

CHAPTER 1

Literary Depictions of the Moor, Travel Writing, and the Maghreb

Many critics have explored the implications of cross-cultural contact on the configurations of self and alterity in travel writing in relation to colonized areas such as the Middle East, India, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.¹ However, despite the rich persistence of depictions of North Africans/Moors in literature from the Middle Ages to the present, there has been little analysis of their appearance in European travel literature of the nineteenth century. Similarly, primary texts by North Africans that also document cross-cultural encounters between North Africa and Western Europe, written in Arabic, have been neglected by both Arab and Western scholars. More often, this part of the Muslim and Arab African world has been assimilated into studies focusing on works from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, or the Middle East in general without regard to regional, historical, and political specificities of the Maghreb region.

In this chapter, I discuss how theoretical approaches taken by orientalist scholars, such as Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, have systematically alienated consideration of the Maghreb as both unique and important from discussions of both the place of the Arab-Muslim in the Western imaginary and in relation to developing political and ideological tensions throughout the nineteenth century. The seminal works of these critics, written decades ago, have remained central to contemporary understanding of the nineteenth century and have helped perpetuate the elision of North Africa into the larger region of the Middle East. I argue that we need to expand current conceptions of the East to include the status of the Maghreb as a liminal space, neither Eastern nor African; such a shift encourages a more nuanced understanding of persistent ideological tensions that continue to haunt modern cultural relations between West and East, between Christianity and Islam. Due to the multiplicity of ways in which cultural relations are fashioned, not simply

through political diatribes and religious rants, but through depictions of cultural and religious “others,” understanding the broader context of such representations is important to better grasp the perniciousness of racism, intolerance, and postcolonial imperialism that continue to plague us today.

Positioning North African Travelers and Their Writings

Nineteenth-century Moroccan intellectuals, such as those examined in this study, strenuously resisted adoption of a metropolitan-based perspective that privileged European ideas of progress and development. Rather, through engagement with Europeans at home and through their own travel to metropolises such as Paris and London, these men developed, and then articulated, a modified understanding of modernity by defining their own, and their culture’s, subjectivity. Through writing, they offered readings of their own cultural and religious traditions through a process of comparison, explanation, and engagement with European culture. As a whole, their works provide an often neglected view of this period of colonial expansion and cultural contact. Not surprisingly, most histories of the period, and likewise the study of its popular literature, such as travel writing and illustrated journals, reflect a European perspective. As historian Edmund Burke III notes, “colonial history was a product of its sources (which privileged European over Arabic sources), but even more it was the manifestation of a particular time, and a particular view of the world.”² I argue here that the Eurocentric perspective has always been challenged by Moroccan writers who, through their writings, reveal an engagement with various facets of European culture. These works document dynamic negotiations with the ideal of European “modernity” from the parameters of their own historical, religious, and social particularities. However, many such texts remain untranslated and understudied, thus leaving an absence in our understanding of multiple perspectives concerning the reality of cross-cultural contacts in this period. In light of this, my discussion of two untranslated Moroccan works, and a revisit of one available in English, provides crucial insights to our understanding of East–West, as well as perceived Christian–Muslim, relationships in the nineteenth century.³

Conventional readings of Arab relations with Europe in the nineteenth century need to adjust their *mashriq*-centered⁴ focus by

including articulations from the Maghreb in general and Moroccan travel writing in particular. A central text for the analysis of Arabic travel writing is Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's *Arab Rediscovery of Europe* (1963; 2011), in which he designates the writings of Egyptian traveler and writer Rifā'a Bey al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801–1873) as the originary moment for the tradition of travel writing in Arabic in the nineteenth century. With the exception of a brief consideration of Khayr al-Dīn al-Tūnisī's (1822–1890) *Aqwam al-Masālik fi Ma'rifat Aḥwāl al-Mamālik* (*The Straightest Road to Knowing the Conditions of States*, published in 1868), Abu-Lughod's analysis of travel writing in Arabic centers on writings by travelers from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. The comprehensive scope of his project is impaired from the beginning by his privileging of the Egyptian–Syrian experience of Western culture. In essentializing Arabs' awareness in terms of the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt and its Syrian connection, Abu-Lughod dismisses the history of the rest of the Western Arab world as peripheral and relatively insignificant. He does not discuss Morocco, Algeria, and Iraq, all of which had significant political and cultural contacts with Europe in the nineteenth century. His generalizations also elide other historical events and cultural experiences as he broadly claims, for example, that “several centuries of isolation, staticism, and decay had brought Islamic society to a nadir by the eighteenth century.”⁵ Here, he commits a theoretical error by failing to delineate the significant differences between the Islamic and Arab worlds, which are far from conterminous in this period. Though he ascribes a period of isolationism and staticism to the Islamic world, this statement effectively ignores not only Morocco, where the geographical and political situation was different from the rest of the Islamic world, but other territories that fall far outside the region of the central Middle East.

Morocco, for example, had never been a part of the Ottoman Empire, but Abu-Lughod regards the Turkish rule of the Arab world as the main backdrop of his historical grounding of the situation. The fact that Morocco had continually been involved in military engagements with most European countries—mainly Portugal, Spain, and France—conflicts with the claim that the Arab world was a uniform and undifferentiated society that was “blithely unconcerned with the bursting energy of a dynamic and expanding Europe.”⁶ Equally inconsistent is his selection of Turkey as a primary contact zone with the West on the grounds that it lies in “close proximity to that bubbling cauldron” of European culture.⁷ Such a statement ignores

other key points of contact and ignores considerations such as the interaction coming from and with Spain and Portugal in the West, in North Africa. Some Moroccan and Algerian coastal towns, for example, had been occupied for centuries and others intermittently fought over. Likewise, others, such as Tangier, Morocco, had long had European residents, especially since the seventeenth century. In North Africa, Morocco was among the last countries to fall to European colonial enterprises and during most of the nineteenth century it practiced a studied policy of pacification and moderation, pitting the English against the French and the Spanish in order to maintain its own sovereignty, which it lost in 1912 and only regained in 1956. Central to this policy were the political and ambassadorial emissaries that different Moroccan kings sent to both France and England to help negotiate and settle complex political and economic issues. The reports that some Moroccan members of these missions wrote testify not only to a rich record of cultural exchange but exemplify modes of discourse and paradigms of representation that informed a decisive moment in the history of the encounter between the West and the Arab world.⁸

Equally dismissive of the history of North African travel writing, Nazik Saba Yared in *Arab Travellers and Western Civilization* (1996), follows Abu-Lughod's Egypt-centered analysis as she regards Napoleon's Egyptian campaign as a determining moment that led to the student missions of the Egyptian Muhammad Ali. The practice of giving young Arabs Western education was later developed with the creation of Western missionary schools "established throughout the Ottoman provinces, particularly in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine."⁹ One significant exception to this *mashriq*-centered approach is Husayn Nassār's, *Adab al-Rihlah* (1991).¹⁰ Besides providing a bibliography of Moroccan travel writers, he admits that the western wing of the Arab world outdid the eastern wing in the number of ambassadorial accounts (44). Unfortunately, this work has not been translated into English and thus remains inaccessible to non-Arabic-speaking scholars of travel writing.

The geographical proximity and the intense nature of Moroccan-European contacts and friction calls for consideration of the multiple ways in which Arab consciousness has been configured in specific cases. Zaki M'barek underlines this point in his introduction to the Moroccan text, al-'Amrāwī's (also spelled: Lamraoui) *Tuḥfat al-Malik al-'azīz bi-Mamlakat Bārīz* (1989). He claims that eastern Arab intellectuals have lacked interest in the literature produced by Maghrebi

thinkers and cites many studies that purport to speak for the general Arab cultural field, but which then ignore North Africa's contributions.¹¹ He incorporates the view of the Algerian 'Abd al-Malik Murtād, who sees a pattern in the *mashriq*'s deliberate dismissal of the Maghreb, even as the latter insists on being heard and represented.¹² The irony of this situation cannot be overstated since the "Moors," along with the Turks, were, during many centuries, the most visible icons of the Arabo-Islamic culture for Europe. In his book *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (2000), Nabil Matar observes that from the Elizabethan period and throughout the seventeenth century, Britons from the British Isles entertained extensive relations of commerce and diplomacy with the "Barbary States" (North Africa), which complemented the knowledge amassed through books about Islam and the Arabs. Matar examines the linkages in discourse and rhetoric between the British exploration of the New World and their concurrent involvement with the Turks and the Moors. Already in 1585, before Sir Walter Raleigh's first project of settlement in Virginia, the Barbary Company was set up to boost trade with Morocco, which had existed since the 1550s.¹³

More recently, Roxanne Euben has taken on the task of addressing the subject of Arab travelers to the West in her book, *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge* (2006).¹⁴ She provides a deep theoretical analysis of motivations for travel in the Islamic world, yet covers a broad period of time and discusses some of the most well-know travelers, including Ibn Baṭūṭa, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, and Sayidda Salme (1844–1924), daughter of the first Omani Sultan of Zanzibar. Thus, while her work places these Arabic writings in conversation with Western works including Herodotus, Tocqueville, and Montesquieu, its breadth necessarily suffers from lack of depth, based on either historical or geographical specificity. Whereas Euben's book comparatively explores the theme of journeying for knowledge in a transhistorical context, from the Greeks to the contemporary time, I examine the construction of modernity through a synchronic paradigm that focuses on narratives written in the second half of the nineteenth century by Moroccan and European travelers. In addition, I explore how the views articulated in Moroccan texts in the nineteenth century continue to inform contemporary conceptualizations by contemporary intellectuals and thinkers concerning the interpretation of tradition, reason, Islam and Western modernity in Moroccan and Arab political Islamic thought. One of the insights of this analysis lies in the dialogical manner in which these narratives

by Moroccans and Europeans are put in conversation around the issue of modernity during a time of high Western imperialism. Through a close analysis of the Moroccan responses to European culture at that time, I am able to trace genealogical links between the current formulations about the compatibility of Islam and the West to earlier positions analyzed through the texts of al-Fāsī, Al-Ṣaffār, and al-'Am-rāwī. My argument also situates the problem of modernity through travel narratives by Europeans and Moroccans at a decisive historical and sociocultural juncture to identify the foundational themes in the relational constructions of modernity, which are relevant for a fuller understanding of contemporary debates about the compatibility of Islam and the West and are at the center of present-day controversies about Islamism and secularism in the Maghreb and the Arab world.

Theorizing Liminality

Analysis of cross-cultural encounters as depicted in travel writing also requires a clearly defined theoretical approach and a well-conceived analytical model of interpretation. Cultural production in the colonial site is more complex than a standard dichotomous logic alleges. The colonial site is, as Russell Berman points out, “a site, indisputably, of conflict and violence but also one of contest, exchange, negotiation, hybridization, and change.”¹⁵ Displacing the logic of binarism enables us to reveal the constant constructionism at work in cross-cultural representation. Since the subject of discourse is continuously constituted in a highly unstable site of intercultural exchange, I adapt and redefine Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of transculturation as a manifestation of this liminal space that inhabits the “in-between” position and is thus subject to the economy of hybridity. The colonial setting is a site of destabilization where metropolitan hierarchies and hegemonic values are transvalued. The transcultured perspective appears in the discursive negotiations of conflicting ideas that draw on different registers and whose temporary reconciliation signals the anxiety inhabiting the ideology of imperialism. I find Pratt’s close analysis of this feature in Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior of Africa* relevant to my critical investigation of reciprocity as “capitalism’s ideology of itself.”¹⁶

In examining the constitution of modernity in these texts, I adapt Pratt’s notion of transculturation in order to describe the Moroccan recreation of certain European situations in terms borrowed from

their indigenous culture. I look at the processes and negotiations of cultural practices and customs from the perspective of transculturation. As defined by Mary Louise Pratt, transculturation is associated with ethnographers who “have used this term to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”¹⁷ She uses it in conjunction with the term *contact zone*, which refers to “the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”¹⁸ Applied to the Moroccan-European context, Pratt’s concept of transculturation highlights also the resistance of the peripheral perspective that revalorizes local Moroccan customs and contests aesthetic and cultural practices of the dominant culture and reinvents them from its own perspective. As a conceptual frame, this perspective engages other productive tropes in the domain of postcolonial studies that go beyond the dichotomous models of self/other.

Commenting on the rampant crossing and invasion of identities in nineteenth-century travel literature, Robert Young wonders why, historically, “comparatively little attention has been given to the mechanics of the intricate processes of cultural contact, intrusion, fusion and disjunction.”¹⁹ The trope of hybridity is critical as it functions on different levels. On the one hand, the cross-cultural encounter is hybrid by its nature since the terms of the binary equations of colonizer/colonized, traveler/natives, and African/Oriental are concurrently destabilized in European writings through the deployment of motifs that discursively clash in the text. On the other hand, Morocco provides a pertinent terrain for the celebration of hybrid figurations that concern geography, people, and culture. Even in relation to the Near Eastern cultures, it occupies a liminal location in which, according to Edmund Burke III, “Mashriqi Arabs, confident of their historic primacy and cultural superiority, regard Maghribi Arabic as incomprehensible, maghribi intellectuals par trop franchise, and Maghribi history as inalterably other.”²⁰ This liminality is perpetuated even in Western academia, where African studies “has tended to see its terrain as Africa south of the Sahara, ‘black Africa’ as opposed to ‘white Africa.’” Despite the fact that two-thirds of all Arabs live in northern Africa (Egypt and the Arab Maghrib are each one-third), Burke points out, “Maghribis have long been regarded by U.S. Arabists as ‘not quite Arabs,’ spoiled by colonization and the *mission civilisatrice*.”²¹ Morocco thus inhabits an in-between space that

draws on, but resists being fully consumed by, essentialisms evoked by the European, African, and Arab cultures.

In approaching the Moroccan corpus in chapter 2, I also draw on Hans George Gadamer's notion of "expressive dialogism," which implies a strong emphasis on the value of dialogue for ontological constitution.²² The subject is constituted through the communal and the dialogical, in the sense that he continually negotiates his relationship with his community or tradition in addition to the intersubjective dimension of interaction with the 'other' cultures. The question of dialogism involves both the subject's awareness of the effects of belonging to a community or a tradition as well as the implication of his interaction with other subjects/cultures. This dialogical social ontology is premised on the existence of a horizon for a true historical interpretation. As Gadamer points out, "a person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him[her]."²³ He connects the acquiring of a horizon to a complex perspective that looks "beyond what is close at hand not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in a truer proportion."²⁴ Gadamer's notion of dialogism also allows me to identify the degree of resistance to and reconciliation with Western culture by adapting the notion of "horizon" to account for the Moroccan travelers' conceptualization as well as interpretation of the nature and dictates of tradition.

Horizon can be explained in terms of sensitivity to the differences between the past and the present (or, alternatively, between what is foreign and what is familiar). Rather than the foregrounding of the new over the old, the Moroccan writers display a varied degree of latitude in reading the constraints and dictates of their culture and tradition. Encounters with tradition result in either the reassessment and reinterpretation of the latter in the light of historical context, such as with al-Ṣaffār and to a certain extent with al-'Amrāwī, or keeping it unexamined and assigning greater importance to it in the intercultural reading, such as with al-Fāsī. Moroccans are in dialogue, therefore, not only with the West, but also with the indigenous culture and its symbolic capital (the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition) and representative symbols (the sultan as caliph).

I here reposition the work of Pratt, Gadamer, and Bhabha in light of the historical specificities of these contacts and bring together the insights of the theoretical articulations of these critics in order to evolve my own critical apparatus. My analysis focuses on the dialogical dimension of Moroccan texts as they engage the defining tropes

of modernity and progress. This trajectory seems almost absent from most studies of Arabic travel writing; such studies often interpret travel writing in essentialist ways that generally emphasize fascination with and laudatory praise of the West. Moreover, in the Moroccan texts, responses to and figurations of European culture tend to vary depending on the historical context and the intellectual and ideological affiliations of the travelers. Al-Ṣaffār's open-mindedness and negotiatory dynamism is unique. Similarly, both al-'Amrāwī's and al-Fāsī's texts are equally unstable, despite their condemnation of the French and British on religious grounds. Both assess technological progress and metropolitan organizations within a more comprehensive framework that places importance on human values and moral conduct. Examples like the problematic of disguise of Loti or the Janus-faced perception of Perrier point to the fluid texture of these accounts, which call for a critical model that allows the contradictory cultural significance of these performative sites to emerge.

The Moroccan corpus provides a space to inaugurate other temporalities and reflect critically on how other histories compete with the metropolitan ones. The theme of reciprocal perception is inscribed in interculturality as a trope that undoes the binarism and challenges the colonizer/colonized dichotomy. Al-Ṣaffār reconfigures the Arab-Islamic tradition that has fallen into obscurity under the effects of colonialism both in the ways he intervenes in the discourse of modernity and social order and in his covert critique of the home culture. In a certain sense, the intercultural process, as Abdellah Mdarhri Alaoui affirms, aims to “démonter les intégrismes culturels hégémoniques, l'uniformisation stérilisante d'origine aussi bien occidentale que musulmane” (“take apart the hegemonic cultural fundamentalism, the sterilizing uniformization of origin that is as much Western as Muslim”).²⁵

In the French and British corpora, discussed in chapters 3 and 4, I use Homi Bhabha's notion of ambivalence to explore the interstitial space I identify as a moment of instability in the discourse.²⁶ In constructing Moroccan culture as premodern or in commenting on its obsolete political system, the texts rely on discursive strategies and imagery that reveal the influence of orientalist desires and fantasies in rendering Moroccan culture. In the British corpus, I emphasize how the writers represent the theme of emancipation, which draws on the ideology of evolutionary thinking but collides with the intransigent rhetoric of the category of race as a central component in European cultural definition.

HISTORICAL INTERACTIONS:
FROM ANDALUSIA TO THE BARBARY STATES

Before tracing the image of the Moor in literature, it is important to have a general understanding of the historical interactions between Europe and North Africa, interactions that set the stage for incursions of the nineteenth century. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Morocco was subjected to continuous attacks from Iberia by both Spain and Portugal. Several towns, particularly coastal strategic military positions, were besieged and occupied by Portuguese and Spanish forces. The Portuguese dominated the Atlantic coast in towns like Essaouira, Agadir, Salé, and Tangier, while the Spanish sought dominance in towns on the Mediterranean coast such as Ceuta and Melilla. At the time of the Turkish expansion in the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, the Iberian crusade spirit centered on the Maghreb. After the expulsion of almost all Jews and Arabs from reconquered Spain in the late fifteenth century, the balance of power shifted irrevocably. The formerly dynamic relationship became polarized during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the Spaniards reestablished their political and religious dominance on land. On sea, it was a period of high piracy and corsair activity, often located along the Barbary Coast. Though the participants in these interactions were mostly Iberians, many Northern Europeans were also placed into captivity and the importance of this phase in the interaction between Europe and Morocco in terms of ideological depictions is reflected in European literature that deals with the sufferings, negotiations, and subsequent return home of captives as depicted in captivity narratives.²⁷

Such onslaughts deepened the schism between the world of Islam and that of Christian Europe. In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese army experienced a disastrous defeat in Morocco, in the battle of the Three Kings in 1578, also known in Arabic as the battle of *Wād al-Makhāzin*. This battle, during which Sebastian, Mohammad al Mutawakkil and 'Abd al-Malik died, marks the start of the waning of Portugal as an imperial power and the resurgence of national pride and confidence within the Maghreb. This confidence led to an increase in corsair activity by Moroccans in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic.

Though moments of cooperation between Morocco and certain European powers were usually economically or politically motivated, they often needed to be theologically justified to a general European public imbued with popular images of fierce Barbary pirates. The

tension between cultures was often, perhaps unavoidably, placed within the larger discourse of religious tradition as these literary texts draw on legacy, as far back as the Middle Ages, outlined in legal writings such as those of Alfonso el Sabio in the eleventh century. In these texts, prescriptions and rules were designed and set out regarding when and how interaction between Muslims and Christians was permissible or should be considered necessary.

Yet, economic concerns remained a significant arbiter of social and religious prohibitions and led to additional political problems within the Maghreb itself. At the end of the eighteenth century, corsair raiding waned as Europeans tightened the rules of maritime trade and found in the previous piracy history of “Western Barbary” a pretext to bring about the dismantling of the Moroccan naval fleet.²⁸ The cessation of maritime trade and the closing of ports was a determining factor in the drop of revenues, one which would result in the weakening of makhzan²⁹ power and lead to repeated popular uprisings and revolts in Morocco. During the last days of the reign of Sultan Mawlay Sulaymān (ruled 1796–1822), public opinion saw in his willingness to export cereals to France and in his dismantling of the Moroccan navy, an official abandoning of *jihād* and a concession to the European “disbelievers.”³⁰ From this native perspective, it then became easy for the populace to explain the outbreak of epidemics and famine between 1818 and 1820 as manifestations of divine retribution for the makhzan’s policy of engaging with the French.³¹

As the scale of power tipped in favor of the Christian West, the Moroccan intelligentsia felt the need to both adapt to and explain these new inequalities of power and dominance. The exchange of emissaries became a substitute for religiously sanctioned military *jihād*, since the Muslim nation could not afford to fight, but could negotiate. The 1820s saw the rise of European involvement in North Africa as signaled by the colonization of Algeria as well as the economic and political decline of Morocco. Morocco had always suspected that the French had their eyes set on Morocco after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. The French landing in Algeria in 1830 signaled the end of a period of quasi-isolationism for the Maghreb. It also marked the beginning of a new era politically, socially, and culturally, as the Moroccan government now had a French-controlled Muslim nation, Algeria, as a neighbor. Morocco’s involvement with the Algerian problem began with the help given by the next Moroccan Sultan, Mawlay ‘Abdurrahmān (ruled 1822–1859), to Emir Abdelkader (‘Abd al-Qādir), the Algerian rebel leader who

had organized armed resistance against the French since 1832. The importance of the religious dimension of this support is well documented in both European and Moroccan historiography.³²

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Morocco enjoyed political and territorial sovereignty, which did not formally and officially end until it was declared a French Protectorate in 1912. Nevertheless, the whole region of the Maghreb had been subject to European imperial hegemony and its gradual colonial penetration and control. The French conquest of Algeria signaled the arrival of a colonial enterprise far different from previous Spanish and Portuguese incursions. French political will and military might would consolidate their colonial interest by the end of the century with the annexation of Tunisia and parts of eastern and southern Morocco. In designating the pre-Protectorate era as precolonial, most studies tend to lessen the importance of early penetration of the French and British in the region and thus to equate colonialism with the formal taking over of the local government. In my analysis of travel literature from both sides of the Mediterranean, I argue that popular literature, as seen in travel literature, reveals the growing tension that informed the long preparatory phase in the precedent forms of annexation and territorial aggressions. Specifically, the hegemonic posturing associated with colonial attitudes and imperialist outlooks dominated French and British representations of Morocco. Informed by established literary stereotypes of the Moor and enhanced by the assumed more “objective” and “scientific” nature of empirical observation and personal witnessing afforded by the genre of travel writing, European writers such as those studied here, helped consolidate public support for high imperialism in the Maghreb.

Literature, Travel Writing, and East–West Relations

The Moroccan perception of European culture(s) has a long ancestry that dates back to the Middle Ages and contests Bernard Lewis’s claim that there was “a complete lack of interest and curiosity among Muslim scholars about what went on beyond the Muslim frontiers in Europe.”³³ These interactions were not only inflected by political and religious strife and dissension but also punctuated by periods of mutually beneficial trade and intellectual exchange between the Moorish kingdoms and various European nations. However, out of the long period of contact between Morocco and Western Europe, a persistent image that dominated discursive constructions of

Moroccans by Europeans continued to be the premodern figure of the “Moor.” This character, a crucial iconic representation of the Arab-Muslim encounter with the West, has no Middle Eastern equivalent.

Contact between peoples of Europe and North Africans dates back as far as the first century A.D., when Roman settlers occupied the Mediterranean coasts and early Christians, many of them Donatists, set up monasteries and churches across the vast territory of North Africa—settlements that extended from what is today Morocco (then known as Tingitaniae) to Egypt. These settlements hugged the coastal regions populated by Amazigh (“Berber”) communities that stretch from the Atlantic and Mediterranean littorals from the west and the north to the desert oasis and Sahara tribes to the south. The next thousand years saw the fall of these Roman settlements as Islamic revolutions gained political and religious dominance through this region, eventually conquering Visigoth communities in the Iberian Peninsula. Subsequently, Arabs held sway in Iberia for over seven centuries, living with and often dominating other cultural groups such as Berber tribes, Jewish communities, and Iberian Christians. The Moroccan empire, led by various tribes of the Maghreb, promoted Arabic and Islamic culture; nonetheless, it also developed its own unique cultural identity and sense of aesthetics, which often blended the traditions of the varied cultures within its realm, especially those of native Berber tribes and others coming from the Mediterranean and West African regions. The presence of the Moorish empire in Europe stretched as far north as Navarre, where it came up against French forces. This western Islamic dynasty slowly lost territory and power, a process that culminated in the fall of Granada in 1492.

The impact of these relations appears in medieval textual legacies in both poetic and narrative genres. The geographical proximity to and interactions with non-Muslim populations in Andalusia and other parts of southern Europe from the eighth through the fifteenth century shaped the perception of Christian Europeans, providing a panoply of images of the Moor/Andalusian long before the fall of Granada. Moors, both wicked and redeemed, appear in Medieval literature, such as in the epics and *chansons de geste*, where they were often valiant knights, though inferior due to their “heretical” beliefs, as well as in later romances and poems in various languages.³⁴ In the French tradition, the most lasting images appear in the *Chanson de Roland* (*Song of Roland*, mid-twelfth century), which tells of the fight for Spain, led by the French peer Roland, against the Saracen King Marsile and Baligant, emir of Babylon. On the defeat of the Moors, Bramimonde,

queen of Zaragoza (Saragossa), comes to represent the defeat of the pagan religion (Islam) as a whole when she converts to Christianity at the court of Charlemagne. Also from the twelfth century, the poems associated with the Guillaume d'Orange cycle, in particular, the tales of the *Conquête d'Orange* and *Aliscans*, provide lasting images of both noble pagan knights and fair Saracen princesses. Even comic representations emerged, as exemplified in the thirteenth-century *chante-fable* *Aucassin et Nicolette*, in which the wise Saracen slave girl/hidden princess Nicolette vows to wed her beloved Aucassin despite the objections of his father. In the Spanish tradition, the *Poema del Mio Cid* remains the most famous depiction of Christian–Moorish relations, though following centuries provide numerous revisions of the image of the Moor through the genre of frontier or Moorish ballads that address relationships between Moors and Christians.³⁵

As the Andalusian Empire declined, culminating in the aforementioned fall of Granada at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabelle, descriptions of North African Arabs and Berbers appeared in other narrative genres such as the picaresque novel and the captivity narrative. Perhaps most famous is the influence that captivity in an Algerian prison, lasting five years, had on Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes, whose works, including *El Trato de Argel* (*Life in Algiers*, 1581–1583), *La Galatea* (1585), and *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (*The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda*, 1617), reflect his trials and experiences. Captivity narratives, with their generic and discursive similarities to travel writing, continued to reach a wide reading public through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with works reflecting captivity at the hands of North African corsairs. Themes and narratives about the captivity of Europeans displaced the medieval image of the Moor as a powerful knight with that of the Moor as a vicious pirate.³⁶ This corsairing activity, which dominated the foreign and diplomatic politics of Morocco with Europe, led to the “popular view that North African history from the sixteenth century through the Napoleonic era is primarily, if not exclusively, that of the corsairs.”³⁷ Though the adventures and the misfortunes of the corsairs and their victims provided fodder for dramatic accounts and political pleas, outside the world of writing, the period was marked by significant political and diplomatic interactions, such as the cooperation among the Moroccan court, Dutch pirates, and government representatives, especially from England, who came together to counteract the growing offensives and domination of the Spanish.

In Elizabethan and Renaissance drama, the image of the Moor underwent further alterations that reconfigure the racial stereotype of its African origin and combines it with moral and psychological degeneracy. According to Jack D'Amico, "The Moor as villain becomes a convenient locus for those darkly subversive forces that threaten European society from within but that can be projected onto the outsider."³⁸ This marks a significant difference from representations of Eastern Arabs in that North Africans came to be seen as markedly darker and often more savage in nature than their more refined Eastern cousins. Perhaps most famous is Shakespeare's *Othello*, though the Moor also appears in the *Merchant of Venice*, George Peele's *The Battle of Alcazar*, and in Restoration poetry.

In the eighteenth century, the image of the Moor is assimilated back into the larger cast of Eastern characters associated with the fantastic realms of *A Thousand and One Nights*. In her seminal work on oriental literature in eighteenth-century France, Marie-Louise Dufrenoy regards Antoine Galland's translation of this text as the turning point in providing oriental fiction with the store of its imaginative material.³⁹ She quotes the following statement by Dr. J. C. Mardrus in describing the work's ability to reflect the Muslim world: "Le monde musulman Sunnite tout entier, de Damas au Caire et de Bagdad au Maroc, se réfléchissait enfin au miroir des Mille et une nuit" ("The entire Sunni Muslim world, from Damascus to Cairo and from Bagdad to Morocco, sees itself reflected within the mirror of *A Thousand and One Nights*").⁴⁰ In the French and British travel accounts studied here, the world of *A Thousand and One Nights* intersects with that of the Moor and its varied figurations. By the nineteenth century, images of North Africans and Eastern Arabs would become stock characters of exoticism and opulence.

Travel Writing and the Arabic-Muslim Tradition

I have outlined above, though in a limited way, how interactions with Morocco and North Africa were depicted in literature and popular culture. This discussion has privileged the European position with which readers are generally familiar. However, as suggested in the earlier brief discussion of travel writing in Arabic, cultural and military interactions were also depicted in Arabic literature not only from the area of Andalusia and during the Medieval period (a period known as *convivencia* for its unique tolerance of cultural and

religious diversities), but in classic Arabic narratives depicting both geography and cultural experiences related to travel to both Muslim and non-Muslim lands.

In the Maghreb in general, and in Morocco in particular, travel literature has been a popular genre since early medieval times. Its development followed at least two major traditions. This mode of writing flourished through the accounts that pilgrims wrote about travel to the Hijāz (a region in the west of present-day Saudi Arabia), describing the countries they visited and the religious practices, social and political events that pilgrims witnessed during the Hajj or pilgrimage journeys to Mecca. This type of travel was highly regarded by the Muslim community and recommended by religious authorities because it helped solidify the identity of the Muslim. It also became strongly affiliated with accounts that are generally known as *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik*, a compilation of descriptive facts and details about the geography, roads, trading posts, and political and urban centers that the traveler would visit as well as of interactions with those people the traveler would encounter. This connection between a type of early travelogue and religious pilgrimage is made explicit in the introduction to the eighteenth-century travel account by Muhammad ibn 'Uthman al-Miknāsi *al-Iksīr fī fakāk al-Asīr*,⁴¹ where he suggests that the genre of travel was originally closely associated with the work of famous Arab geographers like al-Idrīsī.⁴²

While the travel accounts based on religious pilgrimage depict travel within the Islamic world and thus emphasize certain concerns specific to spiritual development and purification rituals, the proximity of Morocco to Europe and the long history of contact between its central governments and other Western courts were major factors in the development of a second type of writing known as ambassadorial travel literature. Accounts in this category are either records of an emissary's impressions of a country and events observed during his trip or special reports by special secretaries or envoys who accompanied the official embassy. In Muhammad al-Fāsī's reckoning, no one in the Arab world wrote as many travel accounts as Moroccans did, most since the beginning of the Saadi dynasty (Sa'diyyīn) period (sixteenth century).⁴³

Unlike other Arab countries in the Near East, such as Egypt or Syria, in which travel literature developed as a result of organized scientific and educational missions to Europe,⁴⁴ or personal passion for exploration,⁴⁵ most travel literature by Moroccans since the eighteenth century has been strongly marked by its association with

official court life. Said Bensaïd Alaoui underscores historical and geopolitical reasons for the flourishing of this form of travel writing when he emphasizes the unique geographical location of Morocco as the closest Arab-Muslim country to Europe and as a nation independent from the regents of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶ These factors rendered contact with European powers essential for the survival of the Moroccan regime and led to extensive and continuous ties with the West. As an example, the travel account of al-Miknāsi in 1779 to Spain illustrates another facet of the Arab encounter with Europe, one that describes the liberation of Muslim captives, as opposed to Christians, a situation that was almost nonexistent in the Eastern Arab region. It also highlights piracy as a pivot point of the relationship between the Maghreb and Europe for at least three centuries. Since the sixteenth century, Morocco had acquired a reputation as one of the powerful corsair countries in the region and was constantly engaged in warfare and military conflicts with most of the European powers. Travel literature of that period, like al-Miknāsi's, still reflected a certain self-confidence and pride that would disappear from travel literature written in the nineteenth century after Morocco witnessed a series of military defeats.

Both of these forms of writing manifest the concept of *rihla* in its epistemological and spiritual dimensions. Arab-Muslim culture has a long tradition grounded in the notion of religious *jihād*, which should not be understood reductively as an armed struggle undertaken for religious freedom.⁴⁷ It is extremely important to recall this specific epistemic formation since most of the ambassadorial and captivity-related missions were conceived as examples of this "religiously" sanctioned form of exchange and "dialogue" with the non-Muslim world.⁴⁸ If we consider the ways in which travel has continually been associated with hardship, we will be able to understand the relevance of the concept of *jihād* to Moroccan travel to Europe. This explains the referential framework according to which the world is divided into the *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-kufr*, respectively meaning "the House of Islam" and "the House of Disbelief" or of "infidels."⁴⁹ Therefore, on a theoretical level, likely contradicted by many lived experiences of many Muslims, any mixing with non-Muslims constituted an arduous test and a spiritually challenging experience that a Muslim would undertake only in situations of emergency or in the service of safeguarding the integrity of the "Muslim nation" in its largest sense. These considerations help explain the need for the prefatory discourse placed at the beginning of most Moroccan travel accounts

of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵⁰ These sections generally provide political and historical information that underscored the official character of the trip and its pragmatic nature. They also invoke Islamic tradition in order to show how these trips are compatible with the core tenets of Islam and often locate their works in a type of literary genealogy of works that have come before the current one. Such references can also be made obliquely through the mimicking of style or content written by earlier writers or by citing canonical texts or authors who confer cultural authority such as Ibn Khaldūn.

In the following chapter, I further develop the relevance of *jihād* in the context of the ambassadorial missions undertaken by Moroccans during the middle of the nineteenth century and provide analysis of the travel narratives that record these missions in the context of modernity, religion, and the distance between Moroccan and European cultures at this juncture. Not surprisingly, the rise of European imperialism in general coincides with an increasingly entrenched image of North Africa as a potential space for colonization in popular writing. As we will see, many travel accounts define Morocco as a colonial space due to the specific historical, political, and cultural hegemony exercised by France and England as well as the series of encroachments on Moroccan territory by both French and Spanish military aggressions.

This potential for a colonial relationship becomes clearly defined after 1830, the year the French moved into Algeria. According to the Moroccan intellectual Abdeljalil Lahjomri,

C'est, bien entendu, à partir de l'expansion coloniale européenne, et surtout de la première moitié du XIX^{me} siècle que la France, en convoitant les richesses et les possibilités d'un certain nombre de pays, a entrepris une lutte politique et militaire pour dominer l'Afrique du Nord. 1830, date qui annonce au monde, par la prise d'Alger, l'intérêt que la France porte au Maghreb.⁵¹

[It is well understood, starting from the European colonial expansion, and above all from the first half of the nineteenth century, that France, while coveting the riches and the possibilities of a certain number of countries, undertook a political and military battle to dominate North Africa. 1830, (this is) the date that announced to the world, by the taking of Algiers, the interest that France had in the Maghreb.]

Admittedly, the Battle of Isly in 1844 and the Spanish occupation of Tétouan in 1859 are military manifestations of a protracted process that sought to impose European economic and political hegemony on the Maghreb. When all is taken into consideration, the whole constellation of economic, political, and social factors of the Moroccan-European engagements at the time reflect a polarized relationship between a colonizing center and a dominated peripheral site with all the accompanying elements of that colonial situation. The conquest of Algeria brought Morocco within the colonial scheme of Europe in general and France in particular. These events also provided material for artistic productions, especially for the theater.⁵² In the realm of painting, Eugène Delacroix discovered in Morocco the locale and the cultural setting that would make of him one of the central figures in Romantic paintings, which would be propagated all over the Western world and offer his Orient to them. As Lahjomri notes,

A la suite de la prise d'Alger (1830) et de l'insurrection d'Abdelkader, qui trouve soutien et aide au Maroc, après les bombardements de Tanger et de Mogador (1844) en représailles contre ce soutien, après la bataille d'Isly, Napoléon Carpentier, Rousseau Des Roches, Alexis Belly, Victor Berard, Louis Clairville, Charles Didier écrivent des œuvres et surtout des pièces de théâtre qui, comme l'affirme R. Lebel avec satisfaction: "mettent en scène un Maroc sans doute de fantaisie, mais *chatouillent agréablement nos fiertés nationales*."⁵³

[Following the taking of Algiers (1830) and of the insurrection of Abdelkader, who found sustenance and aid in Morocco, after the bombardments of Tangier and of Mogador (1844) in reprisal against this support, after the Battle of Isly, Napoléon Carpentier, Rousseau Des Roches, Alexis Belly, Victor Berard, Louis Clairville, Charles Didier wrote literary works, and above all theatrical pieces, which, as R. Lebel affirmed with satisfaction: "Dramatized a Morocco, without a doubt as a fantasy, but one which agreeably tickled our national pride."]

These literary and artistic productions and performances contributed to the dissemination and popularization of recycled images from the medieval and early modern lore that continued to feed on and animate the travel narratives of French and British travel writing in the nineteenth century, as they deploy multiple imperial perspectives and a colonialist range of concepts.

In juxtaposition to the European travel narratives, the corpus of Moroccan travel writing that I analyze in the next chapter is made up of three texts written between 1846 and 1860. All of them come in the aftermath of major military conflicts: the Battle of Isly (1844) against the French and the Spanish campaign of Tétouan (1859–1860). Al-Şaffār's travels in France in 1845–1846, published by Susan Miller as *Disorienting Encounters* (1996), is a detailed record of the author's participation in the embassy of 'Ash'ash, the Moroccan king's emissary, to France. It provides a detailed description of Parisian social life, its political system as well as its cultural institutions.

Tuhfat al-Malik al-'Azīz bi-mamlakat Bārīz (1860) is the detailed account of Idrīs ibn Idrīs al-'Amrāwī's embassy to France in 1860, in the immediate aftermath of the Moroccan–Spanish war. The official purpose of the mission was to secure France's support for the conclusion of a peace with Spain as well as to seek advice about raising money to pay indemnities for the Spanish government in order to regain control of Tétouan and its environs. Al-'Amrāwī's description of French society reveals a more antagonistic and critical perspective, which is evident in his engagement with facets of French lifestyles through which Moroccan culture is revalorized. Although impressed by the modernization and urban organization in France, he finds the French lacking in moral values, which he illustrates through his critique of their liberal attitudes toward sex and their lack of control over their women.

Al-Fāsi's *al-Riḥlah al-Ibrīziyyah ilā al-Diyyār al-Injlīziyyah* (1860) was written and released as a manuscript at the same time as al-'Amrāwī's. The narrative describes his journey to England and his recordings of the sociocultural life of London. Although no mention is made as to the purpose of the mission, it has been argued that the embassy had the same purpose as that to France, namely the securing of Britain's support in Morocco's conflict with Spain, and the payment of Spanish indemnities, and consolidation of diplomatic ties. Unlike the two previous Moroccan texts, this account is informed by the author's more religiously conservative and traditional outlook. The industrial and urban culture of England is described with wonder but it is dismissed as inimical to Muslim faith. Through analysis of these works, and the subsequent juxtapositioning of them with both French and British travel narratives, I follow in the steps of Euben in terms of placing Western and Arabic texts in conversation; this adds to our understanding of the dialectic of East–West and Muslim–Christian culture, while focusing on the historical and cultural specificity of the Moroccan context in a limited period of time, the second half of the nineteenth century.