

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Travel Literature in the Works of Abu al-Qasim: Saadallah Narrating Memory and Critiquing Reality

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Abstract:

Travel literature is an ancient literary art that intertwines the documentation of geographical and cultural landscapes with the elegance of narrative and the precision of historical record. Yet, in his journeys, Abu al-Qasim Saadallah went beyond mere descriptions of the places he visited and the events he witnessed. His writings carried a profound critical insight into the social and political realities, both local and Arab, reflecting not only his keen analytical mind but also his unwavering commitment to awakening collective awareness

Saadallah seamlessly wove literary narration with deep critical analysis, elevating his travels into a vital cultural and civilizational reference. His writings painted a vivid and comprehensive portrait of life in Algeria and the Arab world, unveiling the challenges that shaped society's reality.

Keywords: Travel, Narrative, Reality Analysis, Critique, Transformation.

Introduction

Literature stands as a profound expressive medium, not only reflecting the realities of society but also unveiling its struggles and aspirations. Beyond mere entertainment or artistic creation, it serves as a faithful mirror, capturing life in all its complexity and contradictions. Among its many genres, travel literature holds a unique place, offering a vivid and immersive portrayal of reality. Through captivating narrative, writers document their encounters with foreign societies, weaving together personal impressions and keen observations on the prevailing social and political landscapes.

The travels of Abu al-Qasim Saadallah stand as a distinguished model of literature that intertwines artistic narration with incisive critique. His writings transcend mere descriptions of scenes and events, offering instead a profound reflection of the realities he encountered. With a discerning eye, he critically engaged with the social and political landscapes of his time, transforming his travel literature into a mirror that captured the struggles of his homeland and the broader Arab and Islamic world. Expressing his views on unfolding events and pressing issues, he never compromised the literary depth of his work nor veered from the essence of objective critique. In this, Saadallah's writings became not only an intellectual endeavor but also a force that fostered awareness and channeled critique toward meaningful reform and transformation.

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Definition and Origins of Travel Literature:

Travel literature is a refined Arabic prose genre that arises from an innate desire to explore nations and peoples. It serves as both a chronicle of journeys and a reflection of personal experiences, capturing the traveler's motivations, encounters, and evolving impressions. More than a mere record of events, it often shapes perceptions and renders judgments on what has been seen or heard.(Hussein, 1989, p. 17)

This notion is affirmed by Magdi Wahba and Kamel Mohandes, who define travel literature as: "A collection of literary works that convey the author's impressions of travels across different lands. Such writings may depict customs, behaviors, and moral values, offer meticulous portrayals of natural landscapes, recount the journey step by step, or seamlessly weave all these elements together."(Wahba & Mohandes, 1984, p. 17)

Travel literature stands as a rich tapestry of knowledge, intertwining geography, history, sociology, economics, literature, religion, and mythology.(Krachkovsky, 1963, p. 17)

This vast intellectual expanse renders it an open and fluid text—one that resists confinement within rigid categories, embracing instead the limitless breadth of human exploration and understanding.

The travel narrative is a distinct literary form, structured upon two fundamental referential frameworks. The first is an objective framework, anchored in a real or imagined experience that the writer transforms into the essence of the journey. The second is a textual framework, rooted in literary narration that evokes the style of folk tales and historical chronicles, seamlessly intertwining storytelling with documentary depth.(Halifi, 2002, p. 111)

The travel narrative is inherently rooted in storytelling, weaving together experiences and imagination into a structured literary form. As narration is the natural mode of artistic prose, the travel text transforms both lived and recorded experiences into a crafted literary

reality. Through evocative imagery, it merges fact with fiction, carrying the emotional resonance of the journey. Within this dynamic space, the writer engages with the reader, imparting sentiments and perspectives shaped by the sights witnessed and the moments lived.(Halifi, 2002, pp. 265, 267)

The art of travel writing among the Arabs traces its origins to the pre-Islamic era when they journeyed across various lands in pursuit of trade and more favorable living conditions. Though these early travels were never documented, they enriched Arab explorers and

conquerors with invaluable experiences and knowledge across diverse sciences and arts, paving the way for their expansion.(Hussein, 1983, p. 10) By the mid-second century AH, Arabs began to chronicle their journeys, giving rise to numerous works, including those of Al-Asmai, Hicham Al-Kalbi, and Al-Sarakhsi.(Qandil, 2002, p. 71)

Travel literature flourished in the 10th century CE, reaching its zenith with the writings of Al-Massoudi and Ibn Hawkal. (Qandil, 2002, p. 12)

In the modern era, with the awakening of intellectual consciousness, travel emerged as a vital pursuit for acquiring knowledge and practical experience. This was particularly evident in journeys directed toward the West, then a hub of scientific and cultural progress. Among the most distinguished travelers of this period was **Al-Wartalani**, who served as a bridge between East and West; **Taha Hussein**, whose encounters with Western civilization deepened and refined Arab thought; and **Amin Rihani**, who blended literature, philosophy, and the quest for knowledge in his

travels. Their writings became a testament to their engagement with other civilizations, offering profound insights that enriched Arab and Islamic culture.(Hussein, 1983, p. 15)

Nevertheless, the homeland remains an enduring presence in the consciousness of most travelers, both at home and abroad. Its political, cultural, and social concerns are inextricably woven into their reflections, shaping the essence of their narratives. As they chronicle their journeys, impressions, and contemplations, their vision may expand to embrace the realities of other nations, transcending the confines of their own.

The Critical Dimension in Travel Writing

The travel narrative is a literary form that portrays reality in all its facets—political, social, and intellectual. The traveler does not merely record observations or describe geography but engages in a deeper analysis of prevailing political structures, social dynamics, and intellectual transformations. This critical perspective is honed through accumulated experience from past journeys, shaping a discerning and reflective outlook.

True critique, however, must be rooted in authenticity and guided by a purpose—offering insightful reflections that contribute to reform. It should unfold through the traveler's distinctive voice, not as blunt or overt judgment, but as a nuanced undercurrent within the text, subtly woven into its fabric so that critique emerges naturally, without explicit declaration.(Al-Mawafi, 1995, pp. 55-56)

Since antiquity, travelers have been acutely aware of the dual nature of the journey, blending description with critique. The most prominent sphere in which they exercised this critical lens was in the comparative study of nations, a practice known as the characteristics of countries. When asked about a particular land and its conditions, the traveler would offer a meticulous account, delineating its virtues and flaws with equal precision. Through perceptive observation, they would weave subtle critiques into their narratives, reflecting on the aspects that intrigued or perplexed them.(Al-Mawafi, 1995, p. 57)

For Saadallah, literature serves as a mirror reflecting society—an instrument through which he articulates its struggles, aspirations, and concerns. More than mere documentation, his writing aspires to effect change, seeking to improve conditions in Algeria and the Arab world. As he asserts: "If we are committed to rectifying economic, political, and social conditions, then, in my view, we must equally strive to reform culture, thought, and literature, as they form an essential pillar of national and human identity."(Saadallah, 1983, p. 180)

Saadallah was a scholar and an intellectual voyager, traversing vast domains of knowledge. His identity cannot be confined to that of a mere researcher; he was also a distinguished historian, a discerning critic, and a creative thinker renowned for his objectivity. (Zein, 2015, p. 71)

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His critical approach permeated his literary works, particularly his travel narratives, shaped by his journeys across both Arab and Western lands. His travels led him to Tunisia, where he pursued his studies at Al-Zaytouna Mosque, immersing himself in its rich scholarly tradition and engaging with cultural institutions, academic circles, and libraries that refined his literary and critical sensibilities. (Waznaji, 2008, p. 70) He later moved to Egypt, where he deepened his commitment to academic criticism, exemplified in his master’s thesis on the poetry of Mohammed Al-Aid Al-Khalifa. (Waznaji, 2008, p. 83)

Saadallah applied his critical methodology across diverse literary genres—poetry, short stories, novels, and theater. Even in his travel writings, he scrutinized social, political, cultural, and intellectual realities, offering profound analyses and, at times, bold solutions to the challenges he encountered.

The Stylistic Features of Abu al-Qasim Saadallah’s Travel Writings:

Saadallah’s literary style possesses distinctive qualities that lend it both depth and influence, reflecting his profound academic rigor and vast cultural insight. The defining features of his writing can be outlined as follows:

1. Fluid and Lucid Language:

Saadallah’s travel writing is distinguished by its effortless fluidity and clarity, rendering his narratives both engaging and accessible. His style strikes a delicate balance between readability, intellectual depth, and literary elegance.

In recounting his participation in a symposium in the Hejaz, he vividly captured the precision of its organization: “Technical resources were readily available—simultaneous translation to and from Arabic was seamlessly provided, while photographers, television crews, and technicians managing electricity, sound, and air conditioning moved through the halls at

intervals, executing their tasks with impeccable order. Moreover, the strict adherence to schedules shattered the persistent stereotype that Arabs have no regard for time. (Saadallah, 1983, p. 243)

” Saadallah was meticulous in ensuring that his prose remained close to the reader, maintaining accessibility without sacrificing its intellectual rigor or aesthetic refinement.

2. Meticulous Description :

Saadallah employs a richly detailed and precise descriptive style in his travel writings, bringing places, people, and events vividly to life. In his journey to Khenqqa Sidi Naji, he offers a striking portrayal of the Nasseriyah Zawiya Mosque, writing: “The mosque is vast,

encompassing twenty-six courtyards, with an adjoining uncovered courtyard. A lofty minaret stands tall, still exhibiting the finesse of its craftsmanship, with at least sixty-two steps leading upward...(Saadallah, 1983, p. 262)

Such meticulous attention to detail reveals the writer's ability to conjure imagery that immerses the reader, making them feel as though they are experiencing the journey firsthand.

3. Use of Figurative Language :

Despite the clarity and fluidity of his language, Saadallah masterfully employed rhetorical and literary imagery to enrich his writing, lending it depth and emotional resonance. These stylistic choices not only enhanced the aesthetic quality of his prose but also infused his narratives with a profound sense of presence and vitality.

During his journey to the Arabian Peninsula, overwhelmed by exhaustion and sleeplessness, he wrote: "Sleep had turned to stone in my eyes.(Saadallah, 1983, p. 239)" This striking metaphor encapsulates the sheer intensity of his fatigue, transforming sleep from a natural refuge into an unreachable, burdensome state.

By personifying sleep—endowing it with the human-like trait of solidification—he conveys a powerful sense of strain, as if rest itself had become rigid and unattainable. The choice of "turned to stone" suggests an absolute, unyielding deprivation, evoking the image of a traveler weighed down by weariness, struggling against the relentless demands of the journey.

The dramatic contrast between sleep, traditionally a symbol of rest, and its portrayal as something weighty and agonizing deepens the reader's sense of the writer's ordeal during this prolonged and exhausting journey. Fatigue had gradually accumulated, driving him to a state of extreme exhaustion, where even the simplest refuge—sleep—became an unattainable luxury, reinforcing the intensity of his struggle.

The writer employs similes to vividly portray the beauty of the sunset, describing: "In a neighborhood immersed in lush greenery, where bright white houses stand out like remnants of snow dunes in a northern forest. (Saadallah, 1983, p. 209)" Through this imagery, Saadallah masterfully connects natural elements—trees and houses—to evocative scenes of snow-covered landscapes, enriching the description with depth and elegance. This technique not only enhances the visual appeal of the passage but also immerses the reader, making them feel as though they are witnessing the scene firsthand.

4. Bridging the Past and the Present:

Saadallah masterfully intertwines historical events with contemporary reality, lending his narratives a profound temporal depth. During his visit to Khenka Sidi Naji, he sought to uncover the remnants of its once-celebrated landmarks from the Ottoman era and examine their state in the present. He reflects, "I seized the opportunity to visit it and connect its present with its past." (Saadallah, 1983, p. 257)

His keen eye captured the essence of numerous historical sites, from zawiyas to mosques, offering a vivid portrayal of a region that remains secluded, its way of life untouched by modernity. "As we gradually made our way along a path nestled between the mountain and Oued El Arab, the presence of ancient architecture grew more pronounced. The locals, clad in their traditional garb—cloaks and woolen garments—moved through the narrow alleys and gathered by the modest shops."(Saadallah, 1983, p. 258)

This meticulous depiction not only breathes life into the setting but also infuses the journey with a rich cultural and historical resonance.

5. Critical Sense:

Saadallah's writing is marked by a keen critical insight into the cultural and social phenomena he encounters during his travels, lending his narratives an analytical depth. Reflecting on the village of Khenga Sidi Naji, he writes: "The village that was once a bride has now become an old woman. Will devoted hands reach out to restore at least its scholarly youth and preserve its heritage from oblivion? (Saadallah, 1983, p. 264)

Here, the writer conveys his sorrow over the village's decline, once a thriving center of knowledge and culture. Through symbolic literary language, he captures this transformation, voicing his hope that those who cherish heritage will intervene to safeguard its remnants and revive its intellectual legacy. His critique is delivered with subtlety and eloquence, reinforcing the depth of his perspective.

6. Diversity of themes :

Saadallah's travel writings encompass a broad spectrum of subjects, seamlessly blending history, culture, literature, and art, which imbues his narratives with richness and depth. During his journey to the Hejaz for an international symposium, he visited Diriyah, delving

into its cultural heritage, architectural landscape, and historical significance. He also attended the inauguration of the Faw antiquities exhibition, which featured an array of Arab artifacts, including coins, pottery, and statues, offering a tangible connection to the region's past.

7. The Shift Between Narration and Analysis :

In *The Journeys of Abu al-Qasim Saadallah*, the shift between narrative storytelling and academic analysis stands out as a defining stylistic feature. In his journey to Diriyah in the Hijaz, he begins with a vivid account of his travels: "Transportation between the two cities is readily available and convenient, with roads paved to the latest standards. Along the way, we passed several royal and princely palaces surrounding Riyadh... The old Diriyah consists of ruins of ancient strategic structures, nestled along Wadi Hanifa. Historians recount that Muhammad Ali Pasha's army razed Diriyah in 1811, executing the orders of the Ottoman Sultan..." (Saadallah, 1983, p. 245)

Here, he paints a detailed picture of the landscapes and architecture he encounters, from roads and transportation to the grandeur of palaces, underscoring the transformation they have undergone, particularly in infrastructure. He then seamlessly shifts to a historical analysis, situating his observations within the broader context of Islamic history by discussing the city's destruction, the authority responsible, and the motives behind it. This fluid interplay between narrative and scholarly inquiry lends his prose a unique richness, offering both literary delight and intellectual depth.

Aspects of Criticism in The Journeys of Abu al-Qasim Saadallah :

Throughout his travels, Saadallah voiced sharp criticism of various social and national phenomena he deemed detrimental. His critique, marked by depth and insight, served as a powerful instrument for exposing realities and striving to correct them.

Social Criticism:

Social criticism is an analytical approach that examines and evaluates social phenomena and relationships within a society. It aims to expose contradictions and challenges that shape the lives of individuals and communities. In Saadallah's travel writings, this critical perspective is evident in his engagement with issues affecting Algerian and Arab societies at large.

During his journey to the Hejaz, the author offers a critique of certain practices he observed in Medina while performing Umrah, stating: "One encounters exaggerated behaviors that have no foundation in religion, undoubtedly the result of generations of ignorance that have overshadowed many Muslims. One sees mourners weeping and wailing, people kissing stones and iron, invoking others besides God, and hearing distorted recitations of Quranic

verses, hadiths, and supplications. Though the police attempt to curb some of these actions,

their efforts prove futile."(Saadallah, 1983, p. 249)

He further emphasizes the importance of addressing such issues, suggesting:

"It is the responsibility of Islamic governments and those in positions of authority to cultivate a true understanding of Islam, ensuring that Muslims are taught their religion in its authentic form."(Saadallah, 1983, p. 249)

The writer Saadallah presents a socio-religious critique of practices he perceives as misguided or deviating from true faith—such as excessive lamentation, attachment to stones and iron, invoking beings other than God, and improper recitations of the Quran, hadiths, and supplications. These practices, he contends, reflect a fundamental distortion of religious understanding within certain segments of society.

The writer traces these misguided practices back to generations of accumulated ignorance, which has fostered a distortion of true religious principles. He suggests that such behaviors arise from a deficiency in religious education and the failure to instill an authentic understanding of Islamic culture among the general populace.

Ultimately, the writer proposes reformative solutions rooted in education and cultural awareness. He urges Islamic governments and leaders to promote authentic Islamic teachings and ensure that true religious knowledge reaches society.

During his journey to Khanka Sidi Naji in Biskra, Saadallah reflects on the defacement of ancient landmarks by visitors. He observes: "It seems that visitors would inscribe dates, wise sayings, verses of poetry, or prayers on this plaque—so much so that they ended up damaging the original inscriptions." (Saadallah, 1983, p. 262)

The traveler criticizes the actions of individuals who damage cultural heritage due to their ignorance. This critique reflects deeper issues such as the absence of cultural awareness and individualism, and calls for increased awareness of the importance of preserving heritage.

Saadallah observes that Algerian society, especially in the interior regions, has begun to forget its rich history. When he traveled between the historical and spiritual sites in Khencet Sidi Naji, he noticed how neglect and the lack of awareness lead to the fading of collective memory, such as the tombs. He says: "The tomb of Sheikh Abdel Hafidh is dim and damp, with many rags of various colors, and it has a massive rosary, each bead the size of a cherry. I was told that it originally had a thousand beads, but visitors took some for blessings, and as a result, the number diminished."(Saadallah, 1983, pp. 262-263)

During Saadallah's visit to Khanka Sidi Naji, he described the tomb of Sheikh Abdel Hafidh with intricate details, noting its dimness and dampness, the many colored rags, and the large rosary with beads as big as cherries. These details reflect the reverence people have for the tomb, surrounding it with signs of veneration and devotion.

The visitors tampered with the place, taking beads from the rosary for blessings, which caused their number to dwindle. They also hung the colored rags on the tombs.

In the same place, the writer criticizes the visitors for their mischief and writing on the tomb, stating, "The door of the shrine, which is itself an archaeological masterpiece, was not

spared from vandalism, as one of the visitors engraved two or more lines of poetry by piercing the wood.” (Saadallah, 1983, p. 263) This remark reflects social, cultural, and historical values, including:

The archaeological value: The door of the shrine is a historical and artistic masterpiece, linked to an important religious figure.

Vandalism of heritage: The phrase indicates that, despite its archaeological value, the door was not spared from damage or tampering. Visitors engraved two lines of poetry on the wood through a puncturing method, which is an improper interference with the heritage. This act undermines the value of the artifact and distorts its appearance.

Lack of cultural awareness: The visitors’ act of vandalizing the shrine reflects a lack of cultural awareness regarding the importance of preserving heritage. The visitors may not have been aware of the value of the door, highlighting the need for increased awareness about the importance of preserving archaeological sites. Thus, the author emphasizes the significance of cultural and educational awareness to protect historical heritage from distortion.

Political Criticism:

Political criticism is an analytical and evaluative process aimed at examining the policies, decisions, and actions of actors in the political realm, whether they are governments, political parties, leaders, or political institutions.

The political criticism in Saadallah’s travels manifests through his profound analysis of the political and social realities he encounters. The writer adopts a realistic style to expose the negative aspects and undesirable features in the administrations and societies he visits or writes about. In his journey to the Hijaz, the writer faced significant inconveniences at Algiers airport. He says, “At Algiers airport, I underwent a thorough search, which is not typical for me when traveling to other destinations. But this time, the customs officer asked, ‘Where are you headed?’ I replied, filled with joy and excitement, ‘To Jeddah, God willing.’ He then asked, ‘What do you have?’ I responded, ‘My personal belongings.’ He said, ‘Open your bag!’ I opened it, and he began to examine my clothes piece by piece, checking each pocket and even inspecting the bag itself. He then took my shaving kit, opened it, and examined its contents, touching them from all sides. When I saw how far things had gone, my joy turned into sorrow. I feared losing my temper and saying something that might anger the customs officer, so I distracted myself by talking to my colleague, Dr. Abdullah Rakibi, who kindly offered to escort me to the airport.” (Saadallah, 1983, p. 237)

The statement reflects a political critique of state authorities through the writer’s personal experience with customs inspection at Algiers airport. The thorough and excessive inspection, which goes beyond the usual procedures when traveling to other destinations, exposes stringent security policies that encroach on individual freedoms and privacy. The writer begins his journey with joy and excitement, only to find himself filled with regret and fear of losing his composure. This illustrates the negative psychological impact such practices have on individuals. Furthermore, the differential treatment based on the destination highlights a lack of trust between the authorities and the citizens, with everyone being treated as a potential threat. This reflects a strained relationship governed by suspicion and fear. This implicit critique of the authorities exposes a system that sacrifices individual dignity and freedoms in the name of security, which may be overstated.

He says in the same context, quoting a Saudi guest who visited Algeria: “On this occasion, I recall hearing a prominent Saudi at a dinner hosted by the Director of Riyadh University for the conference delegations, complaining to one of the participants about the harsh treatment he personally experienced at Algiers airport. He said something to the effect

of: 'We helped the Algerians when they rebelled against France, but after they gained independence, they didn't even show us the respect we deserve.' **(Saadallah, 1983, p. 237)**

This criticism deepens with the complaint of the prominent Saudi guest, who pointed out the harsh treatment he personally experienced at Algiers airport, despite the support his country had offered to Algeria during its struggle against French colonization. He said, "We helped the Algerians when they revolted against France, but when they gained independence, they did not even show us respect." This statement reflects a sense of grievance and lack of appreciation, shedding light on a negative perception in the way visitors are treated.

The writer attempts to provide an explanation for this, saying: "It seems that some of the individuals at Algiers airport cannot distinguish between smugglers and researchers, between scholars and workers, between travelers on national and scientific missions and those traveling for vile and immoral purposes. Differentiating between these requires sharp intelligence, keen insight, and a strong sense." **(Saadallah, 1983, pp. 237-238)**

This passage highlights the lack of distinction between various groups, which the writer presents in pairs: smugglers, who break the law, and researchers, who seek knowledge or scientific work; scholars, who represent knowledge and progress, and workers, who perform manual or functional tasks; and finally, travelers on national or scientific missions, who contribute to social advancement, versus those with immoral and selfish purposes.

The text carries an important message, suggesting that distinguishing between these categories requires sharp intelligence, and failure to do so may result in injustice or neglect of the individuals who contribute to the advancement of society.

In another section, the writer reproaches the French colonial policy of demolishing religious monuments, listing the old mosques in the region from the Ottoman era and the beginning of colonization, including the Kherzda Mosque. He says, "The name of an ancient tribe that has now vanished, because the French destroyed it in 1957, built a new structure over it, and left without leaving any trace of the mosque." **(Saadallah, 1983, p. 260)**

The writer condemns the French colonization for destroying historical and religious landmarks in Algeria, which are an integral part of the cultural and historical identity of the Algerian people. Among the many religious sites that were destroyed is the Kherzda Mosque, located in Khanka Sidi Naji in Biskra. The mosque bore the name of an ancient tribe that has since disappeared, symbolizing the erasure of the local identity and the history of the region.

This act represents the erasure of collective memory and the weakening of the cultural and religious bonds that tie the Algerian society to its heritage. The French did not merely destroy the mosque; they built a new structure over it, inhabited it, and then left, with no trace remaining of the mosque. This reflects the colonizer's indifference toward the local history and culture.

The statement seeks to expose the colonial policy that aimed to erase Algerian identity and destroy its religious and cultural symbols. At the same time, it serves as a reminder of the importance of preserving heritage and historical landmarks as a form of resistance against cultural marginalization.

In a conversation between the author and a passport officer about the Arabization of Algerian official documents, the officer looked up at him and said politely, "My brother, when will you Arabize your passport? Did not France leave your country?" His words deeply affected me, and I almost could not find anything to say because, personally, I was convinced by his words. France had left Algeria fifteen years ago, and we claim to have a cultural revolution based on Arabization. Yet, the Algerian still travels with a passport written entirely in Latin

letters and French phrases. (Saadallah, 1983, p. 255) It could be written in both languages, as many Arab countries do (Saadallah, 1983, p. 255)

The author critiques the ongoing reflection of French colonial remnants, despite fifteen years having passed since independence. The passport officer directly asks the author why the passport language has not been changed to Arabic, even after the country's independence. This question carries an implicit call for the Arabization of official documents, highlighting the continued French cultural dominance even after independence.

This reproach deeply affected the author, as he personally agreed with the statement, and he advocates for Arabization as a means to achieve a true cultural revolution.

The Intellectual criticism:

This type of criticism aims to assess ideas and phenomena objectively, seeking a deeper understanding of their roots and effects. It involves asking fundamental questions about the reasons for the existence of a phenomenon, its impact on society, and the underlying factors behind it. This form of criticism is frequently found in Saadallah's travels, particularly in his criticism of the intellectual class in Algeria for not participating in international scientific events to represent the country. He states: "Although invitations were extended to several other Algerians, they did not participate for reasons unknown to us. However, it seems that the primary cause behind this is the mental laziness that afflicts Algerians, preventing them from contributing to global seminars and conferences and representing their country in the best possible way. This has become a noticeable phenomenon among Algeria's scholars in every gathering." (Saadallah, 1983, p. 241)

The writer blames Algerians for not participating in international seminars and conferences, attributing the main cause, according to his understanding, to "mental laziness," a term that carries negative connotations, suggesting a lack of willingness to make intellectual effort or engage in international forums. This critique presents a diagnostic view of a reality that could stem from various factors, such as a lack of self-motivation or the absence of a scientific culture. However, the generalization in the text might be seen as an oversimplification, as there are, in fact, active Algerians who participate in such events. This observation opens the door for a serious discussion on ways to enhance intellectual participation and better represent Algeria on the global stage.

The writer portrays the National Museum in Riyadh, stating: "Despite its small size, it is a masterpiece in terms of organization, coordination, and display." He then mentions one of the members who had previously championed the progressive ideas based on the French model, marveling and saying: "This is it, or nothing! Where are we compared to what we once believed in the Arab world?" Through the writer's words, we observe that he sheds light on the contradiction between the stereotypical image of the Arab world and the reality of progress embodied in the museum. The phrase "Despite its small size, a masterpiece in terms of organization, coordination, and display" underscores that quality and precision are not tied to size or geographical location, but rather to management and dedication. Furthermore, the writer expresses his contempt for the foreign member by adding, "They claim to be progressive in their countries, following the French model." This sentence serves to deconstruct the stereotypes about the Arab world, as the foreign member, who perceives his country as "progressive," finds himself in a situation that forces him to reconsider his preconceived notions. Progress is not confined to certain countries or cultures, as highlighted by the writer's rhetorical question, "Where are we compared to what we once believed in the Arab world?"

This illustrates the orientalist stereotypes some hold about the Arab world, where it is consistently portrayed as backward or incapable of innovation. The statement “he does not believe in the Arab homeland” confirms a preconception, revealing a dismissive attitude towards the region. This critique calls for the recognition of the Arab world’s potential for creativity and organization.

The writer reproaches Algerian intellectuals and authorities for their neglect of Ahmed Reda Houhou’s legacy, lamenting the failure to collect and publish his works, which remain unknown to this day. During the symposium, he encountered Sheikh Abdul Quddus Al- Ansari, founder and editor of Al-Manhal magazine, who had once embraced Houhou during his time in Medina. Through Al-Manhal, Houhou contributed writings and translations that, to this day, have neither been compiled nor properly acknowledged, leaving his intellectual heritage scattered and overlooked. **(Saadallah, 1983, p. 247)**

In this statement, the writer addresses the neglect of Ahmed Reda Houhou’s literary and intellectual legacy, noting that his works “have neither been compiled nor recognized,” despite his contributions to Al-Manhal magazine. He underscores the vital role of cultural institutions in fostering and supporting creative talents while simultaneously highlighting their failure to preserve and collect Houhou’s works. This critique emphasizes the importance of safeguarding cultural and literary heritage, calling for the rediscovery and publication of overlooked works. It also stresses the need to raise cultural awareness about the value of such contributions and the responsibility of cultural institutions in preserving and promoting the work of intellectuals.

Conclusion

The travels of Abu al-Qasim Saadallah went beyond superficial description to profound analysis, blending refined literary narration with sharp critical insight. His observations were not limited to geographical or cultural aspects alone; rather, they served as a lens through which he examined the complex social, political, and cultural realities of Algerian and Arab societies.

Saadallah masterfully painted a comprehensive portrait of the lands he visited, capturing the subtle details that reflect the richness and diversity of their identities. With his keen critical eye, he elevated travel writing beyond mere description, transforming it into an intellectual and analytical pursuit—one that dissects reality, exposes the challenges facing societies, and calls for reform and progress. It is this depth of insight that has rendered his journeys an enduring cultural and civilizational reference.

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