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**Isabella Lucy Bird' *The Golden Chersonese and The Way
Thither*(1883) and William Somerset Maugham's *The Gentleman in
the Parlour*(1930): A Postcolonial Comparative Study.**

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ABSTRACT

This piece of research is concerned with the study of Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (1983) and William Somerset Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930). To achieve our aim, we have used postcolonial theory as elaborated by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). In his theory, Said provides some key elements that can be explored through the postcolonial approach to the text. The appropriateness of this theory is explained by the fact that Bird and Maugham consider the Westerners superior to the Easterners. By analyzing the two texts in the light of other postcolonial thinkers like Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism* (1996) and Joseph Allen Boone's *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (2014), it is revealed that both authors revised Orientalism to achieve personal goals. In our analysis of this topic, we have divided our discussion into three sections. The first section consists of the misrepresentation of the Malays and other Far Easterners. The second section deals with the celebration of the English power and its people, emphasizing on their abilities to rule and govern the East and its inhabitants. The third section focuses on the differences between Bird and Maugham. One is a female and the other a male, which makes a real mark of difference. As a female traveler, Bird seeks to give voice to all oppressed women and to counter patriarchal stereotypes of their inferiority. However, Maugham as a homosexual traveler aspires to break the taboo of homosexuality and finds the Orient as the appropriate place to gain his sexual liberty.

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I. Introduction

European travel writing in the 19th and early 20th centuries was to a certain extent a search for the exotic, which travel writers bring home, either in the form of stories, souvenirs, memories, or diaries¹. It was a time when foreign travel became more and more commonplace for increasing numbers of people. The 19th c travel writers focused mainly upon male travel; and dismissed woman who in their turn challenged the strict boundaries of Victorian Britain and travelled abroad in search for self- determination². Isabella Lucy Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (1883) and William Somerset Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930) are suggestive of the broad global reaches of the British imperial activity. What brings these two texts together is the way in which each of these writers views the Orient. They have similarities and differences in the way ideas are developed or articulated and in the way they celebrate their British Empire abroad. Bird and Maugham are colonialist writers so their works deal with the Malays and other Far- Easterners under the shadow of imperialism.

Bird's and Maugham's works have received a large bulk of criticism. This is due to the fact that both are considered as influential writers and their works as classics in the world of literature. Literary criticism on Bird's work is varied and has been carried out under different viewpoints. Eddie Tay views that Bird displays a certain measure of ambivalence in her depiction of the native of Malaya and of the British themselves. He claims: "[...]the chief trait of Bird's text regarding the people of Malaya lies in its shifts in tone"³. He points out that Bird sometimes praises the Malays and at other times criticizes them and takes side with the British. In addition, Tay considers that Bird depicts Malaya as a resource of raw materials, emphasizing its pragmatic and economic value, but she contradicts this statement by saying that the British presence has the mission of transforming and helping this nation. In her turn,

Park states: “Bird could not remain apathetic toward the political situation and yet the main concerns were travel and exploration”⁴. She cannot prevent herself from being influenced by the political ideas of that time. She claims that Bird deploys Colonialist Discourse in her writings. She adds: “Bird adheres [sic] that Asia is stagnant and unchanging”⁵. This belief is, in fact, prominent during the Victorian Era. It is because the British view themselves as a superior race.

As far as Maugham is concerned, some critical attention has been granted to him. Selina Hastings points out that Maugham is an engaged writer of the British Empire in the Malay Archipelago. She considers that Maugham supports and celebrates the British Empire in the East. She adds that his intention is to maintain the British character in a superior position⁶. In his Doctorate thesis, MouloudSiber compares Maugham’s fiction and non-fiction to other authors of the “British imperial tradition” and states: “Maugham is no less an imperial author through his quest for healing the culturally exhausted Europeans for whom the preservation of empire imposes itself as a necessity”⁷. For him, Maugham is a writer who sides with the British Empire. He adds that Maugham adopts a “Eurocentric” stand point; he is proud of the British race in the sense that they are responsible for the good and just system of rule they bring to the Malays⁸.

Issue and Working Hypothesis

We should not ignore what the critics referred to wrote about Bird’s *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (1883) and Maugham’s *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930). However, by not comparing Bird with Maugham, the previous critics limited their investigation to the celebration of the British Empire and misrepresentation of Orientals. Moreover, they missed the importance of the relation of gender and sexuality with travel writing and Orientalism.

The purpose of our work is to compare Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* and Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour* in terms of similarities and differences. As far as similarities are concerned, both authors focus on the misrepresentation of Malays and other Far Easterners whom they view as degraded. They share the view that the British power and its people are and must always be superior. Concerning differences, we wish to study Bird's and Maugham's differences in terms of gender, sexuality and their link to Orientalist ideas.

As a matter of fact, our work intends first to study the extent to which Bird and Maugham misrepresent the Malay and other Far Easterners by deploying Orientalist Discourse to justify the British intervention in the East. Second, we intend to study the way our authors celebrate their British Empire. They are proud of the English character that is associated with power and civilization. This, in fact, reinforces the idea that it is with the British presence in the East that its people came to know some progress. The third claim we intend to analyze is that they use "travel" as a means to escape from the British restricted values related to gender roles and homosexuality. We shall argue that as a female author, Bird gives voice to the oppressed women in England and in the East and desires to rehabilitate their position within the male dominated society. As a male author, Maugham aims at affirming and at breaking the taboo of homosexuality for all the restricted men in the British society and all over the world.

To deal with this issue, this study will be based on Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) with supporting elements from Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism* (1996), and Joseph Allen Boon's *Homoerotics of Orientalism* (2014). These theories are appropriate in the sense that the writers express a variety of Orientalist interests. In his work, Said argues that representations of the Orient and Orientals are not simply reflections of a true reality, but images provided by Orientalist authors to validate and justify the English intervention in the

East⁹. Moreover, the colonialist discourse maintains the English in a superior position and the Malays in an inferior one¹⁰.

In addition to an Introduction, Methods and Materials, the Discussion of this research paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter focuses on Bird's and Maugham's misrepresentation of the Malays and other Far Easterners. The second chapter consists of the authors' celebration of their Empire and their British fellows. The third chapter examines the difference between Bird and Maugham in terms of gender and homosexuality.

Endnotes:

¹Graig, Patricia, *Travel: Definition, History, Types*, Viewed on 28 November 2014, http://www.diss.fuberlin.de/diss/servlets/MCRFileNodeServlet/FUDISS_derivate_00000002243/02_.pdf?hosts=≥.19.

²Anderson, Monica, *Women and the Politics of Travel 1870-1914* (New York: Rosemont publishing and printing corp, 2006), 14.

³Toy, Eddie, Discourses of Differences: The Malay of Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florance Caddy in Clark Steve and Paul Smethurst' *Asian Crossing: Travel Writing on China, Japan, and Southeast Asia*(Hong Kong: Hong Kong university press, 2008), 104.

⁴Park, Jihang, *Land of the Morning Calm, Land of the Rising Sun: The East Asia Travel Writings of Isabella Bird and George Curzon* (Modern Asian Studies, vol.36, No.3 (Jul,2012), 515

⁵Ibid, 517.

⁶Hastings, Selina, *The Secret Lives of Somerset Maugham: A Biography* (London: JohMurrey, 2009), 270-271.

⁷Siber, Mouloud, *Rudyard Kipling, Edward Morgan Forster, William Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad: The British Imperial Tradition and the Individual Talent*(Doctorate Thesis, TiziOuzou: University of MouloudMammeri, 2012), 3.

⁸Ibid, 64.

⁹Said, Edward W, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 273.

¹⁰Ibid, 7.

II. Methods and Materials

1. Methods:

This analysis of Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* and Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour* will be carried out in the light of Edward Said's postcolonial theory "*Orientalism*" (1978). Said defines Orientalism as a: "Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient"¹¹. For him, Orientalism is a set of Western established ideas whose interest is to represent and take control over the Orient. Said examines the European discourse which misrepresents the Orient. According to him, representations of the Orient are not simply reflections of a true reality, but they are constructed depictions of the Orient¹². He states: "the Orient was essentially an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality"¹³. These misrepresentations are generally reflected in travel literature so as to show the inferiority of the Easterners and to maintain the superiority of the Westerners. In this respect, Said claims: "the literature of empire according to Said involves a set of statements and assumptions about the Orient and the Orientals in order to uphold the imperial power"¹⁴. Travel literature implements the imperial ideology to legitimize the Western colonization.

Moreover, Said distinguishes between the Occident and the Orient in terms of cultural differences. He uses expressions such as "cultural stereotyping"¹⁵ to show the extent to which the Orientals are primitive. This state of primitivism associated to the natives is expressed in different terms. He states: "when an Oriental was referred to, it was in terms of such genetic universals as his "primitive" state, his primary characteristics, his particular spiritual background"¹⁶. It is their primitivism that maintains them in an inferior position and keeps the Easterners in a superior one.

According to Said's postcolonial theory, the West defines itself in terms of superiority over the inferior Easterners¹⁷. Furthermore, he refers to the relation of power between colonized and colonizer in the Western texts to demonstrate the extent to which Western writers celebrate their empire. By doing so, they want to maintain their country triumph. He says: "Europe is powerful and articulate"¹⁸. Said clearly demonstrates that the superior position of the white world gives them the right to take over the Eastern world under the pretext of a "civilizing mission"¹⁹. In this respect, Said argues that the Westerners know more about the benefit of the Easterners themselves. Thus, they have to keep them [Orientals] under their control. Sara Mills states that for Said the European countries marginalized the other cultures of the people they conquer. She writes: "for Said, other people were described as lazy, degenerate, uncivilized, barbaric-as other to the civilized, hard-working British"²⁰

Along with our frame theory based on Said's *Orientalism*, we relied on ideas of other postcolonial thinkers, namely Reina Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism* and Joseph Allen Boone's *Homoerotics of Orientalism*. These scholars "revisited" *Orientalism* and used it in other contexts, related to the personal goals of the writers. As far as Lewis is concerned, Mohd. Ramli states: "post-colonial and feminist critics on Orientalist writings and art- Sara Mills, Reina Lewis[...] have all accused Said of neglecting to mention women's writing within his study on Orientalist discourse"²¹. *Gendering Orientalism* argues that women did not have access to the male position of Eastern superiority²². Thus, they have to find and establish a position for themselves in that male dominated society. Said differently, Lewis demonstrates how feminists in the UK appropriated imperialism to justify their own right to equality.

As for Boone, he offers much insight on the field of sexuality studies in the East. The latter makes reference to the Oriental homoerotic literature that attracted European male travelers²³. Homosexuals in England were forbidden to practice their phantasm. Thus, they have to achieve their goal lying behind Orientalism. In other words, Boone demonstrates the

way through which the oppressed homosexuals succeed to achieve some liberty in the Orient. The latter is viewed as the appropriate place to live and appreciate their male-male sex. It is the perfect place to achieve self-liberation.

Accordingly, the major concepts that can be used in this research paper are: Representation, Western superiority, Gendering Orientalism, and Homoerotics of Orientalism. Representation implies how the Orient is represented and misrepresented in the Orientalist discourse. Thus, these representations maintain the East in an inferior position and the West in a superior one. Then, Western superiority includes the European character as successful and triumphant. After that, Gendering Orientalism involves women's quest for self-determination. Finally, Homoerotics of Orientalism relates to male-male sex and their suffering from discrimination in the British society. Thus, they seek to break that taboo and to free themselves from the restricted values.

2. Materials

-Summaries of the travelogues

The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither (1883)

Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (1883) is a collection of twenty-three letters written to her sister in Scotland. She gives a detailed description of her adventures that lasted five weeks in Malaya. She also includes accounts of many aspects of the region and the people. Bird starts her journey on a steamer from Perak to Hong Kong which she views as miserable, dirty, and old. The author is critical in her description of the people of Hong Kong; she describes them as apathetic. She then moves to Canton, where she acknowledges the British improvements in the peninsula, among which the settlement of telegraph and establishment of roads and hospitals. From Canton, she reaches Saigon. There too, she does not prevent herself from criticizing the Anamese and their way of life. The

fourth step of her travel brings her to Singapore where she explores the growth of that city, its farms, and farmers.

The next step is Malacca. She is particularly interested in its cities and its inhabitants. After that, she visits Selangor, where she makes a great homage to the British officers and their deeds. She returns to Perak and describes the tribal conflicts, the thing which urged the British intervention. Throughout her travel, Bird faces many difficulties and obstacles which she overcomes alone. She also declares that she is among the first 19th century Victorian ladies who travelled without companionship.

The Gentleman in the Parlour (1930)

The Gentleman in the Parlour (1930) is a record of a journey from Rangoon to Haiphong. It traces the travel of Maugham in 1923 through Burma, Siam, and Indochina which enables him to discover the hidden life of the Easterners. His travel starts on a steamer from Pagan to Mandalay which he greatly appreciated. He provides a sensitive impression of the Pagodas at Pagan and the palace of Mandalay. Maugham does not intend to go to Keng Tung, unless he meets a man who tells him that it is a good place which has an important market every five days. There, the author makes a vivid description of the market and the people he meets. He views the latter as lazy and careless. He then travels down to Siam and sees Lumphuri and Ayudha. Once there, his curiosity leads him to visit the ruined temples and the grand house of Constantine Faulkon. Maugham is determined to take a train towards Ayudah, where he sees innumerable heads of Buddha in bronze and stone.

His next step is Bangkok. There, he pays more attention to people than the boring cities. After that, he reaches Angkor, where he is amazed by its temples. From Angkor, he goes to Saigon and settles in the dirty continental hotel. He also describes the festivities of the Chinese New Year. In his way to Hanoi, the capital of Tanquin, he meets Grosely, an ancient friend at St Thomas's hospital with whom he makes a critical account about the climate in the

sense that it harms man. Finally, he takes a steamer to Hong Kong where he converses with Elfenhein. Throughout his travel, Maugham is received by the natives. This, in fact, gives him the opportunity to observe and criticize the intimate details of the Far Easterners' lives and customs.

Endnotes

¹¹Said, Edward. W, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 3.

¹²Ibid, 21.

¹³Ibid, 5.

¹⁴Siber,Mouloud, *Rudyard Kipling, Edward Morgan ForsterWilliamSomersetMaugham and Joseph Conrad: The British Imperial Tradition and the Individual Talent*(Doctorate Thesis, TiziOuzou: University of MouloudMammeri, 2012), 3.

¹⁵Said, *Orientalism*, 26.

¹⁶Ibid, 120.

¹⁷Ibid, 7.

¹⁸Ibid, 57.

¹⁹Ibid, 254.

²⁰Mills, Sara, 'Post-Colonial Feminist Theory'.In *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, edited by, Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones (Edinburgh: EdinburghUniversity press, 1998), 98.

²¹Mohd. Ramli, Aimillia, *Contemporary Critics on the Representation of Female Travelers of the Ottoman Harem in the 19th Century: A Review*. Intellectual Discourse, Vol 19, No 2, 2011, 264.

²²Lewis, Reina, Preface to*Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

²³Boone, Joseph, Allen, *TheHomoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 31.

III. Results and Discussion:

After having analyzed Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (1883), and Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930) through the perspective of Said's *Orientalism*, it is clear that the authors reproduce the colonialist Discourse which tends to misrepresent the Malays and other Far Easterners. These misrepresentations are embodied in their works to validate the imperial ideology and to justify the English intervention in the East. The authors often stereotype the natives and portray them as ignorant, bad-mannered, and careless about covering their bodies. In fact, Bird and Maugham emphasize the moral stagnation of the natives to show the extent to which these people are primitive. Their primitivism also manifests in their inability to rule themselves by themselves. They are seen as Lazy and careless. Moreover, the authors associate dirt with the Malays to demark them from Westerners and to show that it causes many diseases which cannot be cured.

Bird and Maugham, however, view the Westerners as powerful, civilized and well-mannered. They clearly show the capability of the British administrator to rule the natives' affairs and to set peace in Malaya. In fact, the authors' celebration of the English race is to justify missionaries' intervention in the East and to strengthen the belief that it is for the natives' own good. They highlight the backwardness of the natives so as to praise the superiority of the English character. In fact, Said argues that the West always defines itself in terms of superiority over the West²⁴.

Through analyzing the two texts, we realize that the authors also express personal desires. Thus, they use *Orientalism* as a means to express their hidden inclination. One is the desire to restore the rights of the oppressed women in the Victorian society; the other is the desire to end discrimination toward homosexuals. This idea has been revealed by making

reference to other postcolonial thinkers like Lewis's *Gendering Orientalism*, and Boone's *Homoerotics of Orientalism*.

By analyzing Bird's text in the light of Lewis theory, we find that Bird seeks to be intellectually independent so as to trace a way and incite other Victorian women to follow her steps to break the boundaries of the "Angel in the House"²⁵. However, reading Maugham's text in the light of Boone's theory reveals that Maugham finds the East as the appropriate place to look for his sexual liberty. Though he does not declare his homosexuality publicly, it is revealed in the text. In fact, he takes a man as his companionship throughout his travel in the East.

1. Mis/representation of the Malays and other Far Easterners:

To validate Orientalist discourse, Westerners mis/represent the Orient and its people; they often view the latter as a race unable to represent itself. As a matter of fact, Europeans take the burden to represent them²⁶. In this context, Said claims: "The Orient as a representation in Europe is formed -or deformed -out of a more and more specific sensitivity towards a geographical region called 'the East'"²⁷. According to him, representations of the Orient are not simply reflections of a true reality, but they are images which came to define the relation between the Orient and Orientals as inferior, backward, and irrational in opposition to the West. These Orientalist stereotypes do not only misrepresent the Orient but they "deform" it in the eyes of the World. These stereotypes are persistent and embodied in travel literature. Orientalist writers like Bird and Maugham deploy these misrepresentations in their works to show the inferiority of the natives and to justify the English intervention in Malaya. In *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* and *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, Bird and Maugham consider the people of the Far East as "backward", "Primitive", and "unable" to rule themselves by themselves.

A bulk of stereotypes is associated with the natives to maintain them in a degrading state. Bird does not censor her negative vision of the East and its inhabitants. She describes her travel experience with phrases like “New wonder world [...] intoxicating, makes me despair, for I cannot make you see what I’m seeing”²⁸. She is astonished by the low living conditions which make her feel lost and not at ease in that strange country where she knows no one except some British officers. Published in 1930, Maugham’s travelogue deploys colonialist misrepresentations. Right at his arrival, he judges the life of the natives as strange and difficult to understand. He claims:

Looked with curious eyes as passed in my motor car and wondered what strange things I should discover and what secrets they had to tell me if I could plunge into that enigmatic life and lose myself in it as a cup of water thrown over board is lost in the Irrawaddy²⁹

Once there, the author questions the Malays’ way of life. He believes that they have a hidden part of their life which they keep for themselves. He feels bored and considers the place as dull. According to him, the Burmese life is complicated and not easy to get with. Through the authors’ first impression of Malaya, it becomes clear that they misrepresent the life of its people. Relating to this view, Said states: “Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems”³⁰.

Bird and Maugham reproduce the colonialist discourse which tends to misrepresent the Malays morally. The natives are often portrayed as uneducated and ignorant whereas the English are seen as educated and enlightened. Bird in her text associates the superstition of the Malays with ignorance as a mark of their inferiority. She uses more stereotypical images to show that they lack knowledge and have nothing to do with the values of the Western people. The Malays’ ignorance is expressed in their belief in spirits and some other supernatural things. For instance, they argue that certain souls of human beings transform into tiger’s one after their death³¹. Thus, they only speak of them [tigers] in whispers and cannot kill them unless they commit some dangerous aggressions. Bird says “I never heard of any

country of such universal belief in devils, familiars, omens, ghosts, sorceries, witchcrafts”³². This saying shows how the natives are so ignorant that they rely on the paranormal to explain things that happen to them. They do not have a rational mind.

Similarly, Maugham associates the natives with ignorance which is manifested in their superstition. The Malays express distaste for killing the wild creatures of the jungle. They believe that those beasts have as much right to life as they do³³. This explains that they have a sort of feeling or affection for them. Maugham remarks: “it is only unwillingly that they take their guns to kill a tiger that is frightening the villagers or woodcock or snipe for the pot”³⁴. They argue that it brings bad fate if someone attempts to kill those beasts. The author is brought into close contact with the Malays and reinforces his stereotyped vision toward the natives through using such expressions as “They didn’t seem to me very intelligent”³⁵ to degrade them. To a further extent, the author claims that like other people of the East he came across with, the Malays are not intelligent and refers to them as “the stupidest lot of people”³⁶. His view is extremely racist and subverts the Malays’ intelligence so as to keep them in an inferior position. As a relevant instance, they believe that the soul of a dead person may bring peace and good luck to the people of the village where he dies³⁷. Such instances are meant to prove that the natives are ignorant and to maintain them in a degraded position.

The natives’ ignorance does not only manifest in their belief in superstition, but it is also seen in the inability of the rulers to manage their countries; the thing which led the people to become careless and lazy. Bird considers the Malays as careless people who do not pay enough attention to what they do. They do not act in such a manner as to change themselves from the state of primitivism. Their incompetence is related to the professional incompetence of the rulers whose carelessness extends to the people. The latter suffer from the injustice, misrule, and the corrupt character of their leaders who are unable to rule their people. Said writes: “Orientals were ignorant of self-government”³⁸. Indeed, these non-Westerners do not

manage to be integrated into activities that may bring benefit for them and for the development of their country. To refer to the miserable circumstances, Bird uses words such as “oppressive rule”³⁹ and “anarchy”⁴⁰. Another example is when Bird refers to the Malay driver as a “careless fellow”⁴¹, for he is not concerned with accomplishing his job.

In her letters, Bird portrays the Malays as lazy since they do not seem to be interested in or enthusiastic about doing anything. She says: “These natives look apathetic, and are, according to our notions, lazy”⁴². People are not anxious about doing things that interest them; they are voluble and blithe. Syed Hussein Alatas states: “A number of employers have avoided Malays because they believe them to be lazy”⁴³.

Likewise, Maugham confirms that the natives’ carelessness is inherited from their anarchist rulers. Thus, they do not show any enthusiasm in what they do. This mismanagement of their affairs leads them to economic crises. He states: “They keep a little shop, but do not care whether they sell anything, and their goods are dusty and fly-blown; or they run, with lackadaisical incompetence, a coconut plantation”⁴⁴. The author clearly demonstrates that those people do not really care about the effective functioning of their business nor do they give value to it [business]. They are not subject to change since they follow the same way as their ancestors. He states: “they led the lives their fathers had led before them”⁴⁵. The idea of Malays’ carelessness stands for their laziness and incompetence.

Maugham also views the natives as lazy. He claims that the main reason for their static situation is their laziness. For him, the Malays are lazier and lazy people who do not care to perform any given work so as to improve their condition. Instead of work, they spend their time wandering in the Market, chatting, talking about the news and latest stories. He says: “they had come not to buy and sell, but to gossip and pass the time of the day with their friends”⁴⁶. In China, Maugham wonders how these people get a living without working since they spend their time doing nothing interesting and gossip all day long. They are not

motivated to do any work. The only task they can accomplish is to obey their masters' orders and instructions. He affirms: "Next morning while I was having breakfast in my verandah Kyuzaw came in to ask for the day's instructions and to gossip"⁴⁷. Respectively, the author supports Lamartine's racist idea that "the Orientals and Muslims in particular, are lazy"⁴⁸. Most of the time, Maugham portrays Orientals as sitting on verandahs, eating and laughing. As a reply to Maugham's question about life, Kyuzaw says: "there was nothing to do'[...]'Two hours' work in the morning and there were prayers at night, all the rest of the day nothing. I was glad when the time came for me to go home again"⁴⁹. Maugham then acknowledges that the latter enjoys his free time. Both authors share the view that the non-Westerners are not likely to change not because they cannot but because they do not want to change.

The backwardness of the Far Easterners manifests not only in their ignorance and laziness, but it is also expressed in terms of habits. Bird and Maugham affirm that the natives are careless about covering their bodies and are generally bad-mannered. In her travel narrative, Bird's description of the people's hospitality seems to favor her own compatriots over the Orientals. She expresses her disappointment and clearly states that the Malays are not hospitable. For instance, after a long day of travel she expects a meal from a host but never receives one⁵⁰. Unlike Europeans, Malays lack the notion of welcoming a guest, and they do not care about the way the foreigner views them.

Likewise, Maugham believes that the Malays have bad manners. They behave in a rude way; this demarks them from the good-mannered Occidentals. Once in Mandalay, the servant imposes the set of drinks on him [Maugham] without even knowing if he desires to take one or not. He says: "As I walked up he nodded to me and asked whether I would have a whisky and soda or a gin and bitters. The possibility that I would have nothing at **all did not even occur to him**"⁵¹ [*emphasis added*]. This rude behavior demonstrates the natives' lack of

respect to other people. Another example which illustrates their impolite behavior is that they lack the notion of knocking at the door. He states: “a young man sprang to the door and opened it so promptly that I was nearly precipitated on to the platform”⁵². This act is directed to contrast the Malays’ uncivilized behavior to the well-disciplined British. It is, in fact, a proof that marks the native’s backward state. Bird and Maugham affirm that the natives are bad-mannered, unfriendly, lead solitary lives, and do not welcome the stranger.

The authors go far to criticize the people’s way of clothing or unclothing. Bird asserts that the Malays are careless about the way of clothing. They do not follow the stages of development as the Occidentals do; they are primitive to the extent that they do not care about wearing or not, nor do they pay any attention to how others view them. The natives lead a very simple life far from the highly established British one. She writes: “The women wore only *sarongs*, and the children nothing. The men, who were not much clothed, were lounging on the mats”⁵³. This excerpt shows that the natives are often described either as wearing, or not wearing clothes. The author emphasizes this primitive way of dressing which refers to the earliest period of human life. Another example in which Bird dismisses the dress codes of the natives is the instance when she refers to the half nakedness of the Chinese men. She says: “many half naked Chinamen”⁵⁴ the author makes reference to their nakedness in order to maintain them in a degrading state. This also shows the Easterners’ negligence in providing means to cover their bodies.

Maugham joins Bird in her depiction of the Malays’ way of dressing. He asserts that the natives do not wear the same clothes as he does. He states: “He is not dressed as I am”⁵⁵. The author uses this expression to demark himself from the other. He believes that the Eastern dress is not attractive; people almost dress in the same way. He confirms:

In all these lands the clothes the people wear attract our eyes because they are peculiar, in each everyone is dressed very much alike; it is a uniform they wear, picturesque often and always suitable to the climate, but it allows little opportunity for individual taste; and I could not but think that it must amaze the

native of an eastern country visiting Europe to observe the bewildering and vivid variety of costumes that surrounds him⁵⁶

Reinforcing his stereotypes towards the natives in Rangoon, the author uses such expressions as “half-naked”⁵⁷, “naked feet”⁵⁸, and “naked”⁵⁹ with the aim of showing the extent to which those people are backward. They do not care about the way of providing their bodies with clothes. This, in fact, does not bother them at all. While the Europeans progress in the domain of clothing and wear in a fashionable way, the natives could not move a step forward in it. Bird and Maugham view the Malays’ dressing codes in a critical light to emphasize their state of primitivism, and to call for European intervention to save them from their primitiveness. In this regard, Siber and Riche state: “the fact that they can be ‘primitive’ as shown through ‘nakedness’ calls for the intervention of the West to reform or inculcate in them some civilized values like the importance of covering their bodies”⁶⁰.

To maintain the stereotyped view of the Orientals, the authors associate their physical appearances with ugliness. Bird’s and Maugham’s discourse paints a primitive and uncivilized picture of the colonized people. Bhabha claims: “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest”⁶¹. What he means is that it is these negative portrayals of the Easterners that require the British intervention. Bird depicts the unattractiveness of the Malays and claims that they are unpleasant to look at. She says:

I never saw such ugly, thick-set, rigid bodies, such uniformly short necks, such sloping shoulders, such flat faces and flatter noses, such wide, heavy, thick-lipped mouths, such projecting cheek-bones, such low foreheads, such flat-topped heads, and such tight, thick skin, which suggest the word *hidebound*⁶²

Clearly, Bird sees the Malays as an ugly race, completely different from European beauty. Similarly, Maugham in his travelogue reinforces the negative portrayal of the natives and often associates their physical appearances with ugliness. Being a British traveler, Maugham believes that the English people look more attractive than the Malays. He expresses his disgust

of the physical appearance of female Malays. He claims: "They are mother and daughter. The woman, poor thing, had a malformed hand and the girl, as you see, that terrible lip"⁶³. From these words, the author seeks to deform the nature of the colonized women and make of them unpleasant creatures in the eyes of Europeans. To reinforce their view on the physical appearances of the Malays, the authors use animal imagery. Bird compares the teeth of a young Girl to those of animals⁶⁴. She asserts that they are very odd and inhuman. She portrays the Malays as being devoid of feelings, looking more like demons than living humans⁶⁵. In the case of Maugham, he denigrates the people of the East and associates them with animalistic terms like "church mice"⁶⁶. To validate the Orientalist discourse, the authors refer to the ugliness of the Malays using animal imagery.

To develop further, the authors maintain the Malays in an inferior position and consider them as servants. For Bird and Maugham, the fate of the Malays is to be servants to their English masters. In fact, the natives' duties are to carry water, to serve food for their masters and to keep the house in order. Bird clearly demonstrates how the Malays serve the British agents. She says: "Yesterday morning, at six, the Chinaman who usually 'does' my room, gilded in, murmuring something unintelligible, and on my not understanding him, brought in Portuguese interpreter"⁶⁷. It is clear that the author is served by the natives who work for her and obey her orders. She does nothing but ordering and staring at them. The natives settle in the white' houses and starve against their will in order to fit their master's instructions. Bird believes that the fate of the Malays is to be servants to the white men. Because of this, those servants are not given names and remain anonymous in the eyes of their masters. The latter do not show any interest to know the names of those people. What matters for them [masters] is their ability to do the works for them and obey the orders. In this context, she refers to the people of the East as "Malays"⁶⁸, "Chinese"⁶⁹; she never gives them full names as she does with the British.

The idea that the natives are subordinated to the colonizer is also prevalent in Maugham's work. The author makes clear the relationship between the Englishmen and the natives. The latter are depicted as servants of the English imperial agents. For instance, Masterson owns some Malays who obey to his orders in a correct manner. Moreover, the natives are seen as the white men's property. He says: "my servant"⁷⁰. Maugham states that Maugham believes that the Malays are used as servants to the English imperialist men who take profit from their services⁷¹. The author depicts the natives both, men and women, as dependent on the English so that they can be used to the English men's advantages. If the latter behave in such a way is to maintain their respect; they are afraid that the natives overcome them if they do not show their power and make them remain servile. Like Bird, Maugham clearly shows that the natives' status is degraded; this is reflected in the fact that they remain anonymous. The Masters do not name the "other" since they believe that knowing them or not remains the same. They argue that if the natives have names, they will be equal to them [Europeans]. However, Maugham refers to them as "the boy"⁷², "servants"⁷³. From all what has been said above, it becomes clear that the authors stress the necessity of maintaining the people of the East in a fixed and inferior position.

Both texts are filled with such negative representations of the colonized world to emphasize that differences between the East and the West are maintained. Bird degrades the status of the Malays and asserts that they have no knowledge of geography, architecture or even painting⁷⁴. More specifically, the author denigrates the Malay music by mentioning that it is very boring and dirge-like, and not pleasing to a European ear⁷⁵. In his turn, Maugham claims that the Westerners believe that Oriental art and music are something insignificant and unpleasant; it is done in a "savage" and unstructured way. The author goes far when he reduces their art to a childlike one⁷⁶. For the non-Westerners, art means little, and it is uncommunicative; it does not deliver any meaning. Concerning music, Maugham feels that it

is melancholic and tremulous. It gives the impression of something old and sad⁷⁷. He states: “Musicians, hidden by the darkness, played on pipes and drums and gongs, a vague and rhythmical music that troubled the Nerves”⁷⁸. He considers their music as repulsive to the European travelers since they sing in a very loud voice without following any rhythm, and their gestures are like the ones of marionettes⁷⁹.

Along with these stereotypes, the authors go far to associate dirt to the Malays so as to demark them from the cleanliness of Europeans and to affirm that it is among other factors which caused many diseases. These illnesses cannot be cured by native doctors since they lack knowledge about the different medication and rely rather on superstition. This urges missionaries’ intervention in the sense that they are more specialized in this domain. Bird makes reference to the dirty state of people and their degraded health conditions. She describes them as dirty people; they wash their clothes rarely and bath occasionally. She says: “They are quite unwashed”⁸⁰. She associates them with dirt; in her eyes, it is something natural in their life. This, in fact, harms their situation [Malays]. She contrasts them to the Europeans who keep themselves and their surroundings clean. She adopts a racist attitude towards the Malays and believes that their pale skin is related to their dirt. She says: “Children with brown chubby faces which had never been washed since birth, and, according to all accounts, will never be washed till death”⁸¹. Maugham also associates dirt with both the Malay cities and its people. A feeling of dislike and disapproval rises within him as he views the dirty man preparing the food. He shares Rang Lal’s view who states: “Telegu was so dirty that no one could eat what he prepared”⁸². Like Bird, he confirms that the dusky of their complexion is related to their dislike of the use of water⁸³. Moreover, their surrounding is associated with dirt. As a relevant instance, all the places are described as inhabitable; they are not clean enough for Western people to live in. He describes the room in one of the hotels and states: “I was shown a dirty, sordid little room with a mosquito net grimy and torn”⁸⁴.

Another example which intensifies his stereotypical view is when he portrays the streets of Mandalay as dirty, dusty, crowded, broad and straight⁸⁵. According to him, the Eastern cities are overcrowded, boring, and full of dirt; no foreigner can support such degraded and dirty places. Bird and Maugham associate the Malays with dirt as a mark of inferiority.

They emphasize dirt as a factor behind the spread of diseases from which the Malays suffer. However, they argue that disease is also due to the degraded medical conditions of the region and their lack of specialists in this domain. Concerning Bird, she describes the natives' miserable life; they suffer from dangerous diseases which cannot be cured. She says:

We went into three other large wards, foul with horror, and seething with misery, and into a smaller one, nearly as bad, where fifteen women were incarcerated, some of them with infants devoured by cutaneous diseases⁸⁶.

It is clear that Bird uses such expressions to misrepresent the Easterners. Indeed, they lack doctors and different medical treatments to help the patients. For cure, the Easterners turn to mystery and superstition⁸⁷. As a relevant instance, they use powdered rhinoceros's horns, sun-dried tiger's blood, powder tiger's liver, spiders' eyes, and many other queer things⁸⁸. The natives explain these things not in a scientific way but according to some spirits or events that happen in nature; their practices are insufficient. She refers to the dirty hospitals by describing the system adopted there as one of the most antiquated quackery which does not fit to the European medical norms. She states: "the surgery and medicine are totally uninfluenced by the European science, and are of the most antiquated and barbaric description"⁸⁹.

Maugham joins Bird's idea that the dirt associated with the natives resulted in many diseases. He recounts that he suffered from an attack of malaria: "I had probably got malaria"⁹⁰. He believes that Malaria is caused by the dirty food. Arguably, he denigrates their food and describes it as tasteless, hot and disgusting. He could not even support its smell, and it sickened him:

I didn't know why, the insipid eastern food sickened me. The heat of Bangkok was overwhelming. The wats oppressed me by their garish magnificence, making my head ache, and their fantastic ornaments filled me with malaise⁹¹.

As a Westerner, he cannot recognize whether his trouble is spiritual or bodily. Such beliefs tend to prove that the dirty food is among other factors which create numerous diseases. Indeed, these dangerous diseases cannot be cured because of the degraded medical conditions. He refers to their medicine as a primitive one; there are no improvements or even attempts to improve their health conditions. They have no specialized doctors in this domain. He states: "In the medicine stalls the vendors were very old man, with wrinkled faces and blood-shot eyes, who looked like wizards"⁹². Indeed, they rely on superstition and herbs to cure their patients. This, in fact, is very far from the Occidental medical achievements.

To conclude with, it is clear that Bird's and Maugham's travelogues construct stereotypes based on racial differences which deform, denigrate, and misrepresent the East. These physical, moral, and social aspects create negative and incorrect images of the colonized subject. In other words, the misrepresentation of the Malays is actually an imperial ideology to maintain them in a backward and primitive state. This misrepresentation is reinforced with a celebratory representation of the English people who are in the East.

Endnotes

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²⁵Woolf, Virginia, *Professions for Women*, Viewed on 2 September 2015, <http://iws.collin.edu/grooms/wl2woolfpw.pdf> .2.

²⁶Said, *Orientalism*, 1.

²⁷*Ibid*, 273.

²⁸Bird, Isabella L, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (New York: G.P.PUTNAM4S SONS, 1884), 222.

²⁹Maugham, W. Somerset, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (London: Vintage Books, 1930), 6.

³⁰Said, *Orientalism*, 207.

³¹Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 451.

³²*Ibid*.

³³Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 85.

- ³⁴Ibid.
- ³⁵Ibid, 51.
- ³⁶Ibid, 84.
- ³⁷Ibid, 51.
- ³⁸Said, *Orientalism*, 228.
- ³⁹Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 265.
- ⁴⁰Ibid, 194.
- ⁴¹Ibid, 379.
- ⁴²Ibid, 128.
- ⁴³Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of The Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of The Malays, Filipinos and Javanese From the 16th and the 20th century and its function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 1977), 17.
- ⁴⁴Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 88.
- ⁴⁵Ibid, 65.
- ⁴⁶Ibid, 81.
- ⁴⁷Ibid, 96.
- ⁴⁸Said, *Orientalism*, 178.
- ⁴⁹Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 101.
- ⁵⁰Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 381.
- ⁵¹Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 101.
- ⁵²Ibid, 26.
- ⁵³Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 111.
- ⁵⁴Ibid, 381.
- ⁵⁵Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 9.
- ⁵⁶Ibid, 179.
- ⁵⁷Ibid, 8.
- ⁵⁸Ibid.
- ⁵⁹Ibid, 96.
- ⁶⁰Siber, Mouloud and Riche Bouteldja, *The Aesthetic of Natives' Dress and Undress: Colonial Stereotype and Mimicry in Paul Gauguin's and William Somerset Maugham's Cultural Forms* in *Revue des pratiques langagieres* (Mouloud Mammeri: Tizi-Ouzou, N°19), 59.
- ⁶¹Bhabha, Homi K, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 101.
- ⁶²Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 131-132.
- ⁶³Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 67.
- ⁶⁴Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 417.
- ⁶⁵Ibid, 88.
- ⁶⁶Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 37.

- ⁶⁷Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 192.
- ⁶⁸Ibid, 278.
- ⁶⁹Ibid, 315.
- ⁷⁰Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 11.
- ⁷¹Siber, Mouloud, *Rudyard Kipling, Edward Morgan Forster, William Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad: The British Imperial Tradition and the Individual Talent* (Doctorate Thesis, University Mouloud Mammeri of TiziOuzou, 2012), 72.
- ⁷²Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 33.
- ⁷³Ibid, 11.
- ⁷⁴Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 30.
- ⁷⁵Ibid, 26
- ⁷⁶Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 24.
- ⁷⁷Ibid, 80.
- ⁷⁸Ibid, 169.
- ⁷⁹Ibid, 7.
- ⁸⁰Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 128.
- ⁸¹Ibid, 125.
- ⁸²Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 93-94.
- ⁸³Ibid, 82.
- ⁸⁴Ibid, 175.
- ⁸⁵Ibid, 21.
- ⁸⁶Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 90.
- ⁸⁷Ibid, 27.
- ⁸⁸Ibid, 112.
- ⁸⁹Ibid, 111.
- ⁹⁰Maugham, *The Gentleman in The Parlour*, 127.
- ⁹¹Ibid, 126.
- ⁹²Ibid, 79.

2. Power and the English Character:

According to Said's postcolonial theory, the West defines itself in terms of superiority over the inferior Easterners⁹³. During the imperial epoch, this idea was dominant and is reflected in the literature of the epoch. Bird's and Maugham's works are no exceptions. In their travel narratives, the authors assert the inferiority of the Malays as opposed to the superiority of the English people. For Said, a writer cannot avoid the influence and stand indifferent to the political regimes of his country. He says: "Every learned European traveler in the Orient felt himself to be a representative Westerner"⁹⁴. As a matter of fact, travel writers do not ignore the fact that England is a great empire. In the case under study, Bird and Maugham clearly demonstrate that they are supporters of their empire. As it has been already mentioned in the previous section, the Malays and other Far Easterners are seen as backward, lazy, primitive, and ignorant. In contrast, this section focuses on the manners the authors celebrate the superiority of the English and their character.

Respectively, Bird and Maugham are proud of and celebrate English character in their writings. The British believe that they are superior and competent to take control of the Easterners. Their power is expressed in different fields. The authors show the European progress in the medical field. They clearly portray their ability to cure many diseases using modern surgery and medication. Bird and Maugham demonstrate that the economic power promote the good of the colonized land that needs to be exploited rather than remain unexploited. The British also intervene in the political affairs of the natives to save them from their corrupt leadership. As for the British agents in the East, they are referred to from a positive sight. Said writes: "There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate, the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their

internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power⁹⁵.

The authors portray the English as careful, active and competent in contrast to the lazy, careless and incompetent natives so as to justify the imperialist intervention in the East. They praise the superiority of the colonizer who is able to understand and interpret not only the terrain they entered but the inhabitants as well. Said says: “‘Our natives subject’ have more to learn from us than we do from them”⁹⁶. Bird pays tribute to the British officials she meets in the East, whom she describes as amiable and intelligent people. The latter turn out to be people who are engaged in the process of the civilizing mission under the pretext of improving the conditions of the natives. William Edward Maxwell is among those British agents whom Bird meets in Perak. She says:

He is a man of one whose word one may implicitly rely. Brought up among Malays, and speaking their language idiomatically, he not only likes them, but takes the trouble to understand them, and enter into their ideas and feelings. He studies their literature, Superstitions, and customs carefully [...] I have the very pleasant feeling that he is the right man in the right place, and that his work is useful, conscientious, and admirable⁹⁷.

Bird considers Mr. Maxwell as competent, the one who engages himself in the process of understanding and caring about the Malays’ problems. The British presence in Malaya is supplemented with affective qualities in order to maintain their superiority. This explains more the colonizer’s agenda of control which seeks to dominate the colonized not by force but by compassion. Said argues: “They are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves”⁹⁸. The author praises the British and associates them with expressions such as “thoroughly honorable man”⁹⁹, and “high sense of honor”¹⁰⁰. In his turn, Maugham associates the British with all good qualities necessary for imperial domination. He says:

... A man who took much a long time to say what he had to say and had found the world with sufficient leisure to listen to him must have qualities that made

him sympathetic to his fellow. He took the amiability of mankind for granted and I suppose he could only have done this because he is himself amiable¹⁰¹.

The author provides the same description as Bird does so as to praise the British character. He portrays the British as an amiable and wise imperial agent, the one who has the art of speaking and communicating with others.

Furthermore, the authors talk about the English men whose deeds are greatly appreciated by the natives. In her letters, Bird clearly demonstrates how the unselfish British bother themselves to solve the Easterners' problems. For instance, when she speaks of the lieutenant governor, Captain Show, she qualifies his deeds and praises him. She says: "His ordinary rule is the gentlest and most paternal description"¹⁰². The latter's rule is greatly appreciated by the Chinese who consider him as their "father"¹⁰³. This, in fact, makes of him the head of the family who is the father or the elder. Moreover, Bird considers his correct administration as "the rule of just"¹⁰⁴. She does so to maintain her fellow men in a superior position.

Talking about the great deeds of the British in the East, Maugham asserts that the British are motivated people; they really care about the effective functioning of their business and time. Instead of spending time doing unnecessary things as the Malays do, the British take profit from it to accomplish things for their progress¹⁰⁵. They have a sense of responsibility which is the reason behind their success. He states: "I must get back to my office"¹⁰⁶. This instance is depicted by the author to celebrate the good acts of their British officers.

The two texts claim that the British pose as masters over the Malays. For Bird and Maugham, the fate of the British is to be dominant over the Malays. Since the British believe that they are the most superior race in the world, they have to be served and obeyed by a so called inferior race. Bird states that she herself felt superior to the Malay who served her: "At seven, came in the Maddrassee, Babu, with a cluster of banana and after him, two Malays, in red *sarongs*, who brushed and dusted all my clothes as slowly as they could"¹⁰⁷. The author is

served by three men; she does nothing but ordering and staring at them. She believes that the word “served”¹⁰⁸ is strictly applicable to the Orientals who must serve the English. She claims that the English cannot but order and be obeyed. Like Bird, Maugham makes clear how the English men are superior to the Malays. Consequently, the English set themselves as Masters over the Malays to maintain their honor. Reference can be made to Mr. Masterson who has some Malay servants in his house and sets himself as the head over them. Thus, his orders have to be obeyed in a correct manner. Although he is polite and kind to them, he still shows his superiority. For instance, his servant makes him [Masterson] a special dinner every day. He says: “The curry was served and I piled my plate with rice and helped myself to chicken and then chose from dozen little dishes the condiments I fancied”¹⁰⁹. As a master, he sees the Malays as his servants. He refers to him as: “my servant”¹¹⁰. Supporting this idea, Wallas states: “I generally employed one or two, and sometimes three Malay servants”¹¹¹. The superiority of the British leads them to set themselves as Masters over the Malays.

In politics, the British introduced a more advanced rule. Bird and Maugham enjoy the well-functioning of their rule in the East. Before the late 19th century, the British practiced an indirect interventionist policy. Several factors like the incompetence of the rulers and the insecurity of their land convinced the British to apply a more active role in the Malay states. Said writes: “Orientals have never understood the meaning of self-government the way “we” do”¹¹². While Malacca, Singapore, Province Wellesley and Pinang are consolidated to one government under the crown, it is the Pangkor treaty in 1874 that marked the true beginning of the British expansion in the Malay Peninsula¹¹³. Bird refers to the clash between two sultans for whom no arrangement can be made. This urged the British to interfere in order to set peace and prosperity in Malaya. She argues that it is only with the presence of the British that those states knew a better system of law. She says “surely, as we have practically acquired those states, and are responsible for their good government, we ought to give them

the blessing of a simple code of law”¹¹⁴. She states that the British are responsible for the good and just system of law that they exercise over the Malays.

From another side, Maugham focuses on the English capacity to restore peace in the East. He joins Bird’s view that the British go there to rehabilitate the natives’ chaotic situation and help them to lead a peaceful life far from the whims of their corrupt rulers. He states: “The only liberty is the power to do right”¹¹⁵. This means that the right system of the British is the appropriate one to free the oppressed people and change their lives. Because of their miserable system of law, those oppressed non- Westerners aspire to a wind of change from the part of the British. For instance as a traveler Maugham writes about his own experience in one of the Eastern’ villages. He states: “They looked at me humbly, as though they were expecting from me a message for which they had been long eagerly waiting”¹¹⁶. This is a way of demonstrating that he is viewed as a kind of savior. This behavior proves that the imperial agents do their duties correctly to gain the confidence of the natives. He is one among many Europeans who can save them from the claws of their unjust rule. In his travelogue, Maugham metaphorically uses the star to refer to the British desire and benevolence to help those backward people. He writes:

She stood with her companion but with an effect of being apart from them, and on her face wore a good-humored, but faintly supercilious smile, as though she belonged to another sphere. When the clowns attacked her with their gibes she answered them with a smiling detachment; she was playing her part in a rite as became her [...] she had the aloofness of self-confidence. Then her moment came. She stepped forward. She forgot that she was a star and became an actress¹¹⁷.

What Maugham suggests is that the British support the Easterners but do not take complete control of them; the British ruler implements his best system of rule knowing that they are better than them [Easterners]. He compares the smile of that star to the British officers who are comprehensible; they neither blame them [Burmese], nor answer negatively to their insults and accusations. Instead, they [British officers] try to understand them and bring relief to

them. The British task is to make of the natives self-made men who will become active participants in the reconstruction of future Malaya. Because the British are self-reliant, they always move steps forward. Said says: “The West is the actor”¹¹⁸. Moreover, Maugham states: “The British held the power that their fathers had conquered”¹¹⁹. These words show that Bird and Maugham are proud that England is powerful and has a great reputation in Malaya.

In her turn, Bird praises the well-functioning of the British rule in the sense that it fights criminality in Malaya¹²⁰. She puts more emphasis on the British sympathy over the natives. She quotes a prisoner’s words, implying that Hong Kong under the British rule is governed by compassion and says:

Would I were in your prison in Hong Kong”, and this was chorused by many voices saying, “In your prison at Hong Kong they have fish and vegetables, and more rice than they can eat, and baths, and beds to sleep on; good, good is the prison of your queen”¹²¹.

Her depiction of the prison’s system under the British rule is, in fact, to emphasize that British imperialism is guided by compassion and not by force. In addition, Bird clearly shows that the Malays under the British rule led a safe and secured life. She says:

All these people enjoy absolute security of life and property under our flag, that they are certain of even-handed justice in our colonial courts, and that “the roll of the British drum” and the presence of a British iron-clad mean to them simply that security which is represented to us by an efficient police force¹²².

It is inevitable to notice that through these words, Bird articulates her political stance, which of course stands for the benefit of her empire.

For Said, “the British emerged in practical economic and political control of the subcontinent”¹²³. As it has already been mentioned above, the authors praise the British rule. This pride is also expressed in their economic achievements. Bird argues that the British interference in the empty places¹²⁴ is to make it known and explore it for commercial relations between Westerners and Easterners. In Letter VII of the travelogue, Bird describes how the

ambition of Sir Stamford Raffles makes of Singapore a free port. She says: “The prescience of Sir Stamford Raffle marked it out Malacca in 1819 as the site for the first free port in the Malayan seas[...] and was erected into the capital of the straits settlement which includes Malacca and Penang”¹²⁵. This extract shows that Singapore was a blank space, inhabited only by a few miserable fishermen and pirates¹²⁶. However, it became a known port after being discovered for its natural resources by the British. In this respect, Said states: “Europe was always in a position of strength”¹²⁷. In fact, Europeans always feel themselves superior; thus, they feel the necessity to dominate and civilize the weaker countries.

Bird confirms that it was only under the British control that the voluminous list of the peninsula’s exports increases. It consists mainly of sugar, pepper, tin, nutmegs, mace, sago, tapioca, rice, buffalo, hides and horns [...]but the island itself though its soil looks rich from its redness, only produces pepper and gambier¹²⁸. This, in fact, proves that Bird supports the British imperial ideology and justifies their interference in the economy of the natives. In this way, Bird shows how the British succeed to improve and change the economic exchange between Malaya and other countries by putting aside their [Malays] old commercial practices. Bird’s celebration of the British achievements leads her to criticize other imperial powers. She says: “The French do not appear to be successful colonists”¹²⁹. She states that the natives rely on the British in every field of life since they have neither settlements nor plantation upon them¹³⁰. What requires more attention is the absence of roads. To the English, the road has a long tradition of being regarded as a symbol of civilization and of cultural superiority. Said differently, it is the best instrument to introduce civilization to facilitate economic activities. In her travelogue, Bird clearly demonstrates the benevolence and the generosity of her empire in constructing roads for the purpose of connecting Asia to both the internal and external world¹³¹.

Maugham supports Bird's view concerning the economy of the East. He believes that those people still follow a primitive way of exposing their goods and exchanging them with other states. He argues that without adopting modern European means, those Malays cannot move a step forward in their economy¹³². By referring to these traditional agricultural means, the author shows the superiority of his fellows. In addition, he shows the British benevolence in constructing roads and other infrastructures for the Easterners. He says: "There was no road, but only a narrow pathway, and where it ran under the trees it was thick with mud"¹³³. This shows the necessity of the British interference in constructing roads in the East.

Bird's and Maugham's travel narratives also show the European progress and development in the medical field. They clearly portray the British ability to cure many diseases using modern surgery and medication. Said argues that the early English Orientalists are "medical men with strong missionary leanings"¹³⁴. In her letters, Bird depicts the instance when a British educated man provides medical aids to cure the Malays' diseases. His competences lead people from the neighboring states of Malaya to come just to be advised and helped in curing their dangerous illnesses¹³⁵. Because of "fatal illness"¹³⁶ and the absence of "medical aid"¹³⁷, Bird strengthens the need for humanitarian interventions. Of captain Murray, she says: "Captain Murray cures it in a few days with iodide of potassium and iodine, and he says that it is fast disappearing"¹³⁸. She believes that the Western medical mission is to build hospitals in the Far- East in order to cure, save and improve the condition of those people. She states: "There are one hundred and twenty beds. There is much to admire in this hospital, the humane arrangements, the obvious comfort of the patient, and the admirable ventilation and perfect cleanliness of the beds and wards"¹³⁹. She praises the people of her race and asserts that they are the saviors of these primitive people.

As for Maugham, he recounts the noble work of the British "doctor" to British people. Reference is directed to doctor Grosely who has left his country [Britain] so as to help the

Malays, who suffer from dangerous diseases. He says: “they had brought to the hospital the notions they had acquired at home and at school”¹⁴⁰. From this, we understand that the author praises the British medical achievements. He is also proud of belonging to that prosperous country. While the natives do not care to improve their health conditions, the Westerners turn to medication to improve their health condition. Maugham himself does not hesitate to ask for a doctor¹⁴¹. The authors believe that with the presence of the British in Malaya, progress is marked. They consider the British achievements in the East as a work of great humanity.

It is the cultural, political, and economical differences between the English and the Malays that divide those two distinct worlds, which urged the developed countries to feel the duty and right to bring light to the underdeveloped countries of the East. The travelogues describe the Orient through the European stand point. Therefore, the authors take into consideration the European view that distant territories such as the Malay Peninsula and their peoples should be subjugated. Both authors believe that the Malays experience the advantages of good order and security which result from the British just rule. The authors claim that the Malays are not industrious, and their cultivation is rude. It is in this way that Bird and Maugham come to explore how the exotic space is suitable to mercantilism and making fortunes.

Endnotes

⁹³Said, Edward W, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 7.

⁹⁴Ibid, 223.

⁹⁵Ibid, 36.

⁹⁶Ibid, 152.

⁹⁷Bird, Isabella L, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* (New York: G.P.PUTNAM4S SONS, 1884), 363-64.

⁹⁸Said, *Orientalism*, 35.

⁹⁹Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 236.

¹⁰⁰Ibid, 142.

¹⁰¹Maugham W. Somerset, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (London: Vintage Books, 1930) 29.

¹⁰²Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 160.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 83.

¹⁰⁶Ibid, 39.

¹⁰⁷Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 192.

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 390.

¹⁰⁹Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 35.

¹¹⁰Ibid, 11.

¹¹¹YVAN, Melchior, Six Months among the Malays, and a Year in China.

<https://books.google.fr/books?id=SAcPAAAYAAJ&pg=PR7&dq=the+malays+as+servants+in+travel+narratives&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=ibeXVYaWBszzUKf8tKgl&ved=0CCoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=the%20malays%20as%20servants%20in%20travel%20narratives&f=false>.

¹¹²Said, *Orientalism*, 107.

¹¹³Toy, Eddie, 'Discourses of Differences: The Malay of Isabella Bird, Emily Innes, and Florance Caddy'. In *Asian Crossing: Travel Writing on China, Japan, and Southeast Asian*, edited by Clark Steve and Paul Smethurst (Hong Kong: Hong Kong university press, 2008), 100-101.

¹¹⁴Bird, *Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 302.

¹¹⁵Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 40

¹¹⁶Ibid, 71.

¹¹⁷Ibid, 7.

¹¹⁸Said, *Orientalism*, 109.

¹¹⁹Maugham, *Gentleman in the Parlour*, 9.

¹²⁰Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 303-04.

¹²¹Ibid, 89.

¹²²Ibid, 325.

¹²³Said, *Orientalism*, 76.

¹²⁴Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 1.

¹²⁵Ibid, 140-41.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Said, *Orientalism*, 40.

¹²⁸Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 141.

¹²⁹Ibid, 130.

¹³⁰Ibid, 262.

¹³¹Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 78-83.

¹³²Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 278.

¹³³Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 97.

¹³⁴Said, *Orientalism*, 79.

¹³⁵Bird,*The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 235.

¹³⁶Said, *Orientalism*, 162.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸Bird,*The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 235

¹³⁹*Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁴⁰Maugham,*The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 189.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 127.

2. Orientalism, Gender and Sexuality:

As it has been stated in the previous chapters, Bird and Maugham are imperial residents who implement in their writings their colonial discourse which stands in favor of their British empire. As Bird was a Victorian woman and Maugham a homosexual, they were both discriminated at a moment or another in England in terms of gender and sexuality. These writers may be classified to the third category of Orientalist writers as Said defines them. He writes: "Three: the writer for whom a real or metaphorical trip to the Orient is the fulfillment of some deeply felt and urgent project"¹⁴². This saying is applicable to our writers who see the Orient as the appropriate place to achieve their personal goals. One is the rehabilitation of women's position within the male dominated society; the other is the affirmation of his homosexuality.

a- Bird and Gendering Orientalism:

The nineteenth century travel writing focused upon male travel and exploration; it dismissed women travelers, who in their turn, challenged the strict boundaries of Victorian "separate spheres" ideology and free themselves from domestic constraints. In this context, Anderson argues that in terms of the history of Victorian travel writing it is male travel accounts that for the most part recall for the readership what happens abroad. She says: "Those male writers focus upon male travel, male exploration, easily dismisses women travelers as a poor carbon copies of masculine original"¹⁴³. In the same context, Reina Lewis criticizes Said on the grounds that he completely neglects and even excludes women from Orientalism. He says: "Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province"¹⁴⁴. Yet, women have to be first intellectually independent to create a position for themselves within male centered world. Kristi Siegel argues that early women need to establish some credibility in their narratives through which they resisted the attacks directed to them, mainly that of their travel as unnatural¹⁴⁵.

In the Victorian era (1837-1901), the fate of women was to be “the angel in the house”¹⁴⁶; they were seen as housewives, mothers, and sex objects. They were generally attributed a narrow range of social roles while men were occupying a full range of social and occupational roles. Consequently, women’s rights were extremely limited; they were excluded from the public sphere of power, not allowed to own property and loose ownership of their wages. The latter wanted to get rid of the strict Victorian’s social codes. Thus, they found travel as a means to free themselves and assert their rights. Kristi Seigel states: “For Victorian women traveler, questing for self meant traversing boundaries for cultural property”¹⁴⁷. This saying argues that women’s desire to cross Europe is a way of breaking the established taboos of the English society and to negotiate their right place in society.

It must be remembered that each of the Victorian women, during their travels, were protected by the presence of their husbands against dangers which may face them. However, Bird, in her travel to the East, rejects even the companionship of her husband; she is determined to go abroad and face the danger on her own. She shows what an English lady can do. In a similar way, Marry Carpenter argues that: “The devoted work of multitudes of English women in that great continent shows what our sex can do”¹⁴⁸. In *The Golden Chersonese and The way Thither* (1883), it is clearly demonstrated that Bird is self-determined; she expresses her desire to explore the world and acquire knowledge. Through her narrative, the author challenges the Victorian male writers’ centered world and establishes a place for herself in the Victorian literary texts through which she arouses the interest and admiration of the public readers. She is determined to describe her personal experience of Malaya as she sees it: “The opinions expressed are wholly my own, rather right or wrong, and I accept the fullest responsibility for them”¹⁴⁹. This quotation proves that she is completely responsible of the information she provides to her readers. In fact, readers have been strongly attracted by Bird’s travel narrative, her capacity for accurate observation, and her retentive

memory. Her vivid portrayals have enabled multitudes of readers to share her experience and adventure. This shows the influences she succeeds to exercise as a woman writer on her readers. Lewis argues: “nineteenth- century women who transgressed the codes of femininity to publish or exhibit art were to some extent aspiring to recognition in the terms of their culture”¹⁵⁰. During that period, women’s desire was to be intellectually independent. Thus, they broke the taboos by travelling abroad and publishing travelogues.

Bird’s journey to the Golden Chersonese is significant in the 19th century because of the danger and difficulties she faces. When she travels she seems to enjoy her freedom as a solitary traveler. “I’m enjoying a delicious solitude”¹⁵¹, she says. This, in fact, shows her delight in the freedom of travel. This opportunity for adventures came after years spent caring for others. By traveling abroad, she does not care for anyone but herself. In her journey to Kwala Kangsa, the elephant refuses to carry on his way. Bird’s strength makes her continue to her destination on foot¹⁵². This act proves Bird’s daring and determination. In fact, she is self-reliant. Though walking alone may stand as a barrier for her journey to be accomplished, she shows her ability to face difficult situations. This event is very significant since it occurs to an English woman in a country of native men without a white male escort. She succeeds to reach Cholen despite the difficulties she faces¹⁵³. It is a feeling that makes her independent. This is consistent with Bird who is walking in Malaya. She is able to step out from her restricted roles and condition as a Victorian lady. Another instance which shows Bird’s strength is when she rejects a guide only to get lost in a maze. She writes:

Rejecting a guide, I walked about Saigon, saw its streets, cafes, fruit markets, bazaars, barracks, a botanic or acclimatization garden, of which tigers were the chief feature, got out upon the wide, level roads, bordered with large trees, which run out into the country for miles in perfectly straight lines¹⁵⁴.

The quotation above shows that Bird’s eagerness for freedom and knowledge leads her to discover the secrets of that unknown land by herself without any companionship. This, in fact, proves that in England, she is not free to exercise her will; she is restricted either by the

marital duties or patriarchal roles. Precious McKenzie states: “Venturesome women travel writers demonstrated women could develop physical strength and gain control of their own lives”¹⁵⁵.

Bird clearly demonstrates her ability to conquer the territories alone and to face the wilderness. That is how she takes a Chinese boat “The Rainbow”¹⁵⁶ to Malacca. She emphasizes on the fact that she is the only European and female traveler abroad. She claims: “I am the only European passenger and the only woman on board”¹⁵⁷. Her pride stands for her desire to challenge male travelers. She believes in her own abilities and competences that enable her to criticize the image of women provided by the Victorian society. Once in Malaya, Bird aims at experiencing the exotic, seeking out to enjoy the sense of freedom away from home. She asserts: “I never feel well except in the quiet and freedom of the wilds”¹⁵⁸. From this excerpt, we understand that Victorian women do not feel at ease nor do they enjoy their living conditions. Their only duties are to nurture their children and to take care of their authoritative husbands who just consider them as a source of physical desire. Indeed, they are viewed as passive, waiting for someone to come and change their fate and bring them out of the claws of their male dominated society. However, in journeying abroad, women enjoy their trips and come to recognize the value of freedom. They start to gain confidence and change their view on themselves. Victorian women are no longer the submissive and passive women; they are rather the curious and active ones who seek to improve their fate and impose themselves on that male dominated society.

As it has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, Bird meets many British officers and administrators; she also gets access to their affairs. This proves the extent to which she is self-determined. She breaks the taboo of the dominant man and dominated woman and considers both sexes equal. Both have the right to deal with their countries’ affairs and both are active participants in the construction or regeneration of their future

Britain. This, in fact, encourages her to take a pen and write down her journey as male travelers do. Unlike other Victorian women, like George Eliot who wrote under a male pseudonym, Bird rejects anonymity and writes under her real name “Isabella Lucy Bird”. There is no denying that Bird is a courageous woman and adventurer. She does not consider her experience in the East as frightening though she faces some danger. Another instance which shows her bravery is when she decides to go at night and confront the dangers of that jungle which is not safe because of the tigers. She claims: “I wanted to go out by moon light [...], and even the Malays there don’t go out after night fall”¹⁵⁹. She adds: “there is no one but myself at night”¹⁶⁰. From this, we may understand that she desires to get rid of the weaknesses associated with women and to show her strength and courage. Even in extremely dangerous situations, she describes her circumstances in a wondrous tone. She says: “and myself disarmed and unescorted in the heart of a region so lately the scene of war”¹⁶¹. These words, in fact, explain that despite the dangers and discomfort she may face, she adopts an unwilling attitude towards that.

Bird sympathizes with Malayan women, and often takes pain to describe them. Bird’s narrative aims to criticize the stereotyped images related to the Oriental women and to create a kind of relationship between Oriental and Western women. Lewis says: “women writers often expressed sympathy for ‘native’ women”¹⁶². Bird sometimes grants little attention to the clothing and jewelry of those women. She does not condemn them but rather shows sympathy towards them. She justifies the fact that Malayan women do not buy luxuriant dress stating that they have little money which they use to sell mats and feed themselves¹⁶³. As a Victorian lady, she shares the suffering of other oppressed women in Britain. Thus, she adopts a feminist attitude towards the Eastern Women. Lewis argues:

When we look at European women’s representation of and participation in processes of othering, we are looking at representations made by agents who are themselves partially othered and whose actions may add to both the relegation of themselves *and* of other women¹⁶⁴.

In the same context, Helena Swanwick claims: “this was the essence of the white feminist burden, premised among other things on the expectation that British women’s emancipation would relieve Indian Women’s suffering and “uplift” their condition”¹⁶⁵. This means that the British and the Oriental women similarly suffer from being restricted and oppressed by men.

In her travelogue, Bird views the female Others as women who are also subjected to cultures that manipulate their bodies. Indeed, women are seen in the East as sex objects, housewives, caring for their husbands and children. She remarks that even the girls are secluded and not allowed to go beyond their private houses. She says: “when these girl-children are twelve years old, they will according to custom, be strictly secluded, and will not be seen by any man but their father till the bridegroom lifts the veil at the marriage ceremony”¹⁶⁶. This quotation clearly shows how these women, often at an early age, are owned and controlled by men. They are veiled until the day of their marriage. In this way, the veil limits the freedom of women and forbids them from showing their beauty. Arguably, Bird compares the veil to the fact that women in England are excluded from the public sphere. It also prevents Victorian women from exerting their capacities in the improvement of their country. Moreover, Bird compares the act of being veiled to her fellow women who are dismissed as their husband’s property. Antoinette Burton claims: “what defined and motivated female reformers was a body of clients who were in need of salvation: the poor, the sick, the unemployed, the prostitute”¹⁶⁷. What the author means is that the Western women go to the East to help those oppressed and excluded women and save them from the evils of their society. In fact, this fits with what Bird did. She sympathizes with those women because her sisters in England suffered from male domination. Most of the time, women are viewed as sex objects; they have to take care of their bodies in order to please their men.

Women during the Victorian era were expected to have sex only with one man who is the husband; they have to be faithful since divorce is seen as a shame. However, it is acceptable for a man to have multiple relationships; they are engaged in love affairs with other women without caring about their wives. Seemingly, in her narrative, Bird makes reference to the faithful Malay women whom she describes as caring and obeying to their husband's orders and restrictions. However, the Malay men, as Bird describes them, are most of the time unfaithful and practice polygamy¹⁶⁸. Those selfish men enjoy getting married to several women so as to suit their desires. By emphasizing this fact, the author wants to show the suffering of women all over the world and their desire to get free and reject the taboo that women not men have to be faithful. She believes that faithfulness is a human quality. Thus, it has to be practiced by both men and women.

To conclude with, it becomes clear that Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither* is an instance of gendered Orientalism. Bird finds the Orient as the appropriate place to show her self-determination. She always conquers Malaya alone, she faces the danger of the wilds, and walked without companionship. The text then provides a voice to all oppressed women to rehabilitate their position within the male dominated society. Homosexuals in their turn find the Orient a place to practice their male-male sex. Thus Maugham does not hesitate to celebrate his homosexuality and rehabilitate the position of that category within and outside England.

b- Maugham and the Homoerotics of Orientalism:

Since 1533, homosexuality was viewed as an intolerable act which led directly to the extermination of its practitioners¹⁶⁹. While other European countries deal slightly with the discrimination of this issue during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, England took strict instructions based on persecutions¹⁷⁰. In other words, the nineteenth and early twentieth century knew a wave of repression against homosexual men and Maugham

was no exception. As time moves, homosexuality was transformed from a prohibited practice to become an established taboo. However, in the East things were different; people lived their solitary lives without restrictions, and “misbehavior” was tolerated. This led Europeans to go there to discover these pleasures. In this context, Boone argues: “Within Western fantasies of the “Orient” lies the potential for unexpected eruptions of sex between men”¹⁷¹. The Oriental literature which is saturated with historical and literary examples of desire, love and romance between men, attracted most of Western men¹⁷². Most of the European men had sexual and emotional inclination towards intimacy with other men even if sometimes it was practiced secretly. Within the same idea, Aldrich argues:

Homosexuals appear among all groups of European who sojourned in the colonies. Some men travelled overseas in the course of their professional lives as public servant, diplomats, missionaries, or members of the liberal profession. Their sexual activities while overseas are not always known, and probably were often not particularly relevant to their public lives¹⁷³.

Because of this frequent persecution of homosexuals, individuals turned to literature as a source of validation and affirmation of the same sex practices. This led to an explosion in published travel narratives which deal with male homoeroticism¹⁷⁴. Boone states: “For many Western men the act of exploring, writing about, and theorizing an eroticized near [and Far] East is coterminous with unlocking a Pandora’s box of phantasmic homoerotic desire”¹⁷⁵. This, in fact, may be applied to Maugham’s narrative, in which various accounts of homosexuality are explored. It is worth to note that Maugham does not reveal himself as a homosexual openly. In this context, Seedgwick states: “the continental refusal to acknowledge the existence or legitimacy of same-sex desire had turned it into the sexual secret”¹⁷⁶. Right from the beginning, Maugham expresses his inability to resist male attractiveness; it is a sentiment that he cannot control. He declares: “I am afraid of people with too much charm. They devour you. In the end you are made a sacrifice to the exercise of their fascinating gift and their insincerity”¹⁷⁷. These words prove that the author is attracted by men. During his

sojourn in the East, the author is accompanied by a male interpreter who is described as being physically attractive. He is fascinated by the boy's appearances and says: "My interpreter smiled brightly, flashing a great many white teeth at me"¹⁷⁸. The fact that he has a male companionship attributes to his homosexuality. He adds: "He was a good speaker my interpreter"¹⁷⁹. From the physical description that the author provides about the boy, we may deduce that he has sexual relationship with him. This proves that he does not find his pleasure only with men. In addition, the text is full of physical descriptions which aim at confirming his attractiveness to men. He says: "He was a man in the early thirties, with a pleasant friendly face, curling dark hair speckled with grey and handsome dark eyes. He spoke with a singularly musical voice, very slowly, and this, I hardly know why, inspired you with confidence"¹⁸⁰. In this context Boone states: "It is strange to see how passionate they are [Europeans] for handsome males"¹⁸¹.

Maugham is blindly attracted by male bodies. This, in fact, provides him with confidence. The author is not free to express himself in his homeland, so he finds a great delight to do it in the East. Said argues:

The Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe[...] In the twentieth century one think of Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others. What they looked for often- correctly, I think- was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine¹⁸².

Because they were discriminated in their homeland, they find the Orient as the appropriate place to look for their sexual desire.

As a British resident, Maugham works for the benefit of the British Empire. This Empire provides opportunities to express his sexual feelings that were denied at home. In this context, Edmunds White comments: "Whether becoming a gay is a political act or not, homosexuality always carries some political impact. The intention may be personal but the function of homosexuality is social"¹⁸³. The quotation above demonstrates that behind the author's imperialist's duties, he wants to affirm and live his homosexuality freely. He also

desires to rehabilitate his condition as a homosexual, and break the taboos of male-male sex in Britain and all over the world. Being sexually oppressed in his mother land, Maugham is fascinated by the beauty of the Eastern people and landscapes where homosexual love may be practiced without fear of persecution for the crime of “sodomy”¹⁸⁴. Through the physical descriptions that the author provides, we may float in his imagination and understand that what he means is that he aspires to establish a relationship with them. As a relevant instance, reference is directed to the scene in which he describes the Eastern dancers:

Their hands were beautiful, with small and tapering fingers, and in the progress of the dance their gestures, elaborate and complicated, pointed their elegance and emphasized their grace. Their hands were like rare and fantastic arckids. There was no abandoned in their dance. Their attitudes were hieratic and their movement formal¹⁸⁵.

This quotation proves what has already been said above. Maugham imagines the gestures and attitudes of the dancers which arise in him a sexual desire. In fact, those male dancers are established institutions in the east and are commonly assumed to be sexually available for pay¹⁸⁶.

Women are usually seen as a male desire, the beautiful and fine creature that God created to be loved by men. However, being a homosexual, Maugham hardly bears his life with his wife namely SyrieWellcome¹⁸⁷ whom he married in 1917 and divorced in 1929 so as to live with his beloved partner Gerald Haxton¹⁸⁸. To express his rejection of having sex with women he uses expressions like “I’m not a lady’s man”¹⁸⁹. It is worth to note that Maugham’s marriage results from his fear of losing his reputation and career as a writer. A direct flaw to this is revealed in *The Gentleman in the Parlour* when the lieutenant is forced to marry just to have the position of the governor. In fact, he is not about to have such position because he is a bachelor¹⁹⁰. Maugham’s vision of women is more or less critical. His homosexuality led him to view women as a barrier to men’s liberty. He refers to Masterson who refused to be engaged in a serious relationship with a Burmese woman under the pretext that he would not sacrifice his happiness for a dream¹⁹¹. That happiness refers to his own joy on the grounds that

he ruins his marriage and spent most of the time traveling in Exotic locals with his male companion Haxton. Besides, we have already discussed the point that Maugham is repelled by the women of the Far East, but not men. In one of his descriptions, he writes about a mother, and daughter, the former with “a malformed hand”, the latter with a “terrible lip”. His descriptions of women as ugly reinforce the idea that he is more attracted by men than women. This, in fact, shows his homosexuality.

In the light of all what has been said, Maugham’s Orientalism is characterized by the “homoerotic” desire which is regarded at home as a sin, crime and taboo. Sexual irregularities result in possible imprisonment, especially as the British established some laws in the colonies which are less tolerant of sexual dishonest activity. His travelogue mirrors his aim of breaking the taboo of homosexuality for all the gays in the British society and all over the world.

Endnotes

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¹⁵⁰Lewis, Reina, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 22.

¹⁵¹Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 287.

¹⁵²*Ibid*, 386.

¹⁵³*Ibid*, 125.,

¹⁵⁴Ibid, 121.

¹⁵⁵Kenzie, Mc, *The Right Sort of Women: Victorian Travel Writers and the Fitness of Empire* (Britain: Cambridge schools publishing, 2012), 5.

¹⁵⁶Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 154.

¹⁵⁷Ibid, 155.

¹⁵⁸Ibid, 466.

¹⁵⁹Ibid, 289.

¹⁶⁰Ibid, 232.

¹⁶¹Ibid, 384.

¹⁶²Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*, 22.

¹⁶³Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 175.

¹⁶⁴Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*, 238.

¹⁶⁵Antoinette, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, And Imperial culture*, 1865-1915, 10.

¹⁶⁶Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 241.

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¹⁶⁸Bird, *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, 31

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¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Bonne, Joseph, Allen, Preface to *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), xviii.

¹⁷²Ibid, 31.

¹⁷³Robert, Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality*, Viewed on 8 July 2015

<https://books.google.fr/books?hl=fr&lr=&id=tq9UTX5O2CIC&oi=fnd&pg=PT12&dq=robert+aldrich's+colonialism+and+homosexuality&ots=pFtkjSFerS&sig=5M3D1qKvXm93FYOsLKrY-t0T45E#v=onepage&q=robert%20aldrich's%20colonialism%20and%20homosexuality&f=false> .

¹⁷⁴Bonne, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, 27.

¹⁷⁵Boone, Joseph Allen, *Vacation Cruises; Or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism* (PMLA, Vol. 110, No. 1, Special Topic: Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition (Jan., 1995), 93.

¹⁷⁶Cocks.H.G, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19th century* (Great Britain: MPG Books Ltd. Bodmin, 2003), 3.

¹⁷⁷Maugham, W. Somerset, *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (London: Vintage Books, 1930), 1.

¹⁷⁸Ibid, 51.

¹⁷⁹Ibid, 52.

¹⁸⁰Ibid, 29.

¹⁸¹Bonne, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, 60.

¹⁸²Said, *Orientalism*, 90.

¹⁸³Yongs, Tim, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 141.

¹⁸⁴W W W. Polomaredu/pc3h/docs/short% 20 Historical% 20 Background Hardy 2.Pdf. Viewed on 28.06.2015.

¹⁸⁵Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 170.

¹⁸⁶Boone, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, 102.

¹⁸⁷[https://en. Wikipedia. Org/wiki/w.-Somerset-Maugham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._Somerset_Maugham).

¹⁸⁸*Ibid*.

¹⁸⁹Maugham, *The Gentleman in the Parlour*, 150.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid*, 154.

¹⁹¹*Ibid*, 38.

IV. Conclusion:

The present research is based on a comparative study between Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and The Way Thither*, and Maugham's *The Gentleman in the Parlour*. This study shows the similarities and the differences between the two works. Throughout the analysis of the travelogues, it is apparent that the two authors share common attitude towards colonial relations, expansion, civilization, and self-affirmation. Indeed, the authors misrepresent the Malays and other Far Easterners to show the inferiority of the "natives" and to justify the English intervention in Malaya. In this sense, the Malays are viewed as morally, physically, and socially primitive and inferior. Bird and Maugham express their support for the British Empire by representing the British as a superior race. Consequently, they take control over the Easterners. Our authors differ in the sense that they lie behind travel to achieve personal goals. For Bird, it is the struggle against the patriarchal structures of Victorian society. For Maugham, it is the struggle to break the taboo of homosexuality.

After studying the two works, we come to the conclusion that Bird calls for the integration of women into the male dominated society and struggles to give voice to all the oppressed women to put an end to the patriarchal domination. Her text is part and parcel of the Orientalist tradition, but it is feminist in orientation. As for Maugham, he aims at ending the restricted values against the male-male sex. His text provides an instance of Orientalist discourse that is characterized by personal ideology and homoerotics.

In addition to Bird's and Maugham's critical views of the Malays and their celebration of the British power and character, they defend the rights of both women and homosexuals within society. Each one seeks to achieve his personal goal. It is the way we have compared between the two works. We would like to advise more students to deal with this issue from a feminist' perspective. Indeed, Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883)

may be compared to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in the sense that both authors advocate women's rights.

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