

RESEARCH

# Gendered Eyewitness in Narration: Imagining Morocco in British Women Travel-Inspired Narratives in Late Nineteenth Century

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The nineteenth century gave unprecedented travel opportunities to Europeans to visit and write about the "Orient". The growing imperial expansion and subsequent imperial consciousness among British travelers found ample justification in various literary forms and discursive manifestations that enhanced a zealous desire towards empire building and the construction of a British identity that grappled with its otherness in "highly asymmetrical relations of subordination." This offered many Victorian women travelers the chance to travel beyond borders while subverting the conventional image of domesticity associated with them, just as it enabled them to embrace freedom from the compelling institutions of patriarchy at home. Studying Victorian female travel narratives to the "Orient" provides inexhaustible grounds to rethink the intricate relationship between travel, overt nationalism, gendered constructions of identity and Orientalist ideology. This paper is concerned with the traveling experiences of Amelia Perrier through her *A Winter in Morocco* (1873), and Frances Macnab's *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* (1902). With a postcolonially-inflected consciousness, it attempts to investigate how these travel narratives reproduce the strategies characteristic of Orientalist discourse in its inscription of self and Other power relations, fueled up by a will to knowledge and control over new territories. I shall argue that late nineteenth century British women travel writers operated not only in the power structures of gender but also within the larger structures of empire, class categorization, and race dynamics.

**Keywords:** Travel writing; Orientalism; gender; imperialism; Morocco

## Introduction

According to scholars and historians, the long outstanding Moroccan-British relationships goes back to the thirteenth century when King John (1167–1216) sent a secret ambassadorial envoy to the Moorish emperor Sultan *Mohamed al-Naṣīr* (1198–1213) for a mission that was doomed to failure. The envoy asked for military help against the widespread incursions of Britain's enemies, namely France, with the promise of turning Moor if the support were granted (Laamiri 55–77; Rogers 1–5). The other historical juncture that would witness the presence of England in Morocco's relations is around the sixteenth century when mercantile and trading opportunities became noticeable between both countries. These exchanges were followed by numerous official diplomatic letters from the Sa'adī Sultan 'Abd al-Mālek (1575–1578) and Aḥmed al-Manṣūr (1578–1603) to Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603) on various issues. They targeted the strengthening of mutual diplomacies as decrees were issued "in favor of English merchants to facilitate their commercial activities and to reduce competition in the sugar trade from Moroccan Jews" (Ben-Srhir 13). With Aḥmed al-Manṣūr, Anglo-Moroccan political, economic and diplomatic alliance became stronger than before, especially after the defeat of the Portuguese in 1578 in what is historically known as the battle of Alcazar, which culminated in a military coalition against Philip II of Spain. This mutual alliance also granted England unprecedented protectionist privileges at sea while Morocco enjoyed substantial power and diplomatic recognition. Yet, by the early seventeenth century, after the death of both Aḥmed al-Manṣūr and Queen Elizabeth I, and under the reign of Mūlay Zaydān (1608–1627), the political instability of Morocco along with the negotiations over

British captives brought the already established relations to sporadic tensions. As the ambassadorial consultations with Zaydān were most of the time unsuccessful, Charles I (1625–1649) who was already at war with Spain had to resort to the services of Moorish pirates in Tetouan and Salé, through his envoy J. Harrison, asking for support and for the negotiations over captive redemption. Yet in the wake of fierce piratical activities led by Salé and Tetouan corsairs, King Charles II (1660–1685) initiated contacts with the new Sa'diyī Sultan *Mohamed al-Sheikh*. The new Sultan was committed to secure the British maritime interests; on the process, the English would support him against his enemies inside and outside the country.

These recorded historical facts show that contacts between the Britons and the Moroccans are not a newly born phenomenon. Throughout periods of tension and of political, diplomatic upheavals over sovereign issues, both sides have come to set mutual grounds of understanding and partnerships. Britain's quest for trade alliances and maritime partnerships with Morocco governed by diplomatic encounters during the early modern period, gave also rise to scores of documents about tales of exotic lands. These produced rich cultural background of encounters in various literary genres. Travel writing was a more common opening at the heart of such earlier contacts. Since mid-sixteenth century, Morocco was open to traders, diplomatic envoys, captives, buccaneers and travelers who happened to visit, willingly or unwillingly, the Moorish State of Barbary and left their impressions about it. They left considerable accounts of travel about their experiences of exotic journeys in the alien spaces of the Moors. This period, consequently, started the British awareness of Morocco as an exotic country through unusual tales, memories or comments from a distant land. The most widely known documents in the annals of history, and which relate early British experiences in Barbary appeared as correspondences or as ambassadorial accounts. For example, James Aldy's *The First voyage of traffique into the Kingdom of Marocco in Barbarie, begun in the yeere 1551, with a tall ship called «the Lion» of London whereof went as a capitain Master Thomas Windham*; and Emund Hoggan's *The Ambassage of Mr Edmund Hogan, one the sworne esquires of her Majesties person, from her Highness to Mully Abd el-Melech Emperour of Marocco, and King of Fes and Sus, in the Yeere 1577, written by himselfe*. (Chaouch)

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed growing interest in Morocco both as a potential trading partner with a highly sizeable threatening power to European seafaring activities, and as a valuable cultural topic of dramatic and fictional works which featured Moorish characters massively. In the 19th century, the publication of travel texts on Morocco flourished considerably as Europeans started to move beyond borders for various purposes and under different circumstances. Travellers, explorers and scientists, namely the British, started scientific expeditions to study the geographically distant races, ethnicities and cultures of the North African countries. Their aim was to demonstrate, but also to circulate, racial and ethnic hierarchies in colonial centres to justify national ideologies of colonial conquest.

The 1830s up to the turn of the century also saw a wave of British male and female travellers who visited alien spaces and wrote about them. As Rana Kabbani states,

Nineteenth-century Britain produced a growing mass of travel literature, in a frenzied attempt to know the world it was in the process of conquering. The travelers travelled for their *patrie*, as it were; they were the seeing eye, and the recounting voice. They often had financial backing from officialdom, since their travelogues ultimately served to forge the imperial representation of the world. (6)

Morocco was no exception and was a destination to curious British travellers. To name but a few, Arthur Brooke came to Morocco and wrote his *Sketches in Spain and Morocco* (1830). Thomas Roscoe visited the country and wrote *The Tourist in Spain and Morocco* (1838). David Urquhart wrote his *The Pillars of Hercules or A Narrative of Travels in Spain and Morocco in 1848*. Amelia Perrier settled in Tangier for some time and wrote her *A Winter in Morocco* (1873). Margaret Thomas came up with her *A Scamper through Tangier* (1892) during a rough visit the northern parts of the country. Agnes Frazer, known as Frances Macnab, stayed in Morocco and wrote about it in her *A Ride in Morocco: Among Traders and Believers* (1902). Lady Agnes Grove offers a descriptive account of her journey in *Seventy-One Days' Camping in Morocco* (1902); Isabella Bird in her *A Traveller's Testimony* (1905). It is extremely important to state that the military expert, the traveller and the scientist were all almost fulfilling the same national and cultural role of being at the service of the British Empire. Knowledge about new territories, whether of the traveller, the military expert, the Botanist, the ethnographer, the anthropologist, is motivated by will to domination within a purported colonial desire.

For England and the British people, the nineteenth century witnessed unprecedented radical changes both at home and abroad. The century resonated with paradigmatic shifts in Victorian society initiated by rapid expansion in scientific advancements, an increase in urbanization, optimism and doubt for the future. The concept of Britishness emerged as supreme idea that pervaded the Victorian society. Colonies proved

promising, and growing desires for imperial expansion and the increasing rise of imperial consciousness among the nineteenth-century Victorians have subsequently been translated into various literary forms and discursive practices. These offered British women travellers the possibility of challenging the conventional image of domesticity and transgressing the dominating patriarchal discourses associated with them, as it enabled them to break away from the constraining institutions at home, embrace prospects of freedom and mobility, and, thus, redefine their position within the British society. Traveling became leisure and recreation, discovery and exploration, transgression and revolt. Adventurous women travel writers, such as Elizabeth Murray, Mary Kingsley, Isabel Savory, Frances Manab, to name but a few, were a source of inspiration for the concept of the “New Woman” that started to emerge by the turn of the century. Hence, Travel literature and empire fuelled up Victorian gender revolution. Nineteenth-century women travel writers laid the foundation for the late century’s New Woman movement. The New Woman, of the late century, no longer contented herself with the domestic life; she engaged in adventure and exploration which the travel writing of the previous decades had triggered.

Studying Victorian female travel narratives that narrated journeys to the “Orient” provides inexhaustible grounds to rethink the intricate relationship between travel, overt nationalism, gendered constructions of identity and Orientalist ideology. This paper is concerned with the traveling experiences of Amelia Perrier through her *A Winter in Morocco* (1873), and Frances Macnab’s *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* (1902). With a postcolonially-inflected consciousness, the paper attempts to investigate how these travel narratives reproduce the strategies characteristic of Orientalist discourse in its inscription of self and Other power relations, fuelled up by a will to knowledge and control over new territories. I shall argue that late nineteenth century British women travel writers operated not only in the power structures of gender but also within the larger structures of empire, class, and race.

### **British Orientalism and Victorian Women Travel Writers in the Imperial Experience**

The nineteenth century was a period of expansion for the British Empire. Colonies were seen as haven for social mobility and sexual exploration away from the confines of Victorian society for British men. According to Ronald Hyam, European women were kept out of the colonies, instead, because they were seen as financially burdensome and would stand as hindrance to men in their quest for sexual gratification in the colonies (34–90). As fear of racial mixing developed into an issue, it became an urgent need to the imperial project for white women to enter the colonies because female settlers would restore western social norms and domesticity to the outposts of the empire (Hall 107–120); as “the promotion of domesticity demanded fuller incorporation of colonial wives” (Bush 80) who soon became increasingly “important as boundary markers, maintaining racial authority” (Hall 70). However, not all white women participated in the colonies as settlers and wives. British women travel writers occupied a distinctive space in the colonies that allowed them to ignore some traditional gender roles. Through travel and writing, some women travelers transgressed “spatial boundaries of gender, power, and patriarchy” in the colonies that would have seemed impossible in the metropolitan centers (Lorcin 8). These travelers gained more social power as they entered the male dominated sphere of colonial travel and exploration. Ideas about race and colonialism influenced their writing as they adopted imperial language and metaphors. They articulated notions of racial superiority and their writings legitimized imperialism as they wrote about the physical, moral, and sexual inferiority of the Other, which was absorbed by British readers (Chaudhuri 549–562). The writings by female British travelers display how notions of gender and race informed their travel experiences and interactions beyond borders. Strobel points out that their writings also delineated other purposes beyond the simple categories of gender norms and racial perceptions. These women writers contributed in the circulation of knowledge about colonies: “European women collected and disseminated information about the colonial world for readers back home. In some cases this reporting aimed to create a climate favorable to imperial expansion or to bring public attention to purported abuses on the part of the indigenous peoples or European colonial officials” (Strobel 35). British women travelers’ writings also offered a distinctive view about how readers in the metropolitan centers imagined the Orient and its Otherness and contributed to the circulation of information at home about the colonies. These travelers “were aware of this dichotomy of being a woman with temporary male status” (Birkett 137); they wrote about distant lands within an orientalist vision encompassing a sense of wonderment about exotic spaces and people.

Scholars who have read and reflected on western travel writing as genre have stated that travel accounts are inextricably constructed around the journey to exotic lands wherein the western traveler is inescapably confronted with difference. This engagement of the travelers- be they men or women- with other spaces

produce geographical boundaries that are reconfigured around a set of binary oppositions that locate Self and Other in an infinite set of “asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (Pratt 4). In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that nineteenth-century travel-inspired narratives by male travelers mainly underlined and promoted Europe’s hegemonic attitude toward its cultural otherness. Said defines Orientalism as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). *Orientalism* focuses on the analysis of travel narratives for their geographical, historical and political importance as a specific literary genre that contributed in building the discursive constructions and reconstructions of Orientalist ideology (99). Hence, the bipolar division between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority is a recurrent theme which is often highlighted every time the traveler attempts to translate the Other’s culture and make it plain and understandable to the West. Accordingly, Saidian model of analysis makes it apparent that many of the nineteenth-century travel narratives served in the hegemonic normalization of colonial power relations and that the binary cognitive paradigms between the West and the East is crucial to the definition and conceptualization of the European Self.

Said’s seminal work initiated a new way of reading nineteenth-century travel texts as discursive instances of the British colonial project. Power relations between East and West, for Said, are deeply rooted in the material conditions of colonialism, which give the discourse of Orientalism durable authority to reproduce itself “again and again through scholarly texts, travelogues, literary works of imagination, and the obiter dicta of public men of affairs” (Asad 648). Said’s analysis of Orientalism as a strategic formation of colonial discourse and his insightful discussion of the intersection between cultural, intellectual, and political processes in the formation of colonialism continues in his *Culture and Imperialism*. In *Culture and Imperialism* he shows that European colonial powers deployed the power of narration in delineating lines of demarcation between the West and the Orient to justify colonial encroachments. Said argues that “The continuity of British imperial policy throughout the nineteenth century—in fact a narrative—is actively accompanied by this novelistic process, whose main purpose is not to raise more questions, not to disturb or otherwise preoccupy attention, but to keep the empire more or less in place.” (Said 74).

British women travel writing during the Victorian period, with its imperial shifts and turns, has stirred interest among scholars worldwide. In fact, keeping empire and promoting imperial manifest ideals was not only a male traveler’s concern; but also a woman’s. This is a serious omission that Said’s work has been harshly criticized for. *Orientalism* opened up debates for critics to explore the gender and sexuality dimensions of Orientalist discourse, and built up on *Orientalism* to focus closely on the intriguing issue of gender and colonialism. Ever since the publication of Said’s work, there has been an interesting debate about *Orientalism*’s main methodological tenets. This study has triggered much controversy but it has also generated outstanding intellectual development across colonial and postcolonial discourse analysis. Feminist readings of this work, for example, have focused on the analysis of the colonial and postcolonial condition, and have, as a result, engaged insightful discussions about various positions which women and men travelers adopted in resisting or complying with colonial and imperial projects. As Sadik Rdad has stated, “both male and female travel writing, which is certainly informed by different discursive frameworks pertaining to conditions of production and reception, are vehicles of colonial expansion, perpetuating the hierarchized relation between colonizer and colonized, and reinforcing administrative rule” (118). The affiliation of female travel writers with the grand narratives of travel literature and their association with colonial and imperial power has largely been discussed by travel critics such as Billie Melman, Sara Mills, Rana Kabbani, Mary Louise Pratt, and Lisa Lowe who have developed Said’s ideas further. Before moving further into the reading of Amelia Perrier’s *A Winter in Morocco* (1873), and Frances Macnab’s *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* (1902), I shall start with a brief overview on both Billie Melman’s and Sara Mills’ works in their analysis of the problematic of the intersection of gender with travel writing, colonial power and imperial enterprise. Both critics conceive of women’s travel writings as having contradictory connections with the dominant discourses of colonialism. Women travel texts, for them, are conflicting with imperial ideology and do not back up imperial desires inherent in travel texts written by male travelers.

In trying to bring a corrective to Said’s thesis in her *Women’s Orient: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918*, and *Sexuality, Religion and Work* (1992), Billie Melman explores large body of British women’s writings about the Middle East during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She sets out by asking the following overriding question: “Was women’s experience of modern colonialism subsumed in the newly ‘invented tradition’ of an expanding empire (Hobsawm’s term), or did they develop a separate, feminine experience?” (2). Melman argues that British women who visited the East during imperial zeal developed a



discourse about the region that differed significantly from the dominant view of male orientalists (7). The position of women as outsiders within their own culture meant that their experience of the Middle East took place outside the formal institutions of power and culture and, therefore, provided them with a different lens through which to view the Middle East. As she puts it, “There is not one authority ordering the experience, reconstructing the information gathered and shaping the discourse” (315). Melman insists that these women travelers “are admitted to the experience of the empire only as spectators or as victims” (6). She implies that women travelers are not part of the political and ideological history and are not located within the colonial enterprise. Melman’s work remains among the most substantial revisions of Said’s theoretical underpinnings, and one of the most considerable contributions in the field of colonial discourse analysis. She is indebted to Said and challenges his neglect of class and gender in the Orientalist constructions of Self and Other. According to her, the works of women travelers in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries challenge the conceptualization of the Orientalist binary oppositions. This alternative view is based on the encounter between the woman’s own culture and that in which she is traveling and which offers an analogy that sometimes “led to self-criticism rather than cultural smugness and sometimes resulted in an identification with the other that cut across the barriers of religion, culture and ethnicity” (8) since women are both inside and outside the dominant structures and discourses of colonialism.

Another instance that has attempted to bring a corrective to *Orientalism* with regard to gender and colonialism is Sara Mills’ *Discourses of Difference: Women’s Travel Writing and Colonialism*. In an attempt to criticize Said’s homogeneous model and therefore theorize for a counter-Orientalist discourse by reading women travel narratives, Mills “strategically deploys Foucauldian notions of discontinuity and subversion in order to map out the discursive specificities and complexities of the texts she reads, unraveling the distinctive features of each text and highlighting its variety” (Bekkaoui 43–44). For her, the consistency of the colonial text is destabilized from within since “each discursive position is undermined or called into question by other elements within the text, and while some elements may be dominant, there are sections of the text, which temper a straightforward position being offered” (Mills 87). The heterogeneity of the text is, therefore, made visible through the contradictory sites inherent in colonial authority and in the dialectics of power relations. This heterogeneity of the colonialist ideology, for Mills, is mostly gendered; and it is gender which disturbs the colonial text generating discursive complexities on the process. The female traveler foregrounds her femininity, and in doing so she sympathizes with and over-protects the colonized, identifies with them to disapprove of the colonizer and the colonial enterprise she represents to adopt what could be referred to as a “native-going” attitude in her narrative. Sara Mills makes it clear that the rereading of women’s travel writing entails a complete revision of the theoretical framework of Orientalism because of the conflicts and traditions between the dominant colonial discourse and women’s discourses that, according to her, are counter-hegemonic. She insists that “the work of women travel writers cannot be fitted neatly within the Orientalist framework (...) their work exhibits contradictory elements which may act as a critique of some of the components of other colonial writings” (63). Hence, gendered subjectivities upset colonial writings because of the conflicting desires inherent in their works. In fact Mills analysis has allowed her to think beyond Saidian model of analysis and theorize for the multiple intricacies which upset the homogeneities of Orientalist ideologies. Yet, the idea that the heterogeneous complexities and counter hegemonic features of colonial discourse are possibly made visible through gender-based texts is unpersuasive in Sara Mills’ case.

That Frances Macnab and Amelia Perrier, as female travelers, are engaged in the narration of colonial authority is incontestable. Perrier’s *A Winter in Morocco*, and Macnab’s *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* are texts that are replete with clear instances wherein the travelers seem to be visibly complicit and complacent with colonial discourse and imperial power despite the fact that they are written by women. The economy of colonial pleasure and imperial desire surface within the sub-text of these narratives and enhance the male dominated tradition of travel writing in promoting and celebrating imperial power.

### **Gendering Discourse and Narrating Travel in Frances Macnab’s *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers***

As stated earlier, the nineteenth century was a period of expansion *par excellence* for the British Empire. Alongside with the imperial project, travel writing flourished. Morocco became one of the most imagined destinations that has prompted European travelers, men and women alike, for long given its geographic proximity to Europe. Agnes Frazer, identified as Frances Macnab, visited and wrote about Morocco by the end of the nineteenth century. Her account of the entire journey through the turn of the century’s turbulent country appeared in her *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers*. Macnab’s travel-inspired narrative was written in a very specific contextual juncture of modern Moroccan history. On the one hand, it was at a

time when the country was “seething with resentment against the Europeans and their agents” (Pennell 128) as it was exposed to the colonial encroachment of European powers, namely France, Britain and Germany, after the outcomes of the defeat in the Morocco-Spanish war during the 1860s. On the other hand, her work came out during French colonial presence in Algeria and just a few years before the signing of the Algeciras treaty of 1904 that handed the country over to Spain and France and declared the annexation of Egypt to Britain. This situation made travel for European visitors much more constrained because of the political condition overwhelming the country both on local and global scales. Under such uncomfortable situation, escort to travelers of the time was a recurrent practice.

Yet, unlike Edith Wharton (Simour 39–56), Macnab did not travel under the watchful eyes of a specific institution or under visible auspices of a governing authority. Thus, she did not write within the direct orders of an institutional authority like the French one, as was the case with Wharton. She traveled without restrictions and this fact gave her much freedom to forward her opinions about the imperial schemes of European colonial powers including the position of her own country in Morocco. With “no special object”, as she evasively claims, she started her daring journey from England by her own, equipped with her camera and a tent in an anthropologic-like mission. Such condition is dictated by her previous long experiences in travel through Africa prior to setting off to Morocco.

In her short preface to the book, she, whether consciously or not, declares that she “saw Morocco entirely from a Western Standpoint,” and that to her “surprise, [she] found this strip of Africa offered problems of great importance to the uttermost parts of [her] Empire.” Seeing the country from a western standpoint remains ambivalent in Macnab’s case as her statement entails various interpretations since it is not quite clear, at least for us readers, if she meant to refer to her implied perception of Morocco within the binary divide and dual opposition characteristic of East and West Orientalist categorizations; or if she indirectly, but convincingly, translates the prevailing belief of all the times about the Western position in upholding moral duty of saving the East from its decadence. In both cases, however, what is clear is that the statement voices a delicately implied colonial desire engulfed in a discourse about nation, especially when she adds that the country “was sufficiently attractive to the United States to furnish the occasion for a naval demonstration.”

Further in the text, we will discover how the nationalistic discourse encompasses colonial desire through reference to a legend wherein God ordered all the nations to ask for whatever they want; beautiful climate; a handsome people and a rich soil; mineral wealth; rich vegetation and beautiful scenery. The Englishman asked for only one thing, and the rest will come: a good government (Macnab 6). In fact, all the way through the account, Macnab refers to Britain’s unconditioned right to serve in the transmission of the civilizing mission and modernity to Morocco. She refers to signs of modernity and achievements in the colonies where England rules; she overenthusiastically states, while adopting a native’s voice in a call-like to go western (Rddad 117), that “this poor country, it never get no chance. India get railways; its people they come to England and enjoy the Jubilee. China, she get a chance someday. But this poor country never get nothing-no railway-no.” (Macnab 242) In here, we notice the workings of two voices that splinter Macnab’s work. In his insightful and well thought article, Sadik Rddad states that

While one discourse attempts to relegate Moroccan culture, history and identity to archival sites, the other resets it as a signifier of resistance and opposition. A significant corollary of this hybrid enunciative narration and discourse is the recognition of a disjunctive voice in command of narrative and authority. (117)

In this citation, the voice purporting to be of a native’s can, nonetheless, be recognized at first glimpse as being an utterance voiced out by the commanding narrator of the travelogue. In fact, Sadik Rddad has noticed that the voice of the native in *A Ride in Morocco* is manipulated by the overriding forces of the textual narrative and by the commanding discourse of imperial desire. When Macnab allows the native voice to emerge, she still dominates the discursive precincts of colonial avowal. She does so to confirm Britain’s right to colonize Morocco to introduce modernity and western ways of life. According to her, if the other nations competing over Morocco are mostly involved in religious missionary activities to evangelize the country (Phillips 1–20), something she seems to stingingly criticize in her travel account, Britain is well positioned to modernize politics, insure justice and democratize the country because “the position in Morocco is that of a population on the margin of Europe holding fast to laws and customs which are absolutely abhorrent to modern humanity.” (Macnab 135) What Morocco needs, Macnab concludes, was not another religion but an efficient, uncorrupted government (138–149) that England cherishes through Godly divine blessings. This somehow justifies Macnab’s and the natives’ excessive glorification of the British in this narrative.

Macnab's narrative is an account of observation, descriptions and impressions about the author's encounter with the mysterious aspects and practices of Moroccan culture, both secular and religious. Her journey, started in Tangier, ventured into unknown villages and Douars in the Riff Mountains, went through Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, Safi, Mazagan and finally to Mogador from which she sailed back to England. This physical journey, unexpected as it was for a Victorian woman of the time, is undertaken simultaneously with a retrospective journey into the history of Morocco wherein she explores Moorish architecture, social activities and ceremonies, Harems and religious brotherhoods' practices of the Aissaoua and the Gnaoua. She is one of those notable instances of Victorian women who passed through Tangier to travel through or dwell in the country. She starts by framing the "ruins of Tangis" through its English past; as having once belonged to the British crown. She situates Tangier within an acquainted national history (Bialasiewicz & Wagner 131–156), a lost territory wherein she sets discursive scenes to invite other travelers into the so familiar and not so distant exotic land. She thus constructs a narrative that celebrates the partially rooted Britishness that historically took over the city; and by the same token she forces a nationalistic discourse wherein the city seems like an extension of the British territory that needs to be annexed, colonially dominated and predominantly persevered through the promotion of civilization.

While on the move in the inland territories of the country, Macnab is caught under the spell of an exotic "orient" that is beyond compare and cannot be absorbed by any means; a prominent discourse in the (mis) representation of Morocco in British travel writing. In a moment of utmost exposure to a novel experience, she just wished she "could find some hermit's cave in the rocks and live there" (Macnab 243). In a go-native-like attitude, Macnab's romantic desire "dismantles her colonial discourse, even as it blurs the boundaries between the subject and the object, between Western and native identities [...] by desiring to be Other and be in an 'other' place, Macnab attempts to disavow her identity and be a 'translated and a reinvented being'" (Rddad 119). In this same act of translating the Self, we feel that Macnab's sensations are drawn stationary all at once and that she fails to flare up her descriptive power at the sight of an Oriental nature that is "so hard to fathom or describe," (136) and which cannot even "lend itself to photography." (69) All she could do is just engage in a watching process; "We can but watch." (136)

This confession is somehow misleading because the traveler within Macnab has not aborted her ability of writing about the country, and hence the reinvention of herself to go native is interrupted by the hidden ideological aspirations she embodies as a western traveler. Her narrative refuses to reduce her to a mere spectator or passive observer. She tells her story while describing the native space in an act that allows her to construct Orientalist images whose boundaries genuinely interest with her implicit ambitions. In offering views about the Moorish space, she lines up her descriptive mode with a nationalistic desire that serves the British dominant discourse of expansionism and colonial hegemony. Here again, her disavowed imperial desire is articulated through the voice of a native. This time, she makes it plain to the reader through a colonial voice that imperatively stands for hers that "Morocco is a finer country than India; why doesn't England take Morocco? Let England take Morocco, and do with it whatever she will, for the English are a merciful people." (263)

In confirming this statement, she proudly states that "the Moors were ready to grasp at any straw," to be saved from the corrupt government, and from decadence and injustice inflicted by other European rivalry powers. Macnab holds a strong conviction that runs underneath the discursive fabric of her narrative about the very straw/savior who would not be anyone else but the Englishman who is a rare breed, ethical, moral, rational and courageous. As the following excerpt delineates, and in order to push the discourse over colonial domination further in a penchant tone, Macnab's text brings a native's voice at the forefront: "English were a very strong people and were not afraid of anything. When an Englishman said a thing the Moor found it came true (...) it is good for Moors to have to do with English people" (81). This assertion which is adjacently overlapping with the inclination towards, and over-glorification of, the English people finds its ample justification in disguised colonial voices, heard from the natives' mouths, that keeps forcibly lurking beneath the textual germination of the narrative all the way through.

Macnab's *A Ride in Morocco* stands as a clear instance where gender and colonial desire are complicity filtered through the discursive imbrications of the narrative. Macnab's text can be interpreted as an imperialist call, though gender-engulfed, for the British to seize Morocco, modernize it and save it from the clutches of decadence and corruption imposed by both the natives and the patronizing competing Christian powers, namely France and Spain. As clearly delineated in this reading, Macnab's travelogue disturbs the idea that tries to disregard the participation of women travel writers in the narration of political and ideological history of colonialism, and hence to locate them outside the colonial enterprise. Her text is replete with instances of a pro-colonial discourse, enhanced by Orientalist constructions which are meant to promote the modernizing mission of Britain in Morocco.

## The Exotic as Divinely Therapeutic: Missionary Discourse and colonial Desire Reinvented in Amelia Perrier's *A Winter in Morocco*

By the second half of the nineteenth century, as stated earlier, North African lands and people got more open to the European travelling experiences and to the colonial desire of an unprecedented increasing number of female travelers who visited these distant spaces for various reasons and under different circumstances; and who, quite interestingly, contributed to the promotion of colonial discourse and aesthetics. In fact, Moroccan identity and culture have been manipulated by colonial discourse ever since the European civilizing mission first began. (Mis)representation, nurtured by a set of symbolic images, and Orientalist metaphors that became crucial in the promotion of the binary division between 'Self' and 'Other', "has characterized the West's depiction of the colonized 'Other' in the archives of Western history" (Orlando 97). This dual opposition of "the twains that shall never meet", to use Rudyard Kipling's words, was instrumental in securing the continuation of fantasies and desires and in "promoting stereotypes that remain prevalent even in post-colonial era" (97).

Among the female travelers who visited Morocco for health recovery and stroke convalescence, and who have been less studied in Moroccan academic groves, is Amelia Perrier. Amelia Perrier was born in Cork, England, in 1841. She worked in London as journalist and novelist, and her two novels, *Mea Culpa* (1869) and *A Good Match* (1872) received critical attention in her times. The death of her brother in 1872 after a long and painful illness led to the breakdown of her own health. She traveled to Morocco under this forced condition, producing her travel book *A Winter in Morocco* (1873). The following year, she suffered lungs failure, and was thereafter, unable to work until she died in Sussex in 1875. In her *A Winter in Morocco*, Perrier chronicles her journey to, and stay in, Tangier. She recorded the customs of the natives whom she interacted with, and provided her reactions to various situations she experienced as resident and traveler. In her descriptions of people and spaces, she took on an ethnographic-like position to approach the natives, namely, Moroccan women, Muslim and Jewish.

Amelia traveled to Tangier with a "a constant endeavor throughout the foregoing narrative to give as true and faithful a picture, of the country and people of that proportion of Morocco in which [she] resided, as [she] could" (Perrier 353). She traveled to Morocco at a time when evolutionist theories about racial hierarchies, wherein the distance between civilization and primitiveness is measured on ethnic and racial grounds, became part of a prevalent popular debate in Europe. She also traveled at a time when Britain was very much involved in colonial expansionism with greedy imperial ambitions to annex North Africa, and also more importantly at a time when the evangelization of the native Other became part and parcel of colonial concern and cultural encounters. In his discussion of *Travels in Morocco* (1860) by James Richardson, Ahmed Idrissi Alami suggests that "within a Christian evangelizing framework, Christianity becomes linked to modern social causes that necessitate the positioning of Islam as stagnant and primitive as well" (150), as it undermines the souls of the Moroccan people who are in need of more stable, solid and emancipatory grounds to sustain morality and ethics. In fact the immediate relation between British missionary work and the colonial project cannot pass unnoticed. British travelers combined missionary propaganda with exploration for colonial purposes since "Christian missionary activity was central to the work of European colonialism, [...] transforming imperial projects into moral allegories." (Johnston 13)

So, unlike Macnab who is very critical of the missionary activity in Morocco, at least in her overtly expressed statements, Amelia Perrier's gendered text seems to be serving as "a moral justificatory power for the empire" (Mills 29–50) in advocating one of the "twin tools of European imperialism" (McEwan 73–100), the "Christianizing mission" that the British massively devoted themselves to in Morocco. In Macnab's case, the British colonial project should be promoted outside religion and outside missionary work; instead it would be interesting if the British could "establish friendly intercourse on a ground of common interest" (Macnab 102); meaning inside commercial activities that can yield a modernized country. In Perrier's case, however, the emphasis is on the workings of missionary discourse that converses with, and reinforces, colonial desire.

In her narrative, Perrier devotes a section on religious superstition, followed by an entire chapter on missionary work in Morocco. For her, the country is in a state of decay, almost ruined by Islamic superstitious beliefs, and she hopes that through religious conversion

The picture exhibited in the foregoing chapter of the condition of religious superstition and ignorance in which the inhabitants of Morocco are sunk, must naturally prompt an inquiry as to what is being done by the people of more enlightened countries to rescue them from it. (229)



As her travel piece suggests, colonial desire is visibly accentuated through ambitious projects that consolidate the religious endeavors of missionary undertakings. The Christianizing mission, as her text demonstrates, would serve in supporting the expansionist desire of the British colonial project. The denigration of Islam, as is the case in a *Winter in Morocco* is a recurrent trope and a sustained tradition of Orientalist stereotypical discourse wherein Islam is Orientalized through various historical junctures of encounters between the crescent and the Cross.

As the underpinnings of the text start to disentangle the various discourses at work in *A Winter in Morocco*, the reader is confronted with textually interwoven instances that re-inscribe and resonate with the ideological concerns of the author-traveler, and which, consequently, relegate Moroccan culture, people and religion to a low-grade position. With Amelia Perrier, we would notice how issues about racial and moral superiority of the dominant discourse are activated within a larger scope encompassing modernization, freedom and colonialism. To put it otherwise, Amelia Perrier's travel narrative subscribes to the infiltration of an orientalist discourse whereby western civilization and utopic discourse of humanism coalesce and feed one another in an act of reverence that views Britain as savior. The rhetoric of salvation, projected in colonial ideology, permeates Perrier's text as an invitation to Britain to provide Moroccan Jewish and Muslim women with what their homeland, religion and culture could not afford. In an invitation-like attitude for active intervention to protect Moroccan women, she declares that she feels sure "the ignorant, degraded, enslaved condition of the women—rich and poor, 'free' as well as bond—in Morocco, will excite a feeling of pity and indignation in the mind of everyone who reads it" (352). In talking about the degraded and oppressive situation of women, she argues for an emancipatory discourse "drawing on liberal ideals concerning the rights of man and the inalienable freedoms of the individual" (Alami 150) which can be implemented through endeavors of reforms that have to be brought by the British.

In her representation of Moroccan Muslim and Jewish women, and with a proud feeling of cultural superiority, Perrier uses a language reminiscent of Darwinian rhetoric of bodily features and racial traits to enhance the subservient and inferior status of these subjects. She describes them as follows: "a large, coarse, plain-featured young woman"; "she had a long, and rather thin, but expressive face and (...) soft, dark eyes" (303). In creating the distance between civilization and primitivism, she juxtaposes and associates women with a state of bestiality and describes them in zoological terms. In commenting about one of them, she says that "she looked about as comfortable and satisfied in her lot, as the laughing hyena caged at the Zoological Gardens, does with his" (183). Elsewhere she observes a Moorish lady and states that "she reminded me of nothing so much as of a handsome fat, dull, contented cow; an animal placidly happy in its well-fed, irresponsible, existence" (181). Also, in gazing at a Moroccan Jew, we become aware how the evolutionist theory has nurtured the textual fabric of Perrier's account in narrating Otherness through observing and describing. This time, she makes it plain that

to any one not prepared to accept the Darwinian theory in its fullest extent, it is not pleasant to contemplate one of one's fellow-creatures with a low forehead, cunning little eyes, and a generally roguish expression, and dressed in a mauve coat and trousers, green waistcoat, blue tie, brown hat, purple band, coral studs, and yellow gloves. It is unpleasantly convincing. One cannot help fancying that if it came into fashion among monkeys to dress, in such garments would they probably array themselves. (318–19)

The racial superiority and the implicit discourse of Darwinian hierarchy that are constructed in Perrier's text circulate orientalist stereotypical discourse that invitingly calls for the civilizing mission of the British. For her, the inconsistencies and primitivism of Islam like polygamy, imposture, and slavery can be eliminated only through the rigorous work of missionaries in their acts of conversion. The processes of conversion in Perrier's text are mediated most of the times by the Jews who are hired to convert the Muslim population, and whom she sarcastically criticize for weakening the work of missionaries (232–234). The discussion of missionary activities in Perrier's work is suffused with contradictions and anxiety. Sometimes, she is against the missionary enterprise; but at different intervals of her text she proudly celebrates the efforts undertaken in the Christianization of the Moors. This leaves her text with a knot of ambivalences. Perrier positions herself in the narrative as an enlightened Victorian woman who can dictate how the processes of modernity in Morocco through conversion can be easily attainable because of the inconsistent nature of "the Mohammedan religious code" (336).

This research contribution has been concerned with the study of both Amelia Perrier's and Frances Macnab's descriptions of Morocco, respectively through their travel narratives *A Winter in Morocco* (1873)

and *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* (1902). My reading of these texts has tried to consider gender as a subversive textual force that is complicity involved in the narration of nation, colonialism and the British discourses on identity and difference. It has also tried to consider how gendered colonial travel writing is an example of Orientalism in practice, and to demonstrate how late nineteenth century British women travel writers operated within the broader structures of empire, class, and race. As I conclude this study, I read *A Winter in Morocco* and *A Ride in Morocco* as discursive instances about a reformist intervention of Britain to reorder the country through an appeasing and pacific imperial project. Both texts, thus, interest with the dominating discourse of British imperial desire and colonial expansionism in North Africa, and create textual spaces where gender is visibly intertwined with colonial authority.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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