

Recollecting History Beyond Borders Capt

Lhoussain Simour



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Recollecting History beyond Borders looks closely at the experience of Moroccan captives, acrobats and dancing women in America throughout various historical periods. It explores the mobility of Moroccans beyond borders and their cultural interactions with the American self and civilization, and offers a broad discussion on the negotiation of the complex dynamics of representation and on the various discursive ramifications of the cultural contacts initiated by ordinary Moroccan travellers. It also recovers some undocumented narratives of Moroccans, whose less-studied transatlantic experiences and journeys help to fill in some gaps in the history of Moroccan-American cultural encounters. Enslaved Moroccans who unwillingly made trips across the Atlantic, as well as acrobats and dancers who were an integral part of the American amusement industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have often been neglected in the archives of history, and have not been considered to be a valid and pertinent subject of inquiry. Retrieving their narratives, staging them as real agents of history and taking their experiences critically open up new possibilities of adding the cultural and intellectual dimensions of the Atlantic liaison to Moroccan history, which has generally focused more profoundly on the Mediterranean in dealing with cultural encounters with the west. This study also introduces some forgotten archival information about Moroccans, and provides a critical account of their experiences by reading such documents as discursive instances of ethnic and cultural encounters. Slaveholder ledgers, newspaper archives and magazines, naturalization indexes and census records, legal records and court sues, and records of professional occupations and apprenticeships, as well as wedding and divorce documents, in which Moroccans appeared in America are all modalities that offer not only openings into unheard-of stories about situations and experiences of cultural encounters with the West that are ultimately worth tracking and discovering, but also interesting research venues on complex discourses about a new revisionist historiography. This book unearths the repertoire of cultural tropes of difference from their frozen position in archives, and reads them in the light of their historical contexts and beyond the mechanisms of hegemonic discourses dictated by archival authority, and, as such, provides new critical openings which go beyond views that conceive of the Other as victim or mere object of study.

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