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The Colonial Mother and the American Other in Mohamed Hassan al Hajwi's *The European Journey*

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ABSTRACT

Drawing inspiration from postcolonial theory and Marxist criticism, this article analyses Mohamed Al Hajwi's perception of France in his travelogue, Ar-Rihla al Urobiya *(1919),* The European Journey. *The travel account initially celebrates France's technological progress and modernity, highlighting its influence on Al Hajwi's reform project for Morocco, modelled after the French system. Within this narrative, France assumes the role of a benevolent colonial power within the imperial trope of a protective maternal figure. However, this celebratory discourse undergoes a gradual erosion and eventual subversion as Al Hajwi encounters the American Other during his travels in France. His discovery of America's formidable military prowess and its role in World War I shatters his confidence in France's supremacy, leading to a profound shift from admiration to disillusionment. Towards the end of his journey, Al Hajwi unveils the crisis and inherent vulnerability of France and Europe, underscored by war, labour strikes, and shifting global realities.*

Key Words: Admiration, America, Colonialism, Disillusionment, France, Moroccan Travelogue, Occidentalism.

During the summer of 1919, Mohamed Hassan Al Hajwi visited France as a member of the Moroccan diplomatic delegation dispatched by Sultan Moulay Youssef to Paris to attend the Victory Celebrations, commemorating the end of World War I and the triumph over Germany. Al Hajwi chronicled his travels in his *Ar-Rihla al Urobiya* (*The European Journey*), the first Moroccan *rihla sifariya*, ambassadorial journey, to be composed during the colonial period.

Ar-Rihla al Urobiya not only chronicles al Hajwi's European experiences but also reflects his Occidentalism, marked by a profound fascination with French civilization, modernity and technological achievements. Moreover, the account showcases the author's sincere desire to convince his fellow compatriots to recognize the greatness of France and, consequently, accept its influence and presence in Morocco. In this respect, al Hajwi reminds us of the American writer and traveller, Edith Wharton, who undertook a visit to Morocco in 1917, following an invitation from the Resident-General of the Protectorate, Louis Hubert Lyautey, to celebrate and exalt French accomplishments in Morocco, while also seeking to persuade the global audience about the French civilizing mission in North Africa, as illustrated in her travelogue *In Morocco* (1920).

1. PARIS THE CROWN JEWEL OF CAPITALS

As in the case of Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*, al Hajwi's *European Journey* demonstrates a fascination with France's culture and civilization. For him, the French are the paragon of elegance and taste. His representation of the greatness of France is more particularly manifest in his description of the Parisian Grand Hotel, the place of residence of the Moroccan diplomatic delegation. Al Hajwi is impressed with the grandeur, elegance, and luxury of the Grand Hotel, presenting it as a symbol of French modernity and sophisticated urbanism. He writes,

> If you enter from the hotel lobby you find on your right a large hall with a coloured glass dome, in it coloured lamps in the form of the evening sky with its stars. And in that large space are tables, sofas and seats, and soft chairs to sit on, relax, converse and socialize and drink what you want to buy. And there is an area for music available every afternoon to the evening, at mealtime and after, and there are three pots in it. It looks as if you were in a Riad. (Al Hajwi, 2004 : 58)

The traveller's eye is delighted with the combination of colours, architectural design, and green plants. He is equally fascinated with the splendid hotel lighting. "All of the sections of the hotel" says al Hajwi, "are illuminated by electricity. In the room where I was staying, there were twelve electric light bulbs, some equal to a hundred candles, others to fifty." (p. 60)

The Grand Hotel is equipped with two lifts that "go up and down, which are called *ascenseur*. They go up with the hydraulic power to all the floors. Each one has a person in charge of it. When you want to ascend or descend, you click on the bell, he instantly comes to you riding his machine, on any floor you are in. He then takes … s you up or down to where you want without charge" (p. 58). Another marvel in the same hotel is the telephone in each room which allowed guests "speak with whom you wish inside and outside of Paris while you are in bed." (p. 59) For Al Hajwi, the technological innovations in the hotel epitomize the greatness that the French reached.

Furthermore, al Hajwi, who was a merchant besides functioning as a faqih and a Makhzen official, is also astonished by the fact that the hotel is not simply a place to spend the night, but it also a hub of commercial activities, advertisements, exhibition of goods, and currency exchange. The Grand Hotel had which were rented to merchants to display samples of their goods for publicity in exchange for a fee and goes on to comment that "each shop is the size of several shops in Fez, and yet, it is just a place for the exhibition of goods' samples." (p. 57) The Moroccan merchant is equally amazed that the columns of the hotel and its walls were rented for merchants to write their advertisements, turning the walls into a source of income and profit for the hotel. Certainly, for al Hajwi, the hotel was the perfect epitome that French modernity and civilization. Unable to represent Paris in its detailed complexity and diversity, as Alain Roussillon argues, al Hajwi focuses on the Grand Hotel "as a sort of microcosm of Parisian life." (Roussillon, 1999 : 53). See also (Zakri, 2016 : 58)

Another aspect of urban France which especially amazed the Moroccan traveller is transportation. The Moroccan visitor is amazed at how quickly and smoothly people move about the vast city of Paris thanks to the efficiency and the numerous means of transportation. Thus, he explains to his reader that "most of the big streets, called boulevards, have tramway tracks, and in many of the boulevards … they use large automobiles that carry sixty people, moving continuously to transport people from one place to another, without counting the great number of small automobiles that carry one, or two, or six, or four people." He also describes the spacious underground roads used by electric automobiles and trains, each train consisting of five wagons, each of which can carry about 100 passengers. (p. 54) Al Hajwi comes to the conclusion that the numerous modes of transportation and the accessibility of these means are the major reasons why "Paris has reached this degree of urbanism and population."

Because Al Hajwi considers the pursuit of knowledge to be one of the primary purposes for travelling, he particularly wished to visit the National Library of Paris and a special invitation was granted to him as well the rest of the Moroccan delegation by the French Minister of Education. Al Hajwi gladly reports "Thus, I went there with some members of the delegation who have fondness for books. And so we entered it and saw all sorts of amazing things. How could one not be astonished at the sight of close to three million printed books and about one hundred thousand manuscripts." (p. 75) Expectedly, Al Hajwi was greatly impressed by the hugeness and grandeur of the building, the countless number of books, and the various languages in which they are written. The opportunity of visiting the library prompted the Moroccan traveller to engage in self-critique, reflecting with self-sarcasm and mockery on the relatively smaller contribution of Muslims to knowledge, wondering "what have Muslim scholars composed during this period?!" (p. 76)

Al Hajwi eulogises Paris, describing it as "the capital of France, in fact, the capital of modern sciences and European literature, beautiful manners, the abundance of money, elegance and courtesy, politeness and politics." (p. 50) He also calls it

> the essence of the modern city and of the European system, methodical freedom, firm fraternity, binding equality, innovative inventions, spacious streets, excellent transportation infrastructure, vehicles as numerous as the adorning stars, fascinating beauty of homes and houses and of what is inside them. And whatever your eyes are laid upon is nice and of course captivating and fascinating. As a whole, it is the crown jewel of capitals, and the most beautiful city, to which stout camels have journeyed. Glory to the one who has accumulated beauty for her and bestowed on her earthly beauty that is apparent in everything and is seen by the beholder. (p. 50)

Al Hajwi exalts Paris as the paragon of civilization, beauty and modernity. In the passage, he composes the French motto of "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité" into verse. The French capital possesses all the splendours, glories, and luxuries to be called the "crown jewel of capitals, and the most beautiful city": refined and unerring taste, meticulous care for fashion and clothing, beautifully decorated houses, and an obsessive devotion to beauty "in the faces of the inhabitants, in their manners and clothing, and their houses, stores, restaurants, hotels, and roads. Even the vehicles are beautiful and pretty, painted in various hues of colours that baffle sight." Travelling through Paris "you don't see in the streets you pass anything ugly or unpleasant" and "your

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eye glimpses only beauty." No other Moroccan traveller ever showered so much praise on a European city as al Hajwi did for Paris.

In his travel narrative, al Hajwi does not speak about the Europeans in terms of the dichotomy of Christians and Muslims nor does he ever refer to the French in terms of colonial hegemony. A*r-Rihla al Eurobiya* is free of the Islamic worldview which pervades many Moroccan *rihla sifariya*, especially the dichotomous binarism of the House of the Believers and the House of the Unbelievers such as in Ahmed Bin Qassim al Hajari's *Kitab Nasir Al Din Ala Al Qawn Al Kafirin* (1611–1613), Mohammed Bin Al Wahab Al Ghassani's *Rihlat Al Wazir fi Iftikak Al Asir* (1690–1691), or Mohamed al Fassi's *Al-Rihla al-Ibriziyya ila al-Diyaral- Injliziyya* (1860). The author of *Ar-Rihla al Eurobiya* never uses the labels Christians, unbelievers, or infidels to categorize the Europeans nor does he engage in any religious polemical debate or confrontation with them.

In another context al Hajwi urges Moroccans, "Let us hold our hand in hers, be loyal to her, and unite with her so that we can lift Morocco from its slump to the level befitting its historical glory and its status among nations. This cooperation is imposed by our time and the logic of progress and power, which have become in favour of France, the protective state."[4]

A few years earlier the religious scholars of Fez issued a fatwa warning against dealing with Europeans, blaming them for the backwardness of Morocco. Foreigners, they affirm "are the cause of our worries, our underdevelopment, our chaos, our internal conflicts, our loss of independence and our destruction. What good did they bring us? What sciences did they teach us? What did we gain from these sciences?"(Heimer, 2008 : 200) As a liberal religious scholar, Al Hajwi never attributes the backwardness of Morocco to the foreign Other but rather to the corruption of state officials, the indolence of people, the internal chaos caused by Bouhmara, and the narrow-mindedness of religious scholars who discouraged Moroccans from imitating Europe, especially France.

He does not consider loyalty to France or its imitation to have a negative effect on the Islamic identity of Morocco because he considers France to be tolerant towards Islam and to the people's religious practices and beliefs. He says explaining to a Sudanese envoy that France "leaves freedom to the people. We have noticed that France cares for our mosques and maintains them much more than before. It preserved also al *Ahbas* and organized its administration and is still seriously dedicated to that." (p. 161)

2. THE COLONIAL MOTHER

In his travelogue, al Hajwi holds the belief that France, as a colonial power, assumed the responsibility of safeguarding its colonies. He sees the colonial rule as a means of providing a certain level of stability and security in the territories under French control and conceives the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as somewhat resembling a mother and children dynamic, where the French colonizing power takes on a protective and nurturing role over its subjects.

During their visit to the city of Strasbourg, the Moroccan delegation was received by General Gouraud, who hosted a banquet in their honour. During the event, he delivered a speech outlining the relationship between France and its subjugated subjects. Al Hajwi found this speech to be useful and decided to summarize it in his travelogue:

> he expressed his special proclivity to Morocco, more particularly to Fez, considering himself one of its people. He acknowledged the courage he witnessed in the Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian soldiers who are the foster children of France (*hum awladu hadanatu ifransa*). He also talked about their achievements in the first, second, third and fourth years of the war exhibited in the battle of the Marne, Verdun, and other great battles where they pushed back the enemy that was attacking their mother France. (p. 102)

North Africans are the offspring of French métropole. France provided protection to the colonized people who in return offered their services, and even displayed a willingness to sacrifice their lives for the powerful nation of France and the great French empire. This sense of loyalty is a combination of filial devotion, national pride, and a deep respect for France, depicted through the imperial trope of a caring colonial mother.

Dana S. Hale argues in *Races on Display: French Representations of Colonized* discusses how France deploys the colonial rhetoric of the colonized peoples as children serving devotedly their colonial mother. She states that "Especially after World War I, the French used kinship terms to refer to the relationship between metropolitan France and its overseas territories. The French parental (often maternal) image was used in discussions of the *mission civilisatrice* at the same time that a fraternal image of union and respect for colonial races was promulgated." (Hale, 2008 : 161)

The scene also reminds us of Roland Barthes' reading of the signs of colonialism in *Mythologies*. The cover of Paris-*Match* shows a back young soldier in French uniform saluting the French tricolour flag with uplifted eyes. Barthes comments that the image is meant to signify that:

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> France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier. (Barthes, 1972 : 115)

The semiotics of the visual image of a black soldier giving the French salute signifies a harmonious and diverse French Empire where all citizens, regardless of colour or creed, serve under its flag. According to John Gomez, Barthes's reading of the image

> has removed the signifier of the black soldier from its real history—the long, troubled, and violent history of French colonial exploitation—and inserted it into an entirely different system of myth. Barthes proposes that this mythological system denies the actual history of exploitation in favor of an alternative meaning: the concept of a fair and unprejudiced vision of French culture and France's empire. (Gomez, 2017 : 42-43)

Emptied of its historical meaning and imperial violence and exploitation, the black soldier becomes the sign of French greatness and care for its colonial subjects. General Gouraud's speech, too, perpetuates the myth of the greatness of the French colonial empire and naturalizes the subjugation and exploitation of the colonized.

Al Hajwi, too, legitimizes the myth of the colonial maternal figure in a speech he improvised at the Muslim cemetery of the Nogent-sur-Marne, in response to a speech by a French Minister. He thanked "the French nation for its kindness in caring for her sons (*awladiha*), as she recognized their right and allocated this piece of land for their burial and for ensuring that the rites of their religion regarding the washing of the dead, burial, and prayer over the dead are respected." (pp. 68-69)

The colonizer's gesture of providing a burial ground for the colonized subjects who sacrificed their lives is an assertion of the colonizer's control and a perpetuation of a narrative of colonial benevolence. This act creates an image of the colonizer as a caring maternal figure, as implied in al Hajwi's observations. However, such an image of the colonizing mother obscures the underlying violence and injustices that characterized the history of colonialism. Al Hajwi's recycling of the colonial mother/children relationship romanticizes colonial dominance.

3. THE AMERICA OHER

France's care for its colonies and colonized subjects is illustrated in an incident that occurred to the Moroccan traveller. Al Hajwi recounts the incident as a funny anecdote in a chapter entitled "Refutation of a Falsehood." On his way from Paris to Boulogne al Hajwi shared a train compartment with American soldiers. At lunchtime he and his son left their seats and went to the restaurant car, leaving their praying rags spread on their seats. When they returned they found their seats occupied by two American soldiers. His son tried to communicate with them in French but they didn't understand him. They ignored him and remained seated. So, he went to the French train captain and complained to him about what happened. The captain "came up to them and talked to them but they didn't answer him. He went to an American officer and brought him to remove them from our seats. However, the officer didn't understand the train captain because of his ignorance of the French language." (p. 112) After this communication breakdown, the train captain resorted to force. "He aggressively removed them from the seats. He grabbed each by his arm and pulled him away, though the body of each of them was greater than that of the captain. They left in humiliation and we took back our seats." (p. 112)

For Al Hajwi, the moral significance of citing this anecdote is to repudiate the baseless rumour that the American soldiers committed abuses in the land of France but also to illustrate how fair and just the French are with the Moroccans although they are aliens in their lands. The train captain did everything he could to restore seats to the two Muslim passengers even by the rather violent means of grabbing and pulling the American soldiers who fought with France and helped defeat its German enemies in the war.

However, the anecdote is much more compellingly meaningful in another respect. What is important about *The European Journey* is the fact that it is one of the rare, probably the first Moroccan travel narratives to mention America and its rise in power on the international stage. Despite the situational superiority of the French train captain and the humiliating submissiveness of the two robust-bodied American soldiers and relinquishing of the seats to the two Oriental-dressed Moroccans, their presence in the train, in France and in al Hajwi's *rihla sifariya* all herald the emergence of a new great power far superior to France and to old Europe.

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Significantly enough, al Hajwi's encounter with America occurs very early in the narrative. Immediately after setting foot on French lands in the port of Bordeaux, the Moroccan traveller quickly observed that the majority of items being transported in the dock were American war equipment, ammunition, and war supplies, all brought in by the United States to aid France and its allies in the war effort. The unexpected sight of the vast scale of American military equipment at the port during his first encounter with France came as a surprise to the Moroccan visitor.

Al Hajwi continues to inform his reader that the military strength of America was not restricted to war equipment alone. The Americans have also invested enormously in the infrastructure in France by building ports and supply routes to the battlefield as well as in the communication system. America

> built its own proper docks on the shores of the river and built warehouses, making it a great port, and extended the railways, the telegraph and telephone lines and strengthened the industrial roads, through railways and other means, from Bordeaux to the battlefield so that communication from America by sea and land is very easy and orderly, as will be mentioned later. (p. 43)

Despite his fascination with French technological achievements, al Hajwi becomes aware of the superiority of America. It is an awareness that problematizes his encounter with France, the paragon of Western civilization and the model for his reform project.[1]

The Moroccan traveller was equally astonished to learn that after the end of the war, the Americans began transporting their military equipment back to their country. All the way from Bordeaux to Paris, while on the train, al Hajwi keeps noticing "American soldiers and their ammunition chests, many of which are still being shipped back to North America, such as massive guns." (p. 45) He is also puzzled when he saw that they were also taking back their logistics equipment such as

> pulling and lifting machines, and rail lines that stretched from there to the battlefields. And it is surprising that they return everything back to their country and sold nothing, not even the furniture of their homes, which is useless to carry back; unlike the British, they sold in France many supplies and war necessities such as wool, and even horses; they have sold many and are still selling more. (pp. 45-46)

Al Hajwi perceived the transportation of war equipment back to America as a confirmation of the country's power, especially when compared to the British approach of selling numerous supplies and war necessities to France to avoid the expenses of transportation.

The display of American power becomes publicly visible during Victory Day. During the celebrations, the soldiers of France and her allies marched in processions in Paris. Among the participants, it was the American army that attracted the attention and admiration of the Moroccan visitor. Al Hajwi recounts:

> American soldiers, preceded by the American General, the Chief War Staff, the cavaliers and the infantry, with American music bands and American flags. In their dress and organization, the American army was magnificent, and everything they wore or in their possession was sparkling. They were absolutely the most wonderful of armies, their uniforms and their equipment all new, used on this occasion for the first time. (pp. 64-65)

It was the American army that attracted the spotlight. Al Hajwi describes the American army as the most magnificent of all the armies that marched on that day. His use of expressions such as magnificent, most wonderful, and sparkling demonstrates the Moroccan traveller's enchantment with the Americans who have attracted the spotlight. Considering the historical context of Morocco being colonized by France and the delegation's primary goal of celebrating the victory of France and its allies over Germany, it is indeed ironic that al Hajwi's narrative consistently foregrounds the American military power more prominently. Al Hajwi admits that during his journey And although he does not actually point it out each time he encounters them he writes that he has "seen a great deal of their tents and ammunition on the way from Bordeaux to Paris." This is where the traveller realizes "the power of America and the level of wealth and readiness it has reached." (pp. 45-46)

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Marxist critics of travel literature such as Peter Hume and Pierre Marchery have stressed ideological and discursive tensions and contradictions in the text. Additionally, they draw attention to the gaps, the silences and the unsaid of the text. Terry Eagleton explains in this respect that "a work is tied to ideology not so much by what it says as by what it does not say. It is in the significant *silences* of a text, in its gaps and absences that the presence of ideology can be most positively felt." (Eagleton, 1989 : 34-35) Eagleton goes on to explain that the role of the critic "is to show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent. It is not just that the text knows some things and not others; it is rather that its very self-knowledge is the construction of self-oblivion." (Eagleton, 1978 : 43) This is useful in the analysis of al Hajwi's discursive representation of France and America. His text seems to be fraught with contradictions, silences, and ideological conflicts. Indeed, the prominence of America in the narrative creates a significant unsaid aspect of the text. It becomes a pervasive and puzzling presence in al Hajwi's travelogue, affecting his Occidentalist worldview and reform project and leading to irreconcilable ambivalence and ideological conflicts within the narrative.

Al Hajwi is able to detect the beginning of a major shift in power around the world. After the decline of Muslim nations that led Morocco and many other countries to precarious stations and all the major European powers at the time lost a great amount of resources and human lives during World War I, a new nation was quickly rising into the limelight as a global power. "In a century and a half," the baffled al Hajwi writes, "a newly independent nation reaches such greatness." This is something extraordinary, he stresses. "The independence of this country was only in 1776 AD." This contrast of decline and growth prompts al Hajwi to evoke a Koranic verse from the Chapter of "*Al Fatir*," that "If God wills, He can do away with you and bring forth a new mankind." To al Hajwi this implies that the great era of France and Europe in general was coming to an end, being replaced by a new emerging nation.

Evidently, what started as a casual encounter with America at the port of Bordeaux and on the train to Paris develops into an implicit but consistent pattern in al Hajwi's *rihla*. Another powerful encounter with the greatness and power of America takes place at the National Library in Paris. Al Hajwi writes,

> We entered a room that, they said, contained books written by American scholars. Their number equals both Al Qarawiyyin Library and Marrakech Library combined, all printed books. I said to myself: This nation came about in the recent time and its scholars have written this amount of books, while they have achieved independence only about one hundred and fifty years. (p. 76)

The Moroccan traveller, during their visit to the National Library of Paris, had a remarkable encounter with the extensive collection of American literature. This encounter served as a compelling testament to the cultural and intellectual strength of the United States. The abundance of books showcased within the library underscored the nation's unwavering commitment to literary production and its profound appreciation for the value of written works. As an accomplished scholar and writer, al Hajwi found himself in a state of awe and admiration for this burgeoning nation's dedication to fostering intellectual exploration through literature.

And to foster a favourable attitude by the reader towards the Americans, al Hajwi goes at length to try and refute the rumour of American soldiers' misconduct against the French following the victory against Germany. After learning that "many people claim that American soldiers treated the French roughly and disrespectfully since they helped them with the war and victory was achieved thanks to them and their assistance," al Hajwi informs his reader that from his personal experience, "such accusations are greatly exaggerated." Although he cautiously admits "it shouldn't be generalized." He recounts his encounter with American soldiers so that it "can serve for comparison with other cases." And goes on to declare,

> We have often seen their soldiers enjoying themselves in Paris and Bordeaux, harming anyone or breaking the law. Yes, we were told that in Bordeaux there were American police to assist the local police to maintain public security in case American soldiers are involved in ordinary fighting among themselves or with others, in which case the American police would deter and oblige them to respect rights and morals. And the fact is that every day American soldiers travel back home after completing their military mission. (p. 112)

Certainly, Al Hajwi intended his European journey to serve as a record of the marvels of France and as a platform to present his reform ideas for modernizing Morocco, influenced by the French model. However, the consistent resurfacing of America, a nation outside the European borders, in the background of his account, undermines his confidence in French

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technological achievements and challenges his reform project. The Americans “helped them with the war and victory was achieved thanks to them and their assistance.” During the Victory celebrations, al Hajwi announces that the Americans “were absolutely the most wonderful of armies.” In addition, while praising the French education system, he asserts that it “has surpassed the other nations” and adds “except North America.” Through the small pieces of information about America, al Hajwi seems to have started consciously to realize the coming change in the world where Europe would no longer remain the centre. This seems to upset and subvert his entire reform project based on the French model of modernity and civilization.

At the end of his travel account, al Hajwi reveals what he has been concealing about France. He mentions the strikes in England but hides the information from the reader in France. Only during his voyage back home that al Hajwi confesses that during his residence in the Grand Hotel, the staff were on strike while he was staying there and that

> Every day, a group of workers go on strike. In fact, on the day of our arrival in Paris, the restaurant and café workers went on strike so we didn’t find anyone to serve us food in the hotel where we were staying except the owner of the restaurant and his secretary. And on the day of our arrival in Strasbourg, we found tramways workers on strike. (p. 172)

The protesters attacked the French army, killing a lieutenant and wounding two soldiers and threatened to kill anyone who wanted to return to work. Even at the Grand Hotel where the Moroccan delegation was residing, a place that Al Hajwi had previously celebrated with such enthusiasm, the staff was on strike. The Moroccan traveller had previously concealed this information from the reader and the difficulties the Moroccan visitors faced to be properly looked after during their stay. The revelation of this concealed information at the end of the narrative is undoubtedly a sign of al Hajwi's altered perception of France.

In England, too, there were rampant strikes. The strikes of coal miners caused a shortage of coal, while the strikes of the police, who were supposed to maintain order, resulted in acts of vandalism. Due to the strikes, Europe was in a state of paralysis. Activities and services were severely disrupted, leading to a breakdown of the usual order and structure in society, and resulting in widespread chaos and uncertainty. In this tumultuous environment, the Moroccan traveller, unaccustomed to strikes and their impact on the economy and social order, was alarmed and apprehensive. The disruption of daily life and the sight of disorder prevailing in what was once perceived as an ordered and prosperous world could have left a lasting impression on the Moroccan traveller, offering a new perspective on the complexities of social and political dynamics in Europe. Interestingly, the Moroccan traveller’s Eurocentric Occidentalism is demystified through an altered perception of French culture, civilization, and power, as well as that of Europe in general.

The discovery of the power of America on French soil, the metropolis of colonialism caused an inner crisis in the traveller's civilising mission of France. The distinct nature of America's history contrasts with that of France, leading to a significant change in the traveller's image of France.

What is quite interesting in *The European Journey* is that author concealed the bloody strikes of the tramway workers he himself witnessed in Strasbourg early in the narrative. He only talks about them towards the end of his travelogue. The reader realizes that in order to design a coherent reform project built on the idea of France as the model and its celebration as the epitome of modernity, civilization, technological achievement, and law and order, al Hajwi’s narrative was engaged in a systematic process of concealing and repression. Al Hajwi was deliberately involved in a process of censorship against anything that would undermine his enthusiasm for France and his highly favourable image of France because this image was the cornerstone of his reform project to save his own nation from backwardness and decadence. Now, having been in Europe and having witnessed the disastrous consequences of the war, understood the inherent flaws of the capitalist system, experienced the collapse of the European economy and suffered his own trade failure, and was exposed to the explicit and implicit xenophobia against Muslims, al Hajwi of the end of the journey and the conclusion of the narrative finally decides to confess and reveal the flaws of Europe that his narrative so much endeavoured to conceal from the reader’s eyes.

CONCLUSION

Al Hajwi returned back to his country completely disillusioned with Europe. He expresses his postcolonial agency in his *European Journey* by suggesting an alternative route, a new nation and a different civilization outside the colonial hegemony of France, a trajectory that disorients the very history and civilizational ideals of Europe, bringing to the fore deep crisis in the heart of colonial authority and romanticized notions of French colonial motherhood.

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