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Le regard de Hilton-Simpson sur le "caractère national" algérien : *Parmi les montagnards de l'Algérie* (1921)

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Introduction

Melville William Hilton-Simpson's travelogue Among the Hill Folk of Algeria: Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains (1921) is based on the author's seven years of travel experience in Algeria. From the very beginning, Hilton-Simpson expresses his desire to be original by providing fresh and previously unknown information about the Berbers of the Aurès region, without adhering to the conventions of Western travel writing. To capture the reader's attention, he asserts that he intends to write a book about the unexplored Algerian region and its people, grounded solely in his own observations and impressions. This distinguishes his work from typical tourist accounts and other travel writings.

Hilton-Simpson also emphasizes the innovative nature of his observations about the tribes of Algeria's hills, focusing on their cultural norms and customs. However, several questions arise when reconsidering the text: Does Hilton-Simpson's portrayal of the hill folk challenge or reinforce existing stereotypes about Berber communities in literature? In what ways does his representation of the Algerian people either contest or reinforce exoticizing and orientalist narratives about non-European cultures? Does Hilton-Simpson's travelogue reflect the complex interplay between personal experience, cultural difference, and the conventions of travel writing? What cultural, social, or political implications underpin his descriptions of the Algerian highlanders, and how do these intersect with colonial discourses of the time? Does he present the locals as "perfect," accurately depicting their cultures, traditions, and identities, or do his portrayals fit more broadly within ongoing discussions about literary representation? How does Hilton-Simpson's portrayal either reinforce or challenge the exoticizing and orientalist narratives of non-European cultures? In other words, does Hilton-Simpson offer an "objective" understanding of indigenous cultures, or do his representations contribute to broader debates on the representation of the "Other" in literature? Answering these questions requires first examining the concept of "imagology," as defined by Joep Leersen, as well as the historical context of Hilton-Simpson's work to assess whether the author truly challenges or perpetuates stereotypes about Algeria through his depiction of the Berbers, especially in relation to their interactions with Western characters or influences.

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1. Theoretical Framework

In his New Perspectives on Imagology (2022), Joep Leersen emphasizes that imagology primarily concerns the study of images and literary representations within various cultural settings. He argues that comparative imagology helps us understand how different cultures create and perceive images, particularly through interactions between cultures. Leersen identifies two key types of cultural and literary images: "auto-image" and "hetero-image." An auto-image, according to Leersen, refers to how a culture depicts itself — how a writer views his own culture and portrays his people, considering their beliefs, values, and identity. This self-representation often stands in contrast to the hetero-image, which refers to representations of people from other cultures. Imagology, therefore, examines how one culture constructs its image of another, revealing the stereotypes, perceptions, and prejudices that shape these representations and influence cross-cultural interactions. As Sandra Vlasta (2022) notes, these images should not be seen as direct reflections of reality, but rather as constructs shaped by discourse, the author's intentions, and the targeted audience (p.114).

Leersen further explores how these images — whether auto-images or hetero-images — are integral to shaping cultural identities and fostering cross-cultural dialogue. To support his argument, he draws on examples from travel narratives written by Western travelers during the high colonial period, from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century. He argues that these narratives were influenced by both material and symbolic power structures. Therefore, scholars should not view the rhetoric of national characterization as merely a superficial aspect of colonial policy, but should instead examine the underlying forces that shaped the authors' perceptions and decision-making. For Leersen, applying imagological analysis to political discourse offers valuable insights into the interplay between rational and emotive, prejudice-driven factors that influenced international relations and national positioning (Leersen, 2022, p. 49).

Thus, can Leersen's concepts of "cultural images" be applied to Hilton-Simpson's representation of the Shawia people, given the colonial context in which his narrative was published? How does the text engage with existing literature on the relationship between travel writing, ethnography, and colonial representations of the "Other"? To what extent can Hilton-Simpson's "constructed images" be understood as part of what Hugo Dyserink and Joep Leersen call "Cultural imaginings predetermined by already existing concepts" (Dyserink, Leersen, 2010: 489)? Does Hilton-Simpson's portrayal neglect crucial aspects of Shawia life, such as their economic activities, social structures, and historical contexts? In the words of Dyserink and Leersen, does the British travel writer exoticize the people and places "as part of an even more vague and stereotyped entity, the Orient, where Western fantasies about the veil and the harem play an important role" (Dyserink, Leersen, 2007: 211–212)? To answer these questions, a critical reading of Hilton-Simpson's work is needed, taking into account the historical and ideological context in which these representations were constructed, and examining whether they reflect or challenge existing cultural, literary, or discursive conventions.

2. Historical Background of Hilton-Simpson's Travelogue

In an essay entitled Enmity, Identity, Discourse: Imagology and the State, Joep Leersen highlights the profound impact of national stereotypes, prejudices, and emotions in shaping policy and decision-making processes. He argues that imagological analysis can reveal the fundamental factors influencing literary representations, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the historical context within which these works are produced. Melville William Hilton-Simpson (1881-1938) published Among the Hill Folk of Algeria: Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains in 1921, during a period characterized by significant technological, political, and societal changes, especially in the realms of transport and tourism. The advancements in transportation allowed travel writers to visit previously inaccessible regions, sharing their experiences with readers.

In his essay The Politics of Adventure: Theories of Travel, Discourses of Power, Ali Behdad asserts that travel writing, across different historical periods, has been driven by three main premises: the exoticism of adventure, the science of exploration, and the commerce of tourism. Behdad notes, "The improved travelling conditions and the presence of Europeans throughout the East made the oriental journey, once an arduous, demanding, and ambitious endeavor, an easier, less time-consuming, and more practical enterprise, thus generating a steady flow of European tourism to the Orient" (Behdad, 2009, p. 90).

Hilton-Simpson, as a British travel writer, was driven by a fascination with the exotic and the unknown, which motivated him to explore and document the world beyond Europe. The historical context of his time, marked by the ongoing expansion of European exploration, directly influenced Hilton-Simpson's motivations and his desire to contribute to the literary tradition of documenting non-European cultures. His representations of the Algerian population echo the broader European tradition of sensationalizing the "other" and reflect the spirit of adventure, discovery, and curiosity that defined his era. In the words of Bill Ashcroft, Hilton-Simpson sought to "bring a world beyond the horizon into the familiarity of language" (Ashcroft, 2009, p. 229).

The travelogue, which was written based on Hilton-Simpson's self-initiated journey, does not engage with the complex colonial relationships between the West and Algeria as represented by French travel writers. As Algeria was a French colony at the time, the British Empire did not have a significant political influence in the region, and there were no major tensions or conflicts between Britain and the Shawia people during Hilton-Simpson's travels. The book is more a reflection of the burgeoning British tourism industry in the early 20th century, and Hilton-Simpson's observations are part of a larger movement to explore and understand non-European cultures in the age of modern travel. His work reflects the growing interest in the discovery of the "exotic," but focuses primarily on scientific curiosity and personal exploration rather than the colonial implications of imperialism. As Behdad argues, the secular notion of

travel at the time necessitated new relationships with the "other" and new methods of observation (Behdad, 2009, p. 85).

3. Representations of Foreigners in Hilton-Simpson's Text

Hilton-Simpson's travelogue creates vivid "cultural images" of the people he encounters, providing insight into how Western travel writers perceived non-European populations. In his study of ethnotypes or "attributions of National Character," Joep Leersen defines imagology as

> "factual inventories of foreign characters and of characterizations of foreigners in a given literary corpus. They were descriptive rather than analytical, and subject to naive essentialism" (Leersen, 2016, p. 14).

This definition aligns with the analysis of Hilton-Simpson's travelogue, which includes numerous descriptions of the Berber people and their cultural traits.

At the outset of his work, Hilton-Simpson explicitly positions himself as an ethnographer, disclaiming any claims to archaeological expertise (p. 11). Based on his personal experiences and investigations, he traveled to Algeria to document the lifestyles, customs, traditions, and cultural peculiarities of the Shawia people in the Aurès region. Over the course of seventeen years of travel to Algeria, Hilton-Simpson claims to have read most of the significant works related to the country, but found no detailed description of the Berber way of life in the region, either in French or English literature (p. 11). His aim was to fill this gap in the travel literature by offering a comprehensive and detailed account of Berber customs and traditions, highlighting their richness and complexity.

From an imagological perspective, Hilton-Simpson's portrayal of the Berbers emphasizes their "strangeness," positioning them as an exotic and ancient people. The British writer's authority on the subject is underscored by his assertion that, despite reading extensively, he could not find the kind of detailed ethnographic account he aimed to provide. His description of the Berbers, focusing on their fair hair, blue eyes, and lighter complexions, contrasts sharply with the darker Semitic and "negroid" types of the desert. He also highlights the Berbers' resistance to linguistic assimilation, noting that the Shawia continue to speak their Berber language, despite the influence of Arabic and the Arab conquest centuries earlier (p. 16).

Hilton-Simpson's emphasis on the Berber people's distinct physical characteristics and cultural resilience aligns with a long-standing European tendency to view indigenous populations through a lens of racial and cultural difference. His descriptions of the Berbers reinforce colonial stereotypes by presenting them as racially distinct and culturally separate from the "Semitic" and "negroid" populations of the region, highlighting a perceived superiority of the "fair-haired" Berber race. This reflects the colonial gaze that sought to categorize and control indigenous populations through racialized and culturalized representations. Additionally, the description of Berber

culture as an unspoiled, pure form of indigenous life serves to exoticize the Shawia people, aligning with the broader Western tendency to romanticize non-European cultures as "primitive" and "untouched" by modernity.

Moreover, Hilton-Simpson's narrative highlights the Berbers' resistance to adopting Arabic, portraying their cultural heritage as a form of resilience against the pressures of colonialism. The emphasis on their linguistic and cultural independence can be read as a subtle critique of colonial efforts to assimilate indigenous populations. This cultural resistance, while not overtly framed as political, positions the Berbers as a symbol of indigenous persistence in the face of colonial forces seeking to erase their identity.

Despite this portrayal of cultural preservation, Hilton-Simpson's descriptions of the Berbers ultimately reflect the colonial mindset, positioning the Berbers as "the other" in ways that reinforce stereotypes of racial and cultural difference. His observations, while valuable for their ethnographic detail, must be understood as part of a larger discourse that often exoticized and marginalized non-European peoples.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hilton-Simpson's travelogue serves as an interesting example of the ways in which travel writers of the period, influenced by colonial ideologies, engaged in the construction of "cultural images" that both exoticized and essentialized non-European populations. His portrayal of the Shawia people of the Aurès region provides a rich ethnographic account that highlights both the resilience and the marginalization of indigenous cultures under colonial influence. However, the representation of these cultures, while detailed, must be understood within the context of broader colonial discourses that often shaped and constrained the ways in which these cultures were viewed and represented.

4. The Author's Ideal Description of the Berber Resistance

Hilton-Simpson provides paramount images of the Berbers of the hills, describing them as remarkably courageous in resisting various invasions throughout history. They struggled against Arab invaders with the help of their queen Kahena, who fought until her demise. The author writes that, despite the extreme violence of the Arab conquest, the Berbers demonstrated their resilience and military prowess. Moreover, in this mountainous region, Shawia Berbers resisted French cultural domination by preserving their cultural identity, traditions, and heritage. In other words, Hilton-Simpson states that the Berbers' resistance to invasions and cultural assimilation is highlighted by their enduring courage and determination to protect their heritage and identity against external pressures and historical adversities. He writes that, from time immemorial until the French invasion of the massif in around 1845, the Aurès has never been definitively conquered by the sword. However, what the sword could not accomplish, religion succeeded in achieving by making the inhabitants of the Aurès accept Islam as their new faith. By adopting the Muslim faith, they gradually acquired many Eastern customs (pp. 15-16).

Furthermore, the British author highlights the power dynamics inherent in the Arab conquest, with their dominant culture exerting a great influence over the local inhabitants by imposing their values and erasing Berber traditions. The Berbers, described as "bowing" to the new faith by adhering to its main principles, can be interpreted as a common "image" in colonial discourse, where the colonized are often portrayed as passive recipients of colonial influence, rather than active agents in their own right. For Hilton-Simpson, the Muslim religion was a tool used by the Arab conquerors to exert control over indigenous populations and impose new beliefs and values. The author's perception and belief can be linked to a recurring theme in Western travel writing discourse, where religion is often used as a means of justifying and legitimizing colonial expansion. The descriptions reflect the colonial mindset of the time, which viewed the foreigner as uncivilized and in need of conquest and conversion. He portrays the Aurès region as an exotic place that has never been "definitely conquered" until the French invasion, implying that it was a wild, uncontrolled territory that needed to be civilized by Westerners.

5. The Reiteration of Stereotyped Representations in Hilton-Simpson's Text

The interplay of stereotypical representations in Hilton-Simpson's narrative appears with the recurrence of some "ethnotypes," which are, according to Joep Leersen, "either explicitly or implicitly oppositional. They invoke Self-Other oppositions (auto-image vs. hetero-images; ethnocentrism vs. exoticism or xenophobia) and/or will silhouette a given national character against the implied background of how it differs from other national characters" (Leersen, 2016: 17). This difference lies in the idea of "Western paternalism," a belief in the moral and cultural superiority of Western societies over the rest of the world. According to Hilton-Simpson, the presence of France in Algeria is perceived as benevolent rather than condescending and oppressive. In the travelogue, Western control may be evident in the way the British author interacts with and observes the culture and people he encounters during his journey. This includes instances where the author imposes his point of view, values, beliefs, and ways of life onto this non-Western society, often with the assumption that France is helping or guiding them toward a "better" way of living. This attitude can be seen as a form of cultural power, where Western travelers assert their dominance and control over the cultures they encounter. Ali Behdad rightly points out that the traveler invests himself with the power of knowledge that comes with familiarity: "The traveler becomes the savant who knows and has enough credentials to judge and make authoritative remarks about other people and cultures" (Behdad, 2009: 230).

Moreover, Western paternalism in the travelogue may also be reflected in the language used to describe Berber culture, which can sometimes be patronizing or stereotypical. This helps perpetuate a sense of Western superiority and reinforces existing power dynamics between the West and the East. A number of characteristics of colonial discourse appear when the author, for instance, ignores in his descriptions the effects of

colonialism on the local populations but gives importance rather to the generosity of the French presence in Algeria. As an illustration, he refers to the school established for some years at Beni Ferah, which is the residence of the only European in the place. Implicitly, the author suggests that Algerians were uncivilized and backward before the coming of the French. In addition, the French schoolmaster is described as a gentleman, delighted to welcome a European traveler, whose presence gives him an opportunity to exchange ideas with a member of "civilized society" (p. 22). The description implies a high social status, emphasizing the refinement of French culture and respectability, aligning him with the cultural ideal of a well-educated and refined individual. Moreover, the author refers to the schoolmaster's residence as the only European in the area, reflecting the colonial hierarchy where Europeans held positions of authority and influence over the indigenous population. The description of his "solitary existence" amidst Shawia culture emphasizes the alienation and challenges faced by the colonizer in adapting to the local environment, shedding light on the complexities of colonial encounters.

Furthermore, the schoolmaster's welcoming attitude towards the European travelers shows that he is interested in intellectual pursuits and values the exchange of knowledge only with other Europeans. Such a perception illustrates the lack of connection with Berber society and the absence of communication with these indigenous populations. The exchange of ideas mentioned in the passage symbolizes the power dynamics inherent in colonial relationships, where the European seeks affirmation and intellectual engagement from the colonized, embodying a sense of superiority and control. From an imagological perspective, the passage reiterates the well-established cliché of the "civilized" European and the "backward" Algerian. Such a hetero-image stands for the complexities of cultural interaction, power dynamics, and the impact of colonialism.

It is important to point out that Hilton-Simpson not only passes judgment on the role of the French presence in Algeria; he also stresses the schoolmaster's delight in interacting with someone from "civilized society," highlighting the value of exchanging ideas with a fellow European. The passage conveys a sense of cultural contrast, emphasizing the schoolmaster's high educational level and the significance of cross-cultural communication in such a setting. Hilton-Simpson's choice of diction reinforces imperial discourse, as the writer qualifies the French colonial rule merely as the "French military authorities," while the notion of "European civilization" is repetitive in the text. What follows expresses clearly his viewpoint: "The individual who expects to find a Piccadilly or a Ritz in a hamlet such as I have described will be AT THE 'MOUTH OF THE DESERT' better advised to confine his wanderings to the great highways of European civilization than to seek the nooks and corners of Algeria" (p. 23). For the writer, civilization is automatically associated with large avenues, splendid hotels, and impressive highways, while the desert has a "swallowing mouth." Hilton-Simpson stresses then, in the words of Leersen, "the hierarchical gap that existed between Occidentals, who were considered to be powerful in Arab countries, and the weakness of Orientals in colonial times" (Leersen, 2022: 262).

More importantly, Hilton-Simpson's presentation echoes the belief, fueled by European imperialism, that the cultures and societies of the Aurès region were inferior to the French one. He writes: "Kabyle cousins of the mountains near the coast, who have been more progressive in the adoption of Western ideas" (p. 16). The stereotypical aspect of Hilton-Simpson's cultural images can be linked to the assumption of the superiority of French culture and society and the belief that it was their duty to "civilize" the "primitive" people of Algeria and Africa in general. Consequently, it goes without saying that Hilton-Simpson reiterates the idea of "Western paternalism" and the "White Man's Burden," initiated by the British novelist Rudyard Kipling in 1899, which urged Europe to take up the "burden" of civilizing non-European "savage peoples." The phrase was used to justify the policy of imperialism as noble and to strengthen the belief in the superiority of Western culture and society. The same idea was most often used to justify the exploitation and plunder of the resources of Algeria by France. The French argument was built on the necessity of "une mission civilisatrice" because the people of the region were culturally different and needed to be "civilized" and "absorbed" into French culture and society. Hilton-Simpson ignores that the building of schools, along with new medicines and treatments, came at a huge price for the people of the region, who had to assimilate to the colonists' culture and, many times, abandon their own. The French "civilizing mission" was also used to justify any possibility of resistance to French domination. The objective was to convince that the people of the region needed the help and guidance of the French, justifying the imposition of its presence and domination.

The depiction of the villages of the Aurès region alludes to infertile lands untouched by the changes brought by industrialization. This suggests that the author viewed Shawia land through the prism of the strange and the exotic. He moved to different places where the inhabitants belonged to a different historical epoch. Melville William Hilton-Simpson's perception of the Algerian desert is characterized by a clear dichotomy between "European civilization" and the "Algerian" or "Shawia" land. The author connotes civilization with modernity, infrastructure, and industrialization, while the desert is perceived as an arid, hostile place untouched by the changes brought by French modernity. His description of the villages in the Aurès region, which he sees as infertile and barren compared to the grandeur of European cities, reinforces his misrepresentation of the region. Therefore, the perception of the Algerian desert is also shaped by his adherence to the idea of the European necessary "civilizing mission" as the sole solution to elevate these populations from their backwardness and savagery. He views the desert as a space that suggests danger, to be explored and conquered, and the people living there as in need of guidance and development. The author constructs a negative image of the desert, as Laura E. Franey rightly suggests, solely through a kind of "heroic author, who moves from adventure to adventure against a dark, infernal backdrop where there are no other characters of equal stature, only bewitched or demonic savages" (Franey, 2003: 11).

5.1.The "Temperamental Opposition" Between Arab and Berber Women

Like most travel writers of his time, Melville William Hilton-Simpson reiterates common Orientalist stereotypes and biases. He distinguishes between Arabs and Berbers living in Algeria by depicting Berber women's status as "similar to that of women in Europe," in contrast to the oppressed, voiceless, and subservient Arab women. This suggests that Hilton-Simpson creates a dichotomy between Arab and Berber women, exoticizing or romanticizing Berber women while casting Arab women in a negative light. For instance, he depicts Arabs as backward and inferior, stating through a narrative voice: "My wife and I commenced our inquiries into the customs of the Arabs of an oasis with a view to comparing them with those of the Berbers of the hills" (p. 22). The author stresses cultural differences by expressing sympathy and solidarity with the Shawia, identifying them as akin to Europeans. In so doing, the writer, like his Western predecessors, falls into the trap of constructing stereotypes by not only opposing Berber traditions to those of the Arabs, but also by emphasizing differences in their dwellings. He points out that the women of El Kantara pass most of their days secluded, as far as possible, from the gaze of their neighbors, noting that their dwellings, though similar to those in the oases of the Sahara, differ markedly from those of the Shawia in the hills. "Windows in the outer walls of an Arab house are conspicuous by their absence" (p. 31). Hilton-Simpson uses expressions such as "secluded women" and "gaze" to describe the region's architecture, which allows light and air into the house while maintaining privacy and seclusion for the women inside. Women can observe the outside world without being seen, thus fulfilling Islamic teachings on veiling. This description can be linked to Ashcroft's idea that a travel writer's voyeuristic gaze can "colonize the space" of their journey by establishing an invidious power relationship in the binary of surveyor/surveyed, recorder/recorded, representer/represented. It also reflects the perception of Arab women's identity as fixated on the notion of "closed spaces" (Ashcroft, 2009: 235).

The two conceptions of women in Hilton-Simpson's travelogue operate as extensions of travel in distinct and oppositional ways. His portrayal of Arab women as creatures of inferior status reinforces their subjugation: "They rarely leave their homes, especially when they are young and beautiful, except for some definite purpose, such as bringing in heavy goatskins of water or washing clothes in the stream" (p. 30). He also highlights the absence of women in public places: "Very soon we began to make a considerable number of acquaintances in El Kantara; at first, among the male population only, for women, other than an occasional danseuse of shady reputation, are never to be seen in an Arab café" (p. 23). This reinforces the binary opposition between the public, male world and the private, female world.

Another derogatory image that characterizes Arabs as lazy and careless is used when he writes: "We have already seen that the male population of El Kantara and, for that matter, all Saharan villages pass their days and much of their nights in the café, returning home merely to eat and sleep; family life, therefore, as we understand it, can hardly be said to exist in the villages of an oasis" (p. 34). These examples of "othering" are prevalent throughout the text, exemplifying a perception of cultural and social difference. The first instance creates an image of exoticism and separation, while the second emphasizes the

absence of women in public spaces, creating a distinction between the roles of men and women in Arab society. These instances of "othering" reinforce divisions and marginalize entire communities based on cultural, gendered, and social differences.

Hilton-Simpson also contrasts Berbers with Arabs, stating: "The Arab is, in truth, an indolent poor agriculturalist compared with the more industrious Berbers of the hills" (p. 23), and that Shawia women are far freer than their Arab neighbors (p. 29), who live in prison-like seclusion. Shawia men "are far less strict in their treatment of their women than the Arabs" (p. 222). This opposition reflects what Joep Leersen describes as "vacillations" in Orientalist discourse, where the available discursive-rhetorical reservoir of ethnotypical statements about a given nation contains a layered, historical accumulation of contradictory elements. These images and counter-images illustrate the underlying "imageme" of the group being studied. The contradictions within the imageme are often rationalized by attributing them to the nation itself, portraying it as temperamentally bipolar or a "nation of contrasts" (Leersen, 2016: 18). In the case of Hilton-Simpson, these contradictions are seen in his shifting portrayal of Arab men and women: on the one hand, they are degraded and inferior; on the other, the Berbers are depicted as industrious and free.

Hilton-Simpson's portrayal of Arab women's degradation reaches its extreme when he compares them to the loathsome animal, the pig. He states: "The Arab's idea of the gentler sex when we remember that in his own tongue the native finds it necessary to apologize should he use in conversation the name of that, to the Muslim, loathsome animal the pig, and that a similar apology should always follow the mention of the word woman, an association of ideas which gives us some clue to the state of degradation from which the Arab woman, of the poorer classes at least, has never been able to rise" (p. 34). This offensive misrepresentation reflects a colonial and Orientalist view of Arab culture, which portrays Arab men as misogynistic and their women as oppressed. The idea that Arab men view women as pigs is both factually incorrect and disrespectful. In Islam, pigs are considered haram (forbidden by Islamic law), and the author's conflation of the two ideas reflects a profound misunderstanding of Arab and Islamic culture.

It is also important to note that the passage generalizes "the Arab woman" as being perpetually degraded. This essentialist view oversimplifies the lived experiences of Arab women, who come from diverse backgrounds and social contexts. Moreover, it reduces the complexity of gender relations in Arab societies by implying that poverty is inherently linked to the oppression of women. This perspective echoes Orientalist portrayals of the Arab world as backward and in need of Western intervention, as seen in the works of scholars like Edward Said (1978). Such reductive representations ignore the agency of Arab women, as well as the complex social, political, and historical factors that shape their lives. In this respect, Hilton-Simpson adheres to a longstanding Orientalist narrative that frames Arab women as victims of their culture, in need of Western "civilization."

In contrast to Arab women, Hilton-Simpson emphasizes the better situation of Berber women within the context of Islam. He argues that despite adopting Islam, Berber women experience a level of freedom not afforded to their Arab counterparts, who are seen by their male counterparts as "inferior animals" (p. 34). Berber women are portrayed as freer, able to go out and engage in activities such as pottery making, which contrasts with the seclusion associated with Arab women. This suggests a cultural distinction where Berber women enjoy greater visibility and freedom in their daily lives, allowing for interactions with outsiders. Hilton-Simpson states that, despite embracing Islam, Berber women enjoy freedoms unknown to their Arab neighbors, and "we soon found that we should not lack opportunities to talk to them and watch them at their various occupations, many of which, for example, pottery making, are carried on outside their homes in the full view of the passer-by" (pp. 40-41).

The description of Shawia women performing pottery-making without embarrassment reflects a positive image of their role in society. The author praises their skills and asserts that Shawia women have a "shrewd head for business," positioning them as active participants in the economic sphere. However, Hilton-Simpson's portrayal of both Shawia and Arab women remains within the confines of Orientalist tropes, oscillating between depicting them as voiceless victims and exotic creatures. His observations are shaped by colonial discourses that frame the Arab world in terms of its perceived backwardness and the superiority of European culture.

In conclusion, Hilton-Simpson's travelogue offers a complex, yet deeply flawed, representation of Arab and Berber women. It reaffirms many of the stereotypes central to Orientalism, including the idea that Arab societies are misogynistic and backward, while Berber societies are more liberated. Hilton-Simpson's narrative is shaped by the imperial ideologies of the nineteenth century, which conditioned European perceptions of the Orient. His descriptions of the "Other" are filtered through these ideologies, reinforcing the notion of a dichotomy between the civilizing West and the barbaric East. While he attempts to present a more sympathetic view of Berber women, his depiction is still problematic, reinforcing the gaze of the colonial traveler while positioning the Shawia as curiosities to be observed and studied. This analysis invites further reflection on how colonial narratives continue to shape our understanding of cultural differences and gender dynamics in non-Western societies.

5.2. "Strange Customs" and "Superstitious Rituals of the Shawia

5.2.1. The Ceremonies of "Anzar"

Hilton-Simpson describes the desert community as a place in which nothing happens, while "superstition is still rife" (p. 46). The British author describes in detail the magical rites and ceremonies practiced to make rain fall in times of drought. He, for instance, refers to the legend of "Tislit N Unzar," a ritual of animist origins. "Anzar" is known in Berber mythology as the beneficent element fostering vegetal growth and raising crops. In times of drought, "Anzar," the God of rain in Berber folklore, was solicited to activate its fertile power, and rites were devised to obtain rain to water the thirsty earth. Hilton-

Simpson describes this practice through "very young and well-dressed girls, who carry decorated wooden ladles across the village streets. In their distinguished appearance, with silk kerchiefs, silver brooches, earrings, and pendants resembling a woman's head, they stop at every Shawia home while singing words such as: 'The ladle is playing in the street; Oh, clouds that are on high, allow the rain to fall.' They sing for the inhabitants, requesting alms. The inhabitants, in return, offer them dried fruits, semolina, and other foodstuffs. After visiting all the houses, they take the gathered food to the mosque or to a village's sacred tree, where a group of women collectively prepares couscous for the whole village. This ritual is devoted to hastening the long-awaited blessing of rain, with which they may once again cool off the sunburnt earth and crops (pp. 45-46). Although otherness is not directly expressed by Hilton-Simpson, as a European traveler, he finds it odd that little girls in the village cross roads with oversized wooden spoons, fitted like a woman's head, and covered with silk kerchiefs, silver brooches, earrings, or beads. This ritual offers a strange, unfamiliar, and exotic sight to the traveler, representing a cultural experience distinct from that of traditional European practices. For him, these ancient superstitious rites are associated with magic and witchcraft, as he states: "The practice of magic in the mountains, for the women are better equipped with magical lore than are the men of the Shawia" (p. 46). The author displays stereotypes of Algeria as a dark country and the Aurès as a regressive region. While its traditional communal ethics teach sharing and togetherness, the text associates these values with backwardness and social regression.

5.2.2. Beliefs in "Djinns" and the Practice of Witchcraft

The stereotype about the Shawia rural folk is consolidated by Hilton-Simpson's descriptions of superstition. The hill women of Algeria, in his opinion, believe in spirits, which are a vital part of the region's cultural background; they may be used as a method of protection against numerous types of harm. Djinns also cause mischief by supplying good services and occasionally tempting absolute terror. This practice is considered impious and scary, as it displays a belief in the power of magic to create emotions and love relationships. The Berber women, in this case, turn to magical practices, alongside other malicious methods, to preserve their husbands' affections. Superstitions reinforce the significance of belief in supernatural forces and their ability to defend or harm the living. The use of magic, within the context depicted by Hilton-Simpson, involves women resorting to magical practices to maintain their marital ties and their husbands' affections. The writer cites, as an example, an old woman called a "Sorceress of the Moon," who practices a ritual of digging up the bones of a dead man or woman. She then burns them with incense and magical herbs while invoking the aid of supernatural forces. The author's portrayal of Shawia women practicing magic is telling, as it locates and illustrates the sensationalist discourse of monstrosities and marvels surrounding Berber women, who are ready to avail themselves of any means, magical or otherwise, that may allow them to achieve their goals. As an illustration, the author asserts: "An old woman of this class who possesses the requisite knowledge of magic, or whose eloquence can persuade her dupes that she possesses it, known as a 'Sorceress of the Moon,' proceeds

at dead of night to a cemetery and there digs up the bones of an old corpse, which she burns upon a fire with some incense and magical herbs, at the same time invoking the aid of the hidden spirits in her impious task, for the desecration of a grave is regarded with the utmost horror by all right-minded Mohammedans" (pp. 46-47).

The cultural image that appears in the text reflects the Orientalist perspective that portrays Shawia women, particularly those old women associated with magic and the occult, as bizarre, irrational, and morally inferior. Hilton-Simpson describes these women as "very ready to avail themselves of any means, magical or otherwise" to retain their husbands' affections. This trope echoes the Orientalist stereotype of the "sexually promiscuous exotic Oriental femme fatale," who is driven by unbridled desires and will resort to unethical or supernatural means to achieve her goals. The description of the "Sorceress of the Moon" engaging in the "desecration of a grave" further reinforces the Orientalist view of Berber women as superstitious, uncivilized, and disconnected from "right-minded" European values. This portrayal casts them as the antithesis of the rational, moral Western woman.

The author constructs a negative "hetero-image" of Berber women, presenting them as the exotic, irrational, and morally inferior "other" in contrast to the Western, "civilized" ideal woman. This derogatory image serves to reinforce the power dynamic between the West and the Orient, with the West positioned as the superior, enlightened while the Orient remains irrational and backward. Therefore, Paul Smethurst is right to point out, in his essay "Mobility and Empire," that travel writing played a crucial role in the discursive construction of empire. It helped create and reinforce simplistic binary oppositions, such as the dichotomy between the West and the Rest. Attached to these binaries were clearly derogatory formulations that contrasted the West as civilized, scientific, and rational against the Rest as savage, superstitious, and irrational. This discursive formation did not innocently or neutrally propose these categories. Rather, it allowed the West — which itself is a problematic and homogenized concept — to define and assert its own identity in opposition to a projected, essentialized "other" (Smethurst, 2009: 1). Therefore, Hilton-Simpson's travelogue and the imaginative geographies it produced were instrumental in the imperial project. The author did not merely describe or reflect existing differences, but actively constructed and consolidated hierarchical binaries that positioned the West as superior and the non-West as inferior. This discursive framing was a crucial mechanism through which Western imperial power was legitimized. It is part of travel writing and the spatial imaginaries it generated, which were deeply imbricated with the discursive formations that underpinned and justified Western imperial expansion and domination. Therefore, it can be said that Hilton-Simpson's descriptions cannot be a neutral or innocent process; they instead actively form and strengthen the ideological foundations of Western imperial discourses, which are recurrent in his textual content and displayed through the hetero-images he creates as a British travel writer.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of the national character provided by Melville William Hilton-Simpson's travelogue through the theoretical lens of Leerssen's theory of imagology reveals how Hilton-Simpson performs the identity of narrator/traveler and forms stereotypes using "tropes and images" to project himself as a 'no less careful scientific observer' and a well-instructed traveler capable not only of comprehending alien facts but also of expressing them in terms familiar to his Western readership. The author's construction of the self-image as a Western imperial subject is not only the product of his own cultural background but also those larger historical and literary contexts in which he wrote his text. The destination and itinerary were unusual for a British tourist of the day, so Hilton-Simpson could emphasize features of Algerian culture or landscape that fit Western ideas about it, while sidestepping those that did not.

Certainly, the author details the lives and exchanges between European travelers and the Shawia people, a Berber community residing in Algeria's Aurès Mountains. Despite the way travel writers of his time frequently exoticized and objectified non-Western women, Hilton-Simpson provides a sympathetic portrayal of Shawia girls as resourceful individuals working on behalf of their communities. Therefore, Hilton-Simpson's narrative is an improvement on standard travelogues; he treated the Shawia with a certain respect and decency about their culture, which was not normally seen in older accounts of this type. He represents Shawia women as social agents rather than beautiful objects to marvel at. Yet, in this particular case, Hilton-Simpson faces a complication of having to answer two diametrically opposite imperatives. In order to establish his intellectual credibility, he felt the need to dramatize (humanize) that which was then considered "exotic," shedding a nuanced light on Berber women's lives in the Aurès rather than relying upon biased and eroticized portrayals by male Orientalists. However, in Among the Hill Folk of Algeria: Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains, he seems at pains to shake off Orientalist paradigms as far as the setting and the people he met with are concerned. His literary work does have its share of clichés and stereotypes in colonial and Orientalist discourses, with Hilton-Simpson placing Europe firmly at the privileged center and himself as the main observer, which reflects his sense of cultural superiority. His self-image illustrates his Eurocentric posture. Moreover, his text recreates existing stereotypes of Algerian women as oppressed and voiceless, immoral, and ignorant. As a vehicle for Orientalist discourse, the text considers the Berber woman not as an individual, but as a contrastive type, which reinforces the Arab/Berber dichotomy. Their voices and opinions are not considered throughout the text. This absence and lack of representation is due to the fact that Hilton-Simpson has been influenced by the French colonial discourse and his desire to enact his European identity. The way Aurès women are represented in the narrative is an example of the textual performance of Englishness. Melville William Hilton-Simpson celebrates only those features in Berber culture and Shawia physical aspects that are similar to Anglo-Saxon characteristics. While the construction of the Berber woman can mainly be understood as an expression of liberated femininity, the "Arab" is considered the

antithesis of English and Anglo-Saxon values. Despite this differentiation from other Algerian women, the Shawia woman remains an inferior version of the Western self.

Other limitations of Hilton-Simpson's portrayal of the Shawia culture include his emphasis on attitudes and appearances, which left out other essential elements of colonization. The warfare and tensions between the Aurès populace and French colonizers remain offstage, noted at times, but not dramatized or witnessed during the numerous years Hilton-Simpson spent in the area. Moreover, the British travel writer silences the historical context and implications of French colonization in the region, focusing more on business factors such as hotel expansion and market strategies. This omission, by implication, suggests a perspective mainly driven by commercial interests rather than recognizing the harms of colonization. Furthermore, the writer has failed to offer a deeper understanding of the historical context in his observations on Shawia identity and language use, which remain superficial. Worth noting also, though Hilton-Simpson portrays Shawia women as independent persons within that community, he recreates the readymade molds of the Orientalists for Arab women, who appear as voiceless and passive victims, subjugated, dominated, and vilified by their men. Thus, Hilton-Simpson reinforces the project of the Western travel writer who claims to capture the "novelty" by reproducing existing stereotypes. His constructed images of the Berber women, living beyond Europe, are meant to attract the attention of European readers, eager for exoticism and sensational information, observations, and expressions that shaped Western colonial discourse.

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Résumé

This study focuses on the construction of literary and cultural images in Melville William Hilton-Simpson's travelogue *Among the Hill Folk of Algeria: Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains* (1921). The main goal is to analyze the author's depiction of the Aurès region, specifically focusing on the aspects, forms, and functions of cultural stereotypes and the representations of "self" and "other" as seen through his perceptions of the Shawia population. This analysis uses the theoretical tools and methodology of Imagology to investigate whether the author portrays the Berbers in a positive or negative light. It examines the extent to which the text reproduces stereotypes and cultural images that are deeply embedded in Western imagination. This Imagological approach is particularly significant within the historical context of colonialism and its impact on the representation of non-European cultures.

Mots-clés

National character, stereotypes, discourse, Imagology, cultural representations

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة بناء الصور الأدبية والثقافية في كتاب الرحلات الذي كتبه ميلفيل ويليام هيلتون-سيمبسون بعنوان Among the Hill Folk of Algeria: Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains (1921). الهدف الرئيسي من الدراسة هو تحليل تمثيل المؤلف لمنطقة الأوراس، مع التركيز على جوانب وأشكال ووظائف الصور النمطية الثقافية، بالإضافة إلى تمثيلات "الذات" و"الآخر" كما يراها من خلال تصوره لسكان الشاوية. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على إعادة قراءة النص من خلال الأدوات النظرية والمنهجية المستفادة من دراسات "الإيماجولوجيا" (Imagology)، بهدف تحديد ما إذا كان المؤلف يصور الأمازيغ بطريقة إيجابية أو سلبية. سيتم تحليل مدى تجسيد النص للصور النمطية والصور الثقافية المتجذرة بعمق في الخيال الغربي. إن هذه المقاربة الإيماجولوجية مهمة بشكل خاص في السياق التاريخي للاستعمار وأثره على تمثيل الثقافات غير الأوروبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

لإيماجولوجيا، الصور النمطية، الخطاب، الهوية، التمثيلات الثقافية

Abstract

Cette étude porte sur la construction des images littéraires et culturelles dans le récit de voyage de Melville William Hilton-Simpson, *Among the Hill Folk of Algeria:*

Journeys Among the Shawia of the Aurès Mountains (1921). L'objectif principal est d'analyser la représentation de la région des Aurès par l'auteur, en mettant l'accent sur les différentes formes et fonctions des stéréotypes culturels ainsi que les représentations de soi et de l'autre, telles que perçues à travers son regard sur la population chawia. Cette analyse se base sur une relecture du texte à travers le prisme des théories et méthodologies des études imagologiques, visant à déterminer si l'auteur dépeint les Berbères de manière positive ou négative. L'étude mettra en lumière l'étendue de la reproduction des clichés et des images stéréotypées, profondément ancrées dans l'imaginaire occidental. Cette approche imagologique est d'autant plus pertinente dans le contexte historique du colonialisme et de ses effets sur la représentation des cultures non-européennes.

Keywords

Imagologie, stéréotypes, représentations culturelles, discours, identité