The Representation of Yemeni Culture in Early 20th Century British Travel Writings

Bandar Mannaa[1] and *Naima* Benlarabi[2]

[1] A doctoral Student at Faculty of Languages, letters and Arts

[2] A Professor at faculty of languages, letters, and Arts

Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra-Morocco

ABSTRACT: The present article seeks to analyze the representation of Yemeni culture in early 20th century British travel writings. It questions the British travel writings as merely stereotypical texts or regard them as vital historical documents. This article also tries to locate different themes that have been deploying by British writers in the respective period. The chosen works are by Harold Ingrams (1937) and Freya Stark (1948), which have shown different features about the relationship between Yemeni culture and the British attitude. I used the post-colonial theory and Orientalism as approaches to analyze the works under examination. In the analysis, I argued that a writer's choice for language and content entails a lot of differences, which reflects the location of Yemeni culture in the eyes of the Western encounters, particularly British travelers' accounts. Finally, I revealed how two writers have portrayed Yemeni culture, its land, people, and presented diverse images of Yemen to emphasize my assumption that British travel writings on Yemen are both diverse and complex in their representation.

Key words: The representation, British travel writings, Orientalism, Yemeni culture.

1- INTRODUCTION

Since childhood, I have spent a long time thinking, like other people, about the true meaning of the phrase "Al-Saeedah" or "Arabia Felix[1]", as Romans and Greeks described Yemen in their ancient writings. I wonder why giving such a name to a country that had not savored such "happiness" for centuries. In fact, Yemen was the center of civilization and wealth on the Arabian Peninsula for ages. Classic Greek and Roman historians depicted it as a land of prosperity and wealth, using the phrase Arabia Felix to refer to its material wealth and strategic geographical location. Because of its fertility and its trade prosperity, Yemen was a home to several great ancient kingdoms; for that same reason, it was popular in ancient times as Arabia Felix or in Latin 'Fortunate Arabia'[2] to

[1]Arabia Felix**,** (Latin: "Happy, or Flourishing, Arabia") in ancient geography, the comparatively fertile region in southwestern and southern Arabia (in present-day Asir and Yemen)

[2]Playfair, Robert L. *A History of Arabia Felix or Yemen: From the Commencement of the Christian Era to the Middle of the sixth century*. Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970. P 2

distinguish it from the vast forbidding reaches of the Arabia Desert.

Later, Yemen was the place where coffee consumption used (Arabic Qahwah) to support (religious chanting) by Sufis before even the fame of coffee plants were known in other parts of the world. The latter, leads to huge international commerce of coffee around the world. Coinciding with the rise of the ancient civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and along the Mediterranean Sea, Yemen became a crucial overland trade link among civilizations. Consequently, many pre-Islamic trading states grew up astride, an incense trading route that ran northwest between the foothills and the side of the desert. In addition, it was the source of precious stones, incense, and mastication. However, this positive reputation in ancient times has eclipsed after numerous crises that Yemen went through its long history. First, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire during World War I and the withdrawal of the Turkish army out of Yemen, the country was governed by isolationist Imams until the establishment of the Republic on 26 Sept. 1962 supported by the Arab Egyptian army, under the leadership of Gamal Abdul Naser. This Arab presence had directly led to the liberation of South Yemen, on 30 Nov. 1967, making an end to 129 years of British occupation. Second, the Arab defeat of June 1967 and the withdrawal of the Egyptian army from Yemen, the country became a hot point of the Cold War in the region and it could not be said that it was totality isolated. Third, the Unit that was achieved on 22 May 1990, and what followed that up to the Arab Spring.

However, in recent years, Yemen was almost very isolated from the world due to internal political war and economic crises, which has led to a lack of knowledge regarding Yemen. Nowadays, the negative image of Yemen has been widespread. It is mainly due to misleading media broadcasts on the East and Arabs after the 11 of Sept. Such misrepresentation has overlapped with the historical records of Western writings in the colonial and post-colonial eras. Apparently, the Yemeni legacy, particularly during the Greek and classical Roman periods, has been forgotten. With the current negative-positive Western discourse on Yemen overlapping with the reality portrayed by European travel accounts, particularly British ones, this study seeks to uncover such representation(s) by focusing on British travelers' accounts from the early 20th century.

Long before the colonial era, Yemen, both land and culture, has titillated Westerners. Many travelers, writers, and anthropologists like Carsten Niebuhr, James Welested, Walter Harris, and others have made Yemeni traditions and civilization the main objects of their works. During

the period of Western industrial growth, several Western writers portrayed Yemen from colonialist perspectives. Yemen represents a good example of Arab countries that were the object of British travel narratives, especially during the British colonization of Southern Yemen. The British multiplied their travels to Yemen and began the rivalry for its colonization.

Since the European geographical discoveries in the 15th century, and throughout the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, up to the industrial revolution in the 19th century, Europeans have reckoned themselves as 'civilized beings' as opposed to Arabs. In this regard, due to their access to scientific, political, economic, social, and military development, Europeans have enjoyed power and supremacy, which they would exercise over their colonies. This power will not only be limited to military and warship monopoly, but it will be also exercised through huge literary productions that describe the Arab world such as Yemen, the case of this study, from an Orientalist point of view.

2- BACKGROUND

Going back to some historical reviews of the literature written about the representation of Yemen in British travel writings, we find that political, economic, and religious motivations are various pretexts that legitimize the British representation of Yemeni people in different cultural aspects. Their perception is vividly affected by the so-called '*superiority-complex*' as colonizers, powerful governors, and civilizers of the East and other parts of the world. Respectively, Westerns consider themselves white as opposed to Easterners, who are colored. In this vein, a significant figure of studies has been conducted on the representation of West-Arab encounters; however, the studies carried out on Yemen binaries from the last decades are comparatively very few. In fact, most of the studies conducted on the representation of Yemen are in the scope of Arabic studies (Bafakih, Mohammed, 1988; Shuja, Abdul Rahman, 1993; Holfritz, Hans, et al, 1986) with a total absence of English studies regarding the image of Yemen in travel writings.

Apparently, such situation has resulted in a shortage of academic and analytical studies that explaining the shaping issues before Arab Spring. Therefore, this study attempts to highlight the crucial cultural interaction that appeared at such a historical juncture by examining how both sides have become involved in the representing of the image of the "Other". This article will address the lack of academic interest by paying attention to both the Yemeni heritage and British travel discourses and discussing the manners in which

each world perceives the "other". Some British travelers had provided a negative image of the Orient to the Western audience in most of their representations. Those representations differ depending on the different perceptions of the writers and their origins. Therefore, the idea of representation emphasizes itself as an indicator that defines people's culture.

Massoud Amshouch, who is specialized in comparative literature and cultural studies at Aden University, offers various readings of western accounts about Yemen through different times. In his book *The image of Yemen in the writings of Westerners "Studies in the representation of the other*[3], he focuses on the representing of Yemeni culture in Western writings, precisely, European travel accounts. The study contains an introduction that reviewed the French trend in the first half of the twentieth century in comparative literature widely for a new field of research. It deals with studying the image of people and countries in the writings of the "other". He tackles the position of Yemeni women in European writing as victims of social customs, ignorance, economic and conditions within patriarchal traditions. The second part revealed the technical and fictional dimensions in the image of Yemeni women and the role of Western feminist discourse in shaping this picture positively or negatively. Also, Amshouch focuses on the image of Yemen in the thoughts of the German traveler Hans Helfritz, in which he included various social, cultural, artistic, and economic aspects of life in Yemen at that time.

In the same vein, Ahmed Kayed Al Saidi argues in his study *Yemen in the Eyes of Foreign Travelers*[4], those travel writings portray Arab negatively in most of their works. He presents many western books that dealt with Yemen and offers a vision of Yemen through trips and memoirs. In Al Saidi's view, the writings have gotten rid of many of the methodologies of Orientalism and traditional approaches; the shortcomings of which reinforce the other "non-European" as primitive and Berber, particularly assessing their speech on this basis of their colonial authority. Despite the importance of these studies, they are confined to a limited range due to the poor translations since it was difficult to analyze the Western discourse about Yemen in an extended paradigm. In other words, there was no connection to the reality that Yemen has sensitive cultural features. These features were almost absent in the abovementioned studies (Amshouch, Al Saidi) as they tackled some European accounts ambiguously

[3]Amshūsh, Mas'ūd. Ṣūrat Al-Yaman Fī KitābātAl-Gharbīyīn: Dirāsāt Fī TamthīlAl-Ākhar. 'Adan: DārJāmi'at'Adanlil-Ṭibā'ahwa-al-Nashr, 2010.

[4]Al Saidi ,Kayed .Yemen in the eyes of foreign travelers. Sanna:DarJamiatSannaLilNashr, 2009.

in the sense they neglected some small cultural trails that travelers talked about in their accounts.

On the other hand, travel to discover Yemen by Europeans back to the early sixteenth century when Ludovico Di Varthema, an Italian traveler, visited Yemen and published his book in 1510 before two hundred and sixty years of Carsten Niebuhr and the Royal Danish Expedition to Arabia (1761–1767). From then on, Yemen was the heart of trade, especially coffee and spices, which made it a place of competition by European powers. For example, Denmark and Portugal sailed off the Yemeni coast and found fierce competitors in the Othmans (G Hogarth, David, 40). The British joined the competition quite late, but with imperialist policy, which eventually led to colonization. However, the British joined the competition quite late, but with imperialist policy, which eventually led to colonization. The archaeologist David Hogarth mentioned it on his account[5]:

> *The new berry, first mentioned by European writer in 1592, grew so rapidly in favor that the trade of Yemen came to be desired equally with the trade of India; and a new competition for it appeared presently in the shape of the British East Indian company, which sent Captain Sharpey in the ship "Ascension" to the Red Sea in 1609. (40)*

This was the first encounter between Britain and Yemen. Yemen has a strategic location in the Red Sea trade since it has one of the important straits in the world. "Bab Al Mandab" which links the Red Sea with the Arab Sea. Eventually, British travel writers became more interested in discovering an unfamiliar country. However, the actual travel journeys coincided with the existence of the occupation. In 1839, Southern Yemen officially became under the British Mandatory, which opened the appetite of travelers in Yemen to write about their adventures. -

Edward Said's Orientalism has left a significant stamp on the history of post-colonial studies. This extremely debatable work has had an ongoing impact on related disciplines in humanities and social sciences. Post-colonial theory, postcolonial studies, anthropology, history, women's writing, tourism, geography and travel literature have all been influenced by Said. His work is an attempt to combine Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, in the sense of the relationship

[5] Hogarth, David G. *The Penetration of Arabia: A Record of the Development of Western Knowledge Concerning the Arabian Peninsula.*

between knowledge and power, and Antonio Gramsci's conception of political and cultural hegemony. Within these two frameworks, Said approaches Western writings, especially British and French, on the Orient from the late 18th century onwards. Western writers, travelers and politicians, who wrote about the Orient are considered to be Orientalists; thus, what they produced is a discourse of Orientalism. In what follows, I will provide a succinct account of Said's argument regarding Orientalism according to what he mentions in his books and other critiques or reviews.

Ultimately, I will discuss British travel narratives and their relation to the 'Orient' focusing on the articulations of colonial discourse on the one hand, and documentations that belong to the cultural and historical archive of both Yemen (the Orient) and Britain (the West) on the other. This study also focuses on the contribution of depicting the portrait of cultures and nations, under the notion of 'self' and 'other'. Therefore, it tries to explore how the selected works under scrutiny procreate and implant the image of 'the other' within their historical developments.

3- METHODOLOGY

The present article is a critical review of British writings about Yemeni culture during the colonial era (1839-1967). Therefore, I will use postcolonial theory to analyze the documents under scrutiny shedding light on the notion of colonial discourse and the interrelation between the 'colonizer' and 'colonized'. I will also use Orientalism as an approach to investigate the representation of British traveler's accounts about Yemeni cultural aspects; more precisely, the notion of the 'Otherness' between the West and East or the 'Orient' and 'Western'.

ARABIA AND THE ISLES BY HAROLD INGRAMS

The book is a diary of Harold Ingrams[6] during his stay in Yemen in 1934-1944 He was a British colonial leader who worked in the Aden Protectorate, Mauritius, and Zanzibar. He is best known for his project in Mukalla, where he resided with his wife Doreen. He also was an army colonel

[6] **Biographical history**: Ingrams, William Harold (1897-1973) Born 3 February 1897, son of Revd. W.S. Ingrams. Educated at Shrewsbury School. Served European War, KSLI, 1914-1918. Asst District commissioner, Zanzibar in 1919; 2nd Asst Sec., 1925; Asst. Col. Sec., Mauritius, 1927; Acting Colonial Sec., Jan.-May & Aug. 1932-April 1933; Political Officer, Aden, 1934; British Resident Adviser at Mukalla, S. Arabia, 1937-1940; Acting Governor of Aden, 1940; Chief Sec. to Govt., Aden, 1940- 1942; Resident Adviser Hadhramaut States and British Agent E. Aden Protectorate, 1942- 1945; Asst. Sec. Allied Control Commission for Germany (British Element) 1945-1947; Chief Commander of Northern Territories, Gold Coast during 1947-1948; Mission to Gibraltar, 1949; to Hong Kong, 1950, to Uganda, 1956; Adviser on Overseas Information, CO, 1950-1954. Editor of "Commonwealth Challenge" and "If you ask me", 1952-1966; Joint Research Dept, Foreign and Commonwealth Offices, 1966; retired in 1968. Married, 1930, Doreen Short (1906-1997): 2 daughters. Died 9 December 1973. Retrieved from https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/MEChandlists/GB165-0156-Ingrams-Collection.pdf

in the Hadhramaut region, where he mediated the "Ingrams' Peace" truce between feuding tribes.

> *It is not for me to write about Colonial policy and I do not propose to attempt to do so. But at the same time, I have an idea that at a moment when our enemies blackguard us daily about the races who "writhe under our yoke" it is not a bad thing to tell the story of an attempt to carry out the policy of trusteeship and of teaching people to govern themselves in a corner of the world which is mostly desert and in which we can have no material ends to serve. A lot of nonsense has been talked about "Imperialism" and the word has been given a meaning of exploitation of backward races. I do not think anyone will be able to find much about exploitation in the story of the Hadhramaut and I have not found it anywhere else in the Empire. I should not be in the Colonial Service if I had. But I am quite certain I am an Imperialist and equally certain that the vast majority of the Arabs in the Aden Protectorate. Because we all believe in belonging to an Empire which runs itself on a basis of the mutual interests of all who belong to it*[7].

[7] Ingrams, William H. *Arabia and the Isles*. London: Murray, 2010. P xii

Ingrams' motives to travel to Yemen were politically driven. His expeditions to various parts of the country were either to explore or to reach a deal with tribal sheikhs in order to maintain peace among tribes. From Edward Said's perspective, this is a form of western political indoctrination of the East, that is vividly expressed in Ingrams' words '*the policy of trusteeship'* and *'teaching people to govern themselves',* albeit he denies at first the idea of colonial policy. Moreover, the stereotypical view of the Orient as uncivilized and exotic from a western perspective, especially British, is clearly pointed in Ingrams' orientation as he states *'corner of the world which is mostly desert'.* This notion seems to segregate the East from the West under the umbrella of 'superiority complex'. This depiction puts more emphasis on the negative representation of the Orient and reinforces the authority of the West as more civilized.

Aside from the Orientalist perspective, Ingrams rejects the notion of 'imperialist mission within the Empire', which, in his words, even the Arabs themselves serve the same purposes of interest. In this way, according to Homi K Bhabha's approach, such a form of the British conquest of Yemen is not of colonial hegemony; but it is rather a hybrid context between both encounters under the notion of Empire, that is marked in Ingrams' words. He also rejects the false interpretation of imperialist

exploitation in the story of Hadramout and favors a form of co-existence between both encounters based on the sense of mutual interest.

The above passage gives the reader an idea about Ingrams' ideological stances; it is open to interpretation from both an Orientalist perspective and a post-colonial one, particularly Bhabha's approach, as I have explained. Thus, Ingrams' contribution to peace treaties between tribes, particularly diminishing racial clashes, gives authentic value to his intervention that starts from colonial service indirectly, and ends with setting common grounds for a new 'civilizing mission'. The first explicit initiation to racial differences is seen while mentioning the narrator's reaction towards the appearance of people within the first glimpse. Ingrams show the negative insinuations of the Arab race that is, from the narrator's point of view, but a substitute for primitiveness and ugliness incarnated in Arabic personality. Their perception is vividly affected by the so-called 'superiority-complex' as colonizers. Respectively, the Westerners consider themselves as white as opposed to Easterners, who are colored. He notices:

> *As far as I remember, it was the camels, the brightly-clad Arabs with their long curls, strange gutturals, and wild eyes like those -of freshly-caged beasts in the Zoo, which principally appealed to me. (84)*

In this passage, Ingrams tackles the physical aspect; he describes the shape of the Arabs and compares their bodies to Zoo animals, '*like those-of freshly-caged beasts in the Zoo',* and this comparison is made in order to create a vivid picture in the reader's imagination. In this context, the body in the Western discourse about Arabs plays a dominant role, precisely the representation of women and Bedouin, since it is reckoned as an object of examination and an aesthetic instrument of misrepresentation. It gives the reader hints that the first impression of the writer is negative, tending to the preconception of the western mindset, since centuries of cultural conflict and misrepresentation of Others. Although Ingrams was in Zanzibar and Mauritius, in official missions and had contact with Arab traders, especially Swahili, he maintains Western the same view towards the Arabs.

What is compelling here is not just a matter of appearance difference that underpins this text, but rather the theme of 'Otherness'. If we consider, for example, sentences such as 'Arabs with their long curls,' we will never understand why Europeans deliberately show such things in their writings. The idea of differences between

'Europeans' and 'others', which elapsed in the Middle Ages until the 17th century, was solely driven by religious dichotomy, as Said argues. While in the 19th century, they were akin to establish new civilization and breaking the edges of races, which resulted in the same century, until the beginning of the 20th, in the creation of a new political mapIngrams also mentions Yemeni women, describing their clothing, complexion, and demeanor. He claims that Yemeni women, in general, cover their faces, with the exception of older women, who wear a unique type of veil embroidered with a gold border. He explains their garments as follows:

> *In this town, as in Mukalla, all the women, however poor, are veiled, and even young children drew their head veils in front of their faces as we went past. The poorer women wear a cloak which falls from the top of the head almost to the ankles at the back and, leaving a hole for the face which is covered by a thin veil, falls to just below the knees in front. (157)*

In this regard, we see the most 18th and 19th-century writers looked at the Orient through the Thousand and One Nights or Arabian Nights. Many writers did not make their accounts on an informational basis; rather, they produced literary imaginations. The female stereotypes and the presentations of feminine (Oriental) sexuality and the 'Harem' of Arabian Nights had an important effect on the writers and readers of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, in the early 20th century, Europeans became more aware than before of the reality of the Orient.

The above passage by Ingrams can be interpreted as stereotypical stances about Yemeni Women; but in fact, he just conveys the real situation of those women regardless of its consistency to provide a holistic view. Thus, the veil has been used more than anything else in the construction of the Oriental woman. Fascinated by the fact that she hid something behind or within her clothes, thus Orientalist writers targeted the veil as their primary subjects. Moreover, the use of these themes expanded as a cliché colored, as it were, by stance defamiliarization, i.e. the intertwine thread between real and imagined has become unclear.

However, regardless of Ingram's position in the colonization authorities, as an imperialist writer who served as a British commander of the army[8], a reader can admit that Ingrams had had the ability and the competence to understand Yemeni culture and the complex tribal system. In February 1937, a peace between the Hadramaout sultanates, the Qu'aiti and Ali bin Mansur al Kathiri and their tribes, unprecedented in the history of that region,

was brought about essentially by the efforts of two men: Sayyidi Abu Bakr al-Kaf and Harold Ingrams, the first political officers in Hadramaout. Such peace was knowing universally thereafter as "Ingrams Peace" (Smith, G. Rex 40). Ingrams describes people's need for peace in the following lines:

> *Everywhere outside Mukalla, I was begged to stay in the Hadhramawt, because I think they believed I could give them peace. Very often there was the suggestion, "if you do not stay something else must happen." This was a strong undercurrent which was not immediately apparent on the surface. I never anticipated such wide anxiety for me to remain in the country. When I passed through Seiyun for the first time since my return and halted in the marketplace talking to people in .the crowd, an old man came up and said to me: "Is it true that Ingrams is coming. (271)*

Yemen is a tribal society in which most of the people live in rural regions. The sovereignty of tribes is apparent in the lack of state control in tribal areas. Yemen is also a multi-layered tribal society that is prone to a variety of forces between the traditional and forms of government (Sultanates). In fact, tribalism has often been an effective and enduring source of non-stability in Yemen since tribes have endless conflicts. In this regard, the official mission of Ingrams was to make peace among feuding tribes; it took him almost two years to achieve such a goal. The main aim was to configure stability and secure the route, which was a serious problem for the colonization authorities. Notably, tribal chiefs are local rulers that often have more say in the everyday lives of ordinary people than Sultanates at that time. Tribal heads can maintain this power in part because they are themselves, government representatives, and religious guides. Gayatri Spivak argues that Western discourse approved the 'justification of imperialism as a civilizing mission'.(Spivak 271-313)The concept of 'civilizing mission' is based on the premise that the people of Arabia needed to be enlightened and raised from their misery. In this regard, the notion of colonialism as a 'moral obligation' to expand Western civilization, appearing long before imperialism, was defined as such. Elsewhere, in his account, Ingrams confirms that he was more than an individual traveler; rather, he was taking up his government's political agenda regarding interference in the area. In other words, the colonized role is to change his condition by

altering his shape or by mimicking the colonizers' behavioral characteristics; then by learning the language of the colonizer or by educating himself in the knowledge of the colonizer. With the intention to draw himself closer to the master, the colonial subject becomes separated from his unique culture and its traditions. He can associate himself neither with the colonizers' identity nor his own and eventually becomes a hybrid person. Therefore, he becomes separated from his "true" self and finds himself torn in the 'gap' between the colonizer and the colonized. As Bhabah argues:

> *It is true for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place. 'It is always in relation to the place of the other that colonial desire is articulated; that is, in part, the fantastic space of possession' that no one subject can singly occupy which permits the dream of the inversion of roles. (117)*

Bhabha here makes an essential element to define human subjectivity, that is the mirror image. The colonized has been set in place of the subject that the colonizers desire him to imitate their style in life. The colonized forms a mirror in the place of the colonizer where he sees his image. To gain the power of the colonizer and to fulfill his desire, the colonized mimics the colonizer. However, unfortunately, the colonized can't attain the position of colonizer because of the gap between the positions of the colonizer and the colonized. The gap mirrors reality, which creates barriers for the colonized ones to be like colonizers.

However, Ingrams elsewhere shows respect to people's local culture and their choices of imitating what they think is peculiar to Yemeni society. Here we can notice that the text has been written with credible intention even if Ingrams served in colonial authority; he maintains the spirit of people's freedom for reproducing some cultural aspects of a specific frame, which serves their interest. Ingrams states regarding the Arabs' architecture style:

> *It is the Arabs themselves, who, with Arab eyes, are seeing what other countries produce and copying what they think worth copying. They may hit it off wrongly, but gradually innate instinct will lead them right and they will produce something worth looking at. It seems to me that no one can help them with this. (204)*

The construction of a new style of buildings by the colonizers has been considered by the post-colonialists as a direct distortion of a great cultural heritage, but the colonizers reckoned these new constructions as an "act of human solidarity" order to modernize and disseminate a new civilization. In fact, the colonizing powers masquerade under the pretext of reformation to gain strength over the colonies. This point entails the notion of hegemony that is exerted on the Yemeni people. According to Antonio Gramsci, hegemony is an integral form of class rule, that exists not only in political and economic institutions but also in social activities[9]. In other words, the fundamental power of the ruling class holds a specific ideology that can serve their imperial plot to convince the lower class (Yemenis) that their interests resemble the whole community as a win-win affair. Therefore, people can believe that reformation is beneficial, and the colonizer' purposes are to protect and civilize them. Instead, they were trying to abolish a whole civilization for the sake of gaining strength. Thereby, Said claims that the result of cultural hegemony gives Orientalism durability and strength. To be more explicit, the colonizers try to attribute to the natural resources, cultural heritage, and knowledge because the more a country possess the knowledge, resources, and civilization, the more powerful it becomes.

Representation here remains an essential method of defining a people's identity. Stuart Hall defines it as a 'process of fixing meaning throughout a shared conceptual map and practically by way of language in its wide meaning'. (Hall 11) Simply put, members of a specific environment produce meanings over people and objects according to their ideology, understanding, beliefs, and customs. They share a fixed meaning over a phenomenon and transmit it to their descendants within the same culture. For instance, this contradiction of Arab regarding the practice of their religion gives the reader a sense of the reality of this feature of the Arabic character; yet, it is not generalized to all characters. Thus, the absolute delivery led to the confusion of faith and application.

In this sense, many travel writers base their representations of the places they visit on their cultural backgrounds. They view them from a given misconception already held in their country using the stereotypes and prejudice rooted in power, ideology, and discrimination. However, some travel writers are not too extreme in their negative representations; but they make little exceptions when they come up with allusive interpretations of the subject matter, which is

[9] Retrieved from http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-gram.htm accessed 8 May 2021

eventually the oriental community. Ingrams also revokes the Bedouins' personality, trying to claim that they were "hot-blooded" and that even the tiny incident could spark a fight, and quarrels were common. However, such a feature may not have been unique to the Bedouins of Hadramaout at the time, as Yemen was rife with tribal wars and feuds, as Ingrams himself notes.

By contrast, I would not claim that Ingrams planned this splenetic picture of life in Yemen to show the 'superiority of his culture. As we accepted the idea of self-cultural criticism as one of the significant themes in the Western discourse on the Orient, the same concept should find its position in our reading of this discourse with self-criticism. At the same time, one cannot minimize the significant contribution made by Ingrams, who witnessed the traditional Yemeni customs and wrote about them besides his contribution to making peace among tribes. His description of the superstitions of Yemen is free from prejudices or unpleasant words.

Nevertheless, Ingrams, like Walter Harris and Freya Stark, could not withdraw using imperial discourse where politics were included. Having held the position of military governor of Wadi Hadramaout and the counselor to the Sultan of Mukalla, he was hostile to tribes that opposed the regime and British intervention. With such imperial discourse, he justifies the bombardment on 'Al Jabir' (Ingrams291) houses and their inhabitants. However, the reason was basically related to robbery and plunder in routes.

To sum up, the complexity of British travel texts discussed in this text is also apparent because Ingrams is, thematically and stylistically, heterogeneous. We have seen his achievements in documenting and describing Yemeni culture and heritage and his fascination with native hospitality and tolerance, but this is not the whole image. In this sense, travel writers who include such peculiar descriptions in their travelogues intend not only to attract western readers but also to depict the 'other' as a different and weird creation. Ingrams, particularly, was concerning with attracting readers, not only by relating strange events about the Bedouins or the tribesmen but also by using irony in his descriptions.

A WINTER IN ARABIA BY FREYA STARK

The book is half-journal and half-diary recounting Freya Stark's[10] second trip to Arabia. She traveled to explore and document pre-Islamic

[10] **Freya Stark**, in full Dame Freya Madeline Stark (born Jan. 31, 1893, Paris, France—died May 9, 1993), a British travel writer who is noted for two dozen highly personal books in which she describes local history and culture as well as everyday life. Many of her trips were to remote areas in Turkey and the Middle East where few Europeans, particularly women, had traveled before. Retrieved from: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Freya-Stark accessed, June 2019

ruins (in the 1930s) in the Arabian Peninsula as part of the archeologist's team under the auspices of the Royal Geographic Society. Stark was accompanied by two other women: a game geologist and an archaeologist uninterested in the locals or their customs but in monuments.

In addition, the book, especially the diary section, focuses on many cultural and religious observations about life in Hadhramaut. The following passage is a case in point:

> *The Orient does not get much done; it looks upon work as a part only and not too important a part at that of its varied existence, but enjoys with a free mind whatever happens besides. The Occident, busily budding, has its eyes rigidly fixed on the future: Being and Doing, and civilization, a compromise, between them. There is too little of the compromise now. Too much machinery in the West, too little in the East, have made a gap between the active and contemplative; they drift ever more apart.*[11]

Here, Stark emphasizes the notion of East and West, that are considered by culture, literature, and philosophy as the two essentially different types of worldviews and social structures. Stark's point is to show the different scope, which embraces the oppositional space between the Arabic East and the European West; this is commonly labeled as the clash of civilizations. However, in the period of colonization, the features involved in the encountering of two completely different worlds and their cultural meetings appear simultaneously in literary texts. Indeed, European travelers produce literary discourses that appeared the theme of the encounter between East and West. As a result of the Western colonial policy, which created the entire system of the European envision about the Arab world, thus producing wrong stereotypes, and therefore, tries to execute its imperial policy.

Further, Stark reflects how the Arab community enjoys every moment in life, depicting images of their mindset at that time; she reasonably, considered the Arabs as people who enjoy their time in any given situation; the Arabs are contented and satisfied with their life as it is. For them, simplicity is one of the key conditions

[11] Stark, Freya. A Winter in Arabia. London: Murray, 1948.p43

that can lead a person to happiness. An illustration of this point is given as follows:

> *Small boys lost their feet and flew about like a football. They were all in holiday mood and cheerful, and when I looked up from my photography and smiled, the phenomenon was greeted with shouts of joy. (62)*

Stark highlighting the difference between the Yemenis and the Westerners' way of life. She believes that the Arabs may be happy even with the smallest things as she mentions that "Dates" satisfy the Hadramis as opposed to westerners who are always seeking material luxury, even though they are unsatisfied with their life. This conclusion appears to be the outcome of the writer's long observation of Wadi Hadramaout.

In this respect, Stark is best known among the early female writers who recorded the life of Oriental women. She is also distinguished as one of the remarkable travel-writers of the 20th century traveling among Yemeni tribes delving into the tenets of their culture. Indeed, her journey is still recorded as an outstanding explorer of the East, especially her challenges as she traveled comradely alone throughout Hadhramaout without guards. Regardless of the main reasons mentioned elsewhere in the book, Stark states her motives to travel in the East as the following:

> *Here on my bed, wondering why I come to these disastrous lands when I have a comfortable home of my own, I can find no better answer than that old one. I reached the East with the mere wish to know more about the world we have in. But I suppose that now many other reasons have added themselves: partly that it is easier to think in this simpler atmosphere, partly that one would like to add some small arch to the bridge of understanding between East and West…. (130)*

It is noticed here, in Stark's words, that a personal interest constantly derives her from targeting the East, particularly the Arab Peninsula, as the best example for discovery. Stark finds many motives to travel in Yemen. Thus, such eagerness for travel emerge only when the trip becomes one of the main conditions for attaining personal goals, so we can define that as an internal force that makes people put the deliberate effort to satisfy personal needs or to seek fame in specific domains. This shows that travel writing has not been initiated as a field aimed for specific missionaries but as a space for pleasure and passion for discovery, i.e. exploring different

lands and people; in this sense, travel narratives have always been related to personal needs, colonial power, and policies. Then, intertextuality is not newly born with Western travel narratives, from the 17th to the 20th century; yet, cases differ from one Spatio-temporal context to another.

In this regard, representation can no more be considered providing constant meaning, as representation depends on one's peculiar culture and linguistic background, let alone the gender of the writer; this representation underwent historical shifts through centuries. In this respect, feminist observation differs from a masculine perspective due to women were driving by sympathies. Stark has little knowledge regarding the sensitivity of Yemeni culture, let alone being a woman in a country in which women were controlling by patriarchal domination due to social instructions. Still, such stereotypical views decreased as she discovered the customs and rituals.

The life of the Hadramis woman has devoted a wide deal of attention to Stark's writings compared to the rest of the European travelers who wrote about Hadhramaut. Stark was a woman who managed to enter women's councils and engage at the heart of their life. For example, she depicts Yemeni women's clothing in Shibam as follows:

> *Husain's wife, her loose and flowery pink brocade tucked in a silver girdle, looked like one of those Egyptian heads painted on mummy cases as she sat with one knee up and one flat on the ground, attending to the tea. Her mass of small plaits was divided by a parting down the middle, and two subsidiary partings at right angles to it, one at the front and one at the back: from the front, one or two ringlets, not plaited, fall over her ears. I have counted 212 plaits on the head of a small girl. (37)*

In this sense, Stark can give a very depth insight into a part of the culture, which is nearly impossible for most foreigners to penetrate the hidden life of Yemeni ladies, who hide behind seals and a thick veil. She built strong relationships with women who were around her during the journey, then she succeeded in reducing the distance between two different cultures. On another perspective, Stark highlights hidden dimensions regarding the construction of Yemeni families, especially marriage-divorce relations, as is shown in these lines:

> *As we climbed the scree he told me his family affairs and how his father has now remarried his mother, long*

> *ago divorced. Forty-four other wives, which is the traditional number of a centipede's legs, have diversified the interval (90).*

The representation of Yemeni women in this passage demonstrates a deep knowledge of the general situation of women in a conservative society that imposes restrictions to reduce their freedom and limit their life orientation, including marriage choices as submissive to men's order. Stark also reported what she sees during her stay in Yemen, so we do not have to take for granted such matters, that gives a close image about complex make and rejection of Yemeni culture, which has been written with acute descriptions. However, these types of men are still present today among Arab and Yemenis.

Thanks to Stark's diplomacy, she was able to use her friends and others to achieve her goals and spend a large part of her life moving from one country to another despite her poverty. No doubt that the reasons for Stark's success in her exploratory journeys are her ways of dealing with the local population and her ability to weave excellent relations with Sultans, rulers, and merchants and learn how to address every one of them appropriately. On one of her trips, Stark met with Sultan Ali bin Mansour Al Kathiri, who hosted her at his summer house, "Villa Ezz El-Din" in Seiyun. Despite the lack of love for the West and Westerners, this British traveler was able to gain the sultan's trust and confidence thanks to her ability to find a several common points as she describes, "*I think he is not fond of the Europeans since he seemed not very pleased to see me*." Furthermore, Stark gives more details about the Sultan's character as she points out:

> *He is the religious ruler of this place, a descendant of the Converter of the Hadhraniaut, of the tribe of Qurcish. When he walks abroad, people kiss his hand as he passes. He has a manner of authority and looks handsome, his green turban wrapped around a grey skull-cap that matches his grey gown. (66)*

However, in the letter she wrote to her mother on the evening of her first arrival in Seiyun, she said: "Sultan Ali bin Mansour and his brother came to ask about me". In this sense, the Sultan, who favored of the traditional lifestyle, did not smile until Stark was assured of a common tendency between him and her. She told him that she prefers to live with the old and quiet way of life. Eventually, harmony was set between the sultan and Stark; throughout her stay in Seiyun, he came every morning to ask about her and eat his breakfast with her. Here, we can say that Stark

respects people's convictions to live; in turn, she could understand Yemeni culture and convey the reality even if it is not the whole picture. To put it in other words, such relationships promote the development of colonies in each location. It also reinforced the practice of colonial authority among the colonized. Stark reasonably, understands that the purpose of Britain‘s imperial mission was to bring civilization to the less developed people in the colonies. She also postulates that the adaptation of the Arabs of the new colonial lifestyle facilitated the 'civilizing mission'.

In the case of Stark, she is not an agent of imperialism perpetuating British colonial control over the Middle East. However, it does not mean that the credibility of her writing is misleading of the reality of Eastern cultures, but we can interpret her accounts according to cultural dimensions and not political ones. As a case in point, a woman in the imperialist society is tasked with creating humanity through gender representation and through the process of 'social mission' to civilize the Other. Similarly, when it comes to portraying women in the eyes of western thought, Spivak does not blame women for their complicity in imperialism, but rather explains their place in patriarchal society as impactful actors like any other.

4- CONCLUSION

British travel writings from the early 20th century present diverse pictures of Yemen culture, its people, and land. The methods that British travelers employed to represent Yemen are not tied to specific criteria as I propose but are much heterogeneous, ambiguous, and discontinuous as opposed to other Western/Eastern accounts. The diversity of Yemen's geography is reflected in Ingrams and Stark's accounts. The 'barren land' of Hadhramaut, for instance, is contrasted with the image of 'Arabia Felix' in the 'paradise' of Sheba or the fields of fruit trees and streams of water in the interior of 'Aden Tanks'. Yemen has been seen either as the ‘roughness country’ in the Middle East or the most picturesque place on the Arabian Peninsula.

The Yemeni people, on the one hand, have been portrayed as the cleanest, neatest, and most courteous of all the Arabs in the Arabian Peninsula, and on the other, as retarded and primitive people. Even the Bedouin himself is represented ambiguously in the British account on Yemen. The two travel writers idolize him as 'innocent'; while the other places depict him as 'savage' and ' barbarian'. I present these interestingly diverse images of Yemen to emphasize my hypothesis that British travel writings on Yemen are both diverse and complex in their representation. The latter does not only reflect Said's view of Orientalist as being

subjective to colonial hegemony but also could be tackled from other post-colonial orientations, namely Bhabha and Spivak's accounts. In this regard, the works that I have investigated offer a paradigm to reconsider Edward Said's project in Orientalism as a just form of colonial indoctrination. Arguably, in British travelers to Yemen, we have seen not only those who were fascinated by the life and culture of the Yemenis but also, and more importantly, those who criticized the culture of their societies, which gives a sense of self-criticism and awareness because of the intercultural relations between Yemeni people and British encounters. In fact, the latter does not reinforce stereotypical images of the Orient that are grounded from orientalist perspectives, but establish authentic historical records of the Yemeni culture at that time.

However, many things have contributed to the heterogeneity of British travel writings on Yemen, such as travelers' objectives, backgrounds, time of visit, peoples encountered, and the way of travel. This article shows how British travelers to Yemen were from different backgrounds; Ingrams was a government administrator who had experience in Mauritius and East Asia with little knowledge regarding Arabs, but it was clear that he had of traveling through Yemen as an administrator in Colonizer' authority. While Stark is a professional writer who, before she came to Yemen, had traveled widely abroad and published several travel accounts and books that dealt with Arabs. She is best known for her accounts such as '*Baghdad Sketches'*, *letters from Syria* and *East is West*. Travelers' purposes also contributed to the ambivalence of their attitudes to Yemen; in this vein, although Stark did not articulate her reasons for visiting Yemen, her texts and the directions of her journey give us some hints of the objectives. She was interested in scientific activities such as mapping and charting the hydrography of Yemen and more precisely, the route of incense, in addition to her depiction of the feminist trend in travel accounts.

Overall, British travelers to Yemen contributed to documenting everyday life in Yemen, specifically in Hadhramaut, in the early 20th century. In addition, the criticism of some cultural aspects of Yemeni culture should not lead us to underestimate the writer's efforts in describing what the Yemeni and Arabs that have been neglected in Arabic sources. I, myself, admire travelers' courage and patience in traveling through Yemen when the country in the 30s was in a difficult situation and tribal conflicts in its climax. Such journeys are marked with great bravery and challenge surrounded by tribal disputes, harsh geography, unbearable weather, let alone

differences in culture, language, and religion. As a matter of fact, it is worthy of mentioning here what British travelers themselves confess about the Yemeni people, who were free of xenophobia as they treated their British encounters with total tolerance and hospitality.

REFERENCES

1. Al Saidi ,Kayed . *Al-yemen fi Ain almsafron Al ajanib,*Sanna:DarJamiatSannaLilnashr, 2009.
2. Al-Taha, Muhammad. *The Orient and Three Victorian Travelers: Kinglake, Burton and Palgrave*. University of Leicester, 1989.
3. Amshuush, Masoud. Ṣuurat Al-Yemen Fī Kitaabat Al-Gharbiyin: Dirasat Fī TamthīlAl-Ākhar.'Adan: DārJāmiat'Adanlil-Ṭibā'ahwa-al-Nashr, 2010.
4. Ed. Hall, Stuart. Representation: Cultural Representations and signifying practices. London: The Open University,1997
5. Playfair, Robert L. A History of Arabia Felix or Yemen: From the Commencement of the Christian Era to the Middle of the sixth Century. Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970. P 2
6. Homi ,Bhabha,The Location of Culture London: Routledge, 1994.
7. Hogarth, David G. *The Penetration of Arabia: A Record of the Development of Western Knowledge Concerning the Arabian Peninsula.*
8. Ingrams, William H. Arabia and the Isles: By Harold Ingrams. New York: F.A. Praeger, 1966.
9. Said, Edward. Orientalism London: Penguin Books, 1995.
10. Spivak, Gayatri C. Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism. Feminist Reader : Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism. (1997).
11. Spivak, Gayatri C. Can the Subaltern Speak? Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988.
12. https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/MEChandlists/GB165-0156-Ingrams-Collection.pdf accessed, June 2019
13. http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-gram.htm accessed, June 2019
14. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Freya-Stark accessed, June 2019