



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

The Othering Othered: English Female Travel Writers in Arabia

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Arts in English Literature

at

The University of Waikato

by

Thabit Yahya Hakami



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2021

To the soul of my loving father who left this world but will never leave our hearts,

To the heart of my beautiful mother who has the Heaven under her feet,

To my lovely wife who fills my heart with limitless love,

To my little son, Hassan, in whose eyes, I see joy, I see hope,

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines female travel writing in Arabia. Travel writing as an Orientalist discourse influenced both ordinary and well-educated people in the West to look at the Orient through Orientalist stereotypes: “primitive” life-style of nomads, oil industry, or lands of constant conflicts. Travel writing in Arabia is dealt with as a prominent way for understanding the Orient, especially the Arabian Peninsula in the period 1800 – 1950s.

Female travellers had the privilege of accessing the “Harem”, the secluded part of the Arabian house for women in addition to their access (as white women) to the men’s reception rooms. Studying these writers enables us to see how the Orient as “Other” is represented by female travellers who were considered “Other” themselves in the Western context.

This thesis draws on scholars who adopt a feminist reading of Orientalism and who refuse the neglect of female travel writing and assert that female travel writers did produce imperialist images in their unique styles and aesthetic accounts. This thesis centres on the writings of three female travellers who travelled in Arabia between 1878-1940s: Lady Anne Blunt (1878), Gertrude Bell (1913), and Freya Stark (1930s – 1940s). The analysis of these travellers argues that Orientalism is the unique response of any given Orientalist. It depends on the individuals’ cultural, social, political, and psychological background, which in turn contributes to the study of Orientalism in general as an overarching theme in the Western perspective on the Middle East.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

{ رَبِّ أَوْزَعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا
تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ } الأحقاف (١٥)

It was a great privilege to have had the opportunity to embark on the journey of writing this thesis. I would like to express my greatest debt of gratitude to the amazing people who surrounded me throughout this journey.

First and foremost, I would like to express my indebtedness to my supervisor, Dr Mark Houlahan. Dr. Mark, you helped me discover my voice but, most importantly, you helped me grow as a person. Thank you for being encouraging every day even if takes responding to my emails before 4:00 am or after 10:00 pm.

I would like to thank my lovely family who are always with me despite the thousands of miles between us. To my mother, Nema, go my deep appreciation and gratitude. You are my first teacher who taught me that learning is wider than a pen, a paper, and a book. And I want to tell you this: no matter how I grow in people's eyes, I will forever be the child who always looks up to you.

My deepest appreciation goes to my wife, Fatimah, for always being there despite all the difficulties we faced this year. Only you can understand how difficult this year was for me and for you. Thank you for believing in me from the start of this thesis until the minute I finished it. You made me stronger in my weakest moments. Thank you from the bottom of my heart that you filled for all the love and support. If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be where I am today.

I am also grateful to you, Hassan, the most beautiful son. You will grow (Inshallah) and realize that you and your father saw each other for only one and a half months in your

first one and a half years. However, your smile and laughter in video calls and photos brighten my darkest days.

I would like to thank all my family members: My brothers, Khalid, Mohammed, Waleed, Ahmed and Abdullah; and my lovely sisters, Ahlam and Hanan; and my beautiful nephews and nieces. Thank you all for insisting on video calling me to make me delighted.

And for honing my skills to read between the lines, to think, and to argue, I thank you my mentor, Abu Maha. I cannot wait to come back and enjoy our usual conversations in moonlit nights while drinking the tea you make. Special thanks go to you, Dr. Brendan Sheridan, for making the time to read my thesis and provide me with your brilliant insights. Thank you, Vita S, for your attentive reading of some parts of my thesis.

Last but not least, I wish to extend my thanks to Jazan University who awarded me a full scholarship to pursue my studies. I also would like to thank SACM in New Zealand for their unlimited support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1	14
<i>Lady Anne and Wilfrid Blunt: A Romantic Travelling Couple</i>	<i>14</i>
CHAPTER 2	41
<i>Gertrude Bell: A Tigress in the Lion's Den</i>	<i>41</i>
CHAPTER 3	61
<i>Freya Stark: A Humorous and Wise Traveller</i>	<i>61</i>
CONCLUSION	81
BIBLIOGRAPHY	85

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: "All Travellers in Arabia, 1800 - 1950" (Reilly 74).	3
Figure 2: Lady Anne Blunt With her horse Kassida (Archer 1)	14
Figure 3: Gertrude Bell (Lukitz 1).	41
Figure 4: "Freya Madeline Stark, 1957" (Hansen 1).	61

INTRODUCTION

The first time I reached the West was two years after I received a degree in English Language from Jazan University, Saudi Arabia. My main concern at that time was to understand the West from the inside regardless of the various dichotomous perspectives Arabs usually hold about the West: some are occidentalists who view the West as a dominating power that is always ready to control the Orient; others are obsessed with the development of the West with sometimes a feeling of disgust about what they consider a primitive, backward and barbaric Orient. The first thing I noticed as a traveller, is that the West I came to understand as very civilised and highly modernised is no different than my home country, Saudi Arabia: with skyscrapers, modern buildings, strict rules and organised life. On another level, I received many comments in the West from my Western friends (Americans, British, Canadians, and New Zealanders) about my home country thinking that Arabs are very primitive and unchanging desert nomads, or as what they would see in the media about the Arab World as lands of constant conflicts of ideologies and races.

I traced back this issue historically and came to the understanding that travel literature by western intellectuals about the Orient influenced the perspectives of ordinary as well as well-educated Westerners. For instance, one of my New Zealander friends was shocked when I showed him that Riyadh, the biggest city and capital of Saudi Arabia has more skyscrapers and is more modernised than Auckland, the biggest city in New Zealand. Another instance occurred in the US in 2015 during a Saudi Arabian National Day Ceremony organised by Saudi students. An American visitor to the exhibition offered us his innocent warm wishes and prayers that our issues in Saudi Arabia would be resolved soon. I felt obliged to thank him, but also explained that we were living the best and most peaceful life we could dream of in Saudi Arabia. I elaborated that while we were in the West to get a better education, it did not mean that we were running away from home. We can understand from these encounters

that Orientalism, though taking different shapes, persists beyond the 19th century. In his book *Crossing the Kingdom: Portraits of Saudi Arabia*, Lorning Danforth seeks to “challenge [the common] destructive Orientalist stereotypes of Saudi Arabia by offering alternative images of its people, their society, and their culture” (Danforth 1). Danforth’s book came after he visited Saudi Arabia in 2012 for an educational programme for a month.

Therefore, I investigate this issue by way of travel literature. The importance of studying travel literature lies in the idea that it actually sets the tune for the West to view the Orient, the popularised Orient of *The Arabian Nights*, *Sindbad*, *Aladdin* and Harun al-Rashid. Another significant role travel writing plays in understanding the Orient is that it is dealt with as a prominent resource for understanding the Orient especially in studying the Arabian Peninsula in the period 1800 – 1950s even by Arab scholars. For instance, Saudi Arabian anthropologist Madawi Al-Rasheed relies on over 30 travel books in her book *Politics in an Arabian Oasis: The Rashidis of Saudi Arabia* (Reilly 72). A critical reading of travel writing provides the lenses through which the authors see the lands and people. As Casey Blanton argues,

As every travel writer knows, maps and books can tell only part of the truth. By what process, using what models, does the traveler presume to describe, to interpret, to represent people and places who are other to him? What encounter is included, what person omitted? What vistas extolled, what river left behind? Despite these very real difficulties, every travel writer also knows that he or she will find a way. And the large, unruly, amorphous set of discourses we call "travel literature" is a testament to that effort” (Blanton 1).

Shirley Foster and Sara Mills look at travel as a discourse. They argue that:

Discourse[s] are structuring frameworks which determine that certain elements are perceived as noteworthy and that they are classified in certain ways. Thus, even the way that one perceives a landscape, despite the fact that it feels as if it is simple unmediated process of looking, is already mediated through discourses of aesthetics and imperialism which will determine that certain tracts of land are designated as landscape rather than others, and that the viewer experiences certain emotions in relation to particular geomorphological features (Foster and Mills 5).

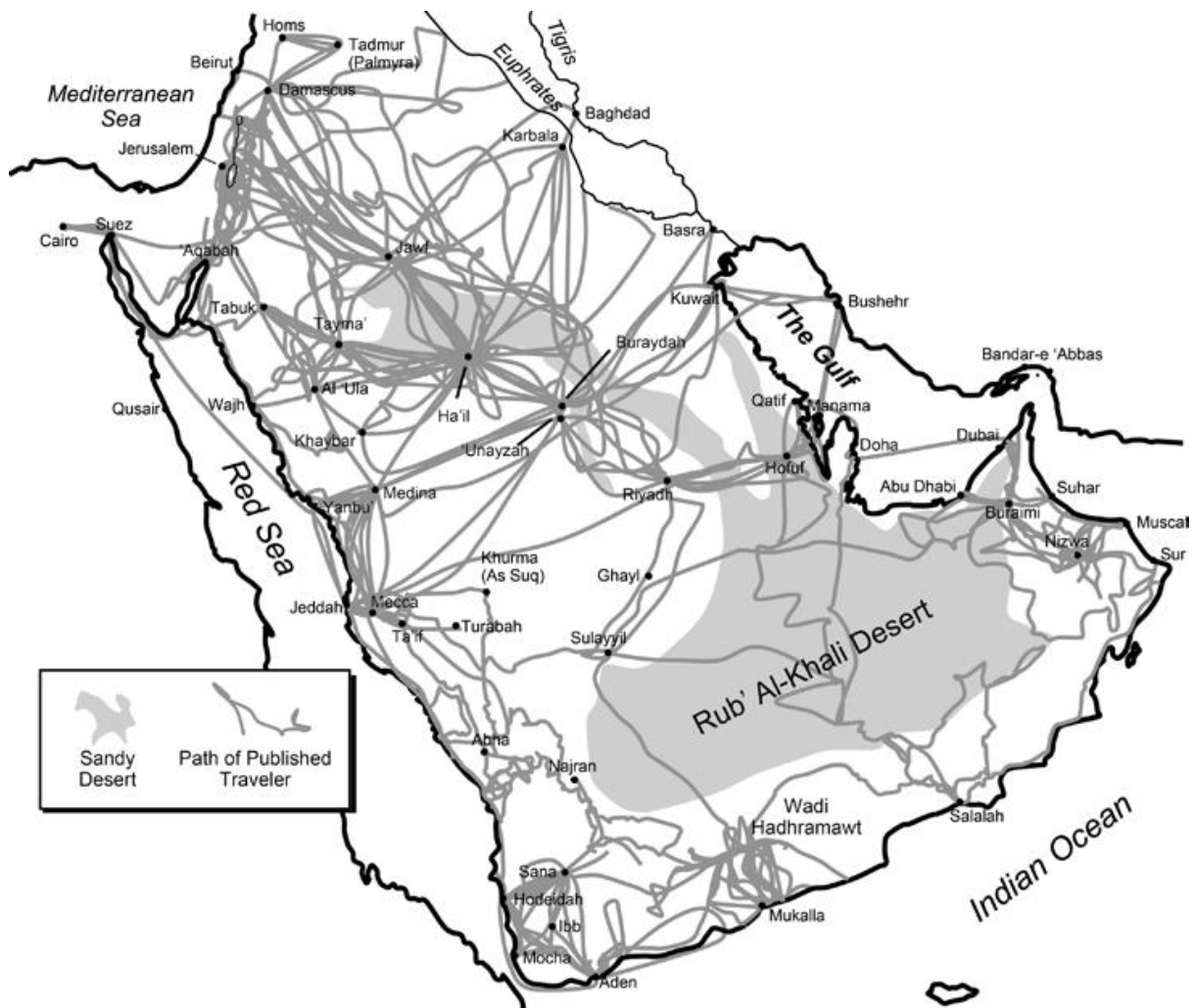


Figure 1: "All Travellers in Arabia, 1800 - 1950" (Reilly 74).

My aim is to read between the lines and investigate these lenses and to reflect on them via a comprehensive study of each individual I am studying. Although some scholars such as Benjamin Reilly call for a “systematic study of Western travellers in Arabia,” (72) I chose to study three renowned travel writers who penetrated the Arabian Peninsula during the allocated period, 1878 – 1940s. Lady Anne Blunt, Gertrude Bell, and Freya Stark travelled in 1878, 1913, and 1930s-40s respectively. My goal is to study the significance of each individual’s representations of the Orient. There are two main reasons that made me interested in studying female travel writers particularly. First, female travellers had the privilege of accessing the “Harem”, the secluded part of the Arabian house for women in addition to their access (as white women)¹ to the men’s reception room. The Harem space was restricted to women which male travellers were not able to access. This gave female travellers the advantage of accessing both the male and the female sections and provide unique representations of their encounters. The second reason is then to study how the Orient as “Other” is studied by English female travellers who were considered “Other” themselves in Europe.² In this I subscribe to the argument of many scholars such as Sara Mills, Reina Lewis and others who suggest that female travel writers “produced imperialist images” (Lewis 3). Therefore, as Reina Lewis claims:

an analysis of the production and reception of representations by women will develop an understanding of the interdependence of ideologies of race and gender in the colonial discourse of the period (Lewis 3).

¹ On this topic, see for example Leen Al-Hadban’s *Let the Real Scheherazade Stand: Literary Representations of Middle Eastern Women*. Al-Hadban points out that Western women “own liberties only men can dream of in the Middle East, and local women do not relate to them as other women, but rather they become distinguished as a third sex” (Al-Hadban 6).

² Some scholars challenge the self/other relationship. Kathleen Ullal, for instance, calls for “a reconsideration of the Saidian self/Other binary, in search of a less polemical stance towards this socially constructed relationship” (Ullal iii). Ullal argues “that the self and other are mutually constitutive. [she] suggest this shift visually and textually by using self-other, rather than the more usual self/Other” (iii).

I also draw on some of the literature and arguments about the issue, starting from Edward Said's seminal work *Orientalism* to other postcolonial and gender studies scholars. Said argues that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric" (204). In *Orientalism*, Said applies Michel Foucault's idea of the intimate relationship between knowledge and power, therefore, his idea "effectively demonstrates the link between knowledge and power, for it 'constructs' and dominates Orientals in the process of knowing them" (Ashcroft and Ahuwalia 49). Said's controversial argument received many simultaneous critiques and endorsements (see for instance, Geoffrey Nash's most recent work *Orientalism and Literature* (2019); and essays in Robert Clarke's *Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing* (2018)). Nevertheless, many critics of travel literature build on his argument or share some similar ideas, though in different tones, depending on their interests.

An important reading of Orientalism as a discourse comes from some scholars such as Reina Lewis and Lisa Lowe who argue that "Orientalism, like any discourse, must be regarded as multivocal and heterogeneous, a formation made up of dissimilar and non-equivalent instances" (Lewis 4). Lisa Lowe in her book *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* argues that "orientalism [sic] consist of an uneven matrix of orientalist situations across different cultural and historical sites, and [...] that each of these orientalisms is internally complex and unstable" (Lowe 5). This reading of Orientalism allows me to understand that Orientalism is a unique response of any given Orientalist which depends on the individual's cultural, social, political, and psychological background and which in turn contributes to Orientalism in general as an overarching theme in the Western perspective on the Middle East.

One of the most compelling contributions to the concept of Orientalism and postcolonial studies came from the incorporation of feminism to the literary analysis of travel

writing by scholars such as Said in his *Orientalism*, and Paul Fussell in his book *Abroad: British literary traveling between the Wars*. In her book *Discourse of Differences: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*, Sara Mills uses Foucauldian discourse to challenge the gendered readings of travel writing. She examines these readings as a discourse of power in which the female travel writing is neglected as not corresponding with the male known adventurous journeys. Mills argues that the disregard for female travel writers is a result of considering women's travel writing as "bad writing" and their journeys as not significant. For example, Paul Fussell argues that women's travel writing is "not sufficiently concerned with travel or writing itself" (qtd in Mills 3). According to Mills, there are plenty of reasons to study women's travel literature more than just assuming that they refuse to conform to their social norms or escape from constraints of their families and societies. Instead, Mills situates women travellers within the colonial context. She argues that,

Because of their oppressive socialisation and marginal position in relation to imperialism, despite their generally privileged class position, women writers tended to concentrate on descriptions of people as individuals, rather than on statements about the race as a whole. (Mills 3).

Women were able to provide the colonialist British with a microscopic understanding of the cultures and the behaviours of the people and the lands they travelled in. Furthermore, Susan Bassnett in "Travel writing and gender" demonstrates that both Mills and Jane Robinson "emphasise the wealth of detail in women's travel writing" and their concentration on individuality by which they "contrast this with the more public discourse of male travellers" (Bassnett 227).

In similar vein, Foster and Mills consider the discourse of women's travel writing practically. They argue that:

women are not excluded from certain high status, male-generated discourse, such as the discourse of imperialism and aesthetics, since many of their writings are formed in relation to these structuring frameworks (Foster and Mills 5).

Women travellers in their distinctive aesthetic approaches, different styles, and varied subject-matter were able to provide the imperialist colonialist British with important and useful accounts in their travel literature. Gertrude Bell and Freya Stark provided unique aesthetic accounts and photographs of places where no English person before them had been. Additionally, Gertrude Bell played an important colonial role during World War I. Stark also worked for the Ministry of Information and was influential enough to convince the Officials to use her propaganda to convince the Arabs to side with the Allies during World War II (Geniesse 261). It is important to note that it was mainly their travel writings that afforded them imperialist roles; their writings were evidence of their ability to serve the British government.

Another approach that is helpful for looking at women travellers is what Gillian Rose addresses in her book *Feminism and Geography*. Rose challenges the conventional perspective that “[g]eography is masculinist” (Rose 4) by her deep investigation of “feminist geographers” (7). In her book she contrasts the “fluidity and viscosity of the female body” with “the linearity and solidity of the male body” (Bassnett 230). It is through this perspective that she reads masculinist geography as an approach to see the world via power and control. On the other hand, feminist geography is concerned with “the most banal and trivial everyday events so as to create a completely different set of identifiable structures outside patriarchal control” (Bassnett 230).

The feminist approach contributed to postcolonial studies in many ways. In her book *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East*, Billie Melman underlines the importance of women's travel narratives in the Middle East through accounts of their encounters with local veiled women of the harem. In Melman's book, as well as Foster and Mills in their *Anthology of Women's Travel Writing*, gender is not the only factor, as race and class are also discussed. In Melman's case, she

asks whether educated English women, themselves conventionally identified as the "other" within their own dominant culture, developed a gender notion of the "otherness" of those outside that culture? She is interested in whether gender and class differences mattered more than national, religious, and racial differences, and she wonders if women developed a separate "feminine", experience in the expansion of empire (Helly 556).

In this regard, Tim Youngs fixates on differences manifested textually, which he argues are dissimilar for women and men because of gender differences. Youngs, therefore, cautions against the assumption that all women are against colonial rule. He notes that female travel writers' sympathy for the women of the Harem is more dangerous than men's obvious imperialist discourse because it is very difficult to counter (qtd in Foster and Mills 4).

ARABIA: What is it and why study it?

In this thesis, I refer to Arabia to mean the Arabian Peninsula. Arabia is "located in the Southwest of Asia. It is bounded by the Red Sea on the west and southwest, the Gulf of Aden on the south, the Arabian Sea on the south and southeast, and the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf (also called the Arabian Gulf) on the east" (*Britannica*). I chose to study this region because it represents the pure Arabia with all its geographical features such as the

barren deserts, the mountains and the seas surrounding it. Before the large-scale explorations for oil in Arabia and before the age of the petrochemical engine, the geographical features of Arabia dictated that its people should live in a certain way. Most of the Arabian Peninsula is arid deserts with a little rain that usually falls during winter. Therefore, the inhabitants of Arabia made their living mainly by pastoralism and trading. The Arabs we see in the travel accounts of the Blunts, Bell and Stark were a tribal society with their own code and social conventions which they adhered to and prided themselves on. The nobility of Arabs lies not only in their birth, but also in their respect for these conventions. It is still common even in the modern day that a family or a tribe may disown the members who do not respect or follow these conventions. In the travel accounts I discuss in this thesis, these conventions are the Arabs' manners and values such as, generosity, bravery, honor, and honesty.

People of Arabia lived either in the cities or as nomad Bedouins who were constantly on the move looking for water and pasture to graze their camels, horses, sheep and goats. Bedouins relied heavily on the rain season which is usually in the winter. However, there were some years when rain didn't fall in the winter. In these years, some tribes fought each other over territories that had water or pasture to feed their animals or sometimes they fought each other in order to capture some of their belongings, especially animals, to feed their tribe members. Usually, a tribe consisted of many members and subclans, every tribe had a chief (Sheikh) and every subclan had a leader who ruled the subclan but belonged to the Sheikh of the tribe. Some tribes made alliances with other tribes to protect each other and to share goods and benefits forming a league or a federation. The chief of this league is called an Amir / Emir (a prince), and this is how countries and emirates were usually made in Arabia; the Amir was enthroned based on his ability to resolve disputes among tribes. Ibn Rashidi's Emirates of Jabal Shammar, and Ibn Saud's Emirates of Ad-Diriyah (1685-1765) were both examples of countries and emirates which started as leagues of allied tribes, though some had

some religious motives too. In his book *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936: From Chieftaincy to Monarchical State* Joseph Kostiner provides a historical, political and economic survey of the making of the modern Saudi Arabian country.

Travel writing in Arabia is by itself a field of knowledge that was produced over the centuries especially since the 19th century. This period is referred to as the age of “Filling the Blank Spaces” in Tim Youngs’ *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century: Filling the Blank Spaces*. Every traveler to Arabia strove to contribute to this field of knowledge with their different perspectives. Such perspectives were generally initiated by their different fantasies of the Arabian deserts and the primitive life of the Arabs. This discourse is a combination of knowledge added to the field of Orientalism and adventures that almost every traveler in Arabia tried to display. And since travel writing in general is a genre in which most authors try to show their adventures by venturing into the unknown, travelers to Arabia showcase many adventurous aspects of the Arabian lands and people. They mainly did this by adopting travelling personas: they wore the locals’ clothes and spoke their language. As Said argues:

The Orientalist can imitate the Orient without the opposite being true. What he says about the Orient is therefore to be understood as description obtained in a one-way exchange: as *they* spoke and behaved, *he* observed and wrote down. His power was to have existed amongst them as a native speaker, as it were, and also as a secret writer. And what he wrote was intended as useful knowledge, not for them, but for Europe and its various disseminative institutions (Said 160).

It is through their different levels of embeddedness and the knowledge they strove to provide that they made Orientalism a field of knowledge in which they compete with each others. Burckhardt, for instance, showcases his adventures via his adoption of an Arab identity, “Sheykh Ibrahim, a poor Muslim scholar of Aleppo” (Nash 46) to show his

remarkable scholarly knowledge of Arabic and Islam as well as his ability to fit in. He tested his Arab persona when he visited the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and stayed for two years (1814-15) (Nash 46) as recounted in his *Travels in Arabia* (1829). This path was followed by Richard Burton who visited the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in disguise as an Afghan doctor, Mirza Abdulla (Nash 58). Burton visited Mecca and Medina in April 1853 and published his account in *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Mecca*. He was well known as “a passionate advocate of British imperialism, although a contemptuous critic of British colonial rulers” (Nash 58). Burton sought that his view of the Arab Bedouin as a “noble savage” (qtn in Nash 58) would be his contribution to the travel canon on Arabia, opposed to Burckhardt’s promoting of “the myth of the noble Bedouin Arab started by [Carsten] Niebuhr” (Nash 46). Burton achieved this aim through his endeavors “to establish the racial characteristics of the ‘true’ Arab” (Nash 59). Burton criticizes earlier travelers in Arabia and contests their view of the noble Bedouin Arab in contrast to the Arabs of the towns or the cities by calling for a racial generalization of all Arabs as a single race.

In contrast, Lady Anne Blunt and her husband, Wilfrid Blunt, bring back the contrast between Arabs of the cities and the Bedouin Arabs with their discussion of the nobility of the Bedouins in their joint travel account *A Pilgrimage to Nejd: The Cradle of the Arab Race* (1878). They claim that Najd (Hail, Riyadh and Qassim) is where someone may find the most genuine Arabs and the purest Arabian horses and camels. Like every other traveler, they displayed the adventurous aspect of their travels through their refusal to travel in disguise in Eastern identities, and instead prided themselves of being able to keep their Western identities and deal with the Arabs via their deep understanding of the Arabian manners and way of life.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will start by reading the travel accounts of the Victorian travelers, Lady Anne Blunt (and her husband Wilfrid Blunt) of their travels in

Arabia. They travelled across Arabia in 1878 in which they traversed the desert of the Great Nefud and reached Hail where the most powerful ruler in Arabia, the Amir of the Emirate of Jebel (mountain) Shammar was based at that time. They published two works: Lady Anne Blunt's book *A Pilgrimage to Nejd: The Cradle of the Arab Race* (1881) and Wilfrid Blunt's article "A Visit to Jebel Shammar (Nejd): New Routes Through Northern and Central Arabia" in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* (1880). In their travels, they claim that their main reason in visiting Najd lies in their interests to look for the mysteries of breeding Arabian horses as well as to reach the region where they thought the most genuine noble Arabs resided.

In the second chapter, I focus on the travel accounts of the renowned archaeologist, historian, and diplomat Gertrude Bell (14 July 1868 – 12 July 1926) who followed the Blunts in their penetration of Arabia and visit to Hail. Bell travelled in 1913-1914 with the intention of publishing a book about her travels but she wasn't able to do so amid the outbreak of the World War I. She recounts her travels in the form of letters to her family and friends and as diaries that were published later after she died. The letters of her Central Arabian journey were titled "The Journey to Hayil" in *The Letters of Gertrude Bell* edited by her stepmother Lady Florence Bell (DBE). Both Bell's Arabian letters and diaries were published in 2000 as *Gertrude Bell's Arabian Diaries* edited by Rosemary O'Brien. Bell also published a three-page article in the Royal Geographical Society titled "A Journey in Northern Arabia" in 1914.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I focus on another author, Freya Stark (1893-1993) who recorded her travels in a different part of Arabia, Yemen and the Hadhramout in 1930s – 40s. Stark visited many parts of the Middle East but visited South Arabia more than once and published her accounts in travel books, articles, and pictorial books. She published *The*

Southern Gates of Arabia (1936) on her Southern Arabian travels in 1935, *A Winter in Arabia* (1940) on her 1937 travels, and the photographic book *Seen in the Hadhramout* (1938).

I decided to study these three travelers in this order not only chronologically, but to see the changing of the female discourse and representations of Arabia throughout the constraints posed upon each one of them. In the Victorian period women struggled in their travels and writing as we will see how this struggle is manifested in the complicated relationship of Lady Anne and Wilfrid Blunt. Later, in the early 20th century, the independence of Western women in their travels and writing emerges in Gertrude Bell's accounts. In the last chapter, I discuss Freya Stark who adopted a completely different approach in her travel that suits her conditions and her philosophies.

CHAPTER 1

Lady Anne and Wilfrid Blunt: A Romantic Travelling Couple



Figure 2: Lady Anne Blunt With her horse Kassida (Archer 1)

It is strange how gloomy thoughts vanish as one sets foot in Asia. Only yesterday we were still tossing on the sea of European thought, with its political anxieties, its social miseries and its restless aspirations, the heritage of the unquiet race of Japhet—and now we seem to have ridden into still water, where we can rest and forget and be thankful. The charm of the East is the absence of intellectual life there, the freedom one's mind gets from anxiety in looking forward or pain in looking back (Blunt *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* 1).

In this chapter, I will read the travel accounts of the Victorian traveller, linguist and author, Lady Anne Isabella Blunt (1837-1917). She was accompanied in her travels by her husband, the renowned poet, diplomat and ant-imperialist, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. Lady Anne and

Wilfrid Blunt were an intellectual travelling couple who co-wrote many books, among them their travel accounts. The Blunts were famous for establishing the Crabbet Arabian Stud in England and the Shaykh 'Ubayd estate in Egypt and devoted both to breeding Arabian horses (Archer 2). Lady Anne's father took her on some travels while she was still young where she learned four different languages; during her travels she met Wilfrid Blunt (Archer 1). She was also a talented violinist and artist as shown in her sketches and paintings: "Her superb watercolours capture the spirit of the desert, and exhibitions of her paintings were held in Saudi Arabia and London in 1993; her journals, which are housed in the British Library, were displayed there in 1977" (Archer 2).

Lady Anne Blunt³ recorded her Arabian travels with her husband Wilfrid Scawen Blunt⁴ in *A Pilgrimage to Nejd: The Cradle of the Race*⁵ (1881). As well, Blunt published an article titled "A Visit to Jebel Shammar (Nejd): New Routes Through the Northern and Central Arabia" in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* (1880). At the beginning, it is important to note that although my aim is to study female travellers in Arabia, it is difficult in the Blunts' case to study Lady Anne's work without studying Blunt's too since they produced most of their works together. And although they benefited from each other, he had a prominent influence on her. Billie Melman asserts that the importance of studying the accounts of traveling couples lies in some

tensions between orientalist authority and individual gendered experience of the eastern Mediterranean; between canonicity and the writing against canonical texts; between feminine identity and the identity of the explorer; between the Victorian

³ I will refer to her from now on as *Lady Anne*, in line with most of the scholars.

⁴ I will refer to him from now on as *Blunt* for the same reason as *Lady Anne*.

⁵ Nejd or in the modern English Najd is the region of the Central Arabia which consists of the current Saudi Arabian Capital, Riyadh, and two other provinces Ha'il and Al-Qassim.

ethos of domesticity and travel; between the work of the professional orientalist and that of the amateur (276).

It is important to mention the Blunts' backgrounds to understand their complicated relationship as manifested in their works, diaries and journals. Anne Isabella Noel was the granddaughter of the famous English poet Lord Byron. The connection between Blunt and Lady Anne is interesting even before their marriage as Blunt was a "Byron worshipper" from when he was young (Finch 34). Lord Byron's support of the Greek Independence War against the Turks and his poetical works such as his autobiographical work *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* made him a romantic hero in the eyes of not only the Greeks, but in most of Europe.⁶ Lord Byron not only influenced the Blunts through his poetry, but also his freedom fighting.

After their marriage, Blunt made it clear in his book *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (1922) that being the granddaughter of Lord Byron, Lady Anne instilled in them both "sympathies in the cause of freedom in the East" (*Secret History*, 6). Blunt's obsession with Byron clashed with his Roman Catholic upbringing which "forbade all pleasures of the flesh and had taught him to regard earthly love as unworthy" and his lover Helen Leutwein, who died Protestant, was "according to his teaching, in danger of Hell-fire" (Edith 34). Therefore, he finds in Arab Bedouins a solution, "a new hope" for his religious predicament (Longford 126).

Furthermore,

Much of the attraction they felt for the Bedouin tribes of Arabia was because [Bedouins] appeared 'proud of their independence', 'tenacious of their rights' and immune from the degrading experience of submission to foreign potentates that

⁶ See for instance MacCarthy, Fiona *Byron: Life and Legend*.

tainted other Orientals ('no serious attempt has ever been made except by Mehemet Ali, to subdue them, and none at all has succeeded') (Villa 50).

On the other hand, Lady Anne benefited from being the wife of such a charismatic and strongminded husband. "As Lady Anne, wife of Wilfrid, she met, and often befriended, the leading thinkers, revolutionaries, imperialists, and anti-imperialists of her day" (Lacy 2).

The Blunts' love of freedom, fascination with the East, and "Eastern" intellectual life are all manifested in both Blunts' poetry, books and some of his memoirs, and Lady Anne's diaries, journals and travel books. According to Rosemary Archer and James Fleming, the editors of *Lady Anne Blunt: Journals and Correspondence 1878 – 1917*, the collection of "her pocket diaries, sketch books, correspondence and miscellaneous family papers," make "339 volumes" (Archer and Fleming 11).

The Blunts' fascination with the East and the charm of primitive life traces back to 1860, when Blunt paid his first visit to Constantinople as a diplomat "to work in the chancellery in Therapia" (Finch 34).

His journey from Constantinople was taken in a dissatisfied state of mind in which the charm of primitive life was brought into sharp contrast with the so-called advantages of civilization (Finch 34).

This contrast is what led him to compare the "primitive" life of the Arabs to the "civilisation" of the West, seeing in the Arabs' life style an escape from the "European thought, with its political anxieties, its social miseries and its restless aspirations" (*A Pilgrimage* 1). After their marriage in 1869, Lady Anne travelled into the East for the first time "as a casual traveller in her extended honeymoon" (Lacy 22). The Blunts "formed a travelling couple" and travelled extensively to the East "Anatolia (1873) Algeria (1874) the Egyptian Western Desert (1876),

Mesopotamia and Persia (1877–78) and the deserts of Central Arabia (1879)” (Nash 2011 73).

The significance of the Blunts’ travelogues lies in their sole interest in the East, as most of the other travellers to the East at that time travelled to many other places in the world. Such other travellers were interested in travelling rather than in some specific region and/or specific people. The Blunts’ interest in travelling was always specific to Arabia, as they fully admired Arabs, Bedouins, Arabian horses, the Arabic language and almost everything else Arabian. For instance, they found the “primitive” life style of the Bedouins emancipating, as Bedouins were almost always free from any overwhelming power of “civilised” life style. In this regard, most of their literary productions contrast the civilised life of the West, which to them was restrictive, with the free life style of Bedouins as quoted at the beginning of this chapter. What made the Blunts more inclined to venture into Arabia and travel to the heart of the “most” Arabian place and people was their quest for the genuineness of blood and nobility of Bedouins of the desert of Arabia, as well as their quest for the pure blood of Arabian horses. As Luisa Villa claims, “[Blunt’s] fascination with the Arabs and Arabia stemmed from his patrician life-style and definitely bore its imprint” (47).

As for Lady Anne, she felt disgusted not only at European politics, but even a “yellow boy” seems very naïve to her in comparison to the children of Arabs. In this, she uses the way Arabs usually describe “White” European people as “yellow” or sometimes “red”. She recounts in her diaries before she and Blunt set foot for their Journey to Najd,

At the Station I saw a Yellow Boy. He looks, there is no denying it, quite vulgar, after the Arabians we are used to. She seemed pleased to see me for instead of biting and playing as he does to other people when noticed by them, he pushed his nose up against me, holding his head quite still and then getting a little bit of my sleeve

between his teeth kept it, and seemed inclined to remain thus (Archer and Fleming 52).

Lady Anne was the first English woman who travelled in Arabia with her husband and penetrated to its very heart, the Najd, where the most powerful ruler in Arabia at that time was based. During their first trip to the Euphrates, the Blunts realized that to the Arabs of the north (notably Syria and Iraq), central Arabia was the most authentic Arabian place. Arabs of the north saw Najd as the “Cradle of their race”, a place of romantic and chivalrous memories. Lady Anne’s interests in looking for the best-bred and purest blood horses was then backed up by the Blunts’ interest in meeting the “best-bred Arabians” and therefore they decided to travel to Najd. In the accounts of Bedouins of the North, Bedouins of Najd are the most genuine Arabs with the most noble birth and who have the best manners among Arabs, as seen in *A Pilgrimage*. The Blunts’ interests in seeking the most noble people are rooted in their own nobility and aristocracy. Luisa Villa notes in her essay “A ‘Political Education’: Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the Arabs and the Egyptian Revolution (1881–82)” that it ...

must be added that, as aristocrats, the Blunts tended to extol purity of blood, and travelling to the Nejd plateau in 1878–79, they held the conviction that the Arabian peninsula was the ‘cradle’ of the Arab ‘race’, where the Arab ge’nos, Arab customs and Arab horses were to be found in their pristine state (48).

Another related characteristic of Arabia is the idea that it was “changeless”, with Najd as the “most” changeless antiquated existing form of civilisation. Villa also points out that the Blunts’ fascination with the nomadic life of the Bedouins and in the desert was showcased in their representation of the Middle East as changeless and timeless either in Blunt’s poetry or in Lady Anne’s beginning of *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* where she describes:

The charm of the East is the absence of intellectual life there, the freedom

one's mind gets from anxiety in looking forward or pain in looking back. Nobody here thinks of the past or the future, only of the present (*A Pilgrimage* 1,2).

This attitude toward the East stems from a juxtaposition between the East and the West. This exact quote is preceded by their disgust with the hectic life of the West:

It is strange how gloomy thoughts vanish as one sets foot in Asia. Only yesterday we were still tossing on the sea of European thought, with its political anxieties, its social miseries and its restless aspirations, the heritage of the unquiet race of Japhet – and now we seem to have ridden into still water, where we can rest to have ridden and be thankful (1).

The Blunts' obsession with the Bedouins and their life made them refer to their land as "still water" in contrast to "the unquiet race of Japhet." This excerpt corresponds with a sonnet Blunt wrote titled "To the Bedouin Arab" (Blunt *Poetical Works* 94). In this sonnet, he invoked the biblical account of Noah's sons and refers to Arabs as "Children of Shem!" who were "Firstborn of Noah's race, / But still forever children" as Shem is, according to the Bible, Noah's first child. Blunt contrasts Bedouins in this sonnet with Europeans whom he calls "sons of Japhet." He praises the Arabs for having "an old wisdom by our world forgot."

Children of Shem ! Firstborn of Noah's race,

But still forever children ; at the door

Of Eden found, unconscious of disgrace,

And loitering on while all are gone before ;

Too proud to dig ; too careless to be poor ;

Taking the gifts of God in thanklessness,

Not rendering aught, nor supplicating more,
Nor arguing with Him when He hides His face.
Yours is the rain and sunshine, and the way
Of an old wisdom by our world forgot,
The courage of a day which knew not death.
Well may we sons of Japhet in dismay
Pause in our vain mad fight for life and breath,
Beholding you. I bow and reason not. (Blunt *Poetical Works* 94).

In this poem, Blunt's reference to the Bedouin Arabs as "Children of Shem ! Firstborn of Noah's race, / But still forever children" serves as an allegory to claim that the Bedouins are ancient and never change despite the fact that being children of Shem they were born first before the children of Japhet. And when they ultimately reached Hail, Lady Anne expresses their happiness saying

It is like a dream to be sitting here, writing a journal on a rock in Jebel Shammar ... nobody believed, of an ideal State in the heart of Arabia, and a happy land which nobody but [Palgrave] had seen ... Wilfrid declares that he shall die happy now, even if we have our heads cut off at Hail (*A Pilgrimage* 207, 208).

The significance of their accounts does not end here, as both Lady Anne and Blunt spoke Arabic fluently and were able to understand the Bedouins' language and even their most complicated ballads without any need for any interpreter. The society of the Bedouins was mainly oral. They usually relied on the oral delivery of news, ballads, which in turn showcased their culture, politics, and social aspects. They rarely read and wrote, and they

were almost always influenced and driven by the words that are passed to their ears and they pass to others'. It was through this passage of words, news, stories, and ballads that the Blunts were able to delve deeply into the cultures and politics of the Bedouins. Geoffrey Nash claims that it is "their mental partnership that produced *The Seven Odes of Pagan Arabia* (1903)" (Nash 2009 73), their translation of the most well-known, finest and ancient seven odes of the pre-Islamic era (6th century). The translation of this deep and old Arabic literature proves the Blunts' proficiency in Arabic as well as their deep understanding of the Arabian people and society.

Lady Anne and her husband were the first Europeans who did not hide their personalities and travelled freely as Europeans, wearing local clothes only "in order to avoid attracting more notice than was necessary on [their] way" (*A Pilgrimage* 22). However, they prided themselves on being able to adapt to the Arabs' life-style. Therefore, in wearing the locals' clothes and in speaking their language fluently, they in fact adopted their culture and their personas.

In addition, another significant aspect of the Blunts' accounts of their travels in Arabia is related to the extent to which Lady Anne is a free nineteenth century female traveller and author. In her essay "Travel Writing and Gender," Susan Bassnett notes that

The essence of adventure lies in taking the risks and exploring the unknown, so it is hardly surprising to find that early travel accounts tended for the most part to be written by men, who moved freely in the public sphere (225).

The questions that shall be addressed here then are: was Lady Anne really an independent writer and traveller? Were her travels with her husband ever influenced by his patriarchal force? Was her account by itself ever policed by him as an editor? And how did these factors influence their representations of the Orient?

To address gender and imperialism in Lady Anne's travels in Arabia, it is important to investigate the complex relationship between Lady Anne and her husband which is manifested in their production of their accounts of their Arabian travels. In the following, I will conduct a comparative literary study of some materials written by Lady Anne and some other materials written by Blunt and use these works as a starting point to identify the different literary styles and writing "personas" in reading the works they co-wrote or co-edited. This study will determine the specific literary style and the perspectives of each one of the Blunts. I will then analyse several texts to investigate whose voice is louder. From the side of Lady Anne, I will rely on her journals edited by Rosemary Archer and James Fleming. From Blunt's side I will study how *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* was heavily edited by Blunt by reading the preface he wrote for their work *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*, as well as some of his poetical works. This approach will link issues of gender to imperialism since imperialism is determined by gender issues in the Blunts' accounts.

Between the Journals and the book.

First and foremost, I shall note that Blunt himself admitted later in *Secret History* that *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* was "in reality a joint work , in which [his] first political views in regard to Arabian liberty may be traced by those who care to seek them"(*Secret History* 21) although it was published under her name. Here, I will read some sections and scenes from the book and compare them with Lady Anne's original journals and then connect the dots. I shall first present those alterations and then, through my text-based analysis, I will introduce the reasons that made me believe those changes have been mainly done by Blunt, not Lady Anne. The platform for my analysis is Edward Said's *Orientalism* along with:

Discourse of Differences (Sara Mills 1991); *Feminism and Geography* (Gillian Rose 1993); and *Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (Shirley Foster and Sara Mills 2002).

Rosemary Archer and James Fleming, the editors of *Lady Anne Blunt: Journals and Correspondence*, note that “[Blunt] allowed himself licence to rearrange the materials in a general way and to transpose events in both time and place so as, one must assume, to lend Lady Anne's account a more rounded and pleasing appearance” (Archer and Fleming 13). There was at least an indication in the Blunts' account of their first trip to the Middle East *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates* that the book was edited by Blunt, and that there were some chapters added by him (13). However, Archer and Fleming also point out that the only indication of Blunt's contribution to *A Pilgrimage* is by writing “Preface by the Editor” which implies that Blunt did not intervene in any way (13). Therefore, I will start by reading this preface since it was, as claimed, written by Blunt. If the book is supposed to be written by Lady Anne, then logically the preface should serve as a means to guide the readers to go through the book, or should introduce the significance of the author's work, or at least the preface should present the editing process of the book. Yet we see nothing from that in this preface. On the contrary, we see Blunt swagger about the significance of this work and the valuable contribution it adds to knowledge, without any emphasis on the quality of the author, Lady Anne.

Therefore, if we consider that his genuine ideas and style are in the preface before conducting the comparative study, we may find that most extreme changes in the style and perspective in the content of the book generally comply with his own motives and ideas. Lady Anne's journals, as Archer and Fleming point out “are not, at heart, repositories of fact; they are, rather, the mirror in which an extraordinarily private and diffident person examined her mind” (Archer and Fleming 11). Therefore, my focus on the changes made by Blunt is not necessary to search for the true and honest version of the truth, but rather to investigate

how these changes have their implications on one hand, the oppressive and authoritative voice of Blunt over Lady Anne, and on the imperialist and orientalist tone towards the Arabs on the other hand.

From the first page of the preface, Blunt conflicts with one of Lady Anne's overarching interests in Arabia, and in Najd in particular. Blunt is generally interested in the life of the Bedouins, their morals, behaviours, and origins (genealogy). His interest to visit Najd is stimulated by the accounts of the Bedouins of the North who viewed Najd as "a region of romance, the cradle of their race, and of those ideas of chivalry by which they still live" (Blunt 1881, I). His interest in the "romantic" and "chivalrous" aspect of the life of Arabs in general and in "Najdis"⁷ in specific relate to his own "patrician life-style" (Villa 47). Lady Anne, on the contrary, is often interested in genuine "asyl" Arab horses as demonstrated in her journals, which is less focused on in the book.

The alterations, omission, and additions (either adding whole sections or only adding descriptions to some events) are mainly showcased through his representations and / or "orientalising" in three different ways. Firstly, those alterations seem to be aimed at presenting a seemingly more valuable knowledge than the Blunts' predecessors. Secondly, they introduce an account full of power and political awareness in terms of the relationships with Turks, Arabs, and Bedouins themselves. Thirdly, some of these alterations also represent an enhanced picture of Blunt himself, putatively through Lady Anne's own words, which generally do not exist in the journals and which seem to be out of his own fantasies about himself and his "alter ego."

In the preface, Blunt mentions some of the predecessors in the knowledge about Arabia, among them the Finnish orientalist and explorer Georg August Wallin, the Italian

⁷ A person or a thing from Nejd is "Nejdi" in Arabic or sometimes "Nejdean" as an English way of saying it.

horse expert and traveller Carlo Guarmani, and the English Arabist William Gifford Palgrave. Blunt comments on the geographical knowledge they each provided and strives to spot the weaknesses and gives the reasons why the geographical knowledge in *A Pilgrimage* is more accurate. Wallin's account is "meagre", Guarmani is "silent as to [Nefud's] singular features" (Blunt 1881, xviii), and Palgrave's "account of the physical features of Nefud and of Jabal Shammar, the only one hitherto published, bears very little resemblance to the reality" (xix). He focuses the fact that being disguised, these early travellers could not provide accurate geographic information as they could not work openly with their barometers and compasses and take notes freely in contrast to the Blunt (xvii). Therefore, he took a chance here to promote some of what he saw a geographical contribution to the knowledge of the region.

The Great Nefud⁸

As I note above, in *A Pilgrimage to Nejd* there is a great emphasis on the contribution to geographical knowledge in the Blunts' account and the best that fulfils this overarching need for the Blunts is the Great Nefud. Being the second biggest desert in Arabia, The Great Nefud is renowned as arid and inhospitable. However, there is a constant endeavour in the book to prove otherwise, through the Blunts' journey to Hail.⁹ As I have argued before, Blunt attempts to compose an argument that supports his idea not his wife's and what concerns him more than the Arabian horses is the political and geographical structures of Arabia. Before he recounts their passage of Nefud, he puts forward some scenes where he indicates the difficulties of doing so to foreshadow and to add tensions to the coming story. The account of their preparations for their journey goes,

⁸ Also Nefud, Nefûd, Nefuds, and the Great Nefuds.

⁹ Also spelled Hyil, Hail

We could not afford to leave anything to chance with the prospect of a three months' wandering, and a thousand miles of desert, where it was impossible to count upon fresh supplies even of the commonest necessities of life. Jôf, the first station on our road, was four hundred miles off, and then we must cross the Nefûd, with its two hundred miles of sand, before we could get to Nejd (*A Pilgrimage* 22).

Their passage of Nefud was celebrated by the Roala, a large Bedouin tribe who inhabited some parts of Nefud, and who seemed to be more able to recognise the Blunts' triumph. Therefore, The Nefud for them was a subject of adventures and discoveries.

Blunt is proud of the discoveries and the new understanding he is able to put forward and to put all previous accounts of European travellers in question. He claims that although Guarmani passed Nefud from different places, his maps are difficult to be understood and he did not provide information of the its physical features (Blunt 1881, xviii). The accuracy of Palgrave's account is being doubted too (See Blunt *A Pilgrimage* 22 and 156). Blunt first notes the advantage of being in Nefud during winter.

Mr. Palgrave's account of the physical features of the Nefûd, and of Jebel Shammar, the only one hitherto published, bears very little resemblance to the reality; and our own observations, taken quietly in the clear atmosphere of an Arabian winter, are therefore the first of the kind which have reached Europe (Blunt 1881, xx).

Blunt practices his mapping activities even in the Nefud to discover as much as he can. He always looks for a higher ground that he can use as a vantage point to see all the surrounding and measure distances,

It is seldom that one can see very far in the Nefûd, as one is always toiling up or down sandslopes, or creeping like a fly round the edges of these great basins. The ground is generally pretty even, just round the edges, and one goes from one fulj to another so

as to take this advantage of level. We rode up to the top of one or two of the highest sand peaks, and from one of them made out a line of hills about fifteen miles off to the west-south-west, with an isolated headland beyond, which we recognized as the Ras el Tawil pointed out to us the day we arrived at Jôf. From these heights too we could observe the lay of the fuljes, and make out that they followed each other in strings, not always in a straight line, but as a wady would go, winding gently about (*A Pilgrimage* 161).

Blunt always strives to cover the whole area and, although the “ground is generally even,” he rode the top of “one or two of the highest sand peaks” to cover the whole area and to identify the pattern of the sand dunes. These are all added to Lady Anne’s account. In her Journals, Lady Anne Blunt writes almost spontaneously in which she merely describes whatever she encounters in a simple language. Through her writings and drawings, she describes what amused her, what drew her attention, what she felt, thought, saw, or heard. In other words, there does not seem to be a specific pattern or an underlying theme, or overreaching idea in her prose and style. Apart from occasional scientific hypotheses and measurements she provides in her journals, Lady Anne generally uses the language of amusement and describes the picturesque desert and its sandhills, dunes, creatures, and plants when she describes the Great Nefud. In her journals, she describes the Nefud as follows,

The Nefud is a wonderfully pretty sight with its rolling sandhills hitherto not over 100 or 150 feet high I suppose - crowned with shaba bushes and dotted about with tufts of hashish of various kinds which the camels liked. It must be heavy going in general but today, owing to yesterday’s storm of thunder and rain, the ground was still moist and the sand not so shifting as in its dry state. We did not see any wild creatures except the desert lark and some lizards and locusts. The desert lark is beginning to whistle. Mohammed calls it the juta (*Journals* 67).

This excerpt shows that Lady Anne concentrates on detailed descriptions of the landscape, the creatures and plants which she sees from a perspective of an artist who is always ready to capture the details aesthetically in a painting.

On the other hand, the description of Nefud in *A Pilgrimage* seems to be more specific and most of what was added to the final version of the book tends to relate to Blunt's perspectives and his ideas about knowledge and politics. As the general theme of the Blunts' study of Arabia is set, the book focuses on the distinguished knowledge the Blunts are able to provide, which is often interwoven with Blunt's political understanding of Arabia. The above scene is described differently in the book and is linked to some economic ideas. Nefud is described as being "better wooded and richer in pasture than any part of the desert we have passed since leaving Damascus" contrary to the "great mistake to suppose it barren" (*A Pilgrimage* 157).

When Lady Anne describes some camels' and mares' pasture in her journals, she usually focuses in her description on the different shapes of the plants and their colours.

There is a great deal of adr, a plant camels like and which has stiff little green leaves and stiff little round brownish yellow flowers. Some of it is in flower and leaf, some quite bare – only grey stems growing in tufts. There is also plenty of hamar, a whiteish blueish green, rather prickly, plant which the mares devour greedily (*Journals* 68).

Lady Anne may mention if camels like some of these plants, or if some plants are good for horses, but her general focus is always on the way these plants look. In the book, there is no importance given to the shapes, colours and sizes of animals' pastures as much as the importance given to their benefits for humans and their travelling animals because to the inhabitants of the Nefud, camels and mares were their only way of surviving the highways of

Arabia. The Blunts allude to that in the beginning of their journey when they start choosing their camels “delul” and the danger they may encounter as well as their camels and mares (see *A Pilgrimage* 6). The description of “adr” in the book goes; “adr, on which they say sheep can feed for a month without wanting water, and more than one kind of grass” (*A Pilgrimage* 157). The description of Nefud in the book is as follows:

Wilfrid says that the Nefud has solved for him at last the mystery of horse-breeding in Central Arabia. In the hard desert there is nothing a horse can eat, but here there is plenty. The Nefud accounts for everything. Instead of being the terrible place it has been described by the few travellers who have seen it, it is in reality the home of the Bedouins during a great part of the year. Its only want is water, for it contains but few wells; all along the edge, it is thickly inhabited and Radi tells us that in the spring, when the grass is green after rain, the Bedouins care nothing for water, as their camels are in milk, and they go for weeks without it, wandering far into the interior of the sand desert (*A Pilgrimage* 158).

This whole excerpt is added to the journal and by mentioning Blunt’s name at the beginning, the credit by default goes to him for the whole section, which is concerned with the natural resources and pastures the Bedouins were able to find. There is also an indication to Blunt’s overarching idea that the Blunts have been able to correct several mistakes and misunderstandings by “the few travellers who have seen it” (158). This scene is also linked to his political idea of the “Shepherd Rule”, the idea that the Bedouins, although having long believed to be living in the desert, a place that has been also believed to be barren, are in fact in control, economically, socially and politically, and are ready for “self-rule”.

To prove that the Blunts are distinguished in their studies, some scenes and descriptions are added about their travel companions and how they gave them the advantage

of travelling safely in Arabia. Although, as Blunt notes in the preface that “[i]t is rare to meet anywhere in the North an Arab who has crossed the Great Nefud”, he follows that by mentioning their most devoted companion, “Mohammed Abdullah, son of the Sheykh of Palmyra” (*A Pilgrimage* xi). Blunt illustrates Mohammed’s loyalty from their last travels¹⁰ as “Mohammed has been given a choice between a round sum of money, and the honour of becoming ‘the Beg’s’ brother, a choice which he had chivalrously decided in favour of the brotherhood” to which the Blunt promise him then with an absolute Bedouin brotherly ritual that they would “go in his company to Nejd, where he believed he had relations, and that [they] would help him there to a wife from among his own people” (Blunt 1881, xi). Blunt illustrates; “[t]he idea and the promise were in strict accordance with Bedouin notions, and greatly delighted both him and his father Abdullah, to whom they in due course communicated” (xi). Another important companion especially in their passage of the Nefud is Radi, their guide from Juf to Hail. Radi “has travelled backwards and forwards over the Nefud for forty years, asserts that it never changes. No sandstorm ever fills up the hollows or carries away the ridges. He knew them all and has known them ever since he was a boy” (*A Pilgrimage* 159). To Blunt, Radi is important because as an expert of the Nefud, he can provide accurate and valuable knowledge in contrast to some other Western travellers such as Wallin.

Wallin defines Nejd as the whole district where the ghada grows, a definition taken doubtless from the Bedouins with whom he travelled, and which would include not only Jebel Shammar, but the Nefûds and even the Southern half of the Wady Sirhán. (Blunt 1881, xxv).

¹⁰ Their previous travel are recounted in *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*

Another interesting practice in the book is the use of the first-person point of view as a narrator. In the preface, almost any scientific or geographical knowledge in general and especially knowledge which are connected to the idea of “mapping” and covering any region is narrated by the pronoun “I” to be credited only to Blunt. However, in the content of the book, the pronoun used is “we”. There seems to be no incident where Lady Anne uses the pronoun “I” in the whole content of the book when discussing the discoveries of this specific kind of knowledge or any knowledge for that matter. Here is an example from the journals where Lady Anne does some measuring of what they consider “[t]he most striking features of the Nefud [...] the great horse-hoof hollows which are scattered all over it (Radi calls them Fulj)” (*A Pilgrimage* 158). This scene is changed from the journals so that Lady Anne is not being given credits for her scientific endeavours or attention. In the journals Lady Anne says that “[a]t twelve I took the level again – we were going up for the aneroid gave 2,430 and two hours and a half later 2,560. [...] The first above mentioned as measured was 140 feet deep, the one I measured at half past two was 230 feet” (Archer and Fleming 67). In the book, this scene is recounted differently: “The diameter of some of these fuljes must be at least a quarter of a mile, and the depth of the deepest of them, which we measured to-day, proved to be 230 feet, [...] the next deepest fulj we measured was only a hundred and forty feet” (*A Pilgrimage* 159). It is notable that the “I” in Lady Anne’s words is changed to “we” in the book. By this change of pronouns, Blunt makes sure that he is always credited for any knowledge given even by including himself in the knowledge Lady Anne provides in a way to take advantage of the co-travelling and the co-writing process.

In the preface, when Blunt mentions any sort of contribution that he is not sure is significant he simply uses “we” as a pronoun. However, when he is quite certain about any sort of contribution, he writes in a way of neglecting Lady Anne. Here is an example of what he considers contributions to knowledge from the preface:

In geology, though possessing a superficial knowledge only of our subject, we have, I believe, been able to correct a few mistakes, and to clear up a doubt, much argued by Professor Wetzstein, as to the rock formation of Jebel Aja; while a short memoir I have appended, on the physical conformation of the great sand desert, will contain original—possibly valuable—matter. The sketches, above all, which illustrate these volumes, may be relied on as conscientious representations of the chief physical features of Central Arabia (Blunt 1881, xx).

Notice here when he is not certain about their “superficial knowledge” of geology, he uses the pronoun “we,” while he prides himself of the short memoir he adds “on the physical conformation of the great sand desert” which “will contain original—possibly valuable—matter” Using the pronoun “I”. The sketches were obviously made by Lady Anne, yet Blunt does not attribute that to her which will lead the readers into assuming that everything in the book is co-produced. Another example is when he presents his prominent idea “the Shepherd rule.” Blunt claims that “[a] more important contribution to knowledge will, I hope, be recognised in a description of the political system to which *I have just alluded* under the name of Shepherd rule” (*A Pilgrimage* xxi). As for the remaining parts of the book, we should not be betrayed by Lady Anne’ narration in a first-person point of view

The Shepherd Rule

Blunt proposed his understanding of the regime that works best in Arabian Peninsula, what he refers to as “The Shepherd rule” (Blunt 1881, xxi). According to him, this system is best because it suits the geographical features of Arabia and its Bedouins’ life-styles. Towns and villages of Arabia were almost separated from each other by deserts that are hard to travel through. Bedouins, with their nomadic life-style, inhabited these deserts and took full control

over all highways leading from/to these towns and villages. Therefore, the safety of townspeople and villagers and their travels and passages to each other and delivery of goods depended on their agreements and jurisdictions with the Bedouin tribes who inhabited these deserts. The tribal leaders “Sheikhs” of these Bedouin tribes themselves lived in the deserts in different camping sites.

Arabia is in general not as pastoral as any Westerner would see it, however, the Blunts claim (via Blunt’s louder voice) that although never noticed by Western travellers before, deserts such as the Nefud, are pastoral at least for animals which are Arabs’ only traveling means and one of their most important food resources (*A Pilgrimage* 158, 259). Therefore, a system was working even before the prophet of Islam, Muhammed (570-632). Blunt refers to this system as “tribute and protection” in which townspeople and villagers pay tributes to the Bedouins to ensure their safety and to be protected by these Bedouins. The Sheikhs of the tribes oversee these agreements in which a Sheikh becomes more powerful than the others and raise up in his rank to become a prince “an Emir” (260-261).

At the beginning of last century, all Arabia was independent of central authority, each tribe, and to a certain extent each town, maintaining its separate existence as a State [...] Each town and village in Arabia was considered the property of one or other of the nomade Sheykhs in its neighbourhood, and paid him tribute in return for his protection. The Sheykh too not unfrequently possessed a house or castle within the city walls, as a summer residence, besides his tent outside. He in such cases became more than a mere suzerain, and exercised active authority over the townspeople, administering justice at the gate daily, and enrolling young men as his body-guard, even on occasion levying taxes. He then received the title of Emir or Prince. It was in no other way that the “Shepherd Kings” of Egypt acquired their position and

exercised their power; and vestiges of the old system may still be found in many parts of Arabia. (Blunt 1881, xiii).

Ibn Rashid, Emir of Najd is an obvious example of this regime. The Blunts strive to prove that no other regime works better which resulted in people being able to

travel anywhere, they say, from Jôf to Kasim without escort. The roads are safe everywhere. A robbery has not been known on the Emir's highway for many years, and people found loafing about near the roads have their heads cut off. Ibn Rashid allows no ghazús against travellers, and when he makes war it is with his enemies (119, 120).

Arabs, especially Bedouins, abided by their jurisdiction and rarely broke their agreements. Although there wasn't a constitution or any obvious elements to their agreement, every Sheikh and his people adhere to the agreements with other tribes, townspeople or villagers. In its simplest and most obvious instance, the Blunts show that it was only via their agreements and relationships with some powerful Sheikhs and tribes that they were able to get the most out of their voyage. First and foremost, they befriended Mohammed Ibn Aruk, who was himself a son of Ibn Aruk's Sheikh of Palmyra (Tudmur) and whose male ancestors were from Nejd themselves (*A Pilgrimage* xi). Along their way, they met some of his relations both in Al Jawf "Juf" - where they met his future wife - and in Najd (Blunt 1881, xvi).

Furthermore, the Blunts were smart in seeking good relationships and connections with some Sheikhs and tribes. The first of these was Mijuel, Sheikh's brother of Mizrab of Damascus and the husband of the controversial Mrs. Digby. According to the Blunts' first travels, Mijuel's son is the one who invited the Blunts to come to his father (*Bedouin Tribes* 324). Mijuel then introduced them to Mohammed Dukhi, Sheikh of a tribe called "the Welled

Ali” who was, according to Mijuel, the best who could advise them for their travel to Najd. Although Welled Ali quarrelled with another tribe, the Roala, whose Sheikh is Ibn Shaalan, the Blunts managed to ally with both. Mohammed Dukhi helped them in providing correct information and valuable advice with regards to their travel.

On the other hand, it is only through their alliance with Dukhi’s opponent that they were saved in Wady Sirhan (a depression that extends from the northern parts of modern Saudi Arabia to the southern Parts of Modern Jordan) where they were approached by bandits. The whole party were held prisoners and their arms, camels and mares, and all belongings were taken. The bandits were from the Roala tribes whose Sheikh, Ibn Shaalan, is the Blunts’ friend. The situation is solved as soon as the bandits knew that the Blunts were friends of their Sheikh, Ibn Shaalan, and, again, their friend Mohammed ibn Aruk, helped saving them since he is Tudmuri and Tudmur pays tribute to Ibn Shaalan.

Mohammed stepped out and came forward. “Min entum?” (who are you?) was the first question. “Roala min Ibn Debaa.” “Wallah? will you swear by God?” “Wallah! we swear.” “And you?” “Mohammed ibn Arûk of Tudmur.” “Wallah?” “Wallah!” “And these are Franjis travelling with you?” “Wallah! Franjis, friends of Ibn Shaalan.”

It was all right, we had fallen into the hands of friends. Ibn Shaalan, our host of last year, was bound to protect us, even so far away in the desert, and none of his people dared meddle with us, knowing this. Besides, Mohammed was a Tudmuri, and as such could not be molested by Roala, for Tudmur pays tribute to Ibn Shaalan, and the Tudmuris have a right to his protection. (*A Pilgrimage* 104, 105).

The Blunts were startled by how these Roalas reacted to that and

What struck us as strange in all this was, the ready good faith with which they believed every word we said. We had spoken the truth, but why did they trust us? They knew neither us nor Mohammed; yet they had taken our word that we were friends, when they might so easily have ridden off without question with our property. Nobody would ever have heard of it, or known who they were. (105, 106).

The message in this situation is clear, and complies to Blunt's idea of "tribute and protection." It also shows how positive their relationships with Arabs can be and how Mohammed's being from Tudmur also helped in their situation.

Although their actions might be thought of as some sort of piracy, nomad Bedouins, in the book, are considered the most honourable and noble among Arabs, more than any city-dwellers or any civilised people. In fact, the Blunts are usually disgusted with the manners of the city in favour of the desert. Any good manners of Arabs are usually linked to the desert and any bad manners are usually linked to the city. When they mention Mohammed Dukhi, they illustrate that "noble though he is in point of blood, is not a fine specimen of a great Bedouin Sheykh. His politeness is overstrained and unnatural, reminding one rather of city than of desert manners" (*A Pilgrimage* 27). This is despite Dukhi being a Bedouin Sheikh of the desert. On the other hand, Mijuel of Mizrab, although he was a city man and although he was married to an Englishwoman, his manners are praised as those belonging to the deserts' Bedouins. Although he is not the Sheikh of Mizrab (his brother is) Mijuel was "entitled by birth and position to speak with authority" because "[i]n appearance he shews all the characteristics of a good Bedouin blood" (8) and also because "his heart remains in the desert" (9).

Accordingly, it is important to point out that according to the Blunts, the ultimate picture of a true "Bedouinism" is the rank of Sheikh among any tribe. This rank that should

only be occupied by the most honourable polite, and true blood among the tribe. At any stage, when the Blunts try to convince their readers of the good manners of any person, they would illustrate their readiness to hold the position of a Sheikh or they would compare them to Sheikhs. When they explained Mohammed's dignity, the Blunts say that "[w]e notice that Mohammed has grown in dignity and importance since we saw him last, and has adopted the style and title of a Sheykh" (5). "zellemet Ibn Rashid" or his guardians are also thought of as sons of sheikhs" (117).

The whole point of the emphasis on the Shepherd Rule and on showing the complicated relationship among people of Arabia is to prove two points; that no other system is going to work for Bedouins, and that the Blunts are so far the best who can judge that. In justifying his proposal, Blunt asserts that "it is probably the oldest form of government existing in Arabia, and the one that best suited for the country's need" (Blunt 1881, xxi). In support of his proposed notion, a whole section is devoted to their visit to Midhat Pasha, who has just been appointed the Governor-General of Syria. This is to contrast Midhat Pasha, his manners and his way of ruling, with the Arabs of the deserts. The Blunts despise every characteristic of this person. Midhat was considered a reformer who wanted to change the country through establishing tramways, steamers, canals, and railways as he recently did in Baghdad. The reason provided for despising Midhat Pasha is that he was an example of the statesman who establishes these facilities not to seek prosperity of civilians, but to get a full control over them. In Midhat's own words, "Railways are important for guaranteeing of order in the country" (17). Yet Blunt's own mapping was a first step that led to applying Midhat's (or any other authorities's) ideas of control.

And if Midhat's objective of providing the country with these services was for the sake of his own power, the Blunts themselves use another strategy to provide themselves with power, a generally European one, the "divide and rule" strategy. In choosing travel

companions, they try to gather people from different tribal and religious backgrounds, “as this prevents any combination among them for *mutiny* or *disobedience*” (31-32).¹¹ They are recognised in three “cliques”, two people from Aghyel tribe, another two from Tudmur, and two who are Christians. Blunt made it clear that he did that “so that though they may quarrel with one another, they are never likely to *unite against us*” (32).¹² The art of choosing the travel companions is implied to be Blunt’s profession by his brotherhood with Mohammed and taking the lead of dealing with the servants (xi, xii, 3). Adding to that, the excessive change of Lady Anne’s account indicates that Blunt also exerts authority over her; therefore, all the travellers are subject to his control.

The Blunts showcase their abilities to understand every minute detail about Arabia and Arabs. In the first chapter, a section is added to the journals to recount all the issues and conflicts in the desert in the Blunts’ way to Najd under a the title “Desert news,” These complicated issues, fights, and alliances are happening between different tribes and sections of the Bedouins. So by mentioning these issues Wilfrid Blunt aims at presenting his political abilities and that he always thinks well of every step he is going to take. He also aims at showing off his ability to provide precise knowledge about the complicated relations among Bedouins, knowledge that even a true Bedouin of the North, his companion Mohammed, “knows nothing about the roads to Nejd or Jof, except that they are somewhere away to the south , and that he has some relations there, and I doubt if anybody in Damascus can give us more information” (4). He provides all this complicated and detailed information without mentioning where or how he gets it, a way of showing that he has this unique ability to find knowledge. This is also another way to relate knowledge to power, by implying that since he is the only one who can provide this detailed knowledge, he enjoys more power.

¹¹ Emphasis added

¹² Emphasis added

To conclude, in reading the works of the Blunts and the biographies about them, it is apparent that Lady Anne Blunt, as an author and a female traveller in Arabia, was restricted by her husband's authoritative voice, and that she was not able to express herself clearly in her published works. Although her first travel book in Arabia *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates*, was published under her name, Blunt himself admitted that this book was "in reality a joint work , in which [his] first political views in regard to Arabian liberty may be traced by those who care to seek them" (*Secret History* 21). Furthermore, through a critical reading of Lady Anne's *A Pilgrimage to Nejd*, we can also see that Wilfred Blunt's voice is the prominent one and that her voice is distorted by Blunt's political views. In contrast, the next chapter focuses on Gertrude Bell, who was the second Western female ever to penetrate to Najd and the first to ever do so without a European male chaperone. Her travel account provides an example of an unchaperoned Western woman in Arabia, and the chapter discusses how her representation of the Arabs and Bedouins varies from Lady Anne's.

CHAPTER 2

Gertrude Bell: A Tigress in the Lion's Den



Figure 3: Gertrude Bell (Lukitz 1).

The archaeologist, historian, and diplomat Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell (1868-1926) was the first British woman who penetrated deep into the heart of Arabia, the Najd, after Lady Anne Blunt; but was the first to do so without a white male companion (chaperone). Bell was the daughter of “(Thomas) Hugh Bell (1844–1931), an ironmaster, who succeeded his father as second baronet in 1904, and his first wife, Mary (or Maria; 1844–1871), daughter of John Shield of Newcastle” (Lukitz 1). As a lady of the British upper-class and the daughter of an extremely wealthy family, Bell enjoyed many of the same luxuries as other ladies of her class, however, the opportunities she had were so extraordinary that, as Graham-Brown notes, she was named a “favoured child of fortune” (qtd in Lukitz 1).

Bell had access to the best education in Britain, enjoyed good relations with very powerful people, and possessed wealth that financed her journeys and projects. Women at that time were still socially restricted, however. Nevertheless, Bell's most important characteristic was her strong personality. Her sense of independence and self-reliance started at three years old, when her mother died giving birth to Bell's brother, Maurice, in 1871 (Lukitz 1,2).

In fact, few Western women, even those with Bell's opportunities, would be as strong as her, though Bell's strong personality is in part enhanced by the luxuries she enjoyed. Emily Erickson notes that women have better opportunities to travel and hold a diplomatic post today than during Bell's time, nevertheless, they are not as adventurous and as unafraid to explore as Bell (Erickson 121). Although she came from an immensely wealthy family, travelled unchaperoned, and enjoyed an extraordinary diplomatic position that had never been achieved by a woman in Arabia before her,

Bell [...] was able to achieve so many things as a woman. Bell refused to be constrained by the expectations of the day for women of her rank: she was able to succeed in the 'man's world' of high politics and diplomacy through her imperialist politics, her class entitlement and her forceful personality (Collins and Tripp 3).

Georgina Howell explains that according to Florence Bell, "[i]ntellectual women who filled their lives with 'men's work' – political debate, meetings, complaining – while neglecting their children, husbands and homes were quite definitely immoral" (Howell 47). Therefore, Florence Bell decided to "domesticate" Bell and to "get rid of her 'Oxford manner' or no one would want to marry her" (43).

Bell's strong personality is reflected in her youth as well as in her later work as an historian, archaeologist, and a diplomat. In her youth, she would proffer her opinions regardless of the positions of the people with whom she would argue, which "sometimes got

her in trouble” (Howell 46). As an historian and an archaeologist, Bell resorted to travelling to fulfil both her dreams to venture into the world and to explore the world’s history through the study of archaeology. Her travels “unchaperoned” and her practice of sports such as mountaineering were ways for her to defy the gender norms. Her first engagement with the Near East was during a visit to Persia in 1892 which “led to a formative romantic experience and also to the earliest manifestation of her outstanding literary and linguistic skills” (Lukitz 3). After that, the Near East became her passion until her death in Baghdad in 1926. She was the founder of Iraq Museum, whose rights she defended “like a tigress” (Mallowan 83).

Gertrude Bell has been considered frequently in scholarship for her contribution to the birth of modern Iraq, which gave her the fame in her career. Nevertheless, her travels to Najd, the home of the Ibn Rashid, the Amir of the Shammar tribe is one of her most significant travels despite the fact that she did not publish a whole book on her travels. Textually, this travel showcases a European woman’s representations of the East which correspond exactly with the idea of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. On a personal level, it showcases Bell’s last amateur, independent travel which also culminated in her being offered a national post by the British government. She only published a two-page article about it in the Royal Geographical Society two months afterwards, for which the Society awarded her the gold medal in 1918. However, as Paul Collins and Charles Tripp argue, right after the outbreak of World War I in 28 July 1914 ...

knowledge that had been merely interesting now became strategically Vital.

Accordingly, its acquisition, coordination and analysis were placed on a systematic footing, in the shape of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, headed by Brigadier Gilbert Clayton” (Collins and Tripp 11).

Bell was then appointed to a political career in Cairo by the War Office in November 1915 (Lukits 6). Upon the outbreak of World War I, Bell was very occupied with her diplomatic post to the point that she was not able to publish the previously promised book on her travels to the Najd. Though she was an amateur who travelled for entertainment with the idea of turning her accounts into travel books, Bell's journey enabled her to provide critical up-to-date information about the desert of Arabia and the political and social activities of its people.

The best person to evaluate the calibre of Bell's travels in Central Arabia and the national value of information she provided was Dr. David Hogarth, President of the Royal Geographical Society, and her colleague at the Arab Bureau in Cairo. He reviewed her account a year after her death in 14 April 1927. Florence Bell includes some extracts from Hogarth's work to complete Bell's account of "The Journey to Hayil" (353). In his account, Hogarth highlights some key points about Bell's journey and praises her achievement as of a "national value". Bell claims that her main interests of her travels were to look for archaeological traces, yet Hogarth in his account notes that the value of Bell's account actually lies in its geographical, political and social information. He points out that...

perhaps the most valuable result consists in the mass of information that she accumulated about the tribal elements ranging between the Hejaz Railway on the one flank and the Sirhan and Nefûd on the other, particularly about the Howaitât group, of which Lawrence, relying on her reports, made signal use in the Arab campaigns Of 1917-1918 (Hogarth 16).

Hogarth clearly attributes T.E. Lawrence's later achievement in provoking the Arab Revolt against Turkey during the War to the information provided by Bell. Hogarth also comments on Bell's account of the political situation in Central Arabia, the apparent weakening of the

Rashidi house, who was an ally of the British main enemy in the region, the Turks, and the rising of the power of the Ibn Saud.

Her information proved of great value during the war, when Hayil had ranged itself with the enemy and was menacing our Euphratean flank. Miss Bell became from 1915 onwards, the interpreter of all reports received from Central Arabia (Hogarth 16).

The relevant texts I will be examining in this chapter are Bell's article in the Royal Geographical Society, her letters in "The Journey to Hayil" in *The Letters of Gertrude Bell* (1927) edited by Lady Florence Bell, and her letters and diaries in *Gertrude Bell's Arabian Diaries* (2000) edited by Rosemary O'Brien. The importance of the last lies in O'Brien's inclusion of Bell's letters to her lover, Charles Doughty-Wylie. In studying the three texts, I should note that due to the different recipients of Bell's letters of this journey, her tone changes accordingly. Through a close reading of these texts, I argue that it was mainly by her extraordinary orientalist representation of the Near East with her exceptional "first of their kind" photographs of Arabia and Arabs, Bell gained the attention of the British Empire represented in the War Office and the Royal Geographical Society.

I presume that the usefulness of the account's accumulated knowledge to British intelligence tempted Hogarth more than its archaeological and historical aspects. However, Bell bases her perspective on the Arabs and the inhabitants of the region on her historical and archaeological understanding of the region. That seems reasonable because the Blunts main interest, horse-breeding, is reflected in their accounts, and so too did Bell's profession influence her travelogue. Not only that, to understand Bell's account better, close attention should be paid to her career as a woman in a still male dominated profession. Equally important is her status as an unchaperoned female traveller and an adventurer; and her political, imperial, and intelligence posting. On the other hand her anti-suffrage claims also

need attention. The actual reason behind her anti-suffragist stance is the fact that “[e]ducated, intelligent women who had already gained civil rights and could exercise political influence feared the effect of uneducated women on policymaking” (Archer-Greve 159). Most of the people from Bell’s class held anti-suffrage beliefs (Duplisea 60). According to Bell’s biographer, Georgina Howell, “the working woman was already worked to her limit and could not be expected to have the energy or insight to vote” (qtd in Duplisea 60).

Therefore, although my main interest in this project is to discuss Bell’s travelling accounts in the Arabian Peninsula, I believe that her earlier and later works are also necessary to provide a complete analysis. In this case, examining any relevant text of Bell’s overall works, personal life, and other engagements with other regions of Arabia should provide a better understanding of Bell and her representations of the Arabian Peninsula..

On the issues related to her gender, key influences are her youth during her studies, her class background and her engagement with other male counterparts throughout her life and career; and her career as a historian, archaeologist and a traveller, as well as her earlier travels, notably her book *The Desert and the Sown* (1907). This book, an account of her travels in Syria, Jordan, and Palestine, assists in understanding her “orientalist” discourse. To examine the influence of Bell’s political career, her role during the First World War and later in Mesopotamia are most important, as recounted in her book *Arabs of Mesopotamia* (1918).

Bell realised the gender issues she faced from her early age when she was a student at Queen’s College in Harley Street, because “[t]he young ladies were scrupulously chaperoned wherever they went, and Gertrude, longing to see more of the sights of the city, chafed at not being allowed to go about on her own” (Howell 29). She told her parents, ““I wish I could go to the National¹³ [...] But you see, there is no one to take me. If I were a boy I should go every

¹³the National Gallery

week” (Howell 29). Nevertheless, Bell was the first woman to get a first in Modern History at Oxford University (Winstone 19). During her studies at Oxford, she was well-known as an opinionated young woman and would argue with her professors (40). At that time, young women were meant not to have opinions as “the idea that women were inferior was built into the teaching” (Howell 39). Furthermore, Bell was a very athletic woman who went hunting, dancing, bicycling, shooting, fishing, gardening, and most importantly, mountaineering (Howell 78).

Before discussing gender issues, it is important to note that in Bell’s life, gender mingles with class: they reflect on and influence each other. Thus, a female who belonged to the upper-class was usually more powerful than a female of middle or lower class. Genna Duplisea claims that “Bell’s class, political leanings, and ability to embed herself in organizations of power and knowledge facilitated her rise in power and respect” (57). Duplisea illustrates how Bell’s social advantages always gave her the good connections and networking she needed to elevate her gender because of her class. Furthermore, this allowed her to always connect with upper-class not only with Westerners, but even Arabs, Druze, Turkish, or any for that matter. Bell was “an upper-class woman connected to the upper classes in the places she visited, which justifies her traveling to and writing about the region” (Duplisea 59). Even during the suffrage movement, “[t]he anti-suffrage movement shows that the class divide was greater than the gender divide” (Duplisea 61).

Adding to that, the wealth of her family played an important part in her encounters. Bell was “a scion of the sixth-richest family in Britain” (Howell 48). Because of this status “Bell had at her disposal not only the ability to travel with relative ease that such wealth brought with it, but also an education that, for a young woman in the late nineteenth century, was extremely privileged” (Short 9). Despite her great academic achievements at Oxford, Bell “would have to rely on assets other than a diploma or even her own knowledge to join a

professional network [...] Bell had access through family connections to British embassies and consulates abroad” (Duplisea 58). Even her grasp of languages is also attributed to her “good family connections that allowed her to travel widely” (Asher-Greve 143). Bell’s command of Arabic was commended by the Mufti of Jerusalem who “pronounced that he had never heard better Arabic on the lips of a foreigner” (Mallowan 82). In this regard, Bell’s class and wealth prevailed over the status of her gender.

In my reading of Bell’s *Journey to Nejd*, I will draw heavily on her class, wealth, and gender to understand how that influenced her travels as well as her representations of Arabia and the Arabs. In her first letter to her father in November 1913, before she started her journey to Najd, she informed him about her plans and tried to convince him to finance her journey. She argued that “there never was a year more favourable for a journey into Arabia than this. The desert is absolutely tranquil and there should be no difficulty whatever in getting to Hayil [...] and even much further” (*Letters* 309).

It is true that Bell was adventurous in choosing to travel to Hail at that time, but her adventures were contingent on her trust in her judgment, abilities, and her money as well. She was able to meet very important tribespeople who were well-acquainted with Arabia and its conditions. She bought whatever she thought she might need: gifts, camels with their gears, and food. She was also able to hire “the right man as a guide” (*Letters* 309). To convince her father about this person, she explains:

I have got to-day exactly the right man as a guide. He was with Mr. Carruthers 3 years ago. I heard of him with the highest praise from him. To-day he turned up at Bassams and Bassam at once told me that I could not have one who is better acquainted than he with all the Arab tribes. To have got him is a piece of extraordinary good luck. He is

the man of all others whom I should have chosen. So much for the chances of success in this business (*Letters* 309).

In this she assures her father that with this guide, there is no need for luck anymore. Bell's self-confidence is showcased in her journey. She claims, "I not a little inclined to doubt my won wisdom" when all her guides and servants "inclined to grumble" to prove that "after all I was right" (*Letters* 332).

In her travels to Najd, Bell willingly avoided using her official connections either from the Turkish, or from the British because "she had a reason to know that such a project would not be approved" by either official side. Nonetheless, she informed some of her unofficial connections and friends and discussed the matter with some local Arabs, among them the local agent of Ibn Rashid. Therefore, Bell only avoided officials who she believed would not approve her travels, and instead dealt with Sheikhs and representative of Sheikhs of the desert. Bell was very intelligent in dealing with each tribe and its sheikh. She knew that tribes of the desert usually raided each other, therefore, she equipped herself with two important survival tools: gifts, which she sometimes calls *mejidehs* or baksheesh, and *rafiqs* (escorts - travel companions) from the tribes she intends to pass through their territories. Throughout her travels, she only dealt with sheikhs through her giving of gifts and asking for *rafiqs*.

The real purpose of this practice was not merely to ask the *rafiqs* for directions, but as a form of surety from their own tribes not to raid or rob Bell and her crew. The first instance of this practice happened when they were stopped by some Arabs of the mountain of Jebel Druse. They were stopped by some bandits who forcibly took some of their weapons and cloaks. The scenario of this situation is similar to the one that happened to the Blunts, the Sheiks of the bandits recognised some of the travel companions and then the travellers got

their possessions back and drank coffee with them. However, Bell notes that she tried early in Dumeir to find anyone who belongs to the Druse Arabs but failed and now after this situation she argued for the importance of having a companion from the Druse Arabs.

But to avoid the occurrence of such events, or worse, we are to take with us a man from their tents, and to that end we have been obliged to camp near them that a suitable companion may be found. The sheikhs have drunk coffee with me, enjoyed a long conversation with all of us and been so good as to accept my backsheesh in token of our gratitude in being rescued from the hands of the shepherds. And they have given us a comprehensive letter to all the Arabs of the Mountain (*Letter* 315).

What the Blunts referred to as gifts (especially for sheiks, or emirs) Bell refers to as “baksheesh”. She also notes at some occasions that Arabs of the desert would accept or even ask for mejidehs, in contrast to the Blunts’ argument that Arabs of the desert would never ask for baksheesh. Furthermore, in another event, Bell illustrated that she and her crew encountered Sayyah, Sheik of the Wadi Sulaiman who not only took some of their belongings, but even refused to give them a companion to be free to come later in the night and rob them. When they heard that Sayyah was camped near them, “we thought it wiser to camp with him that night and take a rafiq from him, -otherwise, you understand, he would probably have sent after us in the night and robbed us” (336).

Bell explained the situation...

He received us with all courtesy, but it was only pretence [...] He swore that no Christian had ever visited this country and none should go, that he would send no rafiq with us so that he might be free to rob us, and finally he proposed to said and Fattuh that they should aid him to kill us and share the spoil. He got no

encouragement from them and I do not know that any of the threats were more than words (336)

He then reluctantly agreed to give them a rafiq.

The rafiqs themselves may not be of that powerful strong personality, but their belonging to a tribe is the point. Bell introduces one of her rafiqs who was a very old man called Abu Ali...

We have with us to guard us against the Arabs of the Mountain the oldest old man you could wish to see. He crouches upon a camel by day and over the camp fire by night. He seldom speaks and I can scarcely think that any one would respect a party introduced by so lifeless and ragged a guarantor (316).

However, this old man later proved to be very helpful when they encountered men of his kin.

The point of her emphasis on having rafiqs is clear that she understands the extent of kinship of the tribal society of the Bedouins and appreciate that even a powerless person such as Abu Ali can guarantee them safe pass through his tribe. On the other hand, she also understands that giving sheikhs gifts proves to them how she appreciates and respects them.

Bell's perspective on the inhabitants of Arabia is based on her profession as a historian and archaeologist. During the period 1886-1914, Bell established her worldview "that would inform her later activities in shaping Iraq's future" (Collins and Tripp 4). In this period, Bell published one of her important books of her travelogues *The Desert and the Sown* (1907). This perspective is important in understanding the degree which archaeology and ancient history had on Bell's accounts. The importance of both to her representations and perspectives of Arabia is expressed in her other book *The Arab of Mesopotamia* (1918) where she describes how "Village headman and Arabian amir 'sat in the gate' as the Kings of Babylon and Judea had sat before them, and judged between their people without code or

procedure” (qtd in Collins and Tripp 11). In this, she links ancient history of the Arab world with its contemporary people focusing on the aspect of the timelessness and changelessness of the Arabs.

In the preface of *The Desert and the Sown*, Bell showcases her ethnocentric orientalist understanding of the Arabs ...

The Oriental is like a very old child. He is unacquainted with many branches of knowledge which we have come to regard as of elementary... On the other hand, his action is guided by traditions of conduct and morality that go back to the beginning of civilisation, traditions unmodified as yet by any important change of life to which they apply and out of which they arose (Bell 1907, x).

In this quote, as well as in her travel account to Hail, Bell’s stereotypical orientalist perspective is manifested in many forms: the first is by infantilising the Oriental for not keeping up with the knowledge that Westerners deemed “elementary”. This leads to another Orientalist point of view which corresponds with Michel Foucault’s understanding of the Western idea of reason and unreason (see Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*). In this book Foucault argues that people with mental issues had been referred to as “unreasonable” and therefore needed to be controlled via pathology. While Orientalist discourse does not necessarily deal with medical or mental issues, the Oriental is represented in the category of the mad which is “unreason” or barbaric. H. V. F. Winstone, for instance, calls the people of the Orient “wild and fanatical tribesmen” in her biography of Bell (Winstone 126). From a Western perspective, stigmatising people as unreasonable and infantilising them should create the possibility, and maybe the necessity, of controlling them.

Even the moral code of the Arabs and traditions were stigmatised by Bell as being outdated and having never been changed “by any important change of life”. The allusion that

a reader may get from this conduct of stigma is that these people need to be brought to the modern day by the power of the knowledge and frequent changes of the life of the West. This position should also create an opportunity for the imperial powers to practice their imperialism on Arabs. In another instance, Bell gives a hint that her understanding of the change of life comes usually from her European perspective. She describes the uniqueness of Hail as this:

There they were, those women – wrapped in Indian brocades, hung with jewels, served by slaves and there was not one single thing about them which betrayed the base existence of Europe or European – except me! I was the blot (*Arabian Diaries* 85, 86).

Her description of the uniqueness of the Arabs of Najd is not a way of contemplating, but rather a constant juxtaposing of the Orient with the Occident. This uniqueness is looked at as “strange” and as “Other”. The most important allusion from this quote is that Bell’s measuring tool of this strangeness is by not seeing any form of European influence on the Arabs of Hail. This view is derived from her Western ego; Europeans are always superior to the East. Bell’s view is also compatible with Said’s frequent reference to the Orientalist discourse that Arabs are low in their religion, traditions, culture.

One example is when Bell passed the Nefud, she notes that “[w]e finished with the Nefud for good and all yesterday and today we have been through a charming country – charming for Arabia – of great granite rocks and little plains with thorny acacia trees growing in them and a very sweet scented desert plants” (*Letters* 341). By being specific that this country is “charming for Arabia” she attempts to make the distinction clear between the meaning of “charming country” in the English context and “charming for Arabia” as an effort to not mislead the recipient of this letter, her father. Another example is when she

complimented the Amir's uncle, Ibrahim, for being "an intelligent and (for an Arab) well educated man" (342). The point that she makes here is that it is "a charming country", but not as charming as an English person would understand, and that Ibrahim was "well educated" but not according to the standards of the West.

In the account of her travel to Najd, Bell frequently evokes these Orientalist ideas. The best section in her travel that provides a clear illustration of her perspective is when she describes her stay in the castle of the Amir of Shammar at Hail. To Bell, Hail illustrates the ultimate example of the ancient unmodified Orient. She claims that "I imagine that there are few places left wherein you can see the unadulterated East in its habit as it has lived for centuries and centuries – of those few Hayyil is one" (85). When she arrived, she figured out that the Amir was not present and was raiding some Northern tribes. In her first letter to Charles Doughty-Wylie (D-W) "with whom she was deeply in love" (Cleveland 664) to recount her stay at Hail she says, "What did I tell you as the quality most needed for travel among the Arabs? Patience if you remember; that is what one needs" (*Arabian Diaries* 79). In another scene, a rafiq warns Bell against going straight South because the tribe who inhabited the region "Howaitat" had left the region and that "the desert is empty – given over to the raiders" of some small Syrian tribes which would be dangerous (*Arabian Diaries* 56). Instead, the rafiq suggested that they should go West, through an "unmapped ground" (57) because Bell relied very much on maps of former travellers and geographers such as Douglas Carruthers and Charles Doughty. How Bell comments on this situation is that

the quality most needed when travelling among Arabs is not (as some have wrongly stated) courage, but patience. My fairy godmothers forgot to endow me with it [...]
But perhaps I should have learnt how to practice it before this journey is done (56).

It is her way of saying that above all, you must have patience to be able to deal with these barbaric child-like people. She focuses on patience in dealing with the Arabs even more than courage while travelling in the barren Arabian deserts.

When dealing with her account of her stay at Hail, there are some issues to be considered, such as gender, Orientalism, class, and religion. The first issue that comes to mind is that Bell notes she was imprisoned for the whole period at Hail starting from February 25, 1914 until March 28. She also notes that she was not given any reason of (her imprisonment / being held). Bell points out that she was not allowed to explore the city during the day without a permission or an invitation and that she was only invited to the Qasr (palace) or any others during the night. This was the nature of her imprisonment, though I assume the situation is more complicated than what Bell described.

While Bell only infrequently refers to the seriousness of an unaccompanied European woman in Arabia, she understands that the restraints on women in Hail are mainly religious and cultural. The conservative Arabian culture at that time greatly influenced people's understanding of Islam – see for instance Terance Lovat's *Women in Islam: Reflections on Historical and Contemporary Research*. Bell points out that the Amir's vizier told her companion Muhammed al-Ma'rawi "that there was some discontent among the *ulema* at my coming and that etc etc in short, I was not to come further into the town till I was invited" (*Arabian Diaries* 80). Therefore, instead of looking at the cultural restraints as initiated in their moral code, and instead of understanding those morals by asking how their restraints originate from their moral code, she criticises harshly and stigmatises them. Although Bell declared that she came to Hail to look at the city and the people, she seems to be more irritated by not meeting important people, which she usually expects when she travels to any place. The Amir was away raiding and the most powerful person in the castle, the Amir's grandmother, Fatima, refused to meet Bell.

Bell constantly compares her stay at Hail to the *Arabian Nights*. She comments in particular on, the buildings, on the harem, on the way Arabian women are dealt with, and on the Rashidi Amirs murdering one other. Bell notes that she was imprisoned with no answer to being paid back the money which she deposited at the Amir's representative at Damascus, being refused to travel until the Amir comes, and being refused to meet Fatima. Comparing her situation at Hail with the *Arabian Nights* may also allude to Bell imagining herself a Shahrazad-like figure. She comments that ...

I had no idea what was in their dark minds concerning me. I sat imprisoned and my men brought me in rumours from town... the whole business was the work of Fatima, but why and how it would end, God alone knew. It was like a story in the Arabian Nights, but I did not find it particularly enjoyable to be one of the 'dramatis personae' (*Letters* 344).

In this quote Bell imagined herself a Shahrazad in one of the stories of the *Arabian Nights* who cannot imagine the dark future in front of her or does not know if she will see the light of the next day or not. The difference between her situation and an imaginative story of the *Arabian Nights* is that she does not enjoy it very much because she is in the middle of a real situation and she thinks that her life is at risk. It may also be understood that in real life, Arabs are more serious and very real and that she could not just deceive them by an imaginative story every night to delay her execution like Shahrazad in the *Arabian Nights*. That statement also hints that although Arabs Bell met were not as naïve as they are in the *Arabian Nights* to be just deceived by a story, they are more violent, though she never indicated receiving threats. If we compare her visit to Hail to the Blunts, we can see that the Blunts claim that:

Still the incident was a lesson and a warning, a lesson that we were Europeans still among Asiatics, a warning that Hail was a lion's den, though fortunately we were friends with the lion (*A Pilgrimage II* 21).

However in Bell's case, she was not able to become a friend with the lion because although she "would never have admitted being afraid of the lion" (O'Brien 18), "[s]he realized that she might fear the lion after all" (O'Brien 30) after she left Hail.

What seems to be encouraging Bell to think as such is the stories she heard from and about slaves, women, and maids of Hail. Regarding slaves, she notes that "[t]hey take slaves like the mares and camels, put the ill favoured ones to hewing of wood and drawing of water and the well favoured they arm and take into their houses" (*Arabian Diaries* 196). Regarding women, she refers to the way they were treated in the light of the political turmoil of the Rashidi dynasty and their many upheavals. As she explains the situation of the women of the castle:

Some of the women of the shakily house were very beautiful. They pass from hand to hand – the victor takes them, with her power and the glory, and think of it! His hands are red with the blood of their husband [sic] and children (*Arabian Diaries* 86).

The descriptions of the city of Hail showcase the differences between Bell and the Blunts' accounts and their different perspectives. In general, the Blunts are impressed by Hail, its people, and their customs which echoes their argument that the political system of Jabal Shammar can stand alone. Hail to them, from the moment they saw people riding to it "looked more like civilisation than anything we had seen since leaving Syria" (*A Pilgrimage* 211). In their description of Hail, the Blunts focus on showing the civilisation of Hail via the liveability of the city, the custom, the nobility and hospitality of their people, and the luxury of the Amir and his guards and servants. They concentrate on detailing every scene in Hail

and in the Qasr/Kasr (palace) of the Amir. They illustrate their amusement the first time they entered Hail and the way they were received.

Our reception was everything that we could wished. As we rode into the courtyard of the kasr we were met by some twenty well-dressed men, each one of whom made a handsome appearance than any Arabs we had previously seen in our lives. ‘the sons of the Sheyks,’ whispered Mohammed, who was rather pale, and evidently much impressed by the solemnity of the occasion (*A Pilgrimage* 213).

In this the Blunts wanted to express that not only they but even a true Bedouin Arab such as Mohammed of Palmyra was amused by such a view, though he came from Palmyra and was supposedly familiar with the civilisation of Syria at that time. They went far to claim that “I thought I had never seen so many agreeable faces collected together, or people with so excellent a demeanour” (214). These were the servants of the Amir. They were even confused that the “magnificent old man, clothed in scarlet, whose tall figure and snow-white beard gave us a notion of what Solomon might have been in all his glory” (213) was not the Amir himself but the Amir’s chamberlain. Wilfrid Blunt then followed the custom and protocol when he “gave the usual ‘salam aleykum’ to which every one replied ‘aleykum salam’ in a loud sheerful tone, with a cordiality of manner that was very reassuring” (214).

The reception of the Amir who “looked every inch a king” (216) is also worth mentioning...

And then there was stir, and a general rising, and the word passed round, ‘yiji el Emir,’ the Emir is coming. We, too, got up, and this time it really was the Emir. He came in at the head of a group of still more smartly-dressed people than those we had seen before, and held out his hand to Wilfrid, to me, and to Mohammed, exchanging salutations with each of us in turn, and smiling graciously (*A Pilgrimage* 215).

The Blunts' account in general is derived from their romantic understanding of Hail. They even acknowledge that the previous tales they had heard about the Amir and his murdering of his rivals in the same reception room they were sitting in the meantime was the reason for them to think that the Amir has "a conscience-stricken face, or of one which fears an assassin" (216). They agree that his face "may be mere fancy, prompted by our knowledge of Ibn Rashid's past life." However, they describe in the footnote that "the danger to Mohammed is a personal one on account of the blood he has shed, not an official one, for, as Emir, he is adored by his subjects" (218).

Bell, on the other hand, was less impressed by her reception in Hail than the Blunts. There are some potential reasons for that. One reason is the absence of the Amir, for which, accordingly, Bell was not probably received with the same cordiality as the Blunts. Although Bell did not make it clear, this may be proportional to the reception of the Blunts in Hail, as Lady Anne Blunt was the only European female who came hitherto thus far. Another reason is that this could be a sign of the collapse of the Rashidi Emirate of Jabal Shammar, which is also not made clear in Bell's account. Nevertheless, her description of Hail and its people does not coincide with her cartographs of Hail. In her photos, the city of Hail is close in its liveability to the account and drawings of the Blunts. Yet in her account, it was full of mysteries.

Almost every detail Bell makes about the city and the people are either reflected in her idea of the *Arabian Nights*-like story or obliquely in the events she narrates. In that, she was not particularly impressed by what she saw in Hail. She narrates the events so that they look like they were a part of her adventure to deal with what she believed were some "close-minded" people, through what she believed to be an imprisonment. Her imprisonment, however, seems to be more complicated than how she describes it. I believe that we need to look at the big picture. First, the Amir of Hail was raiding some northern tribes; second, Ibn

Saud's star is shining in the south and he managed to recapture Riyadh in 1902 after it had been under the Rashidi rule for some years¹⁴. At this stage, the main rival powers in central Arabia belong to the two poles, the Saudi and the Rashidi dynasties,

In conclusion, Gertrude Bell was privileged as a female who belonged to an extremely wealthy family of the ruling class; her status enabled her to meet powerful people everywhere she went. Her class helped her overcome the gender expectations of female at her time in general, and with her strong personality, she was able even to overcome gender expectations of her own rank. However, she was not satisfied with her stay at Hail because her expectations were confounded: she was not able to meet the most powerful people in Hail, the Amir or his grandmother; and she was not given the freedom a white woman usually received in Arabia by having access to both the Harem and the men's sections. In the end, if Bell was described once as "a tigress," in Hail, she was overwhelmed by the power of the lioness, the Amir's grandmother.

In the next chapter, I will read Freya Stark's travels in South Arabia as a woman who was not as privileged as Bell because she belonged to the middle-class and because she was not as wealthy as Bell. In reading Stark, I am interested to investigate her methods as well as her philosophy and how these influenced her depictions of Arabia.

¹⁴ Ibn Saud: King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman, founder of Saudi Arabia

CHAPTER 3

Freya Stark: A Humorous and Wise Traveller



Figure 4: "Freya Madeline Stark, 1957" (Hansen 1).

The perpetual charm of Arabia is that the traveller finds his level there simply as a human being: the people's directness, deadly to the sentimental or pedantic, likes the less complicated virtues; and the pleasantness of being liked for oneself

(A Winter in Arabia 157)

Living over 100 years, Dame Freya Madeline Stark produced a wealth of resources on the Middle East, ranging from travel books (her main profession), books of essays, articles,

autobiographies, letters to pictorial books (Ruthven 147). She was awarded the Founder's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society for her accounts of her travels to Yemen, south of Arabia (Moorehead 81). When she was eighty-two “she was knighted by Queen Elizabeth for her contribution to the literature of travel” (Amoia and Knapp 195). When Stark worked for the Ministry of Information she was able to convince the British officials to apply her idea of Ikhwan al-Hurriyah (Brotherhood of Freedom), a secret network she invented during World War Two to convince the Arabs to support and stand beside the British (Geniesse 261). In this chapter, I will discuss her growing interests in Arabia and her understanding of the “Arab World.” I concentrate specially on her travels in South Arabia, the territories known today as Yemen and the Hadhramaut. The works discussed here are *The Southern Gates of Arabia*, and *A Winter in Arabia*, which appeared respectively in 1936, and 1940. Along with the above works, she also published “*Seen in the Hadhramaut*, the first pictorial portrayal of this remote region” (Amoia and Knapp 201).

Before analysing Stark’s accounts in Arabia, it is important to consider some key points. The most important one is that the Arabs we usually see in Stark’s accounts are not typically the same as the Arabs we see in both the Blunts’ and Bell’s accounts. One important way to understand this difference is to consider the geographical differences between North and Central Arabia (Najd) on one hand and South Arabia on the other. The geographical differences also determine the economic, social and political status of the people. As seen with the Blunts and Bell, the people of the North and the Najd relied very much on the rain of the winter. Furthermore, in the Blunts’ point of view, the Bedouins of the desert controlled the road to and from the cities, therefore exercise their power of control over the trading and travelling activities.

In contrast, the situation in South Arabia was different due to their unique location near the Sea. There were various important ports in different cities such as Aden, Du’an and

Mukala. In general, this means that Yemen and the Hadhramaut had a very strong connections with the outer world in terms of trading. In Stark's account, she notes that goods were shipped to and from India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Abyssinia (Ethiopia). On a different level, South Arabia also had a strong connection up north to Makkah, reaching to Palestine, either via the Red Sea or via land routes. People, especially pilgrims, travelled to Makkah and some of them continued their travels to Jerusalem. Stark mentions many local people who have relatives or people they know abroad or overseas such as Palestine, Iraq, Malaysia.

This uniqueness of South Arabia made it a target of colonial greediness and created opportunities that colonialists were not able to find in Central Arabia. South Arabia had been under colonial rule for a long time. The British, for instance, aimed at protecting the sea that connects British India to the Mediterranean Sea. They "occupied Aden in 1839 primarily for its strategic position as a coaling station en route to India, as well as a preemptive move to secure her interests in the southern part of the Red Sea against French expansionism" (Petouris 56). The British colonial power was there up until the British withdrawal in November 1967 (Petouris 56). This made South Arabia and its people different in another way than the people of Najd and North Arabia in their opportunities as well as in their struggles too with either the British, or with the anti-colonialist groups. Soon before Stark's *Winter in Arabia*' travels, Harold Ingrams and his wife Doreen, the British political officials in the Aden Protectorate, settled a long tribal dispute and a blood feud for which Harold was called "as Al Muslahi' 'the settler [of disputes]'" by the locals "and numerous fathers offered him their daughters in marriage" (Stearn 1). Therefore, in South Arabia, protection and peacemaking were subject to European intervention,s in contrast to the Bedouins of the desert of Najd as in the Blunts' account.

One important aspect of Stark's account is that her travels in South Arabia took place in the period between the two World Wars. This time is significant in its uncertainty and in the technologies which were introduced and used as a show of power and modernity. During this time, some new technologies had reached South Arabia such as motor cars, trucks and aeroplanes. Therefore, Stark and her companions' travelling experiences was absolutely different to the Blunts and Bell. The travelling that took days on camels and horses from one place to another would take Stark only hours by car or plane. Stark used the time saved in travelling by staying more among the Arabs. She usually stayed for a long period of time in most of the places she visited which created a good opportunity for her to better understand the people, be more immersive and establish strong connections.

Another special attribute of Stark's account is that before she travelled to South Arabia, the oil expedition and the Ingrams had been working there for quite some time and the Arabs of the South were used to seeing Westerners in their land. The significance of Stark's travels is that she usually takes readers through her journey to explore how Westernisation might impact the local people. However, she strove to deal carefully with the cultural differences and incite Westerners to adhere to the local social practices and avoid what "will look discordant against the background of these towns" (*A Winter* 86).

Furthermore, some important characteristics of Stark as a traveller and as an intellectual is that she did not grow up in a wealthy family such as Lady Anne Blunt and Gertrude Bell. Travelling, therefore, was not for her the luxurious entertainment of a wealthy person. The Blunts travelled mainly because they were rich and they were interested in some of the aristocratic people's luxuries such as the purity of the Arabian horses and the nobility of the Bedouins. Bell travelled as an archaeologist and a diplomat who was keen to craft for herself a unique intellectual and political name. However, Stark's initial goal to study Arabic was to become a governess in the Middle East (Hansen 2). She studied at home first, took a

correspondence course, then “studied history at Bedford College, University of London (1911–14)” (Hansen 2) however, Stark was not able to complete her studies amid the outbreak of the First World War. Therefore she was mostly self-educated and her father funded her earlier travels. In her autobiography *Traveller's Prelude: Autobiography*, we see the struggles she, her mother, and her younger sister encountered to gain a living as her parents weren't in a harmonious marriage.¹⁵ Her parents separated when she was ten years old and her mother took her and her younger sister, Vera, to Dronero in Italy to establish a carpet factory “removing the girls from the comfortable life in England and condemning them to life of poverty and loneliness” (Amoia and Knapp 195). Stark worked in the factory for some time and she also kept her mother's house (*Traveller's Prelude* 90).

Another important reason for Stark to travel was as a form of escapism. Stark suffered from health issues almost all of her life. The first and most terrifying one was an accident in the carpet factory. Prior to her thirteenth birthday, Stark was caught by the machinery in the factory (Geniesse 29). In this accident, she was disfigured as she lost half of her hair, her right ear and her eyelid. Stark had to undergo cosmetic surgery “both to alleviate pain from damaged nerves and to do something about the scars around her temple and eye” (Geniesse 159). Stark was proud of her hair before this accident (Geniesse 29), but after the accident she was often cautious about her look and tried always to cover her scars. When her fiancé Guido broke the engagement, she compared herself to prostitutes “realizing that these women who made love for commerce had the chance for a fulfillment that she might be denied” (Geniesse 40). Escapism in her life started during her bedridden period after the accident by her focus on studying and reading Shakespeare. After the broken engagement, her mother, Flora, realized Stark's need of comfort and urged Stark's father to come over from Canada and take

¹⁵ Some scholars suggest that Robert Stark was not her natural father as her mother had an affair with someone else. See for instance (Amoia and Knapp 194,195).

her “to Egypt, the mountains, anywhere, as long as it was away from her unspeakable disgrace” (Geniesse 41).

Stark also saw in travelling “a substitute for love, husband, and children to become a writer, to combat fear and fear of death, and to leave behind what she termed ‘an unacceptable life’” (Amoia and Knapp 194). Her initiative to travel for the purpose of writing was when she discovered that the Druze, the “fiercely secretive people,” rebelled against the French colonialists (Geniesse 11). Stark intended to travel to interview the Druze not afraid that they “were well known to be hostile to outsiders,” but afraid of “the awful thought that eventually, unless she could devise some alternative, she would have to return to Italy, to her domineering mother and that appalling life that had trapped her for so long.” (Geniesse 11,12). Even in “[t]he third phase of Stark’s travels and travel writing” in the 1950s, she sought in her career an escape from the “the moss of British influence and power in the Middle East and [from] the failure of her marriage” (Amoia and Knapp 202, 203). Stark’s travels then were mainly her soothing means for coping with the difficulties of life.

The questions are: did her plan succeed in her goal of conformity and embeddedness? Did she really achieve her goal of becoming an absolute Arab? And do her representations of the Arabs match with her alleged persona? These questions need to be addressed separately, though the first and second intersect at some stages.

In her travels, Freya Stark was devoted to craft for herself a travelling persona, a character who is prone to adopt new knowledge and manners. She desired to be a student more than a teacher of those whom some of the European travellers would call, *primitive* people, the Arabs of the desert. During her learning of Arabic, therefore, Stark was obsessed with the idea that to achieve the ultimate benefits from her travels, she had to adopt new attitudes of travelling and recounting Others. From her earlier stages of learning Arabic and

learning about the East, she realised the importance of “*thinking*” when she read more than fifty entries on the Jebel Druse, the source of one of her initial interests in the East (Moorehead 40). Thinking, then, meant that she had to think of a new, unconventional travelling experience instead of only looking for some new and undiscovered materials to discover and discuss. In fact, her travels to South Arabia are considered failures in terms of achieving her travel goals. In *The South Gates of Arabia*, she failed to reach “the city of Shabwa, previously unvisited by Europeans, and never succeeded in following the ancient incense trail beyond regions already explored by other western travellers” (Ruthven 155). She also notes in *A Winter in Arabia* that ...

[t]he scientific and more serious records of this venture are to be found elsewhere: this is but a record of actions and reactions that might occur in any small Arabian town unused to Europeans and of a journey from Hureidha to the sea (*A Winter* vi).

Stark realised that an unconventional idea that would let her fully understand the Arabs and their land is through two approaches. These were: to change the way Western travellers usually saw the natives of the land they travelled in, and to be immersive and embed herself among the Arabs by adopting their philosophies of life and manners. For the first, Stark shows, on different occasions, the importance of not only appreciating the nature, but loving the “human nature also” (*Winter* 51). On the other approach, she strove to become an “Arab nomad, ‘who receives his world as it comes from Allah, and is not concerned to alter it more than he need’” (Moorehead 38). This is also what led Jane Fletcher Geniesse to give her biography of Stark the title *A Passionate Nomad*. On being immersive, it is worth noting that Stark’s financial needs dictated that she should live the life of the local people in order to travel and in order to find for herself “a subject for travel writing that would produce the income needed to supplement her modest means” (Amoia and Knapp 197).

Stark adopted the advice of a *Mansab*¹⁶ who gave her the five reasons for travel: “to leave one’s troubles behind one; to earn a living; to acquire learning; to practise good manners; and to meet honourable men” (*Winter* 157). These five reasons came from a poem written by Imam ash-Shāfi‘ī (born 767 – died 820), an historical Arab and an Islamic “legal scholar who played an important role in the formation of Islāmic legal thought and was the founder of the Shāfi‘īyah school of law” (*Britannica*). His poems of wisdom especially with regard to travelling are considered up to the modern day a motto for almost all Arabs who leave their land, sometimes as a motif to travel, sometimes as a way of comforting oneself from the hardships of life and that travelling will always be good solution to obtain learning and wisdom in life¹⁷. It is worth noting that ash-Shāfi‘ī had a life that seems to some extent similar to Stark’s, though Stark did not clearly state that. He was born to a very poor family and he was not able to afford the fees of education, but his mother instilled in him the passion for learning and he made great efforts to obtain good education through what was called, at that time, Kuttab (Ibrahim 21). These were humble schools usually in the mosques where the Imam of the mosque taught young children reading and writing and help them memorise the Quran and the Hadith, the prophet’s teachings. He memorised the Quran when he was very young and because he was not able to buy papers to study, ash-Shāfi‘ī had to look for anything to write on such as leather or wood (Ibrahim 22, 23). Afterwards, he spent most of his life travelling to learn and hence ash-Shāfi‘ī became one of the wisest intellectual figures in Islamic history. Throughout his travels, he had to live with the people and travel humbly and sometimes he stayed at the scholars’ houses whom he intended to learn from.

Whether Stark knew the Imam or not, she followed the authentic ancient Arabian ways of travelling that Arabs had followed throughout their history. When she travelled, she

¹⁶ A tribal leader.

¹⁷ myself included.

achieved these five goals of travelling. She left her troubles behind, she sought to earn a living in her travels (firstly she aimed at being a governess in the Middle East, though she did succeed in doing so), she earned a living in her career as a writer and a traveller, then as an employee (a propagandist) at the Minister of Information. Stark also acquired enormous knowledge about Arabia and the Arabs, she practiced their good manners, and she met honourable people with whom she was fascinated.

Stark added and modified some of these motives to make them suit her and her experience. She, therefore, announced her

seven cardinal virtues for a traveller:

1. To admit standards that are not one's own standards and discriminate the values that are not one's own values.
2. To know how to use stupid men and inadequate tools with equanimity.
3. To be able to dissociate oneself from one's bodily sensations.
4. To be able to take rest and nourishment as and when they come.
5. To love not only nature but human nature also.
6. To have an unpreoccupied, observant, and uncensorious mind- in other words, to be unselfish.
7. To be as calmly good-tempered at the end of the day as at the beginning. (qtd in Geniesse 201).

Stark challenged other Arabists to conform to these cardinal virtues and was proud herself of adhering to them; she believes this made her an exceptional traveller. When she was studying Arabic in Lebanon, Stark saw that the Arabs praised her and did the best to teach her, because

they were “only too pleased to find someone who has come neither to improve nor to rob, but with a genuine liking for their language” (*Letters from Syria* 29). Her method was very effective to the point that it led some people to claim that Stark “joined ‘the odd handful who remained not to teach, not to evangelize, not even, broadly speaking, to change, elevate, govern or save but to understand, to interpret, to share the life of the desert’” (Moorehead 39). She also “hated philanthropy [...] her sense of curiosity made her a student more than a teacher” (Moorehead 39).

Stark’s struggle in her South Arabian encounters is created between two sets of binaries: The West (Occident) vs the East (Orient); and Men vs Women. In almost all her travels, she was concerned about these sometimes-overlapping binaries. In her South Arabian accounts, Stark aimed for her created persona to first be embedded, and secondly to avoid corrupting the local Arabs’ manners and social expectations. She uses her travel experience and comparison between these binaries to critique both the Western and feminist practices compared to the virtues and the manners of the Arabs. The significance of her book *A Winter in Arabia* lies in her inclusion of her archaeologist travel companion Gertrude Canton Thomson in the discussion of these dichotomies. Malise Ruthven claims that “Stark’s attitude” then, “to the people of Hadhramaut was the centre of the famous row with [...] Thomson that lies at the centre of [...] *A Winter in Arabia*” (154). For Stark, Thomson represents the example of the typical superior Western female traveller among the Arabs. Although she endeavours to avoid discrimination, she realised that to achieve the greatest level of conformity, she had to appreciate the differences of people as an essential part of understanding the “nature of the human.” Therefore, her representations of the Orient are mainly showcased via her humorous criticism of the West and in contrast adopting the wisdom of the East as an ““exquisite balance of humour and wisdom, the book’s ‘strange excellence’” (Geniesse 346).

In her account, she draws on these binaries to discuss various topics such as hierarchy, education, religion, politics and history and elaborates on the differences among these binaries. Her understanding of these binaries is concluded by her metaphorical explanation of the East and the West as “struggling between Scylla and Charybdis” (*Winter* 44). As in Homer’s *Odyssey*: “Scylla and Charybdis, in Greek mythology, two immortal and irresistible monsters who beset the narrow waters traversed by the hero Odysseus in his wanderings” (*Britannica*). As Odysseus struggles with these two evils, Stark struggles with the East and the West notions. In her travels in Southern Arabia, she notes that ...

we were travelling on the assumption that East is East and West is West, in two separate worlds, of Ishmael and Isaac. It is regrettable, I reflected, that my heart is always with the Ishmaelites: and yet who else can ever live in comfort in Arabia? (*Winter* 18).

In this quote, Stark refers to Isaac and Ishmael, sons of Abraham: children of Isaac as the Western Christians and Ishmaelites, children of Ishmael, as the Muslim Arabs. Stark here reflects that although she favored the *Ishmaelites*, being a Western child of Isaac in Arabia resulted in her being treated as a foreigner. Therefore, her real identity is conflated with her inclinations in the Arabian context. However, she thinks that for Westerners to make the full use of travel in Arabia, mutual respect must always be present by following the social standards of the Arabs and by avoiding what might be considered a taboo.

The idea that “East is East and West is West” is close to the English imperial poet Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Ballad of East and West” in which he maintains that “OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall / meet,” until the judgment day (Kipling 233). However, he argues later in the ballad that “When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from / the ends of the earth!”; that is when two powerful parties

meet, their origins do not matter because mutual respect will be maintained. This same idea of mutual respect is discussed by Sir Kinahan Cornwallis in the “Foreword” to Stark’s *A Winter in Arabia*. He notes that Stark’s ...

lesson is obvious. The Arab, like most of us, is essentially human; treat him, as he should be treated, as a friend and an equal and you get the best out of him; if you are aloof or superior or patronizing, you will get what you deserve. He is more than ordinarily sensitive and quick to imagine a slight, but he responds in like degree to friendliness and kindness. (Stark 2).

Stark defined this as the manners of the Arab,

To the Arab, manners are everything; he will forgive any amount of extortion so long as “your speech is good.” To us, since the end of the eighteenth century, they have become dangerously unimportant (*A Winter* 52).

In Stark’s own account, she points out to a similar, yet improved idea of Kipling’s. After the publication of her travel book *A Winter in Arabia*, she came back to Europe and traveled to the US and paid close attention to the Western understanding of Arabia and the Arabs. Stark realized that the Western view of the Arabs of “today” as though they were the same as the Arabs of “yesterday” needed attention. This led her to write another book *East is West* to dispel this misconception. In this book, she provides an historical overview of the Arabs and the Arab World to claim that the concept of the Arab that the West was holding was changing. The significant change she discusses in *East is West* is the rise of what she refers to as the “effendi”: the middle-class Arab of a different background (be it the tent, the village, the town) and who ...

has had a school and usually a college education, and is trained to a profession in the Western way; he belongs indeed to the West, and it is the West that, for good or bad, will mould him, and with him the future history of his world. (*East is West* xvi)

Stark argues that this *effendi* “has responded to at least three: the internal combustion engine, the (mostly) American educator, and the British Government” (xvi) and that if railways united America and aeroplanes united the British Commonwealth, the future of Arabia might be secured by both motorcars and aeroplanes (xvii).

The change in the Arabs’ lifestyle is discussed in *East is West* to prove that the Arab and Arabia was not as what would the West think, an unchanging timeless Arabia subject to the Western patronizing thoughts and practices. However, Stark expresses her worries and concerns that this change was in fact made to the Western standards by which Westerners would still be superior to Arabs in another way. She also responds to her worries about the change in Arabia in *A Winter in Arabia* differently. Stark recounts that “[w]e are in a proud country still new to Europeans” noting that she and her two British female travel companions were “the first foreigners to live in its outlying districts for any length of time; and the hope that I cherish is that we may leave it uncorrupted, its charm of independence intact.” (*Winter* 44). Stark then refers to her travelling *motto* to live the same way the Arabs live in order “to keep alive the Arab’s happiness in his own virtues” (44). She refers specifically to the “material ways” the Europeans were used to; to “sit on chairs and use forks and gramophones” is a Western way that “beguiled” the Arabs which would lead them to “[d]iscontent with their standards” which eventually would be “the first step in the degradation of the East” (44).

Stark justifies her point as follows:

Surrounded by our mechanical glamour, the virtues wrung out of the hardness of their lives easily come to appear poor and useless in their eyes; their spirit loses its dignity in this world, its belief in the next (44-45).

This argument also evokes the Arabs' religious beliefs in God (Allah). According to Stark, the Arabs' adherence to creeds propounds that they appreciate more the next life than this life and rely on the power of God to give them comfort in their lives and to make them live at ease with what fate awaited them. As noted earlier, the Blunts' point of view that the significance of the Emirate of Najd in the 19th century lay in their adoption of the ancient pre-Islamic code of "tribute and protection" which Wilfrid Blunt refers to as the "Shepherd Rule" (Blunt 1881, xxi). In neglecting religion and as the title of their travel book suggested, Najd is the cradle of the Arab race. On the contrary, Stark argues that the unity of the Arab World "is one of language, largely of religion, and of the civilization they have produced; it is *not* a unity of race" (*East is West* xv).

In her point of view, Stark prophesies that the "unhappy change" in the life of the Arabs is inevitable, however, she notes that the change would not be a "small winter's achievement if it does not come through *us*" (*Winter* 45). Stark's argument here reveals the reason for her opinions about Europeans who travel in Arabia with their luxurious items, such as Gertrude Bell. Stark considers them to be "comparatively soft, bringing along servants and lots of baggage and, in Stark's view, never staying in any one place long enough to soak up the local color" (Hawley 326).

This argument includes Stark's archaeologist travel companion in her Western practices in the Hadhramaut. In *A Winter in Arabia*, Stark travels with two female scientists, the archaeologist Gertrude Canton Thomson, and the geologist Elinor Gardner (Ruthven

154). In this travel, “Stark’s role was to handle relations with local people so that the two scientists [...] could carry on digging without interruptions” (154).

One of these practices is violating the dress code by wearing trousers in Hureidha, the Hadhramaut. In one scene, Stark comments on one of the practices the people of Hadhramaut do to show that they are disturbed or upset. She explains that “nearly every woman I talked to spat on [the carpet] when she mentioned my companions” (Stark 85). Another situation is when one of the children, Ahmed, saw some pages of *Punch*, “the first images of the human beings the children have ever seen on paper, and to them they are living people” (86). Ahmed comments on one of the images, “that is the Madame who digs” referring to the Archaeologist, and then “he puts his small finger on the image of a man and began to spit [...] and inspired, I begin to hope, only by a dislike for trousers” (86). Stark notes that she and Doreen Ingrams dislike trousers too “foreseeing the day when the ladies of the country in their turn adopt this peculiar Western ugliness; we have suggested in vain to the Archaeologist a loose, light coat to cover them” (86). This worries Stark from two sides, first, trousers when adopted in the future, will disturb the virtues of the modesty of the Arab women who are known to be confined to the Harem and whose interaction with men is limited to relatives. The second one is that Stark herself dislikes trousers on women thinking that:

Trousers are, I think, generally ugly on the female figure, where everything is round that the tailor intended to be straight; they do not, however, appear indecent to the Hadhramaut Arab, because they are not as yet particularly masculine (87).

Stark mentions two sisters of a Sayyid, Rahiya and Fatima to show how strict is the dress code in Hureidha.

These sayyid ladies come in the evening, when the streets are dark and empty so that – even veiled as they are and covered in sheet-like white – they may not be seen.

Qasim lets them in, and then clears the kitchen and even the street for them when they leave. “In day-time,” says Fatima, “there are *men* about” in a voice in which one might talk of a plague of locusts [...] [they] keep their veils on, for Qasim is in attendance (77,78).

Although this strictness might only be applicable to the sayyid ladies as Stark mentions some “female water-carriers” in Shibam during the day (*A Winter* 48), she still thinks that their female existence in Hadhramaut is causing a change in the dress of Hadhramaut’s women in another way. She tells a situation when a “Mansab has issued an order that spangles, sequins, cowrie shells and all such ornaments are to be abolished from the wardrobes of Hureidha” (*A Winter* 175). She notes that “the sadness is that *we* are responsible for the tragedy. It is the sight of *our* dowdy clothes that inspires dress reform in the heart of the Mansab” (175). She laments that “It seems unfair that he should be able to condemn the whole womankind of his city to plainness” (175).

An important comment Stark makes, about the women of Hadhramaut, when discussing Canton’s trousers issue is that these women had “a nun-like appearance”, which does not “interfere with the habit of spitting, which develops at the earliest age and at present seems to concentrate on my carpet and the Archaeologist” (86). She explains that

the expression of [the people of the Hadhramaut’s] faces is amiable; hatred is common, but bad temper is scarcely known [...] the women keep into old age an expression of calmness and sweetness, and the lines that are common in Europe are hardly to be found in these harims. This comes, I think, because, living always together and under a rigid code of courtesy, the feelings which create these lines are

never allowed free play. Better than self-control, they have that true serenity which begins at the very source, eliminating those feelings for which self-control is required. I think it because of this inner quietude that the faces of nuns, of Quakers, and of Arab women have, as they settle into age, the same look of peaceful acceptance and repose. (85, 86).

This is to explain that “Alinur’s kindness is now winning its way” while “the Archaeologist does not talk to anyone and continues at present to be unpopular [...] though all [the harims] find to say is that the corners of her mouth turn down” (85). This is what inspires Stark to “notice that corners of mouths in the Hadhramaut [...] hardly ever turn down” (85). This also gave Stark the insight to make the comparison between the women of Hadhramaut and the women of Europe as in the excerpt above.

Stark takes this opportunity to express her disagreement on such practices which appear to the Arab “indecent and also what, when copied, as it inevitably will be, will look discordant against the background of these towns” (86, 87). She commends Harold and the oil expedition who adopt the sarong of the country and “made themselves extremely popular by this adoption” (87). This scene in general shows Stark’s concerns in preserving the culture of the natives and her worries of the wrong adoption of the Western culture which, according to her, will disturb the coherence of this culture and ruin its people. She concludes that by Harold and the oil expedition’s adoption of the sarong as males, trousers, as an unprecedented wear in the Hadhramaut, “are not yet particularly masculine”, which may imply that they were masculine in Europe at that time. Therefore, the Archaeologist, a female, wearing them as the first to wear them in the Hadhramaut, trousers will be engendered as though they are “exclusively intended for female wear” (87). In this instance she critiques the Western women who, in fact, wear trousers merely to show that they are equal to men and that they are not confined to wear clothes specific to their gender: trousers are coded as masculine and

Canton believes that she can practice whatever pleases her, and is not obliged to the gender or even social assumptions either in Europe or in Arabia.

On discussing the differences between the West and the East, Stark sometimes includes the paradox of men and women on various levels, such as hierarchies, education, and religion. She comments on the differences between servants in England and servants in Arabia and notes that ...

A servant in England would be abashed when surprised by literature, but Qasim [her cook in Arabia] leaps up delighted to show his poems, beautiful in red and black scripts. To have him and us in the same house, is like the Orient and Occident under one roof. 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 building, 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 (*Winter* 43).

In this section, Stark draws on both hierarchy and gender to discuss the differences between the East and the West and the issue of feminism in the West. She argues that “[t]oo much machinery in the West, too little in the East, have made a gap between the active and the contemplative; they drift even more apart” (43). The West, then, is active while the East is contemplative and while the West “*does*”, the East just “*is*”. In this regard, she argues that a Western “[w]oman hitherto has inclined to the eastern idea, the stress being laid on what she *is* rather than on what she *does*” (43). To change this and make women *do* and not just *be*, “taking for our sole patten the active energies of men, we are in danger of destroying a principle which contains one-half the ingredients of civilization” and “[b]efore ceasing to *be*,

it is to be hoped that our sex will at least make sure that what is *does* is worth the sacrifice” (43).

A similar critique of the women’s movement into reform is included in her discussion of education and its principles and motives to a Western woman which can explain adequately her point of view. Education in Stark’s account sometime refers to intellectualism more than just learning. Stark understands that education should be based on and lead to wisdom and humbleness; an idea that a tribesman confirms when he points out that “Learning [...] is wider than all things except the excellence of God” (*A Winter* 52). Although the words “wider” and “excellence” in this quote can imply that learning can make people more powerful than anything but God, it can also imply that learning can make people wiser than anyone but God by the use of the word “wider” instead of “Higher” and by referring to “the excellence of God.” This is also to show that to the Arabian manners, learning, at least when she travelled, was still associated with wisdom more than power. Stark comments on her companions’ motives of education as follows:

My companions, both better educated than I am, rightly took themselves more seriously. They were rather prone to that female superstition which, in a circular world, thinks of education as ‘Higher’ regardless of the Antipodes just below and the fact that so many people get on well without it. (*A Winter* 8).

This comment comes when she mentions the way Harold Ingrams looked at them “with a mixture of kindness and apprehension on our feminine invasion, a nuisance inferior only to oil” (7). She disputes the general idea that “British officials [...] are knotted with unsuspected anti-feminist complexes” by the fact that they “had welcomed and helped us [and] that all they asked was that we follow their advice [...] and that we give as little trouble as our nature and occupations permitted” (8). Although Harold Ingrams is concerned about interrupting the

land's "prosperity and peace" he was "striving after", (7), the women's troublesome nature, Stark believes, conform with what I explain above about her disagreement with Canton's behaviors. Believing that education is "Higher" is a way of agreeing with the Foucauldian notion that "language is power."

To conclude, the significance of Freya Stark as a travel writer came from her social, educational, and psychological background which added to her unique experiences and her truth-seeking approach. She adopted the Arabs' lifestyle and their philosophies of life so that she bears the name A Passionate Nomad. She was always concerned about understanding and appreciating the "human nature" and represented her understanding in a beautifully aesthetic and poetic language of.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I investigated travel writing by English travel writers who visited Arabia during the period 1878 – 1940. I utilised Edward Said's *Orientalism* as a lens to examine Said's eponymous complex and heterogenous concept that relies heavily on the individuals' various representations of the Orient, and are rooted in their dissimilar socio-political and psychological backgrounds. In this thesis I subscribed to the idea of many scholars who have investigated this issue such as Reina Lewis and Lisa Lowe. I chose to study white English female travelers in a specific period to show that Orientalism is a unique response of any given Orientalist, and depends on the individuals' cultural, social, political, and psychological backgrounds. This in turn contributes to the study of Orientalism in general as an overarching theme in the Western perspective of the Middle East.

There are two main reasons that drew me to study female travel writers. The first reason is that female travellers were able to access both the "Harem", the space in the Arabian house which was very restricted for women, in addition to their ability to access the men's rooms as white women. Therefore, by being able to access both women's and men's sections, female travel writers were able provide unique representations of their encounters. The second reason is to research how the Orient as "Other" is represented by female travellers who were considered "Others" themselves in the Western context.

In the first chapter, I examined Lady Anne Blunt's 1878 journey to Najd recorded in her book *A Pilgrimage to Nejd: The Cradle of the Arab Race* (1882).. The importance of Lady Anne's account lies in the fact that she was the first European woman to penetrate deep in Arabia and reach the city of Hail where the Prince of the Emirate of Jabal Shammar was based, with her husband the famous anti-imperialist poet, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. By reading her travels, I investigated their complicated relationship as a traveling and writing couple manifested in their representations of their encounters. The Blunts' representations of the

Arabs and Arabia are influenced by their romantic view of the nobility of the Bedouins and their emancipating life-style in contrast to the Arab townspeople, and the restricted “civilised” life-style back in England. This view stemmed in part from Wilfrid Blunt’s patrician life-style, and also from Lady Anne’s lineage as the granddaughter of Lord Byron who bequeathed his poetic talent as well as his promotion of freedom to both Lady Anne and Blunt.

In the second chapter, I discussed the journeys of the famous archaeologist Gertrude Lowthian Bell who also travelled in Arabia and visited Hail in 1913 as the first European female ever to do so without a Western, white male companion or chaperone. Bell’s representations of her encounters are mostly based on her background as a female who belonged to an extremely wealthy family of the ruling class. In these encounters she always expected to meet powerful people in powerful positions everywhere she went. Bell would meet with the Sheikhs of the tribes she visited. However, in her Hail journey she was disappointed to not be able to meet the Prince, as the Blunts did or the powerful and “mysterious” grandmother as she refused to meet Bell because the Prince was raiding at the time. The importance of Bell’s travel became apparent after she returned to England, because this particular journey officially introduced her to the British government as a person who was able to provide valuable knowledge about the region and the activities of its people during World War I. Despite belonging to the ruling class, it was not until she made this Arabian journey that she was able to hold a political post. Although Bell intended to publish a book on this journey, she was not able to as she was very busy with her diplomatic position as the only female in the Arab Bureau. She published only a two-page article in the *The Geographical Journal* for which the Royal Geographical Society awarded her the gold medal.

In the last chapter, I studied Dame Freya Stark who travelled in South Arabia in the 1930s and 1940s and recorded her travels in *The Southern Gate of Arabia* (1936) and in *A Winter in Arabia* (1940). An important way to look at the significance of her travels is that she travelled in a slightly different time-frame and different geographical and social environments to Lady Ann Blunt and Gertrude Bell. South Arabia at that time was influenced by Western technologies and colonialism. Her representations of Arabia varied from Lady Anne and Bell's in her background as a female who belonged to the middle class and who was not as wealthy and privileged as Lady Anne and Bell. Stark adopted a unique approach to her representations as being embedded with the local people; in part this was dictated by her financial necessities and also by her truth-seeking behaviour and finding explanations in everything she encountered. Her representations were often described as an "exquisite balance of humour and wisdom".

The field of female travel writing in Arabia needs more attention as their writings have been neglected by critics as not corresponding with the quality of their male counterparts' writings and adventures. However, their representations do produce imperial images which may be considered as powerful and influential as the male representations. In this regard, I agree with Benjamin Reilly who calls for a more comprehensive and systematic study of travel writing in Arabia, but I also emphasize the importance of studying the writing of female travellers. On the topic of travelling couples for instance, there are Theodore and Mabel Bent, as well as Harold and Doreen Ingrams. These couples produced many publications on their Arabian travels. On the topic of single female travellers, Rosita Forbes is also worthy of study, she recounts her travels in an article in *The Geographical Journal* in 1923 titled "A Visit to the Idrisi Territory in 'Asir and Yemen'". Another single female traveller was Lady Evelyn Cobbold who was a British Muslim traveller who performed Al-Haj, she published her account in *A Pilgrimage to Mecca* (1934). These are neglected writers

and detailed analyses of their work would be strong additions to the subject of female travellers in Arabia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Al-Hadban, Leen. *Let the Real Scheherazade Stand: Literary Representations of Middle Eastern Women*. 2016. Waikato U, PhD thesis.
- Amoia, Alba, and Bettina L. Knapp, ed. *Great Women Travel Writers: From 1750 to the Present*. Continuum, 2005.
- Archer, Rosemary. "Blunt [née King], Anne Isabella Noel, suo jure Baroness Wentworth (1837–1917), traveller and breeder of Arab horses." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford U Press, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31937>.
- Archer, Rosemary and James Fleming, ed. Introduction. *Lady Anne Blunt: Journals and Correspondence 1878 – 1917*. Alexander Heriot, 1986, pp. 11-15.
- Ashcroft, Bill, and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said*. Taylor and Francis, 2008.
- Bassnett, Susan. "Travel Writing and Gender." *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Tim Youngs, and Peter Hulme, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 225–241.
- Bell, Gertrude, *The Desert and the Sown*. William Heinemann, 1907.
- . "A Journey in Northern Arabia." *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1, 1914, pp. 76-77. *JSTOR*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1778786>.
- . *The Letters of Gertrude Bell*, edited by Lady Bell. Earnest Benn, 1927.
- . *Gertrude Bell: The Arabian Diaries, 1913-1914*, edited by Rosemary O'Brien. Syracuse University Press, 2000.
- Blanton, Casey. *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*. Routledge, 2002.

- Blunt, Lady Anne. *Bedouin tribes of the Euphrates*. New York, Harper and Brothers. 1879.
- . *Journals and Correspondence 1878-1917*. Edited by James Fleming and Rosemary Archer. Alexander Heriot, 1986.
- . Anne. *A Pilgrimage to Nejd, the Cradle of the Arab Race: A Visit to the Court of the Arab Emir, and "Our Persian Campaign."* London, John Murray, 1881. 2 vols.
- Blunt, Lady Anne and Wilfrid S. Blunt. *The Seven Golden Odes of Pagan Arabia: Known Also As the Moallakat*. London, Chiswick Press, 1903.
- Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen. *Poetical Works of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: A Complete Edition*. Macmillan, 1914.
- . *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt Being a Personal Narrative of Events*. Alfred A. Knopf. 1922.
- . "A Visit to Jebel Shammar (Nejd). New Routes Through Northern and Central Arabia." *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1880, pp. 81–102. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1800398>.
- . Preface. *A Pilgrimage to Nejd, the Cradle of the Arab Race: A Visit to the Court of the Arab Emir, and "Our Persian Campaign."* London, John Murray, 1881, pp.ix-xxvii.
- Byron, Lord. *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The Floating Press, 2009.
- Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 21 Nov. 2019.
- Clarke, Robert, editor. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Travel Writing*. 2018.
- Cleveland, William L. "Gertrude Bell: The Arabian Diaries, 1913-1914." *The International History Review*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2002, pp. 663–665. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40110222>.

- Cobbold, Lady Evelyn. *A Pilgrimage to Mecca*. John Murray, 1934.
- Danforth, Loring M. *Crossing the Kingdom: Portraits of Saudi Arabia*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 2016.
- Duplisea, Genna. "Writing in the Masculine: Gertrude Lowthian Bell, Gender, and Empire." *Terrae Incognitae*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2016, pp. 55–75.
doi:10.1080/00822884.2016.1147253.
- Finch, Edith. *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt 1840 – 1922*. Jonathan Cape, 1938.
- Forbes, Rosita. "A Visit to the Idrisi Territory in 'Asir and Yemen." *The Geographical Journal*, vol. 62, no. 4, 1923, pp. 271-278. *JSTOR*,
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1781020>
- Foster, Shirley, and Sara Mills, editors. *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writings*. Manchester University Press, Palgrave, 2002.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Translated by Richard Howard. Vintage Books, 1988.
- Fussell, Paul. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*. Oxford University Press, 1980.
- Geniesse, Jane Fletcher. *Freya Stark: Passionate Nomad*. Random House, 1999.
- Hansen, Peter H. "Stark, Dame Freya Madeline." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, May 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/38280>.
- Hawley, John C. "Freya Stark." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 195, 1998, pp. 325–340.

- Helly, Dorothy O. Review of *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion and Work* by Billie Melman. *The American Historical Review*, vol. 99, no. 2, 1994, pp. 556-557. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2167344>.
- Howell, Georgina. *Gertrude Bell: Queen of the Desert*. MacMillan, 2006.
- Ibrahim, Bakr Muhammed. الإمام الشافعي: حياته و فقهاء [Al-Imam ash-Shāfi'ī: Hayatuhu wa fiqhuhu; *Imam ash-Shāfi'ī: His Life and His Jurisprudence*]. Markaz Al-Rayah, 2007.
- Kostiner, Joseph. *The Making of Saudi Arabia, 1916-1936 from Chieftaincy to Monarchical State*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representations*. Routledge, 1996.
- Longford, Elizabeth. *A Pilgrimage of Passion: The Life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*. Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2007.
- Lovat, Terence, editor. *Women in Islam: Reflections on Historical and Contemporary Research*. Springer, 2012. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4219-2>.
- Lowe, Lisa. *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*. Cornell University Press, 2018. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt207g5rk>.
- Lukitz, Liora. "Bell, Gertrude Margaret Lowthian (1868–1926)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press. Jan 2008. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30686>.
- MacCarthy, Fiona. *Byron: Life and Legend*. Faber, 2003.

- Melman, Billie. *Women's Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918; Sexuality, Religion and Work*. Macmillan, 1992.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. Routledge, 1991.
- Moorehead, Caroline. *Freya Stark: The Greatest Women Explorer and Travel Writer of her Age*. Penguin Books, 1972.
- Nash, Geoffrey. *Orientalism and Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- . *Travellers to the Middle East from Burckhardt to Thesiger: An Anthology*. Anthem Press, 2009.
- O'Brien, Rosemary, ed. *Gertrude Bell: The Arabian Diaries, 1913-1914*. Syracuse University Press, 2000.
- Petouris, Thanos. "Britain and Yemen: The End of the British Rule in South Arabia Through the Eyes of a Young Political Officer." *Asian Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2018, pp. 56–81. doi:10.1080/03068374.2018.1419013.
- Reilly, Benjamin. "Arabian Travellers, 1800-1950: An Analytical Bibliography". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 43, no.1, 2016, pp. 71–93. doi:10.1080/13530194.2015.1060155.
- Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Polity, 1993.
- Ruthven, Malise. "A Subversive Imperialist: Reappraising Freya Stark." *Alif*, vol. 26, no. 26, 2006, p. 147. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30197947>.
- . *Traveller Through Time: A Photographic Journey with Freya Stark*. Viking, 1986.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1978.

Short, Emma. "Introduction: Women Writing Travel, 1890–1939." *Journeys (New York, N. Y.)*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2015, pp. 1–7. *ProQuest*, doi:10.3167/jys.2015.160101.

---. "'Those Eyes Kohl Blackened Enflame': Re-Reading the Feminine in Gertrude Bell's Early Travel Writing." *Journeys*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2015, p. 8-28. *ProQuest*, doi:10.3167/jys.2015.160102.

Stark, Freya. *East is West*. John Murray, 1945.

---. *Traveller's Prelude*. John Murray, 1950.

---. *The Southern Gates of Arabia: A Journey in the Hadhramaut*. John Murray, 1936.

---. *A Winter in Arabia*. John Murray, 1940

Tripp, Charles, and Paul Collins. *Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A Life and Legacy*. The British Academy, 2017.

Ullal, Kathleen. *Travel Writing, Self and Other: Finding Reciprocal Space*. 2017, Waikato U, PhD thesis.

Youngs, Tim. *Travel Writing in the Nineteenth Century*. Anthem Press, 2006.

Villa, Luisa. "A 'Political Education': Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, the Arabs and the Egyptian Revolution (1881-82)." *Journal of Victorian Culture*. vol. 17, no. 1, 2012, pp. 46–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2011.630267>.

Winstone, H. V. F. *Gertrude Bell*. Jonathan Cape, 1978.