

**The Implicit Cultural Patterns in the Eastern Narrative  
Discourse of Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq  
A Critical Study of His Travel Accounts: "Al-Wasita fi  
Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta" and "Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun  
Uruba" as Models**

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**Abstract**

*Through this research paper, we attempt to highlight the practical aspect of travel literature among Arab travelers during the Renaissance, showcasing innovations in travel writing style and the diversity of subjects in a modern and scientific manner, particularly those related to scientific discoveries. We also aim to highlight the aspects of civilization and urban progress in the West in various fields, depicting its economic, scientific, cultural, and literary advancements. Additionally, we seek to capture new images and incorporate them into Arab travel literature or, more precisely, "portraying the West in the literature of Arab travelers." This involves renewing the approach stylistically and thematically, simplifying the language used in writing, and avoiding artificial verbosity and excessive rhetorical embellishments, as seen in Arab travelers'*

writings after the fall of the Abbasid state until the end of the Ottoman Caliphate in the eighteenth century.

This transformation was led by a group of intellectuals and elites in Renaissance travel literature – cultured and educated individuals who traveled to European universities and specialized academies for further education and study in Europe, America, and other Western countries. Among these prominent figures were Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi in his work *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Paris*, Mahmoud Abu al-Thana al-Husseini in *Gharaib al-Ightirab wa Nuzhat al-Albab fi al-Dhahab wa al-Iqama wa al-Iyab*, Butrus al-Bustani in *Al-Tuhfa al-Bustaniyya fi al-Asfar*, and Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi in *Aqdam al-Masalik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamalik*.

However, our primary focus is on Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's travel narratives, particularly *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta* and *Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba*. We aim to analyze them critically, examining the stylistic, aesthetic, thematic, linguistic, and imaginative aspects employed by the author in these two travel accounts. We employ meta-criticism and cultural criticism to discuss various themes without hesitation, concealment, or distortion of the facts observed by al-Shidyaq in the religious, social, political, cultural, and economic realms.

This research also raises several critical questions that we attempt to address, including:

- What are the new stylistic, aesthetic, and thematic characteristics in Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's travel writing?
- Did al-Shidyaq achieve his goals through his travel writing in Europe?
- Did al-Shidyaq adopt a countercurrent stance in travel literature to highlight the true self versus the other and provide a new perspective on cultural and civilizational criticism?
- Why was al-Shidyaq marginalized in literary writing and status after his conversion to Islam and abandonment of Maronite Christianity and Protestantism?
- Why did al-Shidyaq favor the Arab Egyptian woman over other women, ranking her first, the Englishwoman second, the Frenchwoman third, and the Maltese woman last?

**Keywords:** Travel Literature, Arab Travelers, Renaissance, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Cultural Criticism

## Les modèles culturels implicites dans le discours narratif oriental d'Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq Une étude critique de ses récits de voyage : "Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta" et "Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba" comme modèles

### Résumé

À travers cet article de recherche, nous tentons de mettre en évidence l'aspect pratique de la **littérature de voyage**, en particulier dans le contexte des **voyageurs arabes** pendant la **Renaissance**, en montrant les innovations dans le **style d'écriture de voyage** et la diversité des **sujets** de manière moderne et scientifique, en particulier ceux liés aux **découvertes scientifiques**. Nous cherchons également à mettre en lumière les aspects de la **civilisation** et du **progress urbain en Occident** dans divers domaines, en illustrant ses avancées **économiques, scientifiques, culturelles** et **littéraires**. De plus, nous cherchons à capturer de nouvelles images et à les intégrer dans la **littérature de voyage arabe**, ou plus précisément, "représenter l'Occident dans la littérature des **voyageurs arabes**." Cela implique de renouveler l'approche tant stylistiquement que thématiquement, de simplifier la **langue** utilisée dans l'écriture et d'éviter la verbosité artificielle et les embellissements rhétoriques excessifs, comme on peut le voir dans les écrits des voyageurs arabes après la chute de l'État **abbasside** jusqu'à la fin du **Califat ottoman** au XVIIIe siècle. Cette transformation a été menée par un groupe d'**intellectuels** et d'**élites** dans la littérature de voyage de la Renaissance – des individus cultivés et instruits qui ont voyagé dans des **universités européennes** et des **académies spécialisées** pour poursuivre leurs études en **Europe**, en **Amérique**, et dans d'autres pays **occidentaux**. Parmi ces figures de proue figuraient **Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi** dans son ouvrage *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Paris*, **Mahmoud Abu al-Thana al-Husseini** dans *Gharaib al-Ightirab wa Nuzhat al-Albab fi al-Dhahab wa al-Iqama wa al-Iyab*, **Butrus al-Bustani** dans *Al-Tuhfa al-Bustaniyya fi al-Asfar*, et **Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi** dans *Aqwam al-Masalik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamalik*. Cependant, notre objectif principal est d'examiner les récits de voyage de **Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq**, en particulier *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta* et *Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba*. Nous visons à les analyser de manière critique, en examinant les aspects **stylistiques, esthétiques, thématiques, linguistiques**, et **imaginatifs** utilisés par l'auteur dans ces deux récits de

*voyage*. Nous employons la **méta-critique** et la **critique culturelle** pour discuter de divers thèmes sans hésitation, dissimulation ou distorsion des faits observés par al-Shidyaq dans les domaines **religieux, sociaux, politiques, culturels** et **économiques**. Cette recherche soulève également plusieurs questions cruciales que nous tentons d'aborder, telles que :

- Quelles sont les nouvelles caractéristiques **stylistiques, esthétiques** et **thématiques** dans l'**écriture de voyage** de Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq ?
- Al-Shidyaq a-t-il atteint ses objectifs à travers son **écriture de voyage** en **Europe** ?
- Al-Shidyaq a-t-il adopté une position **contre-courant** dans la **littérature de voyage** pour mettre en avant le soi véritable par rapport à l'autre et offrir une nouvelle perspective sur la critique **culturelle** et **civilisationnelle** ?
- Pourquoi al-Shidyaq a-t-il été marginalisé dans l'**écriture littéraire** et le **statut** après sa conversion à l'**Islam** et son abandon du **christianisme maronite** et du **protestantisme** ?
- Pourquoi al-Shidyaq a-t-il favorisé la **femme arabe égyptienne** par rapport aux autres femmes, la classant première, la **Britannique** deuxième, la **Française** troisième et la **Maltaise** en dernière position ?

**Mots-clés** : Littérature de voyage, Voyageurs arabes, Renaissance, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Critique culturelle

## Introduction

Travel literature in the Renaissance era emerged through a distinguished group of Arab literary elites, both Muslim and Christian, who were open to the West and engaged in cultural exchange. This was in line with Europe's industrial advancement and the Eastern journeys to the West, particularly Europe, beginning with educational missions such as those initiated by Al-Azhar during the political reforms of Muhammad Ali. These reforms sought to renew educational curricula and inject a fresh spirit by sending young Arab students to the most prestigious universities and academies in France, England, America, and other countries. The goal was to seek knowledge, master modern technology, and explore Europe's industrial advancements and scientific discoveries.

This exposure provided these students with opportunities for research, education, exploration, and writing in the field of travel literature. It also allowed them to experience different cultures, civilizations, religions, traditions, and global heritage, sharpening their intellectual faculties and strengthening their personalities beyond what they had in their home countries. As a result, travel literature flourished, enriched with vibrant colors, profound thoughts, and refined morals, blending diverse terrains and climates, merging Arab identity with European nature, and infusing Arabic travelers' sensibilities with Western linguistic and artistic influences. It also tempered their temperaments, which had been shaped by the harshness of the Arabian desert.

Among the most prominent figures was Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, who was selected as a diplomatic representative of

Arab students in Paris. Other notable figures included Shihab al-Din al-Alusi, Abdullah Fikri, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, and Suleiman al-Bustani.

#### **Examples of Arab Travelers in the Renaissance Era:**

- 1) **Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi's (1801–1873) Journey to Paris:** Documented in his book *Takhlis al-Ibriz fi Talkhis Paris*, based on his stay in Paris as part of the scientific mission sent by Muhammad Ali of Egypt as part of his reform program. This took place after Napoleon Bonaparte's army left Egypt. Al-Tahtawi spent five years in Paris.
- 2) **Shihab al-Din Mahmud Abu al-Thana al-Husseini al-Alusi's (1217 AH–1270 AH) Journey to Istanbul:** Recorded in *Gharaib al-Ightirab wa Nuzhat al-Albab fi al-Dhahab wa al-Iqama wa al-Iyab*, based on his visit to Istanbul, which lasted approximately 21 months. He also wrote *Tashawuq al-Shumul fi al-Safar ila Istanbul* about his journey to the Ottoman capital and *Nashwat al-Madam fi al-'Awda ila Dar al-Salam* about his return to Baghdad.
- 3) **Abdullah Fikri's (1250 AH–1306 AH) Journey to Stockholm:** Documented in *Abdullah Fikri: 'Asruhu, Hayatuhu, Adabuhu*, which includes his travel notes from Stockholm.
- 4) **Butrus al-Bustani's (1819–1883) Translations of Travel Literature:** He translated *Robinson Crusoe* from English into Arabic in his book *Al-Tuhfa al-Bustaniyya fi al-Asfar al-Kruziyya*, modifying its content to align with his literary style. His work is classified as biography, travel literature, and world literature. He is also known as "The Great Teacher."

- 5) **Taha Hussein's (1889-1973) Journey to France:** Undertaken for study, he traveled from Alexandria, Egypt, to Marseille and Montpellier, France, in 1914 and returned in 1915. He earned Egypt's first doctorate in Arabic literature and recorded his journey in books such as *Al-Ayyam*, *Sawt Paris*, *Qasas Mutarjama*, *Min Hunak*, and *Min al-Shati' al-Akhar*. He also married the French-Swiss woman Suzanne Bresseau and had two children, Amina and Moanes.
- 6) **Khayr al-Din al-Tunisi's (1820-1890) Journey to Europe:** Documented in *Aqwam al-Masalik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamalik*, which critiques European countries' history, geography, rulers, and policies from a cultural resistance perspective.
- 7) **Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's (1801-1887) Journeys:** His travels took him from Lebanon to Egypt, Malta, Tunisia, Britain, France, and back. His books *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta* and *Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba* offer detailed accounts of his observations, also reflected in *Al-Saq 'Ala al-Saq fi Ma Huwa al-Fariyyaq*.

And others among the travel writers of the Renaissance era... I shed light on this last one because he was a writer who faced various forms of marginalization, injustice, oppression, and neglect, as well as degradation and trivialization by critics, writers, masters of rhetoric, and readers alike. I found in his works the most delightful forms of art and the greatest discoveries, filled with the pleasures of the world of "travel literature" – a realm of elevated ideas, marvelous depictions of battles, argumentation techniques, rhetorical mastery, verses, hadiths, supplications, artistic descriptions of scenes and landscapes, comparisons between objects,

women, air, seas, rivers, human morals and temperaments, differences among nations, the diversity of reports, histories, statistics, and various other genres and themes, as well as an infatuation with those lands, regions, and figures.

We have structured this research paper into two main sections:

The first section examines Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaaq's first journey, which he recorded in his book *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta (The Means of Understanding the Conditions of Malta)*. This section consists of five subsections:

- 1) A critical reading of the title, the reasons for the journey, and its duration.
- 2) The value of the journey.
- 3) The methodology of the book and its chapters.
- 4) A critical analytical reading of the book's introduction and the interwoven literary genres.
- 5) An exploration of the stylistic, aesthetic, and thematic characteristics.

The second section focuses on his journey recorded in the book *Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba (Unveiling the Hidden Aspects of Europe's Arts)*, which consists of four subsections:

- 1) A critical reading of the title, the reasons for the journey, and its duration.
- 2) The methodology of the book and its chapters.
- 3) Contemplative critical reflections.
- 4) The stylistic, aesthetic, and thematic characteristics.

This study provides a critical analytical reading based on prior knowledge, relying on a moderate – if not refined – sense of literary taste.

## 1. A Reading into Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's Journey (1801-1887)

**Al-Shidyaq:** Ahmad Faris ibn Yusuf ibn Ya'qub ibn Mansur, known as *al-Shidyaq* (1801-1887), did not achieve the same fame as his contemporaries, such as Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871), Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), and Abdelkader al-Jazairi (1807-1883). Initially a Maronite Christian, he later converted to Protestant Christianity before ultimately embracing Islam in Tunisia before the year 1857.

He was one of the most brilliant Arab travelers, journeying to Malta, England, and France during the 19th century. He worked as a journalist, linguist, grammarian, translator, poet, and writer of European travelogues. He mastered several languages, including Arabic, French, English, and Ottoman Turkish. After a short visit to his family in the village of *al-Hadath* in Lebanon, he returned to Malta, then traveled to Tunisia in search of employment. Eventually, he returned to Malta and stayed there for approximately fourteen years. He later moved to London and then back to Malta to resume his work, before returning to London to translate the Bible under the supervision of the English orientalist Samuel Lee, commissioned by the Protestant Society.

From England, he traveled to Boulogne, then returned to France, where he remained in Europe for nearly nine years. Later, he returned to Tunisia with his English wife, whom he had married after the death of his first wife in Malta. In Tunisia, he officially embraced Islam following debates and discussions with scholars at the Zaytuna Mosque. He announced his conversion in 1858 and took the name *Ahmad*, adopting the title *Abu al-'Abbas* (*Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba*, pp. 32-33, 72).

He then traveled to Turkey, where he oversaw the newspaper *al-Jawa'ib*, which was first published on May 31, 1861. It was a weekly news publication that catered to a wide range of readers, covering politics, history, literature, and sciences. Many intellectual elites from both the Arab East and the Maghreb contributed to it.

In 1873, his house in Istanbul was burned down, causing the loss of the original manuscript of his book *Al-Mir'ah fi 'Aks al-Tawrah* (*The Mirror in Reflecting the Torah*). He then traveled to Egypt and later to Istanbul, where he passed away on September 20, 1887. His body was transferred to *al-Hadath* in Mount Lebanon, where he was buried.

Among his most notable literary and linguistic works:

- *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta* (*The Means of Understanding the Conditions of Malta*).
- *Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba* (*Unveiling the Hidden Aspects of Europe's Arts*), written during his stay in London and Paris.
- *Al-Jasus 'ala al-Qamus* (*The Spy on the Dictionary*), in which he critiques *Al-Qamus al-Muhit* by al-Firuzabadi, engaging in a form of intertextual opposition.
- *Al-Saq 'ala al-Saq fi ma huwa al-Fariyaq* (*Leg over Leg on What is the Fariyaq*), advocating for the liberation of Arab women long before Qasim Amin's *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*) and *Al-Mar'a al-Jadida* (*The New Woman*). Some scholars, including Radwa Ashour in her dissertation *Al-Hadatha al-Mumkina* (*Possible Modernity*), argue that this was the first Arabic novel, contrary to the common claim that Muhammad Husayn Haykal's *Zaynab* was the first.

## *His First Journey as Recorded in Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta*

- **Number of Pages:** 74
- **Time and Place of Writing:** According to some researchers, following Muhammad Abdel-Ghani Hassan's study on Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, *Al-Wasita* was written after his settlement in Malta a few months into 1834 (*Muhammad Abdel-Ghani Hassan, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, p. 196*).

### 1.1. A Critical Reading of the Title, Reasons for the Journey, and Its Duration

#### 1) Reading the Title:

The book's title, *Al-Wasita fi Ma'rifat Ahwal Malta*, consists of five words: a noun, a preposition, and three additional nouns. Analyzing its linguistic components, we find phonetic harmony in the repetition of letters such as *alif*, *lam*, *ta*, *tā*, *wāw*, *fā*, and *mīm*, which are dental and labial sounds with close articulation points. Additionally, all nouns in the title are definite, either by the definite article or by annexation, emphasizing the book's encyclopedic nature. The partial rhyme between *Wasita* and *Malta* creates a musical effect that aids memorization and attracts attention.

#### 1) Reasons for the Journey:

The primary reason for this journey was existential – escaping persecution and ecclesiastical oppression in Lebanon, particularly from the Maronite Church. The second reason was financial – seeking means of livelihood for food, medicine, and clothing. This type of journey is similar to his escape from Lebanon to Egypt due to the Church's harassment of his family,

and later from Malta to Tunisia in search of better opportunities. Additionally, there was an educational motive; according to his book, he was invited by the prince of Malta to teach in its schools in 1834 and to correct Arabic books published there (*Husni Mahmoud Hussein, Adab al-Rihla 'ind al-'Arab, p. 87*).

1) **Duration of the Journey:**

He traveled from Egypt to Malta in 1834 and remained there for about fourteen years, working in missionary schools before leaving for England in 1848 (*Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Kashf al-Mukhba' 'an Funun Uruba, p. 28*).

It can be said that the suffering endured by Al-Shidyaq on the island of Malta, along with his prolonged stay there for fourteen (14) years, is a clear indication and an explicit reference to the persecution he experienced in Lebanon. His endurance, surpassing the years of imprisonment endured by Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), peace be upon him, in the prison of Al-Aziz, is noteworthy. It is well known that the island of Malta has been a famous place of exile for liberated heroes and renowned writers, much like the island of Serendib, to which the great poet Mahmoud Sami Al-Baroudi was exiled for approximately seventeen (17) years. However, while Al-Baroudi's exile was forced, Al-Shidyaq's relocation to Malta was a voluntary choice, albeit under coercion from the Maronite Church in Lebanon.

## **2. The Travel Literature of Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq in the Light of Criticism**

### **2.1. The Value of the Journey**

Every literary work possesses significance, purpose, and an intended goal, and this applies to both writers and critics. The same principle holds for Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq. In our attempt to analyze the value of his work, we found that it encompasses multiple dimensions, including:

### **2.2. Historical Value**

This value lies in documenting the post-Napoleonic colonial phase in Arab countries and the literary period known as the Renaissance, which followed the decline of the Ottoman Empire. This era witnessed an opening of Arab nations to Europe in particular and the Western world in general. It was a period of literary, scientific, and international expansion, marking the second major wave of intellectual exchange after the translation movement of the Abbasid Golden Age (132 AH-334 AH). It was also a crucial stage in the history of the Arab Renaissance following Napoleon Bonaparte's colonization of North Africa and the Levant.

### **2.3. Literary and Scientific Value**

This value is evident in the efforts of some Arab countries—whether newly independent or partially autonomous—to send their students abroad for education and to acquire knowledge from the most prestigious European and Western universities. Examples include the journey of Rifaa Rafi' Al-Tahtawi to France for five years, Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq's time in Malta, where he taught and edited Arabic books for approximately fourteen years, and the journey of

Taha Hussein, the "Dean of Arabic Literature," to the University of Montpellier in France. The scientific value is also reflected in showcasing Europe's most significant scientific discoveries and advanced industries, such as the telegraph, electric lamps, water pumping systems, and more. Furthermore, Al-Shidyaq wrote his autobiography in England, publishing his book *Al-Saq Ala Al-Saq Fi Ma Huwa Al-Faryaq*, in which he detailed his life experiences using symbolic and complex writing techniques. In this work, "Al-Faryaq" refers to himself.

#### **2.4. Religious Value**

Al-Shidyaq's religious contributions are evident in his translation of significant sacred texts—including the Torah and the Bible—from English to Arabic in London's City Street under the invitation of Dr. Samuel Lee before his conversion to Islam. This journey, while religious, also held scientific significance. The goal of translating the Torah and the Bible was to promote Jewish and Christian teachings in the Arab world, despite Judaism's restriction on conversions from non-Jewish bloodlines, whereas Christianity allows for religious conversion.

#### **2.5. Social Value**

Al-Shidyaq's work also played a role in introducing European and Western societies to Arab readers, fostering intercultural dialogue between people of different religions, languages, customs, traditions, and ethical values. His travel literature aimed to bridge the cultural gap between East and West by emphasizing humanity's shared origins—Adam and Eve. In turn, he also introduced Arab societies to the

Western world. His journey spanned from Lebanon to Egypt, Malta, France, England, Tunisia, and back again, offering a comparative perspective on cultures, customs, traditions, and religions. Through this, he highlighted the unity of humanity in terms of blood and ancestry, as discussed in sociology.

## **2.6. Cultural Value**

The cultural significance of his work lies in the necessity of borrowing from various cultures—a concept known as “acculturation.” Al-Shidyaq emphasized the importance of critical engagement with foreign cultures, encouraging Arab intellectuals to assess, refine, and adopt beneficial aspects while rejecting harmful influences. He stressed the necessity of mastering cultural criticism, a field that emerged as a response to Orientalist movements that sought to mislead young Arab minds. His writings aimed to correct misconceptions embedded in educational curricula imported from the West.

## **2.7. Geographical and Exploratory Value**

Al-Shidyaq’s travels provided geographical insights into European countries, including their locations on the world map, continents, islands, and terrains. He explored the impact of geography and climate on human behavior and called upon Arab youth—who were largely sedentary and uninterested in travel—to embark on journeys of exploration. He believed that traveling was both an obligation and a necessity, as emphasized by all religions and philosophies. He encouraged young people to venture into the unknown, gain new knowledge, and broaden their experiences. His

book *Al-Wasita* served as a bridge between Eastern and Western societies, promoting mutual understanding.

### **3. The Structure and Chapters of the Book**

Arab travelers known for their extensive journeys and literary excellence—such as Ibn Battuta in *Tuhfat Al-Nuzzar Fi Ghara'ib Al-Amsar Wa Aja'ib Al-Asfar*, Ibn Jubayr in *Tadhkirah Bi Akhbar Itifaqat Al-Asfar*, Al-Maqrizi in *Azhar Al-Riyad Fi Akhbar Al-Qadi Iyad*, and Al-Warshilani in *Nuzhat Al-Anzar Fi Fadl Ilm Al-Tarikh Wa Al-Akhbar*—often structured their travelogues using the number eight, inspired by the eight gates of paradise. However, Al-Shidyaaq deviated from this tradition, choosing the number seven instead, due to its association with the seven gates of Hell, which he viewed with superstition and foreboding.

His book *Al-Wasita* is divided into seven chapters, where he discusses the island of Malta, its geographical location, climate, landmarks, housing, customs, traditions, festivals, and the characteristics of its inhabitants. He also examines the British colonization of Malta, the hybrid nature of the Maltese language, their music and dance, and various aspects of their daily life. Additionally, he describes Malta's air, fields, seasons, markets, celebrations, and marriage traditions, providing a comprehensive depiction of the island's culture.

### **Using the Technique of Description with Narrative in Travel Literature**

Description has been a poetic purpose across literary eras. It has been known since ancient times and flourished remarkably in the Andalusian era through the works of great

poets who were fascinated by the enchanting beauty of nature. They described it in their poetry to the extent of merging with it, engaging in poetic dialogues with flowers in the gardens, as seen in the works of Ibn Khafaja, Ibn Sahl Al-Andalusi, Lisan Al-Din Ibn Al-Khatib, and others. This artistic practice extended to prose in the writings of Arab travel writers from the 3rd century AH to the 19th century AD, as exemplified in the works of Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq in his book *Al-Wasita*.

In the first chapter, *The Mapping of Malta*, Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq states:

"Know that... its location on the globe has led some geographers to classify it as part of Africa due to its geographical position, while others affiliated it with the Italian islands based on the customs, traditions, and religion of the Maltese people. The intent behind this classification is to consider it part of Europe. Those who linked it to Africa include Ptolemy..." (2014, pp. 8-9).

It appears that Al-Shidyaq had extensive knowledge of European geography and the islands of the Mediterranean Sea, including their historical background.

In the second chapter, *On the Climate and Landscapes of Malta*, he states:

"Good health is the greatest possession a person can have, and a land that consumes its inhabitants is not one to be inhabited... Now, let us discuss its air. Air is not usually recognized merely by geographical location... This is why joint disease is common in Malta, and few escape it. I was afflicted with it in my first year there; every morning, I would wake up with aching limbs, unable to move, and my condition worsened until I was bedridden. When the doctor visited

me and saw the flooring of my residence, he informed me of the cause, and I was greatly distressed... The cure for this disease is to reside in a place exposed to the rising sun..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 15-17).

Here, Al-Shidyaq describes his affliction with joint disease—what we now call rheumatism—common in humid coastal areas, which applies to Malta. The island is known for its sudden climate changes and erratic seasons—sometimes experiencing all four seasons in a single day—due to its lack of mountains and rivers and its limited vegetation. He describes the land as barren, with little soil, few trees, and scarce vegetation. Most of its food and drink are imported from Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and Sicily, despite the presence of some fruit trees, which are insufficient for the needs of its inhabitants. The water is mainly rainwater stored in wells, and drinking it often leads to coughing due to its sensitivity. He notes that the most famous garden in Malta is "Saint Anthony's Garden," the governor's summer residence.

Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq also describes the Maltese people's hostility toward Arabs and Muslims, stating:

"For them, the worst insult is to call someone 'Arabi' with a silent 'r', even though in all European languages, it is pronounced with an open 'r'. They cannot fathom that an Arab could be cultured or refined... Any Arab who takes pride in his language cannot bear to hear the corruption of Maltese speech..." (2014, p. 20).

Here, Al-Shidyaq reveals the Maltese people's deep-seated contempt for Arabs, portraying their view as one of mockery and belittlement, even distorting the pronunciation of the word "Arab" to ridicule them. This cultural critique

highlights their animosity towards Islam and the Arabic language, illustrating an early form of Maltese Islamophobia.

In the third chapter, *On Valletta, the Capital of Malta*, he describes the city:

"This city is the seat of the English governor, and its most remarkable features are its fortified walls and excellent harbors... It is characterized by its grandeur and charm, as its buildings are made of stone. However, it lacks minarets or towers, making it resemble a bald head..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 21).

Here, he describes the city's absence of maritime beacons, which help sailors navigate at night, comparing Malta without its towers to a bald head—an unusual yet striking metaphor. This use of sensory imagery enhances the power of his satire, demonstrating his skill in travel writing.

Al-Shidyaq further critiques the city's lodgings, rental practices, and its famous crafts and trades. He also describes the unpleasant sounds of church bells and their deafening noise, which disturb sleep. He portrays the people of Valletta as "filthy wretches" who lack public baths. Instead of regular washing, they bathe in the sea to cleanse themselves, which he sees as a sign of uncleanness, stating:

"Yes, there is a place called a bath, but it is not like the baths in Muslim countries. It is merely a tub, without steaming, scrubbing, or sweating, and it is excessively expensive..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 24).

Here, he sharply criticizes the Maltese for their disdain towards Arabs while simultaneously portraying their lack of hygiene, countering their arrogance with an unflattering de-

piction of their habits. The cleanliness of a people, in his view, is reflected in their abundance of public baths, the purity of their clothing, the quality of their food and drink, and their general hygiene. This, he argues, is a marker of cultural superiority, setting apart advanced societies from backward ones – such as the Maltese.

He also describes the poor services in the city's cafés, the boats in Valletta's harbor, and the numerous church celebrations. Among them, he highlights the three-day carnival festival held on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday:

(Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 26).

Lastly, he provides a linguistic analysis of the Maltese language, observing that most of its words are corrupted versions of classical Arabic, weakened and distorted due to the various civilizations that occupied the island – starting from the Phoenicians, Romans, and Muslims. He portrays the language as fractured and its structure as eroded, resulting from centuries of foreign influence.

In the fourth chapter, he mentioned the customs, conditions, morals, and behaviors of the Maltese, describing them as: "...like the customs of the Franks... As for the villagers, the men pierce their ears and wear gold earrings, grow curly sideburns, and walk barefoot..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 36.)

Their clothes were dirty, tattered, and torn, which he compared to the clothing of the Franks and the English, concluding that there was no basis for comparison. The same applied to their bread and its method of preparation in comparison to European bread... He also noted that they ate strangled chickens rather than properly slaughtered ones,

and even consumed dead poultry. He described their mourning rituals, funeral ceremonies, and burial traditions...

In the fifth chapter, he discussed:

"The English and Their Government in Malta," describing it as a shared and divided rule between the English and the Maltese, saying:

"...It can be said that the governance here is Maltese, even though the ruler is English. The judges, legal scholars, document scribes, government employees, and court police are all Maltese, and the people are not subject to any levies or taxes..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 49.)

Here, Al-Shidyaq illustrates the leniency of the English government towards the Maltese, as excessive taxation and levies, according to Ibn Khaldun's introduction, could lead to the downfall of a state. He compares English rule and its judicial system in Malta with that in England, stating that there is no resemblance beyond the word "English" itself. He even suggests that when an Englishman comes to Malta to rule and reside there, one might doubt his Englishness, reversing the well-known adage to say: "Acquired nature prevails over innate nature," contrary to the beliefs of philosophers. He humorously speculates that Malta's air and climate might have altered the genes and chromosomes of the English.

He describes the English in Malta as miserly, arrogant, and inhospitable to guests, whom they invite to their tables only out of coercion, arrogance, and selfishness...

In the sixth chapter, he addressed: "The Music of the Maltese and Others." He first introduced the art of music, possibly as a way to relieve the melancholy and monotony he experi-

enced in Malta. He recalled various definitions of music, saying:

"...Music is a branch of logic that the mind has extracted through sound when it could not do so through reasoning... In the explanation of Ibn Zaydun's epistle by Sultan of the Literati, Ibn Nubata, it is stated: 'Melody is an excess of speech that the tongue could not express, so nature brought it out through tunes, not through segmentation. When it appeared, the soul adored it, and the heart longed for it...'" (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, pp. 55-56)

He then elaborates on European melodies, categorizing them into four types:

- 1) Entertainment singing, akin to Arabic muwashshah.
- 2) Church hymns.
- 3) Songs resembling lamentations and filled with sorrow and weeping.
- 4) Songs resembling laughter, dialogues, and humorous performances...

In this chapter, Al-Shidyaq discusses numerous musical instruments and everything that produces sound or melody. He provides a fascinating insight into their impact on the ear and soul, stating:

"...Whoever is not moved by the oud and its strings, the spring and its blossoms, has a corrupt disposition and is beyond remedy... Plato said: 'Whoever is saddened should listen to natural sounds, for when the soul grieves, its light dims. But when it hears what pleases and delights it, the extinguished part rekindles...'" (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 59)

This sentiment closely resembles that of Abu Al-Faraj Al-Isfahani in his monumental book *Al-Aghani* on the effect of music on the soul and human nature. I share Al-Shidyaq's

perspective and say: Whoever does not appreciate a radiant face, a melodious voice, a generous and trustworthy man, a strong man, or a modest and affectionate woman... let him feed on straw, for he is...

In the seventh chapter, he discussed: "The Language of the Maltese," saying:

"...Know, may God protect you from error and guide you to the right speech and action, that the Maltese language is a branch of the Arabic tree, a shoot of its fruit. It is spoken in the islands of Malta and Gozo by both the common people and the elite. However, the latter also learn Italian and English—the former for trade, legal documents, and other dealings, and the latter due to its status as the language of the ruling authorities. The Maltese language has not produced sciences or renowned books; rather, it consists of colloquial expressions for daily transactions, insufficient for poetry, description, or preaching. Thus, when they require such expressions, they resort to Italian, which indicates their cultural inferiority, as they have only preserved the most basic aspects of their language..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 63)

Here, Al-Shidyaq, as a linguistic scholar, highlights that the survival of a language depends on its use in scientific writing and literary composition. If these elements are absent and the language remains merely a spoken dialect for daily interactions, it deteriorates and fades away in Malta's barren and arid land...

### **A Dictionary of Place Names:**

Undoubtedly, travel literature pays special attention to the origins of city names encountered by travelers. The traveler often examines the local language of the region and

seeks the linguistic root of the name in that language's dictionary, assigning it one or more meanings understood by both the local population and the educated elite.

For instance, the name "Tiaret" is a compound word from the Berber language, where "Ta" and "Hert" together mean "wife of the lion." The same pattern applies to many Algerian cities. When a foreign traveler visits, curiosity leads him to inquire about the meaning of these names, enriching his linguistic knowledge.

Similarly, when Al-Shidyaq encountered the word "Malta," he did not simply pass over it. Instead, he delved into its linguistic meaning, explaining that it signifies "bees." He stated: "...Muslims called it 'Malta,' and in Greek, 'Milessa' or 'Milette' means 'bees'..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 11)

In another passage, he further speculates:

"...If its name is derived from Arabic, it comes from the root 'M-L-T,' which generally denotes separation or emptiness. 'Amlat' refers to someone without body hair... Germano Farhat also mentioned Malta in his book *Bab Al-I'rab An Lughat Al-A'rab*, stating: '...Malta is a distant, rebellious island near Sicily, whose inhabitants are sea bandits...'" (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 2014, p. 15)

This passage reads like a satirical poem by Al-Hutay'ah in his lampooning of Malta and its people. Thus, he placed it merely as a "middle stop" in his journey rather than an ultimate destination, unlike his travels to France, England, or Europe in general...

#### **4. Precision in Narrative Description and Linguistic Phenomena:**

He described its language as a mixture of the tongues spoken by its various occupiers, including Phoenician, Roman, and Arabic, among others. He also described its land, soil, fields, and trees. He noted that farmers there thresh wheat and stalks with donkeys and their own feet, which he found amusing. Here, he inserts a jest that both surprised and delighted him.

He characterized the Maltese language as overly elaborate, distorting the sounds of letters from the Arabic language, saying: "...They call apples 'Tfeeh,' pomegranates 'Rmeen,' watermelons 'Bteeh,' cucumbers 'Hiyar,' pears 'Linjass,' and melons 'Dlee'... They refer to peaches as 'HooH,' and so on..."

This made me realize why in Algeria we call pears 'Linjass' – we borrowed the term from the people of Malta through linguistic transmission and continuous historical usage. Or perhaps it is a linguistic contagion that leaves no hope of recovery among the common folk...

He blended linguistic criticism with social critique and did not stop there; he went further, delving into issues of Arabic, Italian, and Maltese languages. He explored the origins and roots of words, searching through Levantine and Maghrebian sources, diving deep in pursuit of a linguistic pearl hidden in Malta's oysters – but to no avail.

He also discussed the proximity and divergence of letters among linguists, eloquent speakers, and rhetoricians, distinguishing between refined and unrefined words. It was as if he were delivering a linguistic or rhetorical lesson to his students, presenting the results of his research and instructing

them methodically, forgetting that he was addressing a people who understood little of Arabic beyond the word 'Arabi' – with a silent 'r' – and who ground its letters like flour in a stone mill...

He recalled the examples of Sheikh Baha' al-Din in *Arus al-Afrah* and the renowned grammarian Al-Ashmouni when discussing phonetic alterations. He cited the poetry of the Andalusian minister Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatib in an attempt to emulate Al-Maqrizi in *Nafh al-Tib*. He also mentioned Ibrahim Ibn Sahl, the Andalusian poet from Seville, and Ali Ibn Dhafer.

Through these references, he sought solace in Arab literary memory and Islamic history for the sake of intellectual delight and companionship during long, sleepless nights, which resembled the deep, restless waves of the sea. He consoled himself with the eloquence of the Arabic language and its masters of rhetoric and expression, finding comfort – during his prolonged stay in Malta – in reminiscing about the rule of the Aghlabids and their eventual expulsion at the hands of the dominant Frankish pirates.

## 5. Stylistic and Aesthetic Characteristics

It is evident that Al-Shidyaq's narrative style in recounting his travels is marked by digression. This can be attributed to several factors, including his vast knowledge and extensive exposure to various sciences and arts. His writing reflects an encyclopedic approach, akin to that of Al-Jahiz in his works.

His wide-ranging education and proficiency in foreign languages endowed him with this encyclopedic perspective. He was committed to providing the reader with as much

knowledge as possible. His inclination toward verifying the accuracy and truthfulness of events and reports, his refined critical taste, and his linguistic mastery – especially in Arabic, English, French, and Turkish – further distinguished his work.

His critical approach was grounded in reason, and his style was characterized by humor, wit, and satire. He had a talent for clever repartee and excelled in storytelling. In his travelogue, he employed a wealth of linguistic resources, following the narrative style of Ibn Khaldun in *Muqaddimah* and *Kitab al-Ibar*.

Thus, he stands as a towering figure of the modern literary renaissance, a pioneer of enlightenment, and a distinguished writer in *adab al-rihla* (travel literature) – whether admired or detested, whether praised freely or begrudgingly under the constraints of imprisonment...

### 5.1. Stylistic Features

Al-Shidyaq despised verbal affectation, artificial rhetorical embellishment, and excessive use of figurative language, as he believed they stifled the essence of meaning. Consequently, his style was marked by clarity of expression and fluidity of delivery. He refrained from excessive use of rhyme and rhetorical devices, only employing them spontaneously and naturally.

His prose was precise, carefully constructed, and rich in meaning. His writing was both effortlessly simple and deeply engaging, akin to Al-Jahiz's style in *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin*. He adopted narrative techniques, storytelling, and digression with extensive erudition.

Another hallmark of his style was: "...the precision of description, depth of analysis, and brilliance in imagery and metaphor, especially when transforming abstract concepts into tangible illustrations..."

The ancients wisely observed: "*The delight of the soul lies in transitioning from the obscure to the clear, as when shifting from intellect to sensation.*"

They also said: "*Hearsay is not the same as witnessing, and assumption is not the same as certainty.*"

## 5.2. Aesthetic Features

Al-Shidyayq's approach to writing placed great emphasis on aesthetics. Literature, after all, is the embodiment of sincere emotions, profound passions, captivating beauty, and noble virtues.

It was narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: "*Indeed, Allah is beautiful and loves beauty.*"

One of the finest critiques of Al-Shidyayq reads: "...He is among the few Arab writers who understand the true value of words, placing them precisely where they belong. He does not resort to embellishment, ambiguity, or vagueness; rather, he conveys meaning with clarity, brightness, coherence, and precision. He firmly believed that relying on rhetorical flourishes and decorative language only weakens the essence of meaning.

When he writes, he focuses solely on the idea he wishes to express and the subject he intends to discuss..."

The ancients wisely remarked: "*Words are the body, and meaning is the soul.*"

And what worth do bodies have without the souls of meaning?

### 5.3. Thematic Characteristics

In his first travelogue, *Al-Wasita*, Al-Shidyaq's observations do not extend beyond the confines of Malta and its people, focusing particularly on:

- **The Geography of Malta:** Referring to its geographical location in terms of latitude and longitude.
- **Malta's Climate and Landscapes:** Discussing its climate, terrain, seasons, day and night cycles, gardens, and soil.
- **The Customs and Conditions of the Maltese People:** Covering their festivals, nature, interpersonal relationships, and interactions with foreigners.
- **British Rule Over Malta and the Imposition of the Mandate:** Addressing the ruling class, which includes the governor, judges, religious scholars, notaries, government officials, and the police force.
- **Maltese Music, Songs, and Melodies:** Presenting definitions of musical tones and melodies according to ancient Greek and Arab philosophers, and comparing Maltese music to Eastern musical traditions.
- **The Language of the Maltese People:** Stating that it originates from Arabic but has been significantly influenced and altered by ancient and contemporary languages and dialects.

In general, these are the topics covered in *Al-Wasita*, revolving around cities, regions, famous figures, professions, arts, religions, languages, customs, traditions, agriculture, industry, policing, climate, food, beverages, marriage, festivals, church rituals, and the recitation of sacred texts.

## 6. A Reading of His Second Journey as Documented in *Kashf al-Mukhba' an Funun Uruba*

The travelogue consists of **636 pages**. Some researchers, following the study of *Ahmed Fares Al-Shidyaq* by **Mohammed Abdel-Ghani Hassan**, assert that *Kashf al-Mukhba'* was written after Al-Shidyaq's return from England to Tunisia in 1866.

### 6.1. A Critical Reading of the Title, Reasons for the Journey, and Its Duration

#### 6.1.1. Reading the Title

The book's title, *Kashf al-Mukhba' an Funun Uruba* (Unveiling the Hidden about the Arts of Europe), consists of five words: two nouns (*Kashf* and *Mukhba'*), a preposition (*'an*), and two more nouns (*Funun* and *Uruba*). The words share common phonetic elements, particularly the letters *alif*, *ba*, *fa*, and *waw*, which contribute to the musicality of the phrase. Additionally, the use of *idafa* (construct phrase) in *Kashf al-Mukhba'* and *Funun Uruba* gives the title a formal and structured feel.

Al-Shidyaq reportedly hesitated between two titles:

- 1) *Kashf al-Mukhba' an Funun Uruba* (Unveiling the Hidden about the Arts of Europe)
- 2) *Kashf al-Mukhba' an Tamaddun Uruba* (Unveiling the Hidden about the Civilization of Europe)

This hesitation reflects his primary goal: to enlighten Arab readers – students, scholars, and intellectuals – on European civilization's key aspects. According to **Mohammed Youssef Najm**, the book primarily aims to introduce European arts and sciences and highlight Europe's progress in various fields.

### 6.1.2. *Motivation for the Journey*

The primary reason for Al-Shidyaq's second journey to England was an invitation from the **British and Foreign Bible Society** to contribute to the **translation of the Torah into Arabic** under the supervision of the orientalist **Dr. Samuel Lee** in 1848.

Another key motivation was his **desire to explore Europe** and learn about its culture, much like **Jacqueline Pirenne**, the French writer who undertook multiple European expeditions to explore the Arabian Peninsula, as described in her book *Discovery of Arabia*.

Al-Shidyaq wrote *Kashf al-Mukhba'* 'an Funun Uruba while residing in **London's City Street**, a major global trade center.

### 6.1.3. *Duration of the Journey*

Al-Shidyaq spent over **nine years** in **London and Paris**, visiting London **twenty times** and even acquiring British citizenship. He also lived in **Paris for thirty months** before returning to London.

His long stay in these cities allowed him to closely examine all aspects of European life. His **Christian background** also granted him access to **elite aristocratic circles** in both cities.

In *Kashf al-Mukhba'*, he meticulously recorded every detail about European society—its customs, traditions, social behaviors, history, politics, and economy. His book serves as a **mirror reflecting his lived experiences** in Europe, offering the Arab world an in-depth view of **Western modernization and progress**.

Through this work, Al-Shidyaq aimed to **awaken and enlighten Arab readers**, fostering an intellectual and scientific

**exchange between Arab and European cultures.** His travelogue bridges two **civilizations, religions, and literary traditions** – *Arabic literature* and *Western literature*.

Ultimately, **his journey revitalized the classical Arabic travel-writing genre**, following in the footsteps of **Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battuta, Al-Maqrizi, and Al-Warthilani**. His writing style mirrors his era, reflecting both **progress and decline, enlightenment and ignorance, renewal and stagnation** – a defining characteristic of his literary approach.

## **6.2. The Book's Methodology and Structure**

### **6.2.1. Methodology of the Book**

The traveler Al-Shidyaq wrote in "Al-Wasita" in seven chapters, in which he talked about the island of "Malta" in terms of its location, climate, historical and residential landmarks, its customs and traditions, its festivals, the nature of the Maltese people, and the British colonization of them. (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 74)

He also discussed their hybrid language, which is composed of several languages and accumulations, as well as their singing, music, dancing, and all aspects of their daily lives. He talked about its air, fields, days and nights, seasons, rains, markets, festivals, and wedding rituals. (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 28)

However, he did not adhere to the number "7" and instead adjusted it to "4" in imitation of the four seasons of the year. The book included an introduction that served as a prelude to his work "Al-Wasita," which he repeated as a refrain in the introductions of his books, as mentioned earlier.

These four chapters began first with: "A description of his journey from Malta to England," in which he described the

cities he passed through, starting from the island of Malta from the port of "Messina" to "Sicily," then "Naples," then the city of "Marseille," then "Lyon," then "Paris," then "Calais," to "London" or "Lundra," and finally to the town of "Ware." In this section, he discussed England's farms, land, air, climate, people's lives, and its minerals. He also provided an overview of the discovery of the American continent, the morals of the English, the characteristics of their women, crimes committed there, fortunetellers and astrologers, their security system, police enforcement, and more.

In the second chapter: "The journey to France," he described his return from "London" to "Boulogne," or what is known today as "Bologna." He described "Paris," its schools, hospitals, inhabitants, markets, academies, bridges, theaters, churches, markets, and grand monuments. He spent considerable time discussing the tomb of "Napoleon Bonaparte" and described the clothing and morals of the French. This ultimately led him to draw a comparison between the two cities, "Paris" and "London."

In the third chapter: "Talking about London or Lundra," he covered numerous statistics and figures, its history and location, describing the Thames River, its bridges, ships, boats, and the carriages of Paris and London. He also detailed the insurance associations, money exchange offices, police, museums, banks, churches, inventors and inventions, famous gardens, its kings, and the most significant newspapers and printing presses present there. He addressed censorship on printing, the invention of printing, and the production of paper.

In the fourth chapter: "A chapter on the City," he presented London's massive commercial center, describing it as a

global trade hub and pointing out the competition among merchants. He concluded by stating that the final lines of his book "Kashf Al-Mukhba'" were written in a room in this very district, "The City."

This book is considered "the final part of Al-Shidyaq's journey to Europe," as he wrote it while residing in London and completed its composition in (1857). (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 57)

### **A Reflective Pause on Al-Shidyaq's Literary Biography:**

Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq is a pioneer in renewing travel literature during the Nahda (Arab Renaissance) period – just as Abu Nuwas was a renovator of Arabic poetry in the Abbasid era. The reason for this renewal and rebellion against tradition lies in the manifestations of urbanization, progress, and modernization that emerged with European industrialization.

Al-Shidyaq's works, including "Al-Wasita," "Kashf Al-Mukhba'," and "Al-Saq 'Ala Al-Saq," can be classified as world literature, biographical literature, Western literature, autobiographical literature, cultural criticism, or meta-criticism. These books were written on foreign soil, in an unfamiliar atmosphere, depicting places and people different from those of his native homeland and unlike the people who raised him.

If one wished, they could categorize his writings as "Mahjar (immigrant) literature," as all these descriptions apply to Al-Shidyaq's compositions in his three works. But what are the reasons for his marginalization, the extinguishing of his literary flame, and the neglect of his literary stature?

Perhaps the most likely reason is his criticism of the Gospel after his conversion from Protestant Christianity and his translation of the Torah into Arabic. His conversion to Islam made him a direct target of Western Orientalism, especially after he exposed its linguistic and educational shortcomings, as indicated in his book "Kashf Al-Mukhba'" when he criticized the Orientalist Dr. Samuel Lee, the leader of the missionary society.

What made him an intellectual scholar with deep analytical abilities was his extensive knowledge of theological books in Christianity and Judaism, which granted him the ability to analyze, compare, investigate, and master the art of argumentation and logical reasoning to uncover the truth. After a long journey of deliberation and doubt, he ultimately concluded that Islam is the most authentic, firm, and strong religion among them all. His conviction and choice of Islam cost him dearly in life.

He meticulously examined the errors and inconsistencies in the Torah and the Gospel, critiquing them with a neutral approach—neither excessive nor dismissive, nor atheistic. He exposed distortions, corruptions, and falsifications, recording these observations constructively rather than destructively, unlike Orientalist scholarship. This is evident in his book "Al-Mir'ah Fi 'Aks Al-Tawrah" (The Mirror in Reflecting the Torah), where he expertly critiqued the chapters of the Torah and the Gospel.

His other book, titled "Lam Al-Qurud Fi Dham Al-Yahud" (The Rebuke of the Jews), is a satirical poetic work that criticizes the Old Testament's texts. Through this study, we seek to grant him some fairness, correct the damage caused by distortion, and restore his rightful literary prestige after the

long neglect. Although we could not grant him this justice while he was alive, we state the truth now – both for him and for history – while he rests among those righteous martyrs who sacrificed for the word of truth against the forces of falsehood.

Despite his significant contributions, he did not achieve the same level of literary fame and prestige as other Nahd-era intellectuals, such as Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), Nasif al-Yaziji (1800–1871), and Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883), among others.

It can be said that in this book, Al-Shidyaq did not explicitly declare a renewalist call advocating the necessity of embracing both authenticity and modernity, steering away from sterile ideas and the cultural ignorance that afflicted Arab society under the Ottoman state at the time. He emphasized the need to avoid religious extremism and detestable rigidity while promoting controlled openness guided by both reason and tradition. Additionally, he called for the rejection of religious, intellectual, and cultural fanaticism, which he viewed as a harmful element to the internal fabric of Arab society. Islam, he argued, is a religion that balances the affairs of both faith and worldly life, seeking moderation in all matters, as stated in the Quran: "But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world..." (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayah 77, p. 394). Thus, this travelogue can be considered a reformist call against the stagnation, monotony, coldness, and dormancy that had overtaken Arabic literature.

- Cultural Patterns in Al-Shidyaq's Travel Writing: Al-Shidyaq's travel writing represents a revolution against religious and sectarian fanaticism practiced by

the Shihabis, Druze, and Maronites in Lebanese culture (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, "Kashf Al-Mukhba' 'An Funun Uruba," p. 23). In this book, he shares his impressions of life in Europe, covering places such as Malta, France, England, Tunisia, and Egypt. He addresses many significant events, conflicting European cultural trends, and religious and atheistic philosophical currents, all of which influenced his travel writing. Among these were the conspiracies and intrigues orchestrated against him by Maronites and Evangelicals due to his books "Mumahakat Al-Ta'wil" and "Al-Mar'a fi 'Aks Al-Tawrah." These works criticized the flawed doctrines and fabricated narratives about prophets found in the Torah and the Bible. Following his translation work and the mission he was assigned, he was accused of blasphemy, apostasy, and espionage for England against France.

Every line Al-Shidyaq wrote in his travel literature is a revolt against blind imitation and a call for an enlightened intellectual movement that opens the doors to civilizational progress and cultural distinction for the Arab nation. His writing serves as a counter-narrative to Orientalist campaigns and refutes the baseless claims from the West that religion is the "opium of the masses" and that Islam symbolizes backwardness and civilizational regression. He offers an antidote to such toxic ideas that threaten future Arab generations, drawing clear lines against so-called Arab intellectuals – atheists, Orientalists, and those who scorn Islam or neglect Arab identity. In this sense, his writings constitute a form of conscious, balanced, and moderate cultural and civilizational critique – what is known as "critique of critique."

In this, Al-Shidyaq was ahead of his contemporaries in travel literature. He critiqued with reason and reality, offering a fresh perspective that provided clarity to those who were blind to both sight and insight. He presented facts and events but did not accept them at face value, unlike Sheikh Al-Warthilani, who, in his travel accounts, narrated fantastical stories of his sheikhs summoning the sun with angels or seeing God in a mirror – tales reminiscent of Scheherazade's stories to King Shahryar in the fictional voyages of Sindbad.

Al-Shidyaq provides another cultural perspective – the necessity of balancing materialism and spirituality to achieve civilizational and cultural advancement. He critiques European existential materialism, atheism, and pragmatism, highlighting how, in the West, a man might sell his wife in a bar over a few drinks after mutual consultation. This serves as a critique of the West's abandonment of spiritual values and ethical principles that elevate human beings above animalistic instincts. He further presents another perspective: the importance of adopting beneficial aspects of Western civilization while discarding its superficial and reckless elements. Knowledge, he asserts, is of two types – beneficial and harmful. The Prophet (peace be upon him) sought refuge from harmful knowledge. Al-Shidyaq also offers a new concept of justice, rights, duties, freedom, equality, awareness, ethics, competence, work, enjoining good and forbidding evil, respect for laws, constitutions, and traditions, and the rejection of fanaticism, violence, wars, intellectual and religious laxity, suppression of freedoms, and sectarian and racial discrimination.

He strongly advocates for women's liberation, emphasizing their education, honorable work, and active participation

in all aspects of life while maintaining their chastity, honor, modesty, and adherence to religious and moral values. These qualities, he believed, were embodied in the Arab Muslim woman, whom he admired in the annals of history and in travel literature.

- Section Four: A Critical Analytical Reading
- Employing the Technique of Description and Narrative in Travel Literature: The combination of description and narrative is a distinctive technique that characterized Al-Shidyaq's travel writing in the 19th century, particularly in his works "Al-Wasita" and "Kashf Al-Mukhba'." He describes the beginning of his journey from the port of Malta as follows:

"I say, after praise be to God, that at ten o'clock on the morning of Saturday, the second of September in the year 1848, we departed from Malta to England. After about two hours, its land disappeared from sight, but I did not say, as Al-Sharif Al-Radi did: 'Turning my eyes back, as the ruins faded, My heart followed where my gaze could no longer tread.'

After five hours, we saw the land of Sicily, and around eight in the morning the next day, we docked at the port of Messina..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 9).

Al-Shidyaq records the details of his second journey with precise timestamps, noting the hour, day, month, and year, following the tradition of daily memoirs, which underscores the significance of the journey to him. He classifies retrospection into two types: visual retrospection and emotional retrospection, both running parallel in a single direction.

He then describes his travels to Naples, noting its many "carriages," by which he meant automobiles rather than bicycles, and the beauty of its architecture. He continues to

"Civitavecchia," then "Livorno," and "Genoa," which he calls the city of towering buildings. Next, he reaches "Marseille," with its grand harbor, before traveling by railway to "Lyon," where he vividly depicts the modernity of the cities he passes through. Eventually, he arrives in "Paris," the so-called "City of Dreams," before heading to "Calais" or "Cass." From there, he embarks on a sea voyage to "London," stating:

"...We were fortunate to find a ship ready to sail to London, so we boarded it. As we entered the River Thames, the sun became obscured, the sky turned cloudy, and it was a dark, rainy day—one that would make one mourn the sun of Malta..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 17).

Here, Al-Shidyaq explicitly acknowledges his love for the city of "London," where he found his comfort and enjoyment. He expresses this through the beauty of figurative imagery, painting an artistic and literary picture with the phrase: "The sun was veiled from us, and the sky was covered with clouds," a metaphorical reference to London as "the city of clouds." Additionally, this phrase includes a beautiful implicit metaphor, adding an element of suspense for the reader through his use of vibrant literary imagination. His journey became adorned with the magic of expression, making the heart beat for London and the soul feel refreshed with the fragrance of joy upon visiting it.

Al-Shidyaq replaced the heavily ornamented, rhymed prose—laden with rhetorical embellishments and verbal decorations—with vivid and captivating descriptions of the alleys, carriages, theaters, commercial centers, schools, historical landmarks, and breathtaking natural scenery that delighted the eyes. He described traveling by sea and land, making his journey diverse and incomparable to those who

rode camels, donkeys, and mules, enduring severe hardships in their travels.

He meticulously detailed the conditions of England's judges, their salaries, and described the deeply rooted and emerging churches, mentioning some priests, surgeons, doctors, craftsmen, artists, and various trades and innovations. He also described teachers and educators.

Regarding the village of "Barley," he wrote: "...it was one of the most insignificant English villages, though all their villages fail to capture the heart of a stranger for reasons that will become apparent." Perhaps his dislike for the orientalist "Samuel Lee" extended unconsciously to Lee's village, "Barley."

Al-Shidyaq reluctantly translated the Torah, doing so unwillingly. He also described poverty and the dire conditions of London's poor, asserting that they were much worse off than the poor in the Arab East, even though the wealthy in England indulged excessively in extravagance, luxury, and prosperity. He described hospitals and the services they provided, particularly for the poor, including meals, medicine, and treatment aimed at recovery.

He also depicted the miserable state of farmers and their deteriorating living conditions, outlining the division of English society into three classes:

- The ruling and royal class (the King),
- The middle class (land-owning gentry and clergy),
- The working class (the laboring farmers).

This observation alludes to the political and economic concept of capitalism and the feudal system that existed in England at that time. He portrayed farmers as people who primarily consumed bread and cheese, rarely eating meat.

He noted that the level of red meat consumption was an indicator of wealth or poverty in society.

Al-Shidyaq compared the "Eddystone Lighthouse" in England with the "Lighthouse of Alexandria" in Egypt, noting their similarities in mysteriously vanishing due to unknown natural causes. He also discussed the wonders of the world, stating:

"...Among them are the Egyptian Pyramids, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus built by Artemisia for Mausolus, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, the Walls and Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and an idol from the era of Arab paganism. I say: among the wonders of these wonders, it is surprising that the Great Wall of China was not included, despite being greater in size and utility than the Egyptian Pyramids, as it was built by the Chinese in 137 BC to protect themselves from the Tatars."

It is possible that in this narrative, Al-Shidyaq was influenced by the famous French historian Voltaire's writings on the history of cities. However, he did not mention the Lighthouse of Alexandria among the wonders. Was it deliberately excluded from his list of world wonders during his journey? To elaborate on the wonders of the world:

- 1) The Seven Ancient Wonders:
  - The Great Pyramid of Giza (Egypt)
  - The Hanging Gardens of Babylon (Iraq)
  - The Statue of Zeus at Olympia (Greece)
  - The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus (Turkey)
  - The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (Turkey)
  - The Colossus of Rhodes (Greece)
  - The Lighthouse of Alexandria (Egypt)
- 2) The Seven New Wonders:
  - The Great Wall of China

- Chichen Itza Pyramid (Mexico)
- Petra (Jordan)
- Machu Picchu (Peru)
- Christ the Redeemer Statue (Brazil)
- The Colosseum (Italy)
- The Taj Mahal (India)

We have written these lines as a commentary on Al-Shidyaq's account, aiming to expand the reader's knowledge and offer a broader perspective on the wonders of the world as he described them in his time.

### **Description of Inventors, Inventions, and Industrial Advancements**

In his book *Kashf al-Mukhba'* (*Unveiling the Hidden*), Al-Shidyaq described numerous inventions and industrial discoveries that emerged during the European Renaissance. Among them was the invention of the "air balance" (barometer), about which he wrote:

"...To conclude our discussion on the air balance, we say that its invention, as far as we know, originated in Italy. In 1626, the physician Santorio Santorio wrote a book claiming to have invented it. A Dutchman named Cornelius Drebbel made a similar claim. However, after thorough research, it was discovered that the first merely introduced the idea of its use, while the latter understood its properties before hearing anything about it."

This indicates that Al-Shidyaq was deeply interested in scientific discoveries and technological advancements. He had knowledge of their histories and the inventors behind them.

Regarding the discovery of the "magnetic needle" (compass), he noted that Chinese inventors had known about it between 206–221 BC, stating:

"...The exact period when the magnetic needle began to be used for navigation is unknown. However, its use in travel was known to the Chinese from ancient times, as they used it for navigation to Japan, India, and the Arabian Peninsula. It is possible that the Arabs adopted it from the Chinese. Some claim that the Chinese were aware of it as early as 2634 BC."

This issue remains a matter of great debate among historians of inventions—who was the first to discover and use it? Was it the Greeks, the Chinese, the Muslims, or the Europeans?

Regarding the invention of the compass, he wrote:

"...As for the invention of the instrument known in the West as the 'compass,' it was attributed to a Venetian man named Marco Polo in 1260. Others attributed it to Flavio Gioia, while some claimed that the Chinese knew about it in 1115 BC."

The term "compass" in Arabic corresponds to the "dividers" (compasses with needles), which are used to draw circles and measure diameters.

Al-Shidyaq also mentioned the construction of railways in England, stating:

"...The railway system in England is among the most significant enterprises that have occupied the minds of wealthy individuals. The total capital invested in it amounts to one hundred million pounds, whereas the total capital invested in the cotton industry is forty million."

This demonstrates that the English approach to commerce and economics was based on investing capital in free enter-

prises under the banner of capitalism within the British monarchy.

He also discussed the invention of the "air balloon" and the establishment of lost-and-found offices, writing:

"...In all these stations, there are offices for lost items that travelers may forget due to haste or distraction. These items remain there for two years. If unclaimed, they are sold, and the proceeds are distributed among the station workers."

Islam is the only religion that introduced the concept of safeguarding lost property, setting deadlines for its retrieval, and determining who is entitled to it after the deadline expires, as established in a long hadith and recorded by Al-Bukhari in the *Chapter of Lost Property* in his *Sahih*.

He addressed the textile industry, the construction of the "Basatat" buildings – our postal centers – the method of regulating them, and the invention of the "telegraph" and its types, saying:

"...There, I saw the telegraph station, which is of two types:

The first is the well-known one, resembling a striking clock with a steel needle placed under a semicircle, above which are two small bone pins engraved with alphabetical letters...

The second is what was invented later... It is a wheel-like device with a fine steel pen made of chemical components, and beneath it runs a thin strip of composite paper that records black lines, which in their system represent letters..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 1866, pp. 247-248)

He mentioned the striking clock that "Harun al-Rashid" gifted to King Charlemagne, saying:

"Voltaire said in another place: The first striking clock known in France was the one gifted by Harun al-Rashid to Charlemagne. He also said in *Alphabet of Time* that arithmetic was taken from the Arabs in Spain in the year (1050) and then became well known in England in the year (1253)..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 1866, p. 268)

He also mentioned the invention of "gas" and its use in lighting and illumination, speaking of invention and creativity, saying:

"...Voltaire said that the first to invent these eyeglasses was Alexander Spina in the late 13th century, and the invention of windmills also dates back to that era..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 1866, p. 269)

Then he touched upon the invention of the clock, saying:

"...The author of *Amazing Inventions* mentioned that French historians recorded that the first clock known in their country was the one gifted by Caliph Harun al-Rashid to Charlemagne, King of France, in the year (807), and it was a marvel of that time..." (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, 1866, p. 270)

This subtly points to Harun al-Rashid's gift of the striking clock to King Charlemagne as evidence that the Renaissance in Europe was merely a spark from the golden age of Islamic and Arab civilization during the early Abbasid period (132 AH - 334 AH), when Europe was still struggling through its Middle Ages. The "clock" symbolizes the cycle of time and civilization, demonstrating that power and progress shift between nations.

It can be said that Al-Shidyaq was a pioneer in recording inventions and scientific discoveries in his book *Kashf Al-Mukhba'*, preceding all Arab travelers – whether from earlier, later, or contemporary times – except for "Rifa'a Rafi' al-

Tahtawi" in his work *Takhlis al-Ibriz*. This should be credited to him rather than held against him in the field of travel literature.

### **The Use of Comparison and Textual Balance Between Cities and Countries:**

Al-Shidyaq described the urban development of Europe, including its buildings, churches, theaters, gardens, factories, printing presses, fortifications, historical landmarks, breathtaking natural scenery, mountains, hills, rivers, seas, coasts, ports, lighthouses, newspapers, and paper and printing factories—especially in terms of social aspects such as poverty, unemployment, charities, and police offices.

He compared police forces in "London" and "Paris," finding the former far superior to the latter. He also compared hospitality in England and France, describing French hospitality as cold, indifferent, and stingy, where warmth is only felt at the moment of departure. In contrast, in "London," one experiences warm receptions and a hospitality that encourages long stays at their tables.

Through this, he painted a highly detailed, almost photographic depiction of English life, contrasting it with that of France and Malta—without flattery, exaggeration, bias, or distortion. He worked with the integrity of a journalist faithfully reporting events firsthand. These descriptions were reflected in his works *Al-Wasita* and *Kashf Al-Mukhba'*, which contain extensive knowledge across multiple disciplines, including geography, history, literature, sociology, economics, and politics. These books also feature various literary genres, including migrant literature, autobiographies, biog-

raphies, sea and land travel literature—all woven together under the theme of "travel literature" in the Renaissance era.

He vividly described the English tradition of lighting fires in the freezing winter and compared it to the French custom of fire-lighting. In this, he surpassed Rafi' al-Tahtawi's descriptions of French fires.

Undoubtedly, the fire described by the poet Hatim al-Tai combines all the characteristics of European, Maltese, Arab, North African, Hijazi, and Levantine fires, as expressed in his verses:

"Light the fire, for the night is cold\*\* **And the wind,  
O fire-lighter, is fierce Perhaps a passerby will see  
your fire If you host a guest, then you are free.**

(Ibn Abd Rabbih Al-Andalusi, , p. 242)

He also described the wonders and marvels of "Paris," its famous landmarks, grand churches, hospitals, banks, enchanting gardens, French holidays, morals, customs, and traditions. He elaborated extensively on French women, highlighting their superiority over English women in craftsmanship, as well as their proficiency in hypnotism—practiced in Paris—despite opposition from doctors and clergy for its contradictions with science, ethics, religion, and social norms. He stood as both an observer and a bewildered spectator.

What most captivated him about Parisian women was their striking beauty, elegant fashion, and exquisite cleanliness—enough to captivate even the keenest senses (for doesn't a man walk behind his nose?). He admired their exceptional dedication to raising and grooming their children.

In all these observations, he employed techniques of comparison, contrast, and literary antithesis in travel writing. He meticulously compared what he had seen in his

homeland of "Lebanon," in "Egypt," "Tunisia," "Malta," "Paris," "London," and beyond. Ultimately, he preferred life in "Paris" over "London" due to the latter's higher crime rate.

#### **Section Four: Stylistic, Aesthetic, and Thematic Features**

It is noticeable that Al-Shidyaq's style and approach in narrating the events of his journey—aside from what has already been mentioned—are characterized by a commitment to scientific objectivity. He distances himself entirely from subjective whims and their dangerous pitfalls, which might lead to obscuring or covering up the virtues of both friend and foe, as well as denying the merits of others. For this reason, he states:

“In all that I have described about the English, the French, and others from Europe, I have not been swayed by bias or hostility... Rather, I recounted what I observed and narrated what seemed to be the truth... I seek refuge in God from diminishing people's *due and deliberately speaking ill of them.*” (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 8.)

Al-Shidyaq oscillated between a literary style in narrating his journey and a refined scientific approach. The number of pages in which he discussed European civilization exceeded 400. (Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, p. 67.)

His book employs an informative style with a narrative and descriptive tone, adhering to brevity and conciseness. His sentences are short, avoiding verbosity and complex, archaic vocabulary. He refrains from rhetorical embellishments and literary ornamentation, instead favoring intertextuality, quotations, allusions, and proverbs to counter false information. He cites sayings and historical events, steering

clear of the excessive embellishments of early travel writers, who often indulged in poetic prose and unverified reports.

Unlike them, Al-Shidyaq employs direct language, targeting an educated and ambitious young readership that embraced reform and innovation. In his book, he introduces European terminology that gained prominence in that era, such as *comedy*, *tragedy*, *drama*, and *bank*, thus laying the foundation for linguistic academies in the Arab East.

A key feature of his journey is his focus on history, including the histories of cities and notable figures, aligning with historical writing styles similar to those found in the works of the Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun, particularly in *The Muqaddimah*. However, at times, he falls into excessive digressions—an affliction that affected many Arab travelers—drawing influence from the writing style of Al-Jahiz (Amr ibn Bahr). Despite this, he remains committed to a detailed narrative, descriptive, and informative approach.

It can be said that Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq was indeed the pioneer of travel literature during the Arab Renaissance. His exceptional mastery of this literary form distinguished him from his contemporaries and fellow travel writers, such as Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, who preceded him in documenting his French journey. However, unlike Al-Tahtawi, Al-Shidyaq was not as fortunate in gaining widespread literary fame in the Arab and global literary spheres.

## Conclusion

Following this careful reading and critical study, we conclude with the following key points:

- Travel literature flourished during the Arab Renaissance, pioneered by figures such as Ahmad Faris Al-Shidyaq, Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, Mahmoud Abi al-Thana' al-Husseini, Abdullah Fikri, Butrus al-Bustani, and Taha Hussein. Al-Shidyaq's journey, as described in *Al-Wasita*, was primarily academic, aimed at teaching in European schools and correcting Arabic publications in Maltese printing houses. He lived in Malta for 14 years.
- His book *Al-Wasita* consists of seven chapters, discussing Malta's geography, climate, natural landmarks, customs, traditions, British colonial rule, language, music, and artistic life. It is relatively brief (74 pages) compared to his other work *Kashf al-Mukhba*, which spans 636 pages and covers a range of subjects, including history, linguistics, daily life, city descriptions, and European traditions. It serves as a cultural critique of the Maltese, who are categorized as part of Europe.
- Al-Shidyaq's travel writing in *Al-Wasita* stands out from other travelogues due to its direct reporting, precise descriptions, and an extensive infusion of knowledge and scientific insights. His work emphasizes clarity, verification, documentation, and analytical depth. His writing style reflects a rich linguistic expertise, blending Arabic with various foreign terms.

He also employs humor and wit, resembling the narrative style of Ibn Khaldun.

- His prose avoids artificial literary ornamentation and rhetorical flourishes that were prevalent in traditional travel literature, such as those found in Al-Maqrizi's *Nafh al-Tib*. Instead, his style is clear, light, and straightforward, prioritizing meaning and content over embellishment. His writing encompasses four core values: historical, literary, geographical-exploratory, and social. Additionally, his descriptions of churches demonstrate a deeply rooted religious perspective, offering detailed accounts of their architecture, Sunday prayers, and rain-seeking supplications from the Gospel.
- Al-Shidyaq's journey documents the British mandate over Malta, portraying it in a harsh light that does not align with the general perception of the British in England. He suggests that while the English in their homeland are noble and refined, in Malta, they become vulgar and degraded. His work captures the post-Napoleonic colonial period and the European Renaissance era, providing a fresh and distinctive contribution to 19th-century travel literature.
- His book stands as a comprehensive encyclopedia, covering diverse subjects such as music, arts, musical instruments, and various crafts and trades—details rarely found in Eastern travel literature, whether in the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, or distant parts of Asia in ancient times or during Al-Shidyaq's era.

○ Al-Shidyaq's journey in *Al-Wasita* is considered an important reference in history and the history of languages. It also discusses the evolution and transformation of the Maltese language from Classical Arabic to Italian and then to the current vulgar hybrid dialect, which lacks the knowledge and literacy that other languages have maintained.

○ Al-Shidyaq's journey reveals his deep influence by the landmarks of the Arabic language and foreign language lexicons, as he frequently elaborated on them in his travels. His book is also a geographical and historical account of events that took place on the island of Malta.

○ His work *Al-Kashf* was a countercurrent to Orientalist movements in Arab countries, which Western writers documented in their travels to the East, following the model of the French writer Jacqueline Pirenne in her book *The Discovery of the Arabian Peninsula*. It was a unique revelation of European civilization, industries, and scientific discoveries, making Al-Shidyaq's work an unprecedented contribution.

○ *Al-Kashf* was a reflective mirror of what Al-Shidyaq observed in Europe in terms of its natural, political, social, cultural, intellectual, religious, and literary aspects, as well as the customs and traditions of Western society, their most significant knowledge, sciences, and crafts during the 19th century. It serves as a vivid representation of civilization and industrial progress.

○ Al-Shidyaq's journey in *Al-Kashf* was a revival and renewal in the realm of travel writing in general and Arabic travel literature in particular. Writing styles changed significantly, setting his work apart from other known Arabic travelogues in language, style, and subject matter. This was achieved through the incorporation of new literary genres

and elements, including the documentation of inventions, inventors, and the implicit cultural patterns embedded within the travelogue.

- Al-Shidyaq was marginalized in the world of Arabic literature and travel literature due to an Orientalist attack led by mercenary writers working for foreign entities hostile to the cultural and human values of Muslims and Arabs. A certain elite, affiliated with Arabic literature, drove this defamatory campaign, wielding prejudiced pens, filling poisoned inkpots, and tainting papers with intellectual and literary filth that defamed his status. As a result, he was pushed to the margins of literary history among modern and contemporary writers of his time, mainly because of his criticism of many distorted issues found in the Torah and the Gospel—issues that defy reason, lack credibility, and were never established by authentic transmission.

- Every call for renewal in literature and religion is generally met with acceptance and encouragement—both materially and morally—by ambitious youth. However, some of these movements originate from hidden forces seeking to undermine religions, corrupt literature, and destroy the morals of unsuspecting societies. Al-Shidyaq's renewal, however, was different; it was a call for revival in *travel literature* and an enlightenment for the Arab mind during the Nahda (Renaissance) period. Yet, it did not receive the expected acceptance due to his constructive critique of the contradictions in the Gospel and the absurdities in the Torah. As usual, he was accused of *anti-Semitism*, a common and familiar charge heard in all times and places.

- Al-Shidyaq's writing of *Al-Kashf* was an applied practice in laying the foundations for *criticism of criticism* or *cultural*

*criticism* of other societies. However, his approach was not given due consideration. Nevertheless, he introduced this new critical approach through application and representation in travel writing. He was among the first to counter the Orientalist attacks brought by the Western winds and European travelers—even before his conversion to Islam. Initially, he resisted these attacks through Arab nationalism, but after embracing Islam, both factors combined, granting him even more vigor after a period of weakness. His writings thus became an enlightening call for Muslim Arab youth.

- The precision of his descriptions in *Al-Kashf* was due to his extended stay in Europe, which lasted approximately nine years. In his travel writing, he employed a narrative and descriptive style while maintaining brevity and conciseness, avoiding excessive elaboration. He utilized constructive criticism, supported by evidence and reasoning.

- His writings predominantly focused on the cities of *London* and *Paris*, employing a comparative technique in travel literature. His journey resembled a daily journal and served as a form of comparative literature, documenting both the ancient and modern wonders he witnessed, starting from Egypt to Malta, then England, and finally France—along with the stories he heard about these places.

- Al-Shidyaq's writing style was noticeably influenced by his Maltese and European travels, reminiscent of Ibn Khaldun's approach, who preceded him by four centuries. The spirit of Ibn Khaldun's prose is evident in Al-Shidyaq's travel literature, with many points of intersection in ideas and style. This was not coincidental but rather an external, indirect literary intertextuality.

○ Al-Shidyaq's recorded journey in *Al-Kashf* serves as a volume encompassing history, sociology, religion, customs and traditions, folklore, mythology, scientific and industrial discoveries, and specialized linguistic dictionaries. It also falls within comparative literature, diaspora literature, travel literature, biographies, autobiographies, linguistic and literary translation literature—all of which contribute to travel writing. His work stands as a significant defense against Orientalist attacks.

○ In his book *Al-Wasita*, Al-Shidyaq employed a chronological narrative, arranging events consistently with their characters according to time and place. However, he occasionally paused for physical and psychological rest, reminiscing about his childhood, youth, recklessness, and love for a captivating Egyptian woman whose beauty surpassed that of the charming Maltese women. His style was free from artificiality and harsh expressions, adapting his tone appropriately to the temperaments of the Maltese, English, and French. He believed that gentle words suited women based on their nature, whereas men's coarse temperaments did not align with softness in speech.

○ Al-Shidyaq was notably influenced by the personality of *Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte*, mirroring Ibn Jubayr's admiration for *Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi*, the liberator of Jerusalem and the Levant, and the vanquisher of the Tatars and Crusaders.

○ The Holy Quran, according to the narration of Hafs.

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