'Orientalism', 'Occidentalism' and Anglo-Moroccan relations in the 16th and 17th centuries: a case study in historicising concepts of discourse

J.A.O.C BROWN[1]

First performed in 1594, *The Battle of Alcazar* – a dramatisation of the tripartite struggle for Morocco between Portugal, the Ottomans and the local Sa'adi dynasty, culminating in the eponymous battle (also known as al-Qasr al-Kabir, or Wadi al-Makhazan) of 1578 – opens with a scene apparently indicating contemporary Britons' stereotypically prejudiced and hostile view of Muslims. In it, Muly Mahomet usurps the crown by murdering his uncle and nephews, described by the narrator:

> This tyrant king / Of whence we treate sprang from the Arabian moore / Blacke in his looke and bloudie in his deeds / And in his shirt stain'd with a cloud of gore / Presents himself with naked sword in hand / Accompanied as now you may behold / With devils coted in the shapes of men. (I. i. 17-23)

In fact, the remainder of the play portrays the honour and courage of this villain's rivals, Muslim and Christian alike; the play closes as Muly Mahomet Xeque (i.e. Ahmad al-Mansur, consequent heir to the throne) orders a royal send-off jointly for the battle's victims, his older brother, Abdelmelec, and the Portugese king, Don Sebastian, commanding that "the souldiers tread a solempne march / Trailing their pikes and Ensignes on the ground / So to perform the princes funeralls" (II. v. 1589-91).[2]

This respectful and sympathetic portrayal of at least some of the Muslim characters in the play is not totally isolated in the drama of the time, which also includes plays such as *The Courageous Turke* (1632) and *Osmond, the Great Turk* (1657).[3] Nevertheless, it is somewhat unusual for a period when the 'terrible Turke' or ferocious Moor was common dramatic shorthand for inhumanity and barbarity.[4] Plays featuring 'renegades', or converts to Islam, suggest a similar attitude of fear and revulsion towards Muslims.[5] In other genres, such as eschatological religious writing, Muslims appear similarly comprehended only in terms of their alterity and ultimate subjection to Christianity, described as simply dying or converting *en masse* on the Last Day.[6] The prominence of this stereotype has led some scholars to perceive in early modern England a similar 'Orientalist' discourse to that which Said analysed in more detail for the later, post-Enlightenment period in Europe. As Matar has put it, "[t]he Muslim was all that an Englishman and

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[1] Department of History, S.O.A.S, University of London
[2] Peele (1907)
[3] Cf. Parker (1999), p. 27
[4] Cf. Patrides (1963); Chew (1974), pp. 141-9 & 469-540; Barthelemy (1987); & D'Amico (1991), pp. 75-97
[5] Cf. Potter (1996)
[6] Cf. Matar (1998), ch.4

a Christian was not: he was the Other with whom there could be only holy war."[7] This discourse of conquest, he argues, then created the conditions for colonialism and the "enterprise of empire."[8]

This, of course, links into Said's treatment of 'Orientalism' as – at one of three interlinked levels –something present right from the origins of European civilisation.[9] It is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident' . . . . [which] can accommodate Aeshylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx."[10] Consequently, his work presents it is a "systematic and invariant"[11] phenomenon that is almost "the natural product of an ancient and almost irresistible European bent of mind."[12] At the same time, however, Said does describe 'Orientalism' as being related to certain specific factors or circumstances, such as Christianity, the endowment of chairs in Arabic, Syriac and Hebrew in 1312, the development of Enlightenment thinking, or Napoleon's invasion of Egypt.[13] This ambiguity is partly resolved by his description of a kind of 'latent Orientalism' that is reformulated given expression in different ways at different times.[14] It may also have intensified in certain periods.[15] Nevertheless, it remains a problem at the heart of Said's work that it tends to obscure the processes and reasons for change, presenting instead an essentially ahistorical discourse. This problem can be seen equally in his description of 'Orientalism' as a "closed system, in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter."[16] There is, as another scholar put it, a disjuncture between experience and pre-existing judgements; they "constitute two separate registers, with hardly any means of contact between the one and the other except for the possibility of the latter (judgements) given under the guise of the former."[17] Such an explanation, however, risks leading us in circles if we assume that the idea of an 'Orientalist' discourse is equally applicable to all periods of European or Western history without any reference to actual lived experience. Said's discussion of Dante illustrates this well.[18] As Pick has concluded:

> That Averroes and Avicenna can stand alongside Socrates and Plato is a problem for Said, who is depending on *a priori* rigidly defined categories of East and West, but it was not, evidently, a problem for Dante.[19]

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[7] Matar (1999), p.13
[8] *ibid*. pp. 17-18
[9] Said (1979), pp. 55-6
[10] *ibid*. pp. 2-3
[11] Clifford (1980), p.207
[12] Al-Azm (1981), p.6
[13] Said (1979), pp. 67, 91, 49-50, 122-3 & 42
[14] *ibid*. p. 122
[15] *ibid*. p. 42
[16] *ibid*. p.70
[17] Al-Azmeh (1993), p.124
[18] Said (1979), p. 68-70
[19] Pick (1999), p. 268

In other words, we can say that Said tries to fit facts into his understanding of the discourse, rather than seeing the interaction between these two spheres. Consequently, although there may be in fact a succession of discursive 'epistemes', this approach cannot explain how and why this succession takes place because the discourse is fundamentally not influenced by anything, it only influences things.[20] This "discursive determinism is unable to devise a model of change; it can only deal with synchronic structures or constructs."[21]

As a contribution to overcoming these theoretical problems, this paper will make two main arguments, from the perspective of both British discourse about Muslim countries like Morocco, and Moroccan discourse about European countries like Britain. The first is the simple one that multiple discourses existed in both cases about foreign societies. It is too reductive to shoehorn all these into a theory of dehumanising alterity. Although some discourses may become more prominent and therefore influential, they do not completely exclude others. Secondly, there is an ongoing relationship between discourse and actual experience such that each influences the other in a kind of 'feedback loop.' Although it may be beyond us now to know exactly what the reality of the past was, we must admit that it did exist and that it had its own impact on the development of discourse. We cannot consider discourse as something with no relation at all to reality.[22] In other words, we need to go beyond textual evidence alone and link it to non-verbal experience as far as possible. (This, of course, was one of Said's arguments about Orientalists.[23]) Part of this experience in our case of Britain and Morocco is the communication and exchange between the two countries, since it illustrates that different cultures are not completely closed to one another or mutually unintelligible, as a determinist discursive approach might lead us to believe.[24] These two arguments and this case study are made in the context of an increasing amount of work detailing lived interaction across 'cultural borders.'[25]

Prejudice and misinformation about Muslim societies certainly did exist within British discourse, as noted above. However, these prejudices could not, and did not, entirely blind Britons who travelled to or traded with them to the sophistication and power of Muslim societies. It is this tension that, as Parker has pointed out, makes it difficult to fit this period neatly into "a model of cultural encounter that conforms to a colonizer/colonized model of the world, one in which Europeans can impose upon the peoples they encountered."[26] Thus, for example, Anthony Sherley, recounting his journeys to Persia, dismissed Islam as " a confused hotch potch or mass of

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[20] Cf. Fokkema (1996), p. 229
[21] M. Calinescu, cited in Fokkema (1996), pp.229-30
[22] Said (1979), p. 5
[23] *ibid*, p. 96
[24] Cf. Fokkema, p. 235
[25] Cf. e.g. Parker (1999), Brotton (2002), Matar (2003b) & Garcia-Arenal & Wiegers (2003)
[26] Parker (1999), p.9

superstition . . . full of absurdities and contradictions",[27] but at the same time commended the Shah's government, "differing so much from that which we call barbarousness that it may justly serve for as great an *Idea* for a Principality as *Plato's* Commonwealth."[28] Another example, this time from an account published in 1636 by Sir Henry Blount of his travels in the Ottoman Empire, shows that Britons did in some cases approach Muslim societies with an open mind and a sense of respect. His stated principle while abroad was:

> to observe the religion, manners, and policy of the Turks, not perfectly (which were a task for an inhabitant rather than a passenger) but so far as might satisfy this scruple – to wit: whether to an impartial conceit, the Turkish way appears absolutely barbarous, as we are given to understand, or rather as another kind of civility, different from ours, but no less pretending.[29]

Though this may well, as indicated above, have been a minority view, it is significant in the context of understanding British discourses about these societies that it should have been made in these terms at all. As Parker concluded, a "them-and-us binary, with the Turks as the embodiment of everything that is the antithesis to Christianity, was never as clear-cut as some present day accounts of that 'West' versus 'East' story would have it."[30]

The complexity of the context Britons brought to such encounters was also significant. They did not comprehend a single 'Orient', but distinguished between, for example, Turkey, Persia, Egypt, the Holy Land, Morocco and India. This was the starting point for Sherley's scheme of drawing the Safavids into alliance against the Ottomans, or Elizabeth I's triangular diplomacy with the Ottomans and the Moroccans over the Portuguese pretender Don Antonio in the 1590s.[31] And although they often did assume their ultimate superiority over these societies, it was not as 'Westerners' or 'Europeans' but as Protestants and (mostly) Englishmen – a superiority they assumed equally over Spaniards, Frenchmen, Irishmen, or whoever else was unlucky enough to be Catholic and/or foreign.[32] The British 'Other' was formed not by a single binary conceptualisation, but rather a number of them, constructed in many directions and at different levels.

That British interaction with Muslim societies was situated within a complex web of factors is well demonstrated by Anglo-Moroccan relations during this period. The first known British trading voyages to Morocco were in 1551, attracted especially by gold, saltpetre and sugar.[33] In 1585, a Barbary Company was formed under the sponsorship of the Earl of Leicester. Particularly significant was the trade in military goods (Morocco received

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[27] *ibid*. p.22
[28] *ibid*. p.64
[29] *ibid*. p. 176
[30] *ibid*. p. 3
[31] For the latter, cf. Matar (2000)
[32] Cf. Parker (1999), pp.9-10
[33] Cf. Rogers (n.d.), pp.8-10

arms in exchange for the saltpetre that contributed to the supplies of gunpowder that saw off the Armada), despite criticism of this aid to the infidel from co-religionists on both sides. As Elizabeth's England sought security amidst politico-religious divisions at home and abroad, it was by no means above cultivating 'the Moor.' The common enmity of Spain encouraged this relationship; Drake's expedition against Lisbon in 1589, for example, was planned in expectation of Moroccan support. Although it was not eventually forthcoming (much to Drake's annoyance), the intelligence of the Fugger merchants suggests Moroccan ships may have aided the English at Cadiz in 1596; the English certainly enjoyed rights of supply in Moroccan ports during their ongoing battle with Spain.[34] Despite protracted negotiations, a formal alliance – proposed by the Moroccan sultan Ahmad al-Mansur during the back and forth over Don Antonio – was never consummated. The attitude of Elizabeth and her government shows, however, that – although novel and often suspicious – a relationship with Morocco fitted into a wider context of diplomatic manoeuvring. The English experience encouraged a discourse of wary respect and co-operation rather than simply bouncing off hostile prejudices.

James I's accession marked a cooling in relations with Morocco, and with the Ottomans, whom Elizabeth had also sought to engage.[35] But perceptions of this diplomatic relationship had deeper resonance. Peele's *Battle of Alcazar*, performed during the years of Elizabeth's intense Moroccan diplomacy, shows how positive perceptions had filtered into popular culture to some extent. Another example is the published account of the embassy of Jawdar bin Abdallah in 1637, a visit intended to build on the co-operation of British and Moroccan forces against the rebel-pirates at Salé the same year. It describes the reception of the ambassador in London by a crowd of thousands, led by merchants of the Barbary Company and city officials, "all richly apparelled . . . with such abundance of Torches and Links, that though it were Night, yet the streets were almost light as Day."[36] A glowing description of the Moroccan sultan follows,[37] his redemption of British captives after the capture of Salé is termed not merely an act of "Clemency" but "Piety."[38] Although not free of formulaic imputations against Islam, the account also includes a temperate and generally accurate description of the religion, beginning with a markedly conciliatory comparison:

> They lay Christ was a great Prophet, borne to be Saviour of the World (but not Incarnate), that hee was the Breath of God, that hee was borne of a Virgin, and that the Jewes should have beleev'd in him.[39]

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[34] Cf. Matar (2000), pp.446-3 [sic]
[35] Cf. Matar (1999), pp.143-5
[36] *Arrivall and Intertainements*, p.9
[37] *ibid*. p.20
[38] *ibid*. p.25
[39] *ibid*. p. 35

The ambassador was a Portuguese convert to Islam (a fact noted in the account), yet despite the contempt often directed at the 'renegade' in contemporary literature,[40] "a Man of more respect, or higher account and estimation the Emperour (his Master) could not have sent."[41] It is significant that the whole account begins with a exhortation of the benefits of trade between nations, "though they are far remote from each other in Religions, Realmes, Regions and Territories; yet they are conjoyned in leagues and friendship together."[42] Evidently, the influence of trade and diplomacy made the Moroccans more than simply a putative 'Other.'

Nearly fifty years later, another Moroccan embassy was received with similar enthusiasm and respect. Mohammed bin Hadou arrived in 1682 (apparently accompanied by an English convert to Islam as interpreter), and was lionised in the London press for his dashing horsemanship in Hyde Park.[43] The diarist Sir John Evelyn recorded a dinner with the ambassador and his retinue, who "behaved themselves with extraordinary Moderation & modestie, though placed about a long Table a Lady between each two Moores." Despite the immodest dress of the women (a mixture of the king's mistresses and illegitimate daughters), the Moroccans "did not looke about nor stare on the Ladys, or expresse the least surprise; but with a Courtly negligence in pace, Countenance, & whole behaviour, [and] a great deale of Wit and Gallantrie . . . In a word, the Russian Ambassador still at Court behaved himself like a Clowne, compar'd to this Civil Heathen."[44] An English portrait of the ambassador perhaps supports this image of the Moroccans as part of the courtly milieu of 'civilised' nations, no more exotic, unusual or less worthy of respect than, for example, the Russians Evelyn mentions (see Appendix 1).

Comparison of this picture with an earlier portrait of Abdulwahid al-Nuri, ambassador from Ahmad al-Mansur in 1600, is intriguing, although some caveats should be noted. Using visual images in this way has been the subject of important methodological debate.[45] Often noted has been the deceptive 'reality' of images, which nevertheless are mediated through the biases of both the artist and the viewer. Another major problem is establishing a methodology for interpreting visual images: while some approaches – iconography, iconology, psychoanalysis – have been criticised for being too vague and intuitive, others – structuralism – have been criticised for being too reductive. Yet despite these problems, visual images remain valuable traces of the past, "at once an essential and a treacherous source for historians of mentalities, concerned as they are with unspoken assumptions as much as conscious attitudes." For not only are they evidence of aspects unavailable through texts; though they are

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[40] Cf. Potter (1996) & Matar (1998) ch. 3
[41] *Arrivall and Intertainements*, p.6
[42] *ibid*. p.2
[43] Cf. Matar (1999), pp.38-9
[44] Evelyn (1955), IV, pp.268-9
[45] For approachable overviews of this debate, Cf. Burke (2001), esp. Chs. 10, 11 & 12; and Gaskell (2001)

potentially 'distorting mirrors' rather than windows to the past, it is through the extent and nature of this distortion that we can approach phenomena such as ideology and identity.[46] Of course, it is important to know as much as possible about the function and context of production of any visual image – like any source. It is particularly regrettable, therefore, in this instance that we know very little about who produced the picture of al-Nuri, and under what circumstances (See Appendix 2).[47]

Nevertheless, as Burke has noted, visual images can be particularly rewarding in approaching cross-cultural encounters, especially for historians considering questions of mentalities and alterity: "artists are forced by the medium in which they work to take up a clear position, representing individuals from other cultures as either like or unlike themselves."[48] With the limits of the sources in mind, therefore, it is intriguing to note the distinct – but ambiguous – change in treatment between the earlier and later portraits. In the earlier picture, the Moroccan glares out confidently; his extended forefinger is perhaps a silent assertion of belief against his Trinitarian hosts. Is the expression fierce, the artist and his audience alienated from the fearsome 'Moor'? This is Matar's interpretation.[49] Or is there a hint of a wry smile, the picture a representation of a visitor somewhat strange, but represented with respect on his own terms? The striking emptiness of the background is perhaps significant. Whereas in many contemporary portraits the setting and surrounding objects attest to the collaboration of artist and subject in a conscious and symbolic "presentation of self," here there is again ambiguity.[50] Does the emptiness suggest a sense of distance and fear in the mind of the artist; or is it an honest admission by him that his subject could not be related artificially to any known categories or symbols? Certainly the portrait of al-Nuri seems more realistic (even allowing for the seductive qualities of 'reality' noted in discussions of visual media) than the Europeanised and romanticised depiction of bin Hadou. Painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller (later to become a famous portraitist at court), the picture seems to place the Moroccan securely within British tradition.

We can, therefore, choose between a transition from fear and incomprehension to comfortable friendship, or from wary but respectful representation based on actual observation to containment within preconceived European categories. Probably it is a little of both, but more of the latter. As the 17th century drew to a close, the diplomatic significance of Muslim states in the Mediterranean was waning: the growth of British naval power and the defeat of the Ottomans at Vienna in 1683, followed by the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, were shifting the balance of power. Visitors to Britain from North Africa by the 18th century "projected a very different image to British society from their compatriots a century

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[46] Burke (2001), p. 30-1
[47] Cf. Harris (1958)
[48] Burke (2001), p. 124
[49] Matar (1999), p.34
[50] Cf. Burke (2001), p. 25 & Burke (1987)

earlier. [They] reflected poverty and helplessness, and as diplomats, they represented weal governments that were confronting a powerful imperial. Britain."[51]   Britons were becoming less like supplicants; the observations from experience feeding into British discourses began to reinforce medieval prejudices rather than challenge them. This contributed to the eventual emergence of an Orientalist discourse in conjunction with imperial power. On the other hand, bin Hadou's embassy was soon followed by the surrender of British Tangier to Mulay Ismail, ruler of a resurgent Moroccan state. The ambiguities continued, even if with hindsight the overall trend seems clearer.

Having discussed Anglo-Moroccan relations from the point of view of English 'Orientalism,' we can now shift perspectives to consider Morocco and whether it presents an example of 'Occidentalism.' This term is less widespread, and even recently it was considered not yet a theoretical topic;[52] nevertheless a number of scholars have used it, albeit in different senses. Some have defined it to mean the discursive creation of the 'Self' implicit in Said's description of an Oriental 'Other'; that is to say, "the self-discourse of Westerners" or "auto-occidentalism."[53] Others have inverted Said's term in a different way by discussing 'Occidentalism' as a discourse of non-Western cultures which essentializes the West, possibly in a similarly dehumanising way: "its bigotry simply turns the Orientalist view upside down."[54]   Referring particularly to the Arab world, some scholars have drawn attention to the linguistic coincidence in Arabic of *gharb* ('west'), *gharīb* ('strange', 'foreign') and related words, and how this might be related to such a discourse there.[55]   It is the second use of the term 'Occidentalism' and its usefulness for analysing Muslim societies that will be discussed here because, although the term is not often used explicitly, a very similar concept seems to inform the work of some historians. Where Said presents a deterministic view of 'the Orient' distorted and limited by Western discourse, these scholars perceive the same phenomenon in Muslim societies without ever analysing it in this way; that is to say, they assume that perceptions in these societies of Europeans (among others) were ultimately limited and conditioned by a discourse of dehumanising alterity that could not be changed or reformulated through experiential observation because it was embedded in the normative culture of Islam. This determinist or foundationalist approach offers a neat parallel with Said's argument about Western discourse. Thus, for example, we may cite Lewis:

> Islam was the one true faith, beyond which there were only unbelievers – the Muslim equivalent of the Greek barbarians.[56]

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[51] Matar (2003c), p. 38
[52] Ning (1997), p. 63
[53] Lindstrom (1995), p. 35; cf. also Venn (2000)
[54] Buruma & Margalit (2004), p. 10; cf. also Spencer (1995), Napoli (2001) & Aziz al-Azmeh, *al-Arab wa-al Barabira*
   (London: Riyad al-Rayyis. 1991), cited in Matar (2003a), p. 154
[55] Mernissi (2002), p. 13; Sadiki (1997), p. 184
[56] Lewis (1962), p. 181

Elsewhere the same scholar asserts that, by the early modern period, "Islam was crystallized in its ways of thought and behaviour and had become impervious to external stimuli, especially those coming from its millennial adversary in the West."[57]   Another asserts with similar brevity and confidence that the Muslim societies of the Mediterranean simply "were not . . . interested in things Christian."[58] It was, of course, exactly this type of attitude – relying heavily on texts and a clear idea of 'orthodox Islam' – that Said sought to confront.[59]   However, despite the massive influence of Said's thought, this very attitude is in danger of re-entering by the back door, possibly legitimised by an explicit theory of a determinist 'Occidentalism' using a theoretical approach similar to Said himself. As Freitag has argued, "the current trend to consider the analysis of discourses as the methodological *non plus ultra* harbours a certain danger of backfiring so as to bolster old prejudices in a new disguise."[60]

At first glance, early modern Morocco might seem to present evidence in favour of the idea of an 'Occidentalist' discourse. 'Barbaric unbelievers' were a pressing concern. Since the *Reconquista*, and especially after its conclusion in 1492, Morocco became a frontier society imperilled by the advance of the Christians. The stream of refugees from Spain after 1492 and after Spanish efforts to root out crypto-Muslims and Moriscos introduced into Moroccan society a group especially fearful of Spanish expansion. The conduct of war against Christendom – most of all the Spaniards – therefore became an important function of the Moroccan state and, as Bennison has demonstrated, a crucial aspect of its legitimacy, especially in conjunction with the evolution of 'sharifian' ideology under the Sa'adi and 'Alawi dynasties.[61]   This offers a neat possible parallel; fear of the seemingly relentless advance of the 'terrible Turke'/'cruel Christian' precluded any discourse except one based on alterity and hostility. Thus, there were made repeated invocations in Moroccan texts for God to destroy or weaken the Christians, "the undifferentiated enemy, an adversarial religious horde that attacked and enslaved Muslims."[62]

Matar has argued, however, that these types of texts, while demeaning and insulting, are not evidence that Moroccans drew "a line of structural separation and representation" between themselves and Europeans. He cites, for example, the marriage alliance proposed by Mulay Ismail between France and Morocco in 1699. This, the sultan's ambassador to Paris declared, would "make the Moroccans French and the French Moroccan.[63] In particular, Christians were not described by animal metaphors as Muslims were in English writings.[64] This is partly because, he believes, the Islamic

[57] Lewis (2000), p. 300
[58] Cigar (1981), p.xv
[59] Said (1979), p. 96
[60] Freitag (2002), p. 633
[61] Cf. Bennison (2002), Chs. 1 & 2
[62] Matar (2003a), p. 159
[63] *ibid*. p. 167
[64] *ibid*. pp. 159-62

thought of Moroccan society provided a conceptual space for Christians and Jesus, whereas the Christian thinking of, for example, the English could only reject and denigrate Muslims and Muhammad.[65] Whether or not this is a fair comparison, however, it is certainly true that Moroccan attitudes seem much more complex than the examples above alone might indicate. There was a discourse combining elements of hostility and respect, familiarity and alienation, and this discourse both affected and was affected by events. This is the real parallel with Britain, rather than a deterministic 'Occidentalist' discourse inverting Saidian 'Orientalism.'

Caught between Turkish and Spanish expansion, for example, Ahmad al-Mansur understood Europe's religio-political situation, and saw the English as potential allies despite religious differences. He corresponded regularly with Elizabeth I between 1580 and 1600 to facilitate diplomatic co-operation and growing trade, desiring particularly timber and carpenters to strengthen his fleet.[66] On the other hand, he tried to strengthen his position by offering Spain the withdrawal of this co-operation in return for guarantees of Moroccan security.[67] But both cases show that Christian Europe was by no means a closed book to the Moroccan ruler; rather, it was a significant sphere of interest whose intricacies he appreciated. British military supplies were especially important since the development of a gunpowder army was crucial to early modern Moroccan state formation.[68] Relations with Britain remained significant, although patchy and sometimes confusing, after his death. During the civil wars and sporadic contractions of state authority of the 17th century, trade was an important source of government revenue since it was unable to extract domestic wealth regularly. Military considerations also remained, as both government and rebels sought to cultivate British friendship. In 1626, for example, the Moriscos of Salé concluded a treaty with British emissary John Harrison as part of their efforts to secure independence. Later in the century, the tribal leader Ahmad b. 'Ali al-Rifi maintained his autonomy at Tetuan against the state by monopolizing trade with the British at Gibraltar, from whom he received arms and ammunition.[69] On the other hand, the British government also helped repress these rebels; Charles I refused to ratify Harrison's treaty with rebels against royal authority, and, as mentioned above, Salé was later besieged with British naval assistance. The year after the siege, Mulay Muhammad wrote to Charles I (via the ambassador bin Hadou, whose portrait was discussed above) in revealing terms that emphasised their joint interests in promoting trade and suppressing rebellion, their royal position surpassing religious or cultural differences: "The Regal Power allotted to Us, make us first common Servants to our Creator, then of those People whom we govern."[70]

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[65] *ibid.* p. 158
[66] Cf. Hopkins (1982), pp.2-9, & Abun-Nasr (1987), pp.218-19
[67] Cf. Matar (2000), p.450
[68] Cf. Cook (1994)
[69] Cf. Abun-Nasr (1987), pp.238-9
[70] *The King of Morocco's Letter*

Thus, Moroccan perceptions were pulled in different directions simultaneously, by a particular manifestation of the theory of *jihad* on the one hand, emphasising conflict with and alienation from 'the unbelievers', and the actual experience of interaction with the British. These tensions are illustrated further by a letter of Mulay Ismail to Charles II after the British evacuation of Tangier in 1683, in which he attempted to renew good relations, offering to provision British ships on the Indian voyage:

> As to what happened hereforeto [i.e. the conflict over Tangier], anyone who has told you that I would make a treaty or peace with respect to Muslim land while you are covering it with your canon has lied to you . . . The Turks would revile me if I did it and deride me because of it . . . [But] since you have relieved our shame and handed over our country to us this is the perfection of good relations and your mind may be at rest as far as we are concerned.[71]

Far from being uninterested in "things Christian," the Moroccans – at least at governmental level – saw Britain as part of their world, for good and bad. For a wider perspective, we must await Matar's soon-to-be published research from the archives of Morocco and Tunisia.

It should not be concluded that the concepts of 'Orientalist' or 'Occidentalist' discourses are not useful, but these need to be understood in the context of their relationship to other discourses within a given culture; how they are promoted, retarded, adapted and abandoned in relation to particular historical circumstances. Similarly, the concept of dichotimization of thought remains useful, but needs to be elaborated. It may well be that human perceptions of the unknown can only be mediated through the known, and that the full complexity of the 'Other' can never be fully understood. As Carrier has put it:

> Essentialization appears to be inherent in the way Westerners, and probably most people, think and communicate. After all, to put a name on something is to identify its key characteristics and thereby essentialize it.[72]

Said saw the only way out of this problem to be to know nothing and have no preconceptions: "he is perfect for whom the entire world is a foreign land." In fact, there is some hope because these binary oppositions are not unchanging, but rather created anew by each individual; in other words, human understanding may be limited but it is not necessarily pre-determined or fixed in certain categories. Thus, we must try to understand "the process of essentialization" rather than the mere fact of it.[73] We must see cultures as collections of potential ideas and practices that ebb and flow, rather than as having determining points of origin from which there is no escape. This determinism is the major problem with many discussions of discourse, although some have become more sensitive to this problem recently. Chen's discussion of 'Occidentalism' in China, for example, works within a paradigm of binary opposites, but – crucially – argues that theses conceptualisations of 'Self' and 'Other' are being constantly redefined in

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[71] Hopkins (1982), p.31
[72] Carrier (1992), p. 207. Cf. also Clifford (1980), p. 209
[73] Carrier (1995), p. 8

different circumstances, and can have both negative and positive implications.[74]

Fokkema has emphasised this multi-directionality by arguing that, in a world where often 'the empire writes back' from within the West, "the notion of homogenous cultures with clear geographical boundaries has become increasingly untenable."[75] The case of early modern Anglo-Moroccan relations (among many others) similarly warns us against assuming that such clarity ever really existed. The experience of British contact with Moroccans during this period, for example, mitigated against misinformed, hostile representations of Muslims. Although some of the building blocks that eventually supported an 'Orientalist' discourse of the imperial age were present, the structure to be erected was not yet determined. Said has described as "the most important task of all" as "to undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative perspective."[76] Part of this study must be elements of past discourses in the West that provided these alternatives. Britain and Morocco were able to interact with each other and gain knowledge of one another without being completely constrained by a pre-existing discourse. Rather a discourse was in the process of being developed. Ideological concerns or prejudices were a factor, but by no means the most important – the practical demands of diplomacy and trade created a wary respect and co-operation, certainly at a governmental level and in some ways at a popular level as well. 'Orientalism' as a dominant theme developed only from the 18th century onwards with the confluence of several factors, such as: the decline of Muslim states as diplomatic and commercial partners; the growth of a mass print media and literacy, facilitating the strengthening of self-reinforcing discourse; and the growth of material imperial interests.[77] These partly explain the later divergent paths of Britain and Morocco, where previously both had combined religio-ideological considerations that could encourage dichotomisation with practical relationships that encouraged co-operation and mutual respect. Perhaps by the British imperial period, we can say that 'Orientalist' discourse became so deeply embedded, as a result of these specific political and material conditions, that it dominated the 'feedback loop', affecting perceptions more than being affected by observation. It must be remembered that "the capacities of populations to impose and act upon their constructions of others has been highly variable through history."[78] This process of one discourse becoming almost exclusively dominant is related to power relations; a discourse emphasising power over another culture will naturally be reinforced by a situation in which that power is actually realised. Even at such a point, however, such discourses cannot be considered totally closed systems.

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[74] Chen (1994). Cf. Fokkema (1996), pp. 235-6
[75] Fokkema (1996), p. 237
[76] Said (1979), p. 24
[77] Cf. Matar (2003a)
[78] Thomas (1992), p. 5

Historians have too readily latched onto some cultural key – usually textual – to unlock the fundamental, 'real' explanation of a society. This is true both of 'Islam' and of 'Orientalist' attitudes as ways to explain Muslim societies and the West respectively. We must go beyond these deterministic ideas of discourse, and rethink long-standing assumptions about cultural or civilisational unities, in order to understand the ongoing processes of cultural contestation and formation.[79] As alluded to above, Said and others who have followed him seem at times to have been aware of this need despite their arguments about determining discourses – an ambiguity, perhaps, that itself hints at the problems of their methodological approach.[80] The necessary refinements and revisions of Said's original important insights were in some ways already indicated in parts of his work. For this reason, we can leave him the last words, which sum up a necessary framework for the increasing and significant work emphasising the connections that have pierced apparent lines of division, the overlap that co-existed with separation:

> Cultures are not impermeable . . . Culture is never a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds among different cultures. This is a universal norm.[81]
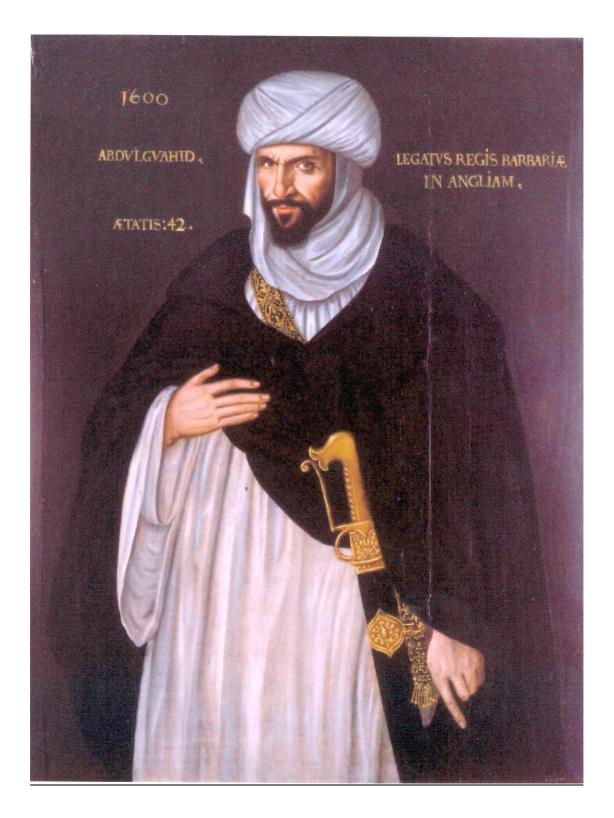
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[79] Cf. e.g. Bulliet (2004)
[80] Cf. e.g. Said (1979), p. 23 & (1993) pp. xxiii & xxvii
[81] Said (1993), pp. 261-2

APPENDIX 1

Muhammad bin Hadou, Moroccan ambassador to Charles II,Sir Godfrey Kneller,1684 (Courtesy of English Heritage (C) English Heritage Photo Library).

APPENDIX 2

Abdulwahid al-Nuri, Moroccan ambassador to Elizabeth I, unknown artist,
1600. Courtesy of University of Birmingham (C) University of Birmingham Collections).

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