no nostrum, by means of which I hope to turn Arabs to Christians, reconcile Allah and Jahve, remove the ancient lack of comprehension between East and West, mix oil and vinegar, or fix the rainbow always in the sky so that the colour-blind may scan it at their leisure through the medium of a piece of neutral- tinted glass. (x)

Graham headed towards ‘Mogreb-el-Aksa’ or the ‘Land of the Sunset’ at the turn of the nineteenth century. The traveller feels that there is something absent which he tries to fill, and it is precisely this primeval absence that motivates the subject’s quest for Oriental paradise, the search for a beyond that always lies somewhere he is not. He undergoes a kind of displacement in time and space. The experience of this ontological and epistemological break is what makes the traveller recognize the identity of his desire as a lack, as an absence. He tries to liberate himself from the banalities of the dominant discourses during his time, the very late nineteenth century. By the same token, he is prompted and motivated by his constant and eager search for the fascinating strange, the pristine and the atavistic, and something outside the common British, and mainly Scottish, modes of life, which have grown insipid, stale and musty: ‘It may be that my poor unphilosophic recollections of a failure may interest some who, like myself, have failed, but still may like to hear that even in a failure you can see strange things, meet as strange types, and be impressed as much with wild and simple folk’ (Graham x). Equally, the purpose of the



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

traveller is to reach the city of Tarudant, a city in the Sus region, the South of Morocco, which is difficult to penetrate and reach, and this desire and sense of mystery is what prods him to make this adventure and reach it. So, the subject's desire for the Orient is stimulated by the city's inaccessibility which blocks his vision. This impenetrability arouses more the traveller's scopic urge to overcome the barrier. What's more, the traveller aspires to achieve something heroic from his detour. According to Trinh T. Minh-ha,

[T]he imperative to travel signifies the quest for the acquisition of knowledge and a desire to return to a Utopian space of freedom, abundance and transparency. Psychic desires are displaced in partial and vicarious participation in another set of relations (another place and time), and the self becomes realized as the hero of its own narrative of departure and return. (5)

The verboten city of Tarudant is surrounded by a mysterious aura and spectrum, and it is a place that may assuage his angst and anxiety:

Our bourne was Tarudant, a city in the province of the Sus, but rarely visited by Europeans, and of which no definite account exists by any traveller of repute. Only some hundred and fifty miles from Mogador, it yet continues almost untouched, the only Moorish city to which an air of mystery clings, and it remains the only place beyond the Atlas to the south in which the Sultan has a vestige of authority. (Graham 2)

The period of his journey is characterized by its malaise, melancholy and its anarchy in terms of its culture and social values. This sense of sordidness and maelstrom is manifested



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

clearly by Anne McClintock, thus: ‘the fetid effluvia of the slums, the belching smoke of industry, social agitation, economic upheaval, imperial competition and anti-colonial resistance’ (134). In the same vein, and in his *Culture and Anarchy*, Matthew Arnold states that the English culture is lacking, lacks something, and acts out an inner dissonance that constitutes its secret, riven self (13). This state is attributed mainly to the dissolution and decadence of the Victorian values, or what is known literally as the *fin de siècle* malaise because at the heart of this period, as Homi Bhabha avers

we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’; an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* here and there, on all sides, hither and thither, back and forth. (1)

At the end of the nineteenth century, there was an escape to the fantastic, the imaginative, and, in turn, the non-western. In an article called ‘Late Victorian to Modernist: 1880-1930’, Bernard Bergonzi writes: ‘In fiction, the *fin de siècle* mood of withdrawal from everyday reality and the pursuit of a higher world of myth and art and imagination led to a taste for fictional romances’ (356). In this manner, the world the traveller reports on will often be foreign, but as Barbara Korte writes in her *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*, ‘the traveller’s own country may equally be the object of his or her investigation. Accounts of travel let us participate in acts of (inter) cultural perception and cultural construction, in processes of understanding and misunderstanding’ (Korte 5). What’s more, the representation of the other or the desire for this other is a desire for self-recognition and self-realization on the part of the traveller. The travelling first-person narrator not only looks at those who inhabit the places



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

through which he or she passes, but views them in ways that throw light on his or her own anxieties and desires and of the home culture:

The Other becomes - or always already is - a sign, an empty space invested by a consciousness fascinated with the problems of identity and history, self and becoming. Representing the primitive Other provides a way to call man and society into question, to analyze the values, customs, and institutions of European civilization. Europe puts the Other to work in order to think itself and to consolidate its place within a unified history and science. (Daniel Brewer 56)

In his *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian fin de siècle*, Stephen Arata points out that it has been widely recognized that British culture in the 1880s, 1890s and the outset of the twentieth century was marked by a sense of irrevocable decline. This sense of sordidness is encapsulated in many literary works, both fictional and non-fictional, and it is manifested in a very artistic mould in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), thus: 'Sordid metropolis, fragmentation, tawdry present, jumbled cultures, the flotsam and jetsam of a decayed civilisation, nostalgia for an earlier, lovelier world, fear of past and future horrors' (Helen Carr 81). For Arata, whose subject is the stories of loss and decadence written at the turn of the century, 'the turn outward to the frontiers' visible in the engagement with issues of empire in late-Victorian male romance is entangled 'with anxieties about domestic decay', an unease given form in 'reverse colonization narratives' such as *Dracula*, *She* and *The War of the Worlds* whose fantasies 'are products of the geopolitical fears of a troubled imperial society' (79). This sense of decadence, disillusionment and anxiety permeates not only novels but also other genres including travel literature: 'Across disciplines and genres are heard the same anxieties concerning the collapse of culture, the weakening of national might, the possibly fatal decay - physical, moral, spiritual, creative - of the Anglo-Saxon 'race' as a whole'(1).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

The belated traveler's solitary quest for elsewhere as a response to the onset of modernism in Europe became crucially productive in the micropolitics of imperial quest during the late nineteenth century. There are many writers who delve into this situation as they find it depressing and gloomy, and this shadow of gloom and angst contributes to 'fracturing metropolitan horizons, eroding confidence in the west's undisputed and indisputable cognitive power and engendering disillusion in the ethos of an imperialist ascendancy' (Benita Parry 116).

For these reasons, Graham falls in love with the Moorish culture and ways of life:

We rose at daylight, drank green tea and smoked, went down to bathe, came back and breakfasted, looked at the horses led to water, listened to the muezzin call to prayers, walked in the olive grove or watched the negroes in the corn field; engaged in conversation with some of the strange types, we read el Faredi, speculated on how long the 'rekass' would tarry on the road from the Sultan's camp, and wondered at the perpetual procession of people always arriving at the castle to beg for something, a horse, a mule, a gun, some money, or in some way or other to participate in the Kaid's Baraka. (Graham 236)

In the main, Graham as a belated traveller is a '*flâneur*', to use Behdad's own expression, that is, 'an idler who tries to see more of the Orient through his erratic sauntering and by remaining dependent on chance' (Behdad 52). This is partly what sealed his decision to 'go native' by outrageously impersonating and dressing up in the manner of a Moor by wearing Moorish garb. The process of 'going native' is imposed on Graham as it serves as a protective device, especially in a Moslem society depicted as a fanatic anti-Christian community. The belated traveller is a cultural transvestite, so to speak, as he takes the adventure of wearing the Other's clothes; Graham finds it difficult to enter the city of Tarudant in European clothes so he disguises in a masquerade as a mimetic mode of identification with the Moorish Other.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

Clothes are the conspicuous signs of social and cultural identity. Hence, attiring in a Moorish costume and garb poses the problem of identity for the traveller; to wear Moorish clothes is both a way of renouncing one's identity and a form of conversion to the other's imaginary. More than a dialectic, Graham's relation to mimesis and alterity, identification and difference, is an unremitting movement between these two terms. Identification is simultaneously alienating and confrontational as Homi Bhabha puts it. To deal with this threat, the subject can adopt the Other's identity through which he can accomplish several aims and tasks. Put otherwise, by donning a Moorish dress, which he highly enjoys, Graham crosses cultural bridges, violates national barriers, and denies difference by becoming artificially Other. The romantic and pastoral tradition and its idealisation and fantasisation of the Orient have a visible impact on the representation of Morocco in British travelogues. Graham's romantic desire to 'go native' dismantles his colonial discourse, even as it blurs the boundaries between the subject and the object, between Western and native identities, and subsequently problematises the very notion of difference. By desiring to be other and be in an 'other' place, Graham attempts to disavow his identity and be a 'translated and a reinvented being', to use the words of Trinh T. Minh-ha (9).

Graham viewed his Moorish transvestism as a form of cultural resistance to his Europeanness, a mode of self-fashioning through which he constituted his desired image: the other mesmerized in himself. He disguises first like a Turkish doctor: 'Even my friends were all agreed that to reach Tarudant in European clothes was quite impossible. Thus a disguise became imperative. After a long discussion I determined to impersonate a Turkish doctor travelling with his 'Taleb', that is, scribe to see the world and write his travels in a book' (2-3). Then like a sacred Sheik (the word 'sheik' here is used religiously, not politically, to refer to a sacred person) from Fez: 'I had to give up this as I spoke little Arabic and no Turkish, and as I looked rather like a Moor from Fez, finally called myself Sheikh Mohammed el Fasi; but I fear few were taken in by that name' (4).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

The traveller imitates the Moors in their dress, eating, dining and riding: ‘Riding along and dangling my feet out of the stirrup to make the agony of the short stirrup leather hung behind the girths, endurable, it struck me what peaceful folks the Arabs really were’ (Graham 100). This desire for the Orient is a desire for self-exoticism which destabilizes the intentional coded message of cultural colonialism. Graham holds this positivistic contention that a full understanding of the Other is possible through immersion, an extended experience that authorizes the subject to speak about the Orient. For Ali Behdad, the belated Orientalism of travellers like Graham vacillates and fluctuates between ‘an insatiable search for a counter-experience in the Orient and the melancholic discovery of its impossibility; they are, as a result, discursively diffracted and ideologically split’ (Behdad 15). His shift between wearing Turkish clothes and Moorish ones is evocative of his unstable and unsteady search and desire for a wholly unified identity and personality in a stifling Victorian context.

Desire for the Orient: Ideological splits in Graham’s Travelogue

To what extent can we say that Graham does adopt an anti-imperialist standpoint in his travelogue vis-à-vis the Moors? We can contend that Cunninghame Graham comes to Morocco in search of a discontinuity with his British selfhood; once there he becomes retentive about the Oriental referent as he witnesses or as he predicts its slow disappearance under the weight of European colonialism. Arriving at Moghreb-el-Alksa in a time when the Other was on the verge of being fully consumed by European hegemony and imperialism, Graham tries to preserve its last traces. The reason why he refuses colonialism is that he wants to keep the status quo as it is because of the Europeans’ would-be intervention that is in the offing; for him, modernity, in the shape of tourists even not colonialists, is about to sweep away the picturesque customs he has come to seek. In this vein, we can say that Graham is anti-imperialist; not only does he mock imperialism’s grandiloquence, but he also feels that he still finds some glimpses of authenticity, the Oriental desire and exoticism in Morocco and its people. Hence, he tries all the harder to



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

salvage that, so to speak, from any external contamination: 'no doubt, in every town throughout the East, the presence of even a small quantity of Europeans forces prices up, upsets the national life, unsettles men, and after having done so, gives them no equivalent for the mischief that it makes' (Graham 162). Moroccans and their traditional ways of life are an antidote for a mechanistic and modern way of life that gnaws slowly at most of the Britons' daily life:

for a thousand (perhaps ten thousand) years the Oriental life has altered little, nothing having been done to 'improve' the land, as the Americans ingenuously say. And so may Allah please, bicycles, Gatling guns, and all the want of circumstance of modern life not intervening, it may yet endure when the remembrance of our shoddy paradise has fallen into well-merited contempt. (130)

The journey of Graham is not only a physical journey but also a mental and intellectual journey into the self, to discover the self. He doesn't want the Moors to be changed, but to be as they are living in anarchy and complete disorder. The relationship between the self and the other is not always seen in a binary and Manichean poles as Said postulates in his *Orientalism*. For Cunninghame Graham, the Other and its place are the mirror image of what the Self is shorn of. Like most of the travellers of the turn of the nineteenth century, Graham headed for North Africa to escape from the grip of the Western civilisation and the noisy atmosphere of the metropolitan city of London, where life was fraught with noise, uninspiration and mustiness. The experience of this ontological break is what makes the subject recognize the identity of his as a lack, as an absence. Hence, he starts to harbor a kind of envy and fear towards his European peers and colonizers because if they intervene in the 'Land of the Sunset' they would bring with them all those terrible aspects of the western civilization. For him, Europeans are just scum in the land of the Moors as they came to Morocco and brought with them degeneracy deeply rooted in the



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

metropole at the time, and transferred it to the 'authentic' periphery or soon- to-be colony. Tangier as an example of an outlying territory swarms with people from different countries, and it is tinged with motley and shoddy things due to Europeans' existence:

I do not mean that the state of affairs in Tangiers is an ideal one. No; there is a large proportion of the scum of all Europeans gathered there. There is a mismanagement of public affairs that passes all belief. There is great injustice on all sides; but-but-but- there is no great hurry and push for life. There is no great machine industry; no public opinion; no roads; no railways; no standing army; and little or no education. (Graham 166)

Graham wants to see Morocco as it is: 'I should prefer to see Morocco as it is, bad government and all, thinking but little as I do of the apotheosis of the bowler hat, and hiding as an article of faith that national government is best for every land, from Ireland to the 'vexed Bermoothes' and then to Timbuctoo' (254). For Graham, 'Europeans are a curse throughout the East' (23), and they bring

Guns, gin, powder, and shoddy cloths, dishonest dealing only too frequently, and flimsy manufactures which displace the fabrics woven by the women; new wants, new ways, and discontent with what they know, and no attempt to teach a proper comprehension of what they introduce; these are the blessings Europeans take to Eastern lands. Example certainly they do set, for ask a native what he thinks of us, and if he has the chance to answer without fear, 'tis ten to one he says, Christian and cheat are terms synonymous. Who that has lived in Arab countries, and does not know that fear, and fear alone, makes the position of the Christian tolerable. (Graham 23-24)



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

The traveller makes efforts to produce different and more sympathetic representations of the Other, and he virtually empathizes with the Moors and regards all those oppressive practices, civilizing pretences and other aspects of the modern life ('better government, progress, morality, and all the usual 'boniment' which Christian powers address to weaker nations when they contemplate the annexation of their territory' (41)) of his country England as a kind of vices that just 'taint' the Moors' virtues such as morality, solidarity and a sense of union:

a poor Mohammedan, unless in case of famine, is seldom left to starve. Even a begging Christian renegade, of whom there are a few still left, always receives some food where're he goes, and is not much more miserable than the poor Eastern whom one sees shivering about the docks in London and imploring charity for 'Native Klistian' with an adopted whine, and muttered national imprecation on the unsuspecting almsgiver. (Graham 41)

Graham also gets fascinated by other ethical values besides such as persistence, fortitude and endurance:

The sufferer by famine, as in Morocco, suffers enough, God knows, stalks about like a skeleton, dies behind a saint's tomb; but in the sun. He believes in Allah to the last, and dies a man, his eyesight not impaired by watching wheels whirr round to make a sweater rich, his hands not gnarled with useless toil (for what can be more useless than to work all through your life for some one else?), and his emaciated face still human, and not made gnomish by work, drink, and east wind, like the poor Christian scarecrows of Glasgow, Manchester, and those accursed 'solfataras,' the Yorkshire manufacturing towns. (125-126)



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

The traveller's adventure into the city of Tarudant makes him as the speaking subject caught between a 'fantasy of the Orient as a dream world where his desires are realized and an image of Oriental society as an unattainable, concealed domain of absolute repression' (Behdad 20) as well as a sense of impenetrability and opacity. This splitting or bifurcation, in the Barthesian sense, in the late nineteenth century travel discourse, 'marks the primal division [...] of the subject and his discourse into a conscious relation that can manifest itself only in the vacillations of the Orientalist subject – and only at the moments of discursive uncertainty' (Behdad 20). Graham is uncertain about his representation and melancholic about his inability to produce a surrogate mode of writing. Indeed, the representations of Graham as a belated traveller thus do not 'close on an exotic signified but practice an open deferment of signification; they are elliptic discourses, uncertain about [his] representations and melancholic about [his] inability to produce an alternative mode of writing about the desired Other' (Behdad 15).

Graham is not contradictory, but rather, to use Barthesian expression, he is dispersed and split: 'When we speak today of a divided subject, it is never to acknowledge his simple contradictions, his double postulations, etc.; it is a DIFFRACTION which is intended, a dispersion of energy in which there remains neither a central core nor a structure of meaning' (Roland Barthes 18). Graham's relationship with Moroccans includes involvement, participation, indulgence and immersion, a kind of giving oneself over to the experience of the Oriental journey without trying to capture the Oriental 'signified'. Far from being a self-centered drive for knowledge, 'the desire for the Orient is the return of a repressed fascination with the Other, through whose differentiating functions European subjectivity has often defined itself since the Crusades' (Behdad 21). Beyond his interest in self-realization through his journey to Morocco, the traveller Graham has a great desire to understand and even become part of the Moroccan culture. Such a desire makes the Orientalist subject/ the traveller surrender his power of representation and pursuit of knowledge by becoming a self-indulgent participant in the immediate reality of the Moroccan/ Oriental culture. In this situation, we can say that the author



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

as an observer who used to occupy a privileged space feels that he is being observed by the Moors/ the once observed who become the observer and, hence, occupy a desired privileged space:

Finding myself the observed of all observers in Mogador, I transferred my residence to Mr. Pepe Ratto's International Sanatorium, about three miles outside the town, which passes generally under the designation of the Palm-Tree House. There I essayed to live my filibustering character down, and for a day or two went sedulously out shooting in the hottest time of day, to show I was a European traveller; collected 'specimens', as butterflies and useless stones; took photographs, all of which turned out badly; classified flowers according to a system of my own; took lessons in Arabic, and learned to ride upon the Moorish saddle. A few days of this exhilarating life made all things quiet, and the good citizens of Mogador were certain that I was a bona-fide traveller and had no design to attack the province of the Sus. (Graham 50)

This concept of observation or the gaze is very deeply rooted in post-colonial theory. Because such observation, which corresponds to and confirms the gaze of the traveller or the soon-to-be-colonizer and his colonial authority, may be reversed as the above excerpt conspicuously elucidates. This is, in Bhabha's formulation, a peculiarly important and potent aspect of the menace in mimicry: the displacing gaze of the disciplined where the observer becomes the observed and partial representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from its essence. According to Trinh T Minh-ha's standpoint, 'in travelling, one is a being-for-other, but also a being-*with*-other. The seer is seen while s/he sees. To see and to be seen constitute the double approach of identity: the presence to oneself is at once impossible and immediate' (22, emphasis in original). In this way, we can say that the metaphoric displacing and



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

returning of the imperial gaze is a fundamental operation of the appropriation of the imperial discourses and cultural forms.

Behdad ascertains that the belated Orientalist dissolves himself in images, figures and signs of otherness, allowing hence for the dissolution of the boundaries between those binary and Manichean entities and racialized constructs: Self/Other, traveller/travellee, narrator/narrated, observer/ observed, subject/ object, British/Moorish, etc. that are deeply seated in colonial discourse: 'Instead of keeping his ideological distance from the Other, the belated Orientalist dissolves himself in images, figures, and signs of otherness, allowing the abolition of observer and observed, subject and object, self and Other' (Behdad 60). Indeed, the nineteenth-century imperial project most clearly focuses upon 'the racialised concepts of the Self and the Other; imperialism worked and operated within an ideal of the Manichean binary, which constructed a demonized Other against which flattering, and legitimating, images of the metropolitan Self were defined' (Jacobs 2-3). Through these Manichean entities, Orientals are perceived in general as representative of inferior Orient which is taken to be constant, timeless, defined by various recurring traits (femininity, idleness, capriciousness, inefficiency, disorganization, dishonesty, etc) against which a West with the opposite tendencies (manliness, hard work, straightforwardness, efficiency, organization, honesty, and so forth) can be defined. These entities, yet, fade away, and so there is a kind of subversion of the self from within by the traveller to show that colonial discourse is not monolithic and homogeneous, but rather it is riven and split from within. The racialized constructs and binaries molded by imperialism were never stable and were always threatened not only by 'the unpredictability of the Other but also the uncertain homogeneity and the boundedness of the Self' (Jacobs 3). By disclosing this ambivalence, the authority of colonial discourse is disrupted. Hence, there is the emergence of the native empowerment, erasing the notion of the Other as a silenced and victim of Western domination. There is the inversion and alteration of the above-mentioned constructs and entities



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

by which the hegemonic ideology produces and marginalizes the dominated and the indigenous people (Parry 15).

Graham is an ambivalent traveller whose reflections are fragmentary; he finds the place of his displacement and the locus of his discontent in Morocco. The belated travel writer's journey is always a disorientation, for the search for a 'counter-experience' in the Other turns out to be a discovery of its loss and the absence of an alternative. The traveller oscillates between two different worlds which are far removed from each other: the East and the West. In Trinh T. Minh-ha's take, 'The traveller's 'identity crisis' often leads to a mere change of appearance - a temporary disguise whose narrative remains, at best, a confession' (22). The encounter with the Other enables the Self to regain, if only momentarily, a sense of wholeness, and therefore the temporary feeling of a meaningful existence. He treks through and journeys into the world of the Other, but his journey, or rather his detour, is fleeting as he quickly returns into his original world because he finds it difficult to find out exactly what he searches for that may change his life entirely: 'I had been put to a pretty strong test, and had emerged triumphantly' (Graham 134). Graham was caught by a Berber Kaid, and his dream to reach the mysterious city of Tarudant was out-of-the-way. So, his desire for the Orient stopped at this moment.

Cunninghame Graham journeys and moves from one identity to another, evoking and conjuring up the ambivalent aspect of colonial discourse and travel narrative as the latter is a literary genre that contributes to bringing some of the features of colonial discourse to the forefront. The traveller's desire to be like the Other shows a kind of discursive heterogeneity of travel discourse. His transvestism, that is, his disguise in Moorish masquerade, is an attempt from the traveller to reconstruct his split and hybrid Self as a Moorish Other. The desire for the Orient, as Behdad points out, is 'a hybrid force that posits uncertainty in the orientalist's consciousness and enables possibilities of dialogic articulation because it propagates different identity effects and ideological positions' (Behdad 30). We can say that Cunninghame Graham settles on the cusp of two different cultures, and he engages, therefore, in a kind of self-parody



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

and self-irony as a strategy of self-protection and self-presentation. For Mary Louise Pratt, the European relations with the Other are characterized by parody and self-parody:

The European's relations with the Other are governed by a desire for reciprocity and exchange, estrangement and repulsion are represented as entirely mutual and equally irrational in both sides. Parody and self-parody abound. This discourse does not explicitly seek a unified, authoritative speaking subject. The subject here is split simply by virtue of relating itself as both protagonist and narrator, and it tends to split itself even further in these account [...] the self sees, it sees itself seeing, it sees itself being seen, and always it parodies itself/ and the Other. (Pratt, 1986, 105)

Morocco and its People between Enchantment and Repulsion in Leared and Meakin

Arthur Leared's *Marocco and the Moors* and Budgett Meakin's *Life in Morocco and Glimpses Beyond* are conspicuous travel accounts that reveal the ambivalent aspects of travel discourse and hence the conflictual structures within colonial discourse. To begin with, Doctor Arthur Leared was born in 1822 in Dublin. He travelled to India and other far-eastern countries. He is a physician and his health got worsened so he searched for the pristine and the exotic in the Orient, especially during his travels to the Levant, Asia Minor and Morocco. The native name of the latter is 'El Maghreb-el-Aksa' or the 'Land of the Farthest West'. In 1872, he journeyed to Morocco, and he revisited that country on two other occasions; in 1877 as physician to the Portuguese embassy, and in the summer of 1879. Armed with a free pass from the sultan Moulay Hassan I (r. 1873-1894), he was enabled to visit the cities of Morocco: Tangier, Casa Blanca, Azamoor, Mazagan, Mogador (Essaouira), Saffi, Mequinez (Meknes), Morocco (Marrakech) and Fez. During his itinerary, he recorded his medical, ethnographic, ethnological, botanical,



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

mineralogical, anthropological and even sociological findings in his travel texts. He sheds lights upon the Barbary state, its government and political order, military power, religion, education, natural history, agriculture, language and cultural markers and mores of its people. The results of his first two journeys were made known by him in two valuable books, especially his *Morocco and the Moors* (1876); his second journey was also the subject of a paper delivered at the geographical section of the British Association, Dublin, in 1878. On a nice upland, north of Tangier, he secured a piece of land for an intended hospital for consumptive patients, as he believed the climate to be more suitable than even that of southern Europe: 'One thing held in view has been to bring into notice, as much as possible, the incomparable climates to be found in Morocco for persons suffering from the problem of the chest' (Arthur Leared 1876, vi). The works of Gerhard Rohlfs, M. Lambert, A. Beaumier, the Consul of France, who settled mainly in Mogador, and Leo Africanus, influenced Arthur Leared a great deal.

As far as the third traveller is concerned, Budgett Meakin, at the end of the 1880s, joined his father in Morocco who settled in Tangier in 1884 and founded the first English newspaper in Morocco, *The Times of Morocco*. At first, the paper was published monthly, and from 1886 on weekly basis. Meakin joined his father, Mr. Edward E. Meakin, in Morocco, and started to work on the paper as assistant editor, and from 1888 as the paper's editor (Meakin, 1895, 535). Budgett Meakin learnt Moroccan Arabic, journeyed among the Moors and he managed to interact with them easily. He also adopts native attire and a native name as he calls himself Tahar Ben Mikki (Meakin, 1902, 2). In 1895, he returned to England, but his requests for funding his research were rejected, so he decided to go by himself to Morocco for one year, and then travelled another year in other countries such as Uzbekistan, Iraq and further East to Japan. He returned to England once more in 1897 in order to write and edit his books. He published four comprehensive travel and history books about Morocco, which established his status as the leading authority in this field: *The Moorish Empire: A Historical Epitome* (1895), *The Land of the Moors* (1901) and *The Moors* (1902).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

Meakin published his fourth book about Morocco: *Life in Morocco and Glimpses Beyond*. The latter's publication was in 1905, a year before the Algeiras Conference (1906) wherein there was the internalization of the Moroccan question and the pursuit of reforms under the French auspices. This book is also written on the eve of French colonialism and a year after the signing of the Franco-British Cambon-Lansdown Declaration, known as the '*entente cordiale*', in 1904, which put Moroccan destiny in the hands of France and Spain and allowed Britain to have a free hand in Egypt. *Life in Morocco and Glimpses Beyond* consists of articles and other notes that are not published in his previous books. Meakin writes the latter book with the help of his wife, who writes some chapters (viii, xi, and xiv), and with his father, who writes some others.

Arthur Leared's and Budgett Meakin's travel texts are characterized by their ambivalence, a trope which is primary for Bhabha, which he takes from psychoanalysis where it was first deployed and developed to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting something and its opposite. Ambivalence describes the complex mix of attraction/ fascination and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between the Self / Other, the colonizer/ colonized, the traveller / travellee, and the narrator / narrated. Ambivalence disturbs and disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial discourse; it simply dismantles the relationship between the colonizer and the would-be-colonized (in case of Moroccans). These three travel writers buttress the colonial implications in Morocco in different degrees. Still, they demonstrate in their travelogues the conflict of *imperium*, a conflict that will inevitably disrupt its assumptions of monolithic and homogenous power.

When we read Budgett Meakin's travel book, for instance, we come across some scenes in which the traveller speaks ambivalently about people being narrated. The following passage which is taken from Budgett Meakin's 'Foreword' is pertinent and captures in a very beautifully artistic mould the traveller's oscillation between a strong fascination to the Moors and their



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

mores, describing them as those in the *Arabian Nights*, on the one hand, and powerful disgust and repulsion on the other:

Which of us has yet forgotten that first day when we set foot in Barbary? Those first impressions, as the *gorgeous* East with all its countless sounds and colours, forms and odours, burst upon us; *mingled pleasures and disgusts*, all new, undreamed- of, or our wildest dreams enhanced! Those yelling, struggling crowds of boatmen, porters, donkey-boys; guides, thieves, and busy-bodies; clad in mingled *finery* and *tatters*; *European, native*, nondescript; a *weird, incongruous medley* - such as is always produced when *East* meets *West*- how they did *astonish* and *amuse* us! How we *laughed* (some trembling inwardly) and then, what letters we wrote home. (Meakin, 1905, v, italics added)

This excerpt abounds with words that conjure up ambivalent attitudes of the traveller towards the Other's culture and topos. The latter's space here, that is, the periphery, which is regarded as 'the borderline, the marginal, the unclassifiable, the doubtful' by the centre, responds by constituting the centre as an 'equivocal, indefinite, indeterminate ambivalence that characterize the centre' (Robert Young 161). The words emphasized in the above excerpt are pertinent in this vein. Also, Arthur Leared is lured by the Moroccan space despite his negative perspective and portrayal of it. The land of Barbary is a site of dread, horror and suffering as well as terrible ordeals both for the travellers and the Europeans in general. The Moorish space is for Leared a very fantastic refuge for his health problem, 'One thing held in view has been to bring into notice, as much as possible, the incomprehensible climates to be found in Morocco for persons suffering from affections of the chest' (Leared vi).



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

Arthur Leared gazes upon the city of Tangier, and his feeling towards it is a *mélange* of fear, awe and mystery captured by the dim light of this arcane city. Arthur Leared draws on a European traditional narrative heritage which has not altered and which is transformed from one traveller to another, concealing any possibility of change. From the outset of his travel account, Arthur Leared makes the reader as if he were in an Oriental space, which means that the Moroccan territories are going to be orientalized. As he notes, 'But the circumstances which calls for remarks is the fact, that far less is known of the interior of Morocco than such remote countries as China and Japan' (Leared 1). The city of Tangier, the first city wherein all these three travellers land in for the first time in their journey to Morocco, is condensed and made compact from a scanning vista from the sea. Indeed, the city of Tangier is fixed and unmoving within the contours of a lot of narrative texts. We start by Tangier here because it is there where these travel writers initiate their journey into the outlying territories of Morocco. Landing in Tangier, Arthur Leared alleges, '[t]o do Tangier justice it should be viewed from the sea, to put one's foot within its walls is to dispel an illusion. Its mosques and flat-roofed houses, batteries, and castellated walls give it a compact and even formidable appearance; but it is formidable only to the wild hordes of the country' (Leared 1). In this vein, Mohamed Chtatou posits that Tangier or Tangiers in its plural sense is a microcosm of Morocco because of its different and ambivalent images, and he also points out that 'if Tangier has over the years exercised its attraction on foreigners because of its exotic appearance and oriental warmth, it has also, at the same time, repulsed many because it seemed unfamiliar and alien' (267-268).

Journeying through the coastal cities of Morocco, Leared's and Meakin's itineraries reflect a narrative heritage among a lot of travellers. Leared's gaze into the inner and uncharted parts of Casablanca is repeated by Wyndham Lewis, another British traveller and painter, about half a century later. After Tangier, Leared regards the city of Casablanca from the sea as a spatial nullity and blankness, 'if we must acknowledge disappointment on landing at Tangier, it was great still in the case of Casa Blanca. Viewed from the sea its compact-looking walls, batteries,



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

and couple of minarets, give it *a respectable appearance*, but inside the walls it is *the dirtiest, most tumble-down place* ever seen' (Leared 55-56, italics mine).

There are various scenes in Meakin's travelogue which reflect those come across in the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* like snake charming, and these the insertion of these scenes is not that innocent at all, because behind each exoticized scene that at first make the author mesmerized and fascinated there is an ideological tendency to call for colonialist enterprise and colonizer's intervention in Barbary. The snake-charmer is rendered as the purveyor of the *exotica* through narrativized scenes: 'This is the man from whom to learn of love and fighting, of beautiful women and hairbreadth escapes, the whole on the model of the 'Thousand Nights and a Night,' of which versions more or less recognizable may now and again be heard from his lips' (Meakin, 1905, 139). So, highly unreliable in their portraiture of foreign environments and characters, exoticist authors create characters based on colonized subjects who often fluctuate between states of unreal god-like divinity and sickly melancholy. Indeed, the unreality of such creations suggests that exoticized characters are sheer figments of the author's imaginations: obscure invented creations.

Budgett Meakin gets engrossed by the strange nomadism and picturesque life of the Moors: 'Some strange fascination attaches itself to the simple nomad life of the Arab, in whatever country he be found, and here, in the far west of his peregrinations, he is encountered living almost in the same style as on the other side of Suez; his only roof a cloth, his country the wide world' (Meakin, 1905, 57). There are many scenes like these two ones that hold the traveller's attention and make him fascinated and lured by the strange world of the Other. Again, in his description of the snake-charmer's scene, Meakin is intrigued by the following spectacle:

Descriptions of this art remembered in a book for boys read years before had prepared me for the most wonderful scenes, and when I first watched the performance with snakes which delights the Moors I was disappointed. Yet often as I might look on, there



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

was nothing else to see, save in the faces and gestures of the crowd, who with childlike simplicity followed every step as though for the first time. These have for me a never-ending fascination. Thus it is that the familiar sounds of rapid and spasmodic beating on a tambourine, which tell that the charmer is collecting an audience, still prove an irresistible attraction for me as well. The ring in which I find myself is just a reproduction of that surrounding the story-teller of yestere'en, but where his musicians sat there is a wilder group, more striking still in their appearance. (Meakin, 1905, 151)

Once the traveller crosses the border, he carries within himself two different and conflictual attitudes; this ambivalence in attitudes is attributed mainly to some social and cultural contextualizing elements that contribute to the frequent ambivalence that is found in some travel accounts. In this vein, Dennis Porter captures this ambivalent attitude and desire, a desire to embrace the Other's culture and ways of life, and a transgression of the commonplace values that are deeply rooted in his backgrounds. This desire for the Other and his exciting places can be sometimes impeded by the traveller's feeling of dismemberment. As Porter notes, 'most forms of travels at least cater to desire: they seem to promise or allow us to fantasize the satisfaction of drives that for one reason or another is denied at home' (Porter 9). In related vein, Porter states that borders are perceived by travellers as both exciting and dangerous, and hence the Other. To quote Porter again,

If, as anthropologists have taught us, borders of all kinds are perceived as dangerous and exciting places, and are associated with taboos, this is no less true of territorial borders [...] Something of such an attitude no doubt contributes to the frequent ambivalence to be found in so many travel literature [where] the notions of guilt and duty are almost as important as desire and transgression. The acknowledgement of law



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

and obligation, resistance to them and a pervasive sense of guilt, recurs with a symptomatic frequency. (53)

This ambivalent attitude between desiring the other's culture, ways of life and place, and wanting its opposite can be attributed mainly to the crisis and limit of representation that starts to permeate Western conception of the Other since the onset of modernity. Since then, there has been an ongoing critique of the West's most confident, characteristic discourses. Many of the approaches to travel writing follow what has been termed the 'crisis in humanities', which was produced by the culmination of many factors in the 1960s and 1970s, including the rise of the new feminism, the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movements, and decolonization and liberation struggles. These contributed to, and coincided with, a general – and generational – questioning of authority and purpose. Indeed, many theories proliferated in this trend in the second half of the last century like hermeneutics, structuralism, neo-Marxism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, postcolonialism, etc. These travel writers and other writers of other genres plant some seeds of this crisis in representation which gets momentum in the seventies and eighties of the last century, especially with the main pillars of the postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said. The latter states that 'it is now almost impossible to remember a time when people were not talking about a crisis in representation' (205). Literary historians like Erich Auerbach, Earl Wassermann and M.H. Abrams have coped in detail with the concept of representation, which is the core of travel discourse.

Since the classicist tradition epitomized by Plato and others, Western thought has predicated on the representation of reality mimetically. This crisis in representation started at the late nineteenth century, and this radical change is entwined with what I have dwelt upon at the beginning of this article: the *fin de siècle* malaise. So, representation cannot be assigned any very essential or fixed signification. It seems 'either to vacillate before various possibilities of



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

meaning or, in some instances, [it] divides in half' (Edward Said, 1989, 222). The onset of modernity, still, brings a crisis in representation which is clearly crystallized in language as the powerful medium and instrument to convey thoughts and ideas. Language in this context is elusive and difficult to pin down by dint of its multifaceted aims and aspects:

Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be 'known'. Its system of values - its suppositions, its geography, its concept of history, of difference, its myriad gradations of distinction - becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded. (Bill Ashcroft et al. 283)

For Edward Said, 'words no longer comprised a transparent medium through which being shone [sic]' (206). Besides, language which is the core of any representation has become unstable, opaque and difficult to grasp reality mimetically. The vast critique of representation in philosophy and in the arts is thematised in the human sciences of the 1960s and 1970s as the 'crisis of representation'. The success of semiotics in particular will popularize Ferdinand de Saussure's position on the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified. With modern semiotics, a gap is opened between words and things, which will never be closed again. Besides, in their edited book, *De-scribing Empire: Postcolonialism and Textuality*, Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson claim that 'language is an opaque medium whose ability to obscure can be deployed as readily as its ability to express' (4).

Many notions and concepts which are part of representation have been upended and dismantled since the onset of modernist literature at the turn of nineteenth century like texts, authors, reality, Self, Other, centre, periphery, etc. For Said,



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

In the age of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, representation has thus had to contend not only with the consciousness of linguistic forms and conventions, but also with the pressures of such transpersonal, transhuman, and transcultural forces as class, the unconscious, gender, race, and structure. What transformations these have wrought in our notions of formerly stable things such as authors, texts, and objects are, quite literally, un-printable, and certainly unpronounceable. (1989, 206)

The travelogues of Budgett Meakin and Cunninghame Graham cannot be inscribed outside the contours of modernist writing of the outset of the twentieth century, a period that is characterized by its perceptual uncertainty and hesitancy (Parry 33). Most of the travelogues that I peruse regarding British travel literature at the turn of the nineteenth century are saturated with tropes that conjure up ambivalence in these travellers' discourse as they laud the Other as a source of some features that are deeply rooted in the Other only and that prod the Self to always look for this Other.

Again, as a microcosm of Morocco, Tangier, the gate of Europe to Africa and of Africa to Europe, the most western city of *Dar al-Islam* or 'Abode of Islam' for most foreigners at the time, and the crossroads of cultures, religions and languages, was over the centuries the focus of interest in Morocco. Some of those who visited it were enchanted and spellbound, others it repulsed and yet others were attracted by some of its aspects and disgusted by others. In general, the lure the city had for its visitors was its exotic appearance: markets, people and their customs, habits and way of life; whilst the repulsion could be largely attributed to the lack of hygiene, religious practices, poverty and political traditions. In addition, many visitors were perplexed by the mystery that shrouded many aspects of urban life (Mohamed Chtatou 275).

The accounts of visitors often read as if they were political pamphlets in which they express their biases and prejudices. For instance, Leared's account of his visit to Tangier was in



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

many respects interesting and informative, yet there are times when he falls prey to unpleasant stereotyping, an example of which is his opinion on Muslim architecture: ‘Whenever the Mohammedan dwells, the rigid jealousy with which women are guarded influences the style of his architecture (Leared 12). These travellers were the subject of culture shock as a result of their initial encounter with the Moroccan society and its environment. This shock was the result of a multi-stage process: encounter with alien environment; observation; cultural comparisons; rejection or acceptance. The initial rejection of the local society was not necessarily slander in intent but could have been merely the result of spontaneous reactions to alien norms. However, continuing rejection was essentially a refusal to accept the other simply because it was alien and therefore inferior.

Conclusion

As these three British travellers are concerned with propagandizing the superiority of western society and lauding the British Empire and its ideological grandiloquence, they also focus on deconstructing and destabilizing the centrality of Western Christian civilization. Their travels into ‘Moghreb-el-Acksa’ produces travel accounts that are schizoid in nature, and this schizoid discourse is attributed mainly to the expansion of a mechanical way of life that prods them to free themselves from this kind of life and assuage their angst in Morocco as a remote elsewhere. Besides, we can deduce that Leared’s, Meakin’s and Graham’s unattainability of a break with the dominant discourses and the impossibility of an alternative mode of representation. These three travellers are liable to search for deep significations and they find the ‘Land of the Moors’ as an oriental space characterized of its belatedness, devoid of meaning, composed of purely aesthetic objects which they sometimes appreciate and most ridicule. So, at once, Morocco is a pristine place, but also an eerily novel, arcane, indeed inscrutable site of the Other.



The Achievers Journal

Volume 4, Issue 1

ISSN (ONLINE): 2395-0897 / ISSN (PRINT): 2454-2296 January-March, 2018

Over years and centuries, Morocco or Western Barbary was visited by various foreign travellers, and through their eyes is revealed a topos full of activity, life and beauty, as well as poverty and other repulsive aspects. In fact none of these three visitors described here rejected Morocco or its people totally, even though at times they were disgusted by some aspects of its cultural practices. All in all, they continued to feel a certain enchantment and attraction to the country as a whole and an honest interest in an alien but mesmerizing world. These are moments of instability and ambivalence in these travel accounts.

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