

Travelling to the Secular or Journeying Inside the Self: Jurje Zaidane's Gaze on European Modernity (Rihla Ila Oroba 1912, A Travel To Europe)

Tritha Abdelaziz

Faculty of Languages, Art and Human Sciences, Settat

abdelaziz.tritha@uhp.ac.ma

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Abstract

Starting from his confrontational allegiance and parochial thesis, namely in his *Essays and Lectures of William Robertson Smith* (1912), William Robertson Smith discredits Arab travellers for their zealous keenness to discover Western cultural intricacies. He has examined the cultural practices and social kinships of Semite people and studied their theologies. William Robertson Smith went as far as to assume that “The Arabian traveller is quite different from ourselves. The labour of moving from place to place is a mere nuisance to him, he has no enjoyment in the effort, and grumbles at hunger or fatigue with all his might” (Smith, 1912, p: 498). My particular interest is in Jurje Zaidane's *Rihla Ila Oroba* (1912) as a culturally inspired travel account to France and England. It is not only a voyage to discern the intricacies of the Western civilizational repositories but an interesting endeavour to demonstrate the long-standing tradition of Arabs' presence in British and French cultural repertoire. His voyage shows the extent to which Arabs were inspired by Western modern logos. Jurje Zaidane minutely lingers on infinitesimal details of each country. I argue that this travel is a parallel occidentalist discourse that tries to create a counter-discursive narrative. Jurje Zaidane, from the perspective of a well-versed essayist, novelist and erudite traveller, cross-examines French and English cultural contexts. Ranging from the narration of public spaces to comments on French and English women, the journey towards the Other is vicariously shifted to Self-inquiry and discovery. Broached from a postcolonial micro-historicist approach, this paper aims at stultifying both the orientalist discourse and the occidentalist premise predicated on Hassan Hanafi's allegiance to Occidentalism. This article concludes that Zaidane's travel displays heterogeneous discourses that do not re-install sharp divisive between the East and the West.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article thesis seeks to highlight the giant role played by Arab travellers, as the historical scope of interest is arrested to the twentieth century, to reverse the orientalist constellation of stereotypical images held about the Orient. It examines Arab travellers' itineraries as alter(native) discourses of difference and parallel occidentalist accounts on the West. The main purport is to foreground the fact that Arab travelers' accounts, during the twentieth century, formulated distinct and ambivalent discourses which ran radically against the orientalist binary logic. Though hidden in plain sight and aesthetically relegated to the margin of history, Arab travels to the West, during the twentieth century, are critical terrains

that shift the spotlight downwards, signal new versions of the inscription of Otherness and recreate the absent/present agency of Arab travellers as interlocutors and 'dissenting voices'. Their historical accounts remain valuable archival material that challenges the Orientalist orthodoxies and Western clashing tropes.

For so long, Arab travellers have been precluded from the literary and travel writing processes concerning the dominance of Western scholarship. My major argument departs from the premise that Arab travels, during the twentieth century, are Occidentalist alternatives to the Orientalist proclivities. They do not re-install the orientalist logos of binarism and dyadic thought. To debunk Bernard Lewis's postulation that Muslim travellers lacked curiosity and inquisitiveness to know the Western world, Muslim journeyers, among many Arab travellers, were active interlocutors and had many archival records worthy of resurrection and scrutiny. William Robertson Smith's ad hominem argument discredits also Arab travelers the possibility of re-narrating their journeys to the Western world. The rationale of this article is to show how Arab travellers, during the twentieth century, formulated heterogeneous discourses on Western modernity and urbanization, ranging from appraisal and admiration to a sheer deflection of Western norms and culture under the banner of their religious incongruity.

Extensive academic research was on Western representation of the East, be it in fiction, anthropological studies or cinema. The Orientalist vision dominated the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Writing on the East as a subject of study generated a series of stereotypes and tropes, ranging from a strong condemnation of the natives' culture to an admiration of his exoticism and 'exceptionalism'. An admiration of the native culture stems from the very fact that it represents something lacking in the West and its condemnation is due to backwardness and "pastness". These travels display another façade of cross-cultural encounters and transnational mobility. While Western historiography absented Arab travellers from the writing processes of cultural encounters, they, through their vivid archival accounts, deflected and resisted Western surrogacy. They formulated parallel occidentalist journeys and refashioned the discourse akin to cultural encounters.

Through his immense interest in Arab travels to a pre-modern Europe (1578- 1727), Nabil Matar traces back a long-standing tradition in Arabic traveling repertoire. A tradition that fostered knowledge of the Christian Other and the development of various stances that culminated in reciprocal love and affection. Contending Aziz Al Azmeh's postulations that Medieval Arab travellers classified Europeans as barbarians, Matar deploys many travel sources and corpus captivities during the early modern period to affirm that their discourses were heterogeneous and historically conditioned.

Detouring Nabil Matar's periodicity, I have exclusively chosen to examine an Arab travel to the West during the twentieth century for the following reasons. First, the twentieth century was a pivotal historical juncture in sowing seeds of modern thought and industrial upheavals. Second, parallel literary and travel writings were also corollaries of those dizzying nobilities of people and portable identities. The twentieth century was a vivid historical juncture when the culture of ambassadorial envoys and students' delegations supplied Western contexts for knowledge transfer, armament expertise and urbanization's enlightenment.

Many Arab ambassadors and students were sent to the West during the twentieth century for political, military and educational reasons. In such a context of growing

vicissitudes in the industrial, agricultural, social and cultural sectors, the shifting paradigm registered a new movement in the conception of otherness and cultural encounters. Third, the rapid cadence of urbanization and the industrial revolution grew pressing, especially since the first electronics appeared in the nineteenth century, with the introduction of the electric relay in 1835, the telegraph and its Morse code protocol in 1837, the first telephone call in 1876 (Klooster, 2009, p:153). Such a vibrant environment of technological innovativeness solicited the movement of human capital “Atlantic” and the fluidity of cultural momentum. This article departs from a set of skeptical concerns which question the possibility of Arab travels during the twentieth century to enunciate a “contrapuntal”¹ alternative to orientalist productions. To provide a postcolonial corrective prism to this biased view, I have argued that Arab travels to the West during the twentieth century are occidentalist postcolonial alternatives which recreate the absent/present agency of Arab travellers not as “silent interlocutors” but as “active participants” in the formulation of their subjectivities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The cultural and literary underpinnings of Western colonial sway resulted in the production of an Orientalist discursive pattern, which functioned as a fixed paradigm in the representation of the East. Since the political and economic served as primordial factors in determining the future of many Arab countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, parallel academic scholarship was a subsequent corollary of Western colonial projects. The nineteenth century was the heyday when many Orientalist thinkers, playwrights, novelists and essayists gave free rein to their untamed generalizations and sweeping postulations regarding Oriental atavism and backwardness. Such a parochial prism of representation can be looked at as a fetishized form which essentialized Oriental subjectivities into mere identical identities and stale sameness². Such Orient was constructed according to the capricious whims of Gerard De Nerval, Gustave Falubert, Chateaubriand, Lamartine and De La Croix, and envisioned, emphatically, as a “locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption” (Said, 1978, p: 206). The process entailed a redeemed version of the Orient where Western intervention was as necessary as an ethical, social and cultural arbitrator to give sense to that mysterious locale, dubbed as Orient. Orientalists created a dyadic formulation of Eastern and Western relations nurtured much by antagonism and schism than by cultural reciprocity and fluid crossover.

With their sojourn in Oriental lands, especially at the turn of the nineteenth century, Western travellers drew sketchy accounts of the natives’ lives and vague information on their symbolic

¹ “Contrapuntal” is a critical concept forged by Edward Said, especially in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), based on a re-reading of historical facts and accounts. This reading offers space for hybrid cultures and shared histories to be reconsidered and revisited in accordance with the logos of cultural criss- crossing. Edward Said has deployed the notion of “contrapuntality” to recreate the absent/present agency of natives and grant them a fluid possibility of counter-production and counter-consciousness. The contrapuntal reading resists “univocality” and homogeneity as it seeks to put into interplay different subject-positions and agencies.

²In his groundbreaking contribution to the rise of postcolonialism, Edward Said, through his inspiring chef d’oeuvre, *Orientalism* (1978) scrupulously examines the correlation between Western hegemony and the politics of representation. Such intimate kinship buttresses the Orientalist modes of production and reinforces the fetishized conceptions about the Oriental backwardness. Edward Said has dislodged Antonio Gramsci’s key concept of “hegemony” from its European referentiality to examine the strategies deployed by the Orientalist discourse. Making use of Michel Foucault’s dual concepts of power and knowledge, Edward Said considers Orientalism as a legitimized interventionist project that accounts for the urgency of Oriental salvation from atavism.

values and signifying practices. Following Gerard De Nerval's *Voyage En Orient* (1851)³ essentialist allegations. Right from the onset of his travelogue, romantic, in fact romanticized, souvenirs of the Arabian Nights started swarming back upon his mind as already inculcated in his orientalist repertoire of images. His encounter with Egyptians revealed the cultural hiatus he created as he overtly expressed his uneasiness and anxiety towards a forlorn culture and a barren land. Through his discursive trope of Otherness, De Nerval declared that "depuis mon arrivée au Caire, toutes les histoires de *Milles et une Nuit* me repassent par la tête et je vois dans mes rêves tous les dives et les géants depuis Salomon" (Nerval, 1851, p: 104). The Orient as a *déjà vu* place haunted De Nerval's spirit and prompted him to validate his elusive clichés as apropos facts of the Orient.

In the same trajectory of his compatriot, Gerard De Nerval, Alphonse De Lamartine, through his *Voyage en Orient* (1855), condensed his souvenirs and *Vécu* in the Orient and, therefore, reproduced the same stereotypical discourse predicated on cultural Otherness. Being a well-established authority in French politics, La Martine served both as a concealed mouthpiece of the French political agenda and geographical journeyer and explorer. Through his minute delineation of Oriental people, the racialized rhetoric of othering reinforced his misconceptions of natives as desert dwellers. The pitch of his vituperation reached its acme when he avowed that "les Arabes du grand désert et du Palmyre sont en foule dans la ville et circulent dans le bazar... Ils se drapent à la manière des statues antiques" (De Lamartine, 1855, p: 11). The Orient as antiquated and decadent was a leitmotif in Lamartine's impressions. Images of disarray and chaos were even key features in Lamartine's postulations.

In addition to the vague abstractions concocted by Western travellers to portray the Orient, many Western Orientalists discredited Arab travellers' curiosity to venture to the other shore beyond theirs. Judged as active participants and pioneers in mapping the Oriental field, Western travellers foreclosed Arab travellers' possibility to strike back and therefore journey to the Western world. The Scottish anthropologist, William Robertson Smith, namely in his *Essays and Lectures of William Robertson Smith* (1912), examined the cultural practices and social kinships of Semite people and studied their theologies. William Robertson Smith went as far as to assume that "The Arabian traveller is quite different from ourselves. The labour of moving from place to place is a mere nuisance to him, he has no enjoyment in the effort, and grumbles at hunger or fatigue with all his might" (Smith, 1912, p: 498). Inferred from Smith's allegation is the incapability of Arab travellers to generate a parallel voyage to the West as they lack inquisitiveness and the passion for travelling and exploring the World beyond their curatorial precincts.

William Robertson Smith's claim is further buttressed by Bernard Lewis, a well-established figure in and authority on Muslim/Christian encounters. Bernard Lewis's postulation is predicated on the examination of Muslims' discovery of Europe, extending across the sixth century up to the nineteenth century. Lewis's vehement concern with the

³ Gerard De Nerval wrote an extended version of his romance-inspired journey to the Orient where he visited Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Rhodes. Throughout his itinerary from Switzerland to Egypt, De Nerval was majorly enchanted by Egyptian women, namely the ones from Cairo, and Lebanese Druzes and Maronites. Following the path of his predecessors, De nerval's journey was more a travel to validate his pre- conceptions than to discover the cultural nuances and the social intricacies severing the Oriental society from its Western counterpart. Even his comments on "female figures as Cleopatra, Salome, and Isis" (Said, 1978, p: 180) were intentional declarations to mythologize Oriental women. Gerard De Nerval's encounter with the Orient registered a state of disillusionment as his dreams were betrayed by the real Orient. He endeavored to create an Orient according to his caprices as he was unable to mollify the trance of his disenchantment.

scrutiny of Islamic history allotted him the prerogative of being a well-established, in fact Orientalist, authority on Islam. In this vein, Bernard Lewis claims:

In the Muslim world view the basic division of mankind is into the House of Islam (Dar-al-Islam) and the House of War (Dar-al-Harb). The one consists of all those countries where the law of Islam prevails, that is to say, broadly, the Muslim empire; the latter is the rest of the world. (Lewis, 1982, p: 60).

Lewis's fevered commitment to the orientalist logos, as adamantly consolidated by his ancestors, entrenches walls and contentious frontiers between the House of War⁴ and the House of Islam⁵. The two geo-religious territories are sealed off and beleaguered with no religious or fluid cultural crossover. He ascribes the split of the world into two antagonistic poles to Muslims' religious blindness. Euro-Christians must have one sole religious referential; it is Islam as the only rightful religion. Bernard Lewis, as obedient to the Orientalist inimical prism, alleges that the dominance of Islam precludes the presence of any other religious polity outside its sphere. Bernard Lewis confirms his radicalized instigation of theological contestations and disseminates the fixed Orientalist tropes.

Lewis's bedrock of essentialism and religious fervor entails the fact that whoever has a religious practice beyond Islam is deemed an infidel (*Kafir*). Lewis' dichotomous discourse, which rests on the religious bifurcation of Islam vs Christianity, is further consolidated by his examination of Muslims' travel to the West. In his book *Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1982), Bernard Lewis alleges that Muslim travellers, right after the Crusades, showed no inherent inquisitiveness and curiosity to know the intricacies of the infidel Other. Muslim travellers were rather blinded by their parochial and curatorial vision, showing their triumph and valour. He further claims that this absence of inquisitiveness is due to the broad generalizations and the vague conclusions that Muslims formulated about a forlorn Occident. In this sense, he stresses that:

The Muslim had no comparable concern with Christian Europe. His religion was born in Arabia; his prophet was an Arab; his scriptures were in Arabic; and his places of pilgrimage, Mecca and Medina, were safely in Muslim lands. Nor was there much else to attract Muslims to Europe (Lewis, 1982, p:8)

Bernard Lewis shrouds Muslims' curiosity to investigate the Occidental realm. He entrenches

⁴ The House of War (*Dar Al Harb*) represents, during the first century of Islam's inception, the geo-religious division which spawned out of a legal and religious discourse forged by Muslim jurists. The House of War designates the territorial circumvention which lies beyond Muslims' land. According to *the Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (Esposito, 2004), the House of War (Dar Al Harb) denotes the territorial sovereignty which does not have a treaty of nonaggression or peace with Muslims. This territorial division upon theological basis dates back to the era of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, when he used to send messages to the Persian, Abyssinian and Byzantine emperors, urging them to choose between war and conversion.

⁵ The House Islam (*Dar Al Islam*) stands for the territorial circumscription under Muslims' sovereignty where the law of Islam prevails. According to *the Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2004), the House of Islam designates that even the countries colonized by non-believers remain, according to Hanafi School, under the control of Dar Al Islam.

also fences to inhibit cultural fluidity and momentum between the Muslim and Occidental worlds. Unable to ventilate their thought and therefore explore the Occidental world beyond the circumvention of their land, Muslims were but riveted to their geographical lot. Bernard Lewis stresses the incapability of Muslims to trespass the threshold of their land as there was nothing available to arouse their interest. Such lack of inquisitiveness found its best explanation in the fact that Muslims were more attached to their sacrosanct territory where they lived in communion and spiritual contentment.

As sketched out previously, the Orientalist mode of representation homogenizes the Orient as one entity, denying cultural diversity and alternative voices. Edward Said criticizes Orientalism as a form of representation that mythos (logically) constructs the Orient or rather 'orientalizes' it. Beyond this orientalist discourse that draws demarcations between East and West as two entities put at odds, Occidentalism as an alternative discourse of difference tries to foster another form of representation that runs counter the orientalist one. In his book *Muqadima FI Ailm Al Istighrab (An Introduction to Occidentalism)* (2000), Hassan Hanafi traces the emergence of Occidentalism as a science that attacks the process of Westernization: "Occidentalism was developed to attack Westernization, which had strong influence not only on our cultural life and imagination of the world but also on our daily practices, purity of language, artistic productions and all aspects of life". (2000, p: 19-20).

Giving the fact that Hanafi's view curtails the struggle over re-positioning Arabs' agency to mere clashing and warring thought, he consequently qualifies Occidentalism as a new form of resistance to all corollaries of Westernization. Occidentalism, for Hanafi, is a counter-production which stresses the triumphant national values and emphatically rejects 'cultural contamination'⁶. In this logic, He re-installs the same paradigms of orientalist binarism. He accuses Westerners for their cultural influence which brought Arab states to an asunder state. Hassan Hanafi's main attempt is to see degrees of Western cultural influence on Arabs' national values and heritage. From a purely nationalistic perspective, he sees the West as a form of cultural domination that has radically changed the linguistic domains and architectural designs.

He goes so far as to suggest that Occidentalism is a form of 'alienation' that divests Arabs' culture from its local specificities and values. Occidentalism for him is a counter-discourse that tries to subvert the colonial cultural legacies and relocate agency on the basis of an anti-Western discourse. Western cultural influence has to be challenged from within Arabs' cultural context by stressing national values and turning the West into a subject of study. Hassan Hanafi claims that "the Islamic thought gives an example of how we should preserve our identity against any form of alienation. The Quran has forbidden alliance with the enemy and the tendency to win his trust" (2000, p 22). Seeing relations between the East and West through a narrow-necked prism of religious maxims, Hassan Hanafi confirms that the West brought forms of alienation that stripped Arabs' culture of its 'authenticity'. In

⁶ Offering a revision to Arabs' historical subordination and annexation to the Eurocentric logos, *Muqadima fi Ailm al Istighrab* (2000) is a critique of Western cultural legacies. Framing his project of "Heritage and Renewal" in three-dimensional 'fronts' (attitudes towards our ancient heritage, Western heritage and exegesis), Hassan Hanafi dismantles the historical ramifications of Self/Other dialectics. As he explicates the second front' resisting mechanisms, postulated on Arab attitudes towards Western civilization, he de-sanctifies Western canonical authorities, namely Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche and Marx. Rather than siding with Arabs' call for emulating Western scientific prototypes, he jettisons this *de facto* attitude, registering a view based on the Self/Other antagonism

contra-distinction to Orientalism, He alleges that Occidentalism envisions striking back and challenging Eurocentrism.

To judge Occidentalism as a science that runs against Orientalism raises questions wedded to the sensibility of this confrontational premise. Scepticism contours Hanafi's allegation that Occidentalism is a scientific reaction to Westernization. In his response to this clashing postulation, Youssef Zaydane contends Hanafi's view as he writes "was Orientalism a science to call its counterpart (Occidentalism) so? Orientalism was a historical study not an art or science" (1998, p: 43). In order to talk about Occidentalism as a counter narrative to Orientalism, we have to take into account that Orientalism is a Western institution, fostered by governments. Youssef Zaydane further asserts that "all occidentalist initiatives are just scattered individual experiences" (1998, p: 43). Occidentalism is not an antidote to Orientalism; the two projects are starkly divergent in terms of methodologies and sponsorship.

On another level, questioning the basics of Occidentalism invites us to see whether all those who wrote, be they Christians or Muslims, about the West are Occidentalists. In order for Occidentalism to be a parallel discourse to Orientalism, critical focus should be made on comparative studies rather than nationalistic views that try to re-install Manichean binarism between East and West. Occidentalism should be an integral component of academic research as Mohammed Amine Al Aalim lucidly puts it:

What would we call the Arabic study and historicization of Indian, Japanese, and Chinese thought and philosophy? Is it Occidentalism or Orientalism? On the other hand, Orientalism is not an act of writing about the Orient's religious Heritage, but it is a comparative study between East and West (1998, p: 54).

Hanafi's project investigates the relationship between the Self and the Other and how Arabs, who have long been othered, could turn Western culture into a subject of gaze. However inspiring his book is, his focus on Occidentalism as an anti-Western discourse eclipses degrees of cultural flows between East and West. Turning the West into a subject of study does not necessarily mean dispensing with its culture. Arabs' mirroring of Western society varies across historical junctures and individual experiences.

The main chapter is to recreate the absented curiosity of Arab travellers to the West during the twentieth century through the scrutiny of Jurje Zaidane's travel *Rihla Ila Oropa*. It seeks to establish a contextual link between European modernity/modernization and Arab travellers' stances vis-à-vis a prosperous and developed West. Back in the twentieth century when many Muslim travellers expressed their dogmatic rejection of Western modernity. The main aim is also to dismantle Hassan Hanafi's project of Occidentalism as best elucidated in his book *Muqadima Fi Ailm Al Istighrab (Introduction to Occidentalism)* (2009). As he argues that Occidentalism is a subversive project to undermine Western cultural legacies, he falls within the same trap of orientalist discourse consolidating binary logics and rigid bifurcation. The argument stressed here is to examine Jurje Zaidane's travel as a representative of Arab accounts of the West during the twentieth century. The aim is to buttress the fact that this travel is contoured by historical conditions, individual conditions and the nature of the travel's mission. This

travel is a textual record that forefronts heterogeneous discourses not necessarily conditioned by Hanafi's clashing thought.

3. Complex Itineraries: *Jurje Zaidane's Rihla Ila Oroba (1912) as the Other Facet of Alterity*

Jurje Zaidane's travel came within a critical historical conjuncture of Western encroachment on Arab countries. The political turmoil and the conflictual relations, impeding fluid contacts, impacted Arab travellers' configuration of otherness⁷. Zaidane, under the traumatic experience of Ottoman "injustice and oppression" (Yared, 1996, p: 79), went to France, England and Switzerland and found solace in their apparent modernity. Since he lived under the Ottoman oppressive state, his comments on the Western democratic system were even direct calls to break free from the shackles of repression. France, England and Switzerland were settings where justice, equality and urban planning were indexes of Western development.

In addition to the turbulent political atmosphere that reigned during Jurje Zaidane's travel, his religious, educational and cultural backgrounds were determinant factors in contouring his *rihla*. Most of the accounts highlighting Jurje Zaidane's biography alluded to his obvious influence by orientalist pioneers. Jurje Zaidane's versatile resourcefulness boils down to his contribution to Arab "Nahda" (Renaissance) as one of the most influential thinkers who developed both geographical knowledge and mastery of foreign languages (Riami, 2012, p: 155). Zaidane, as being an advocator of reformism and Western archetypical modernity, amasses the expertise of being both a philologist and a cultural analyst⁸. Contrary to his Arab ambassadors' peers, who were faithful conformists to the rulers' political agenda, Zaidane detracts himself from the fetters of "Makhzinian" impositions. Out of his noticeable learnedness, Jurje Zaidane breaks free from the previous dogmatic shackles of House of War vs House of Islam that froze Arab travellers' thoughts⁹, namely before the nineteenth century. As the theological injunctions are starkly salient in fashioning travellers' heterogeneous discourses of alterity, Jurje Zaidane's religious background is worth reflection. Since the encounter with the secular West generated inconsistent attitudes of Muslim travellers during

⁷Nazek Saba Yared, in her book *Arab Travelers and Western Civilization*, makes a contradistinction between three variant periods, spanning respectively: 1826-1882, 1882-1918, 1918- 1919-1938. Arab travelers, in the name of Rifaat Tahtawi, Khayr Al-Din, Al Shidyaq and Marrash, belonging to the period bracketed between 1826-1882, saw European modernity as a prototypical paradigm to be emulated. Despite their religious cling, they eulogized the West. The second generation (1882-1918), headed by Muhammed Ali Kurd, Al Muwaylihi Jurje Zaidane, Muhammed Fikri and Muhammed Farid, developed different stances towards Western norms. However, they were all mesmerized by Western urban planning, architectural excellence and democratic system. The third wave of Arab travelers (1919-1938), as affected by the sediments of the First World War, comprised Chakib Arslan, Amin Al Rihani and Taha Hussein. All those travellers found Western equality and justice but extensions of Islamic law. They poured also their anger and vituperations on European colonial power that economically exhausted Arab countries.

⁸For his educational career and traveling itinerary, see Islam Dih's "Ailal al Logha, Rihlat Jurje Zaidane Mina Pathologia ila Philologia" (2014). Islam Dih traces the remarkable shift in the educational circuit of Jurje Zaidane. Imbibing from medical studies, philology and translation, he managed to gain fame as a well-established authority in journalism and comparative literature. Islam Dih tracks also the role of the interwoven historical junctures which urged Zaidane's displacement from Lebanon to Egypt. For his giant contribution to the rise of Arabic "Nahda", see Kinda Al Samara's article (2012) "Sahafa wa Lhadatha wa Tamadon Al Jadid, Al Arab wa Lgharb fi Lqarn 19". Kinda bears out the fact that despite the spasmodic relation governing the West and the East, yet affected by the sediments of colonial expediency, Arab thinkers of the nineteenth century, like Jurje Zaidane and other proponents of "Nahda" project, embraced Western modernity.

⁹According to Calasso and Lancioni (2017), the solipsistic divide rested on geo-religious logic of the House of War and the House of Islam is not a novel division but hence stretches as back as to the eighth century when jihadic missions were growing increasingly. Albrecht Sarah (2018) tracks the emergence of manichean relation between Dar Al Harb and Dar Al Islam and postulates that even Western scholarship, giving Bernard Lewis as an example, reinforces this fixed construct as adamantly maintained and can by no means be trespassed unless after Muslims' triumph.

the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Arab Christian travellers conveyed contrasted stances. Growing up in a Christian orthodox family (Yousri, 2017), Jurje Zaidane predicated his thoughts of the West beyond the curatorial confines of religious law. Conscious of the historical conjunctures and individual conditions that contour Arab travels to the West during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Jurje Zaidane's *Rihla Ila Oroba* (1912) (*A journey to Europe 1912*) is not only a voyage to discern the intricacies of Western civilizational heritage but an interesting endeavour to demonstrate the long-standing tradition of Arabs' presence in British and French cultural repertoire. As the journey made of France, Switzerland and England a destination, Jurje Zaidane minutely lingers on infinitesimal details of each country. Starting from the premise that his voyage is a tentative to test the extent to which Arabs, inspired by Western modern logos, have managed to ventilate their thought and transcend the dogmatic binaries (Dar Al Harb vs Dar al Islam), Jurje Zaidane writes:

We visited Marseille, Lyon, Paris, London, Cambridge, Manchester, Oxford, Geneva, Lausanne and Evian. We studied their conditions and visited museums, libraries and monuments. We closely examined what Arabs were interested in, particularly features of modernity that we kept imitating for a century and we are still undetermined to choose what is suitable for us (2012, p: 7).

Jurje Zaidane, from the perspective of a well-versed essayist, novelist and erudite traveller, cross-examines Western societies, ranging from the depiction of architectural sites, the assessment of economic sectors, and public spaces to observations on gender relations. In a juxtaposed format that comparatively foregrounds the Self/Other interplay; Jurje Zaidane proceeds with charting out the itinerary of his journey.

Seeing that the main motif behind his travel was to examine features of Western modernity as a new defining trait, Jurje Zaidane is faithful to his Oriental inclinations as he sifts what is suitable for an Oriental reader. From the outset, he states that "we will limit ourselves to what is interesting for an Oriental reader to challenge Western modernity. We shall explain the bad and the good sides of this modernity(2012, p: 7). Because he was culturally aware of the differences that might negatively affect the Oriental taste, Jurje Zaidane wrote with vigilance, pointing out the necessity to avert blind imitation of the West.

The struggle over the articulation of subjectivity in Western metropolitan arenas ignited inimical encounters between Arab travellers and features of the un-ubiquitous modernity. Being un-acclimatized with the minutiae of the modern, Arab travellers to the West during the 19th and 20th centuries formulated variant stances towards Western avant-gardism. As paradigms of centre/periphery marked their unremitting shift in a context where modernity held sway, the clash of modernity's definition seems to be more prevalent vogue than cultural enmity. Being a Western wrought artefact that champions European grandeur, modernity is conceptualized in terms of:

With the unprecedented acceleration of modernization, non-European cultures often served as terrains where the state of being modern was articulated with utmost poignancy. The underside of this argument is that colonialism was a major constituting element of Western constructions of modernity" (Idrissi, 2013: p 7)

It becomes obvious then that colonial trauma as a Western landmark that gives credence and poise to the colonizer served as a viable determinant to forge what is dubbed as modernity. This also validates the Eurocentric ethos as a supreme agent that presents the ex-colonized as a mere backdrop or, to use Homi Bhabha's term, a "mottled background" (2004) that marks out any possibility of differentiation. This is evidence that modernity is conceptualized as a purely Western outcome.

Reigning against this exclusionary definition that celebrates European exclusivity and highlights their giant role in setting the base for modernity, the perspective of Arab thinkers runs counter to this compartmental mindset. In his book *Rouh Al Hadatha, Madkhal Ila Taassis al Hadatha Al Islamya (The Spirit of Modernity, An Introduction to the Foundation of Islamic Modernity)*, Taha Abderrahmane (2006), displays the other version of dyad and advances integral components akin to modernity, which are itemized as follows: generalizability, extensibility, autonomy and universality. Destabilizing the mainstreamed claim that modernity is monolithically configured and centrally produced, Taha Abderrahmane explains:

The principle of universality entails that modernity is based on generalizability rather than specificity.... Social individuals have distinct cultural and civilizational characteristics. The extensibility of modernity supersedes those specificities. Modernity is not riveted to the society therein grows. Its highly technical and valuable products are transmitted to other societies despite the cultural and historical differences. (2006, p: 29)

In his quest to decentre modernity and adapt it to the rendition of the periphery, Taha Abderrahmane dislodges modern values and tenets from the parochial Eurocentric sphere for negotiation. The flux and mutability of ideas demystify the doctrinaire conceptualization of modernity as a Eurocentric milestone.

4. Jurje Zaidane's Gazes on European Modernity

An insight into Jurje Zaidane's well-crafted travelogue opens vistas for us to see his thought-provoking commentaries on Western baffling modernity. Ranging from the description of the economy, cultural life, and configurations of public space, playhouses and theatres, Jurje Zaidane draws a parallel comparison between the Orient and the Occident. Working as a disguised ethnographer, he minutely dwells on French political life as a prototypical democratic country:

They elect every seven years, among the candidates, the president who gets the majority of votes. He is elected by the house of Lord and Umma upon a public meeting. The president has to abide by the executive and legislative orders of the two houses. (Zaidane, 2012, p: 10)

Inferred from this citation are the political order and the democratic political life of France as a leading power and a specimen of social justice. Following the trajectory of his predecessors, be they official ambassadors and leisure sought-travellers, Jourje Zaidane does not insinuate the political deficiency in Eastern countries. He rather resorts to tacit criticism embedded in the detailed amplification of the French political system as a marker of democratic grandeur. Rather than overtly disclosing the Eastern democratic retardation, he displays his apparent admiration of the French political system. Nazek Saba Yared buttresses the fact that "Jurje

Zaidane and Ali Kurd, like their forerunners Al Tahtawi's and Khayeddine, were disturbed by the Middle East's backwardness in economic and the scientific fields (Yared, 1996, p: 72).

Seeing the unequal forces of centre/periphery duality, Jurje Zidane as an Eastern traveller, un-acquainted with Western civilizational momentum, discloses plainly his strong admiration of the French democratized system and implicitly castigates the unfathomed state of atavism in which Eastern countries live. Worthy of highlight is Jurje Zaidane's interest in the Western economy. This determines his strong curiosity and inquisitiveness to see the basics of French power and therefore offers an economic corrective to Eastern economic precariousness. He gives factual statistics about commercial transactions, agricultural reaps, wool, minerals textile and silk productions. Zaidane does not only feature the economic strength of France but gives pathways to Eastern countries to guarantee development and combat social disparities.

A seething debate over the feasibility and the practicality of Western sciences characterized Arab travels to the West during the 19th and 20th centuries. Between curiosity to learn about and the authority to debunk Western sciences, Arab travellers develop ambivalent stances. Most of these undecided attitudes emanate from religious injunctions that infuse Arab travellers' mindsets and affect their rendition of Western innovativeness and knowledge. The bifurcated duality is best elucidated by Roxane Euben:

The knowledge ("ilm) here is unquestionably religious, but a hard and fast distinction between secular and religious knowledge misses the scope of "ilm" Within the terms of Islam, all human knowledge—whether of things divine or purely mundane—ultimately derives from God, and thus all potential objects of human knowledge are themselves aspects of divine creation (Euben, 2006, p: 35)

What is implied here is that the conception of science and knowledge for Muslim travellers in particular is predicated upon the theological doctrines and inspired by the Qur'anic guidance. Whatever falls outside the scope of these religious circumventions is taken with reserve and reservation. Jurje Zaidane reverses these dogmas of Western sciences' and knowledge's ephemeral qualities.

Departing from his Orthodox-Christian religious background, his formulations and conceptions are sharply contrasted to Muslim travellers. Zaidane considers French scientific knowledge as salient in the development of nations and the enlightenment of those who are educationally care-free:

The most renowned schools are the School of Art and Industry in Paris (conservatoire) as well as others for agricultural, commercial, industrial and military studies. Just references to these schools lay bare the great differences between our educational system and theirs(Zaidane, 2012, p: 17)

With this eulogy and praise of the Other as analogized to Self's repentance, defeatism and weakness, Jurje Zaidane acknowledges French educational and scientific greatness and superiority. Furthermore, he far transcends the fevered stances premised upon religious tenets and demystifies the long-standing tropes of Western dark sciences that compromise religious sacredness and encourage the transient science to the detriment of the hereafter.

No wonder Jurje Zaidane's infatuation with French education and scientific knowledge inter-texts Rifaat al Tahtawi's thesis, resting on the fact that "Western sciences are in continuous advancement thanks to the abundance of industrial, art and scientific schools" (Qassim, 2003, p:349). Henceforth, Jurje Zaidane shows no animosity towards the scientific innovations of the Western Other.

Be the canonical official envoys or individual trips to the West during the 19th and 20th centuries, Arab travels allocate ample descriptions to the new-configured space. Since spatial boundaries are constructed, or rather discursively conceived, differently in both the Orient and the Occident, the penetration of Western realms is always coupled with Janus-faced sensations of wonder, amazement, admiration as well as anxiety and un-decidedness. Susan Gilson Miller lucidly explains it:

Learning the complex codes that define space and its changing social functions can be among the most difficult trials of the journey. The traveller must be initiated into them by instruction or by example, and failure to learn them can lead to painful embarrassment. Most travellers abroad have acquired at least one story of cultural misunderstanding based on a misinterpretation of signs that set boundaries (Miller, 1992: p 63)

As spatial boundaries and public spaces become embodiments of cultural codes and signs. These spaces become challenging for strangers who are not acquainted with the specificities of the Other's culture.

Jurje Zaidane, being influenced by his peers, introduces us to French and English metropolises through his focus on museums, theatres, architectural sites and monuments. Being a vehicle that instructs morals and inculcates ethics, French theatrical performances are considered as "This is not to highlight theatres because we have many in Alexandria. We saw many performances that criticized morals, rituals and customs, adopting a style that merges humour with seriousness. We do not have such performances in our countries, but I appreciate them (Jurje, 2012, p: 17). Without any sense of cultural hostility that invokes the religious to debunk the suitability of Western fine art to Arabs' taste, Jurje Zaidane cites the merits of theatrical performances in enlightening the audience and instructing the public about many issues.

As a recurrent feature of pre-established orientalist episteme, the Oriental woman has always been an annexation to men's chivalry and triumphalism. Even more provocatively, the Eastern woman has to acquiesce to males' dominant authority. The orientalist mindset creates fixed hierarchies through which the Oriental woman is deemed to undergo a double frustration and conquest. Ensieh Shabanirad and Seyyed Mohammad Marandi(2015: 23) lucidly articulate it 'That women in the colonized society suffer from exploitation by both colonized and indigenous power structure is well understood'. Conscious of the fact that Oriental women were put between the hammer of Western colonialism and the anvil of patriarchy, they were subject to a double trauma. It is within this matrix of double domination that the discourse of Oriental women was much more predicated upon fictitious tropes than on reality.

In the same trajectory, the Harem is a gender-constructed space whereby male and female roles are based on domination and subordination. With all the metaphors of sexual fantasies and animalistic and libido impulses that the Harem is laden with, the Oriental

woman's identity shrinks, following the Orientalist tablets of essentialism, to a docile subservient body. As succinctly articulated in her book *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem*, Reina Lewis (2004: 96) maintains that 'the West's image of the secluded, polygamous oriental woman had accrued the layers of myth, rumor and stereotype of a longstanding fascination. The vision of the harem as a sexualized realm of deviancy, cruelty and excess. The Harem as an arena that harnesses all Orientalist fetishized images of lasciviousness and sexual abuse incarcerates, following the logic of Orientalist discursive practices, the Oriental woman within the precincts of domesticity.

It is worth noting that beyond these tropes that curtail the Oriental woman's position to a Harem-subservient being, there are equally fascinating travels of Arabs, stressing the other version of the dyad, that document Western women's contribution to social and economic welfare and relocate their agency beyond the manacles of gendered circumventions. Jurje Zaidane pours his vituperations on the dark ages in Europe and Arab countries alike, the context in which both European and Arab women were subjugated and dominated. In this sense, Jurje Zaidane states "In the dark ages, either in Europe or other countries, women were humiliated and underestimated. Husbands used to sell their wives in public auction" (Zaidane, 2012, p: 30). As an advocator of modernity, Jurje Zaidane praises the emancipatory step forward that European countries allotted to women. Breaking free from the old orthodoxies of women's incarceration, European women play leading roles in different disciplines and fields. Jurje Zaidane maintains that "European women took higher positions and practised many professions, such as workers in factories and mines, secretaries, chemistry and lawyers" (Zaidane, 2012, p: 30). Clearly displayed is the dichotomous relation between the orientalist constellation that bereaves women of their agency and Jurje Zaidane's ventilated thought which eulogizes Western women and valorises their granted freedom.

As beauty in its inherent meaning signifies all that catch and beguile the eye, Jurje Zaidane had no restraints in manifesting his overt admiration of French women's attire. Notwithstanding he came from an Oriental society where women's sprucing up for public display was often taken with reservation, he gave free rein to his cajoling description "No nation equals the French taste of beauty, this is noticeable among Parisians. You find an ugly woman embellishing with the suitable garment, hairdressing in a way which could fit her facial trait" (Zaidane, 2012, p: 24). Further than seeing Western women through the tenuous prism of religious compelling tenets, Jurje Zaidane was enchanted by the apparent prettiness of French women.

Drawing a parallel analogy between Arab travel accounts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and Zaidane's *Rihla*, one could trace the multivalent stances towards Western women. Religious injunctions were not major factors in contouring the encounter between Arab travellers and Western women. Individual convictions and cultural upbringing impacted also on fashioning heterogeneous discourses. To exemplify, Rifaat Tahtaoui, who was an alumnus of Al Azhar's school, was deemed a "great admirer of French women" (Yared, 1996, p: 52). Within the same historical juncture and unlike his compatriot Rifaat Tahtaoui, Driss Al Amraoui, who went to France and England in 1860 as an ambassadorial envoy, qualified Writing on French women as a sinful act that transgressed their household's intimacy (Matar, 2009, p: 108).

Zaidane's eye was bewitched by both Women's attractiveness and the ostensible features of their giant contribution to the boost of the economy and engagement in social life.

Jurje Zaidane lingered on French women's position as being males' equal compatriots in accessing to job market. He drew on the role of the French educational system that guaranteed women's instruction. Inferred from Jurje's comparisons was the crucial role played by the French system which "saved women from the darkness of ignorance, freed them, acknowledged their rights and equated them with men" (Zaidane, 2012, p: 31). He juxtaposed gendered roles ascribed to Eastern women and the merits of equality that Western women cherished.

The interplay of contrast between the traditional and the modern found its manifest declaration in Jurje's comparison. The journey towards the Other became a thought-provoking experience to ponder upon the Self. Zaidane was dumbfounded by the achievements of French women in a variety of disciplines that were in Oriental society males' dominant specialities:

Among their women, you find sellers in stores, workers in mines, factories and secretaries in companies. They exercised also the highest scientific professions in medicine, law, chemistry and bacteriology. Our women, whether they learn or not, usually stay in their parent's house, waiting for their lot in marriage. Their beauty is decency and modesty. Their parents do not care whether they have any job or not. They either get married or remain as spinsters in their parents' house. (Zaidane, 2012, p: 31)

A subtle criticism of Eastern gender inequality was overtly shown by Jurje Zaidane. Whereas French women reversed the gendered normative status quo and the fetters of domestic docility, Eastern ones succumbed to male' supremacy. Inasmuch as Jurje Zaidane was majorly influenced by the whiffs of Orientalist thought¹⁰, Western gender regulations were effective patterns to build on. Similarly, Rifaat Tahtawi "takes women as moral index of the entire culture in which they are located, and their behaviour is majored always by gradation of distance from the virtuous Arab/Muslim women" (Euben, 2006, p: 120). Following the footpaths of Tahtawi, Jurje Zaidane considered French women, in contradistinction with Arab ones, as leading figures and stark indices of French development. Jurje Zaidane's visit to France was an opportunity to trace not only women's social practices but also the cultural messages, inferred from statues that foreground women's emancipation and integration in decision-making.

5. CONCLUSION

In fine, throughout this doctoral thesis, I have tried to foreground the alternative discourse of difference in Jurje Zaidane's travel account of the West during the twentieth century. I have also brought to the fore this minor narrative as representative of Arab travellers who formulated heterogeneous discourses on the West during the twentieth century. I argue that this initiation to create a parallel discourse of Occidentalism requires deep digging into history to recuperate muffled voices and grant them agency. One of the ways to recover these

¹⁰ In his article "How Should the History of Arabs be written: the Impact of European Orientalism on Jurje Zaidan's Work"(2013), Ann Laure Dupont traces the importance of European Orientalists, namely Cornelius Van Dyck, whom Jurje considered as his intellectual mentor, in fashioning his thought on Arab nationalism. A neat impact is felt in his allegation that Arabs should open up gates for European expertise to accomplish their promising project of *Nahda*. Zaidane stressed even that French encroachment of Egypt in 1798 contributed to the rise of Arab modernity. Also, through missionaries in Syria, Seeds of modernity germinated. Zaidane's overall postulation was to highlight the importance of European civilization in shaping Arabs' conception of modernity. Further than this, Zaidane considered that the emulation of Western norms would be a fruitful initiative for Arabs to get modernized.

Arab subjectivities as distinct identities is to enlarge the scope of scrutiny to include a variety of Arab journeyers on Western shores: acrobats, travellers, merchants, peddlers, horsemen, carpenters, lecturers, preachers, midwives, jugglers and dancers. Such a wide range of professions offers a grass-roots knowledge of how Arabs conceived the Western Other from the prism of Occidentalism. The overall purport is to recreate a counter-productive discourse of difference and counter-literature beyond the orientalist clashing dogmas. Since culture in its democratized sense, as Raymond Williams enhances in his article “Culture is Ordinary”(1958), is ordinary by nature; that is, it belongs to the blacksmith, carpenter as well as other ordinary people, the study of Arab travellers’ petits récits helps to retrieve their “ordinariness” and therefore highlighting their cultural impetus.

This article thesis is also an endeavor to reconsider the position of Arab travellers as occidentalist voices, beyond Hassan Hanafi’s annihilating thesis, and alternatives to the orientalist rhetoric. As the project of Occidentalism entails recuperating the lost voices and exhuming their archives, one of the ways to strike back the metropolitan writings is to trace the itineraries of Arab travellers in the West. This promising project requires also extending the scope of interest to include Arab merchants, peddlers, street vendors, lecturers and bazaar keepers, who, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, extensively supplied Western cultural arenas with their marvellous stories and complex trajectories. Since the main critical focus is to resurrect the forgotten voices of the alternative history, the experiences of Arab merchants, peddlers, street vendors, lecturers and bazaar keepers offer a postcolonial corrective riposte to the orientalist discourse and help writing Arab cultural and historical memory.

I Have considered Jurje Zaidane’s travel as another different facade of discourse on otherness. Zaidane set out in France, England and Switzerland in 1912. Zaidane has allotted ample space to describe the Western democratic system as an urgent declaration to forge a similar one in Arab countries. France, England and Switzerland were, for Zaidane, countries of patent modernity. Ranging from the description of the political system, economy, cultural life, and configurations of public space, playhouses and theatres, Zaidane avows Western extreme organization and obvious urbanization. Using a dialectical approach to his encounter with the Other, Zaidane acknowledges the superiority of Western democratized society and denounces the lack of democracy in Eastern countries.

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AUTHOR'S BIO

Tritha Abdelaziz is a holder of a Cultural studies Master's Degree from the Faculty of Art and Humanities, Dhar el Mahraz, Fes. I have got also a Master's degree from Universita Della Svizzera Italiana, Switzerland. I hold a PhD in Cultural studies. My research area includes issues related to the analysis of postcolonial literature and travel narratives as well as anthropological accounts. I am an assistant professor at the Faculty of Languages, Art and Human Sciences, University Hassan I, Settat, Morocco.