

**White Women in the Medina: Race, Gender, and Orientalism in Women's
Travel Writing on Morocco**

by

Faron Wade-Lang

A Thesis

presented to

The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

© Faron Wade-Lang, September 2019

ABSTRACT

WHITE WOMEN IN THE MEDINA: RACE, GENDER, AND ORIENTALISM IN WOMEN'S TRAVEL WRITING ON MOROCCO

Faron Wade-Lang
University of Guelph, 2019

Advisor:
Dr. Julie Cairnie

This thesis examines how Orientalism appears in the writing of three works of women's travel writing on Morocco and how that mode of representation influences their writing about Moroccan women and women's spaces. The first text is Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* (1920), a text that consciously utilizes Orientalist discourse to justify French colonialism, even when the author appears to be expressing sympathy towards Moroccan women. The second is Elizabeth Fernea's *A Street in Marrakech* (1976), a more ethnographic account of her befriending Moroccan women that captures the ambivalent belonging she experiences due to her position as a white woman. The third is Suzanna Clarke's *A House in Fez* (2007), a text that demonstrates how obsession with authenticity and white feminine benevolence can be underwritten by colonialist assumptions. By examining these texts together, this thesis argues that Orientalism continues to be articulated in new ways, altering depending on the author's subject position.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the course of completing this thesis I have received an abundance of support. I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. Julie Cairnie, for giving me tremendous feedback and ensuring that this thesis, in its final form, is the best it can be. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Sandra Singer, for prompting me to expand upon my ideas and pursue directions in reading I would not have thought of otherwise. I would like to thank Olga Petrik, our graduate secretary, for being so incredibly helpful in keeping me organized, both in terms of paperwork for my thesis and for my PhD application.

I would like to thank my family – Mom, Dad, Denise, Shawn – for letting me discuss my work with them and for offering necessary moral and emotional support. I would like to thank the colleagues and friends I met during my Master’s coursework. I would like to thank Jill and Ainjel in particular – I’m not sure how I would have gotten through the past year without having the two of you to goof off and be gay with. I would like to thank the members of my tabletop group for helping me deal with my stress by sending me dumb memes. Finally, I would like to thank my partner Pierce, who has been there for me this entire time, helping me remember to eat real food when I’m trying to hit a deadline and making me laugh when I feel exhausted. You’ve witnessed bouts of imposter syndrome, moments of triumph, and you’ve been loving and supportive the whole way. I don’t know how I could have done this without you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
1 INTRODUCTION: WHITE WOMEN, TRAVEL WRITING, AND ORIENTALISM.....	1
1.1 KNOWLEDGE OF THE EAST: ORIENTALISM AND TRAVEL WRITING	5
1.2 NEW ARTICULATIONS: TRACING PATTERNS OF ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE.....	10
2 THE IMPRINT OF THE HAREM: EDITH WHARTON’S COLONIALIST CONCERN FOR MOROCCAN WOMEN	18
2.1 “A PEOPLE IN THE MAKING”: MOROCCAN ARCHITECTURE AND WHARTON’S ORIENTALIST DISCOURSE	21
2.2 THE ORIENTALIST GAZE AND THE WOMEN OF THE MOROCCAN HAREMS.....	27
2.3 PANOPTICISM IN THE HAREM AND WHARTON’S FEMINISM-AS-COLONIALISM	33
3 BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE: ELIZABETH FERNEA’S ETHNOGRAPHY OF AMBIVALENCE	40
3.1 BEHIND THE HIGH WALLS: ARCHITECTURE AND INTIMACY WITH MOROCCAN WOMEN.....	43
3.2 “NOT MY MUSIC”: WOMEN’S SPACES, SACRED SITES, AND FERNEA’S AMBIVALENT BELONGING	50
4 ATAVISTIC DESIRES: SUZANNA CLARKE, CULTURE COLLECTION, AND THE WHITE SAVIOUR MYTH.....	59
4.1 A VIEW FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: CLARKE’S ATAVISM AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF FEZ	62
4.2 “CRYING OUT FOR RESTORATION”: THE MORAL OBLIGATION OF THE GOOD WHITE WOMAN	68
4.3 “THE PICTURE OF A COLONIAL ADMINISTRATOR”: MOROCCAN WOMEN AND SURVEILLANCE IN THE <i>RIAD</i>	73
5 CONCLUSION: THE DURABILITY OF DISCOURSE.....	81
WORKS CITED.....	88

1 Introduction: White Women, Travel Writing, and Orientalism

During the 2017 French presidential election, National Front party candidate Marine Le Pen published a blog post on March 8th, International Women's Day, its title translated as "With me, the French will remain free!" Much of the blog post came with the standard pseudo-feminist platitudes that any politician, even the member of a far-right populist party like the National Front, would be expected to churn out every International Women's Day. There were lamentations about the wage gap in France, or women dealing with more frequent career breaks than men and having less access to pensions. All of these would be fine things to bring up in such a blog post, but these references to women's inequality are only a prelude to the kind of nationalist fearmongering for which Le Pen is notorious. Her writing takes on a foreboding tone as she states: "[I]t is because I am a woman that today I will speak to you about a subject that the so-called feminists, or the alleged defenders of women will not address. [...] [The threat of] the rise of Islamist fundamentalism in our neighborhoods and cities" (Le Pen). She writes of Islam as an ideology encroaching upon the freedoms of French women, evoking images of young white French girls being forced to wear veils to avoid being assaulted for "indecentcy." Her overtures about "women's rights" are nothing more than a flimsy masquerade for a much more sinister expression of vicious Islamophobia, something that helped her attract female voters. In an article for NBC News, journalist Saphora Smith interviewed a woman, an avowed Le Pen supporter, who admitted, "I'm worried about my nieces having to wear the veil," before stating that she felt influenced by Le Pen. "She fights for women's rights against Islam [...] I vote because of Marine" (Smith). It seems the image of white French girls covered up by veils was persuasive to those atomized by Le Pen's nationalist discourse, a large contingent of whom were women. Even though the 2017 election was won by Emmanuel Macron, the fires of Islamophobia stoked by

far-right politicians like Le Pen have not died down. The discourse she wielded was one that appealed to colonialist modes of thought, with the image of the veil making reference to features of Orientalism, a distinct body of colonialist discourse. What Le Pen proved was not only that fascist sentiments could be drummed up by wielding these discourses, but that white French women in particular were willing to engage with these discourses as well. From their subject positions as white women, they articulated Orientalism and Islamophobia through a screen of nominally feminist language.

This rhetoric of “invading Muslims” feels ironic when invoked by the French, given the past few hundred years of history – up until the mid-twentieth century – has consisted of them invading other countries with the goal of spreading their empire, even into predominantly Muslim North African countries like Algiers and Tunisia. (I am certain that, for someone wielding the “invading Muslims” rhetoric, invasion is only acceptable when good white Christian men do it.) One of these countries was Morocco, the last North African country to be seized by the French (1912) and the first to gain independence (1956). The justifications behind French seizure of countries like Morocco derives from the same discourse used by Le Pen – while the discourse of empire focused much more on French right to rule than the kind of paranoia of modern Islamophobia, they both appeal to a way of seeing the world where those in the proverbial East are uncivilized and backwards while those in the proverbial West are civilized and rational. Even within a system of discourse meant to paint the people of Morocco as alien and other, flawed and in need of correction, there was also a fetishism for the “exotic” features of the place: the landscape, the architecture, the customs of dress, the women. This fetishism became the driving force behind what would become Morocco’s tourist industry, launched after a directive by the French administrator’s Resident General in 1918 (Hunter 74).

The industry was built to draw in those who conceived of Moroccans as cultural others worthy of French subjugation, but who also desired to lay their own eyes upon the exotic visual splendor of the place and its people.

What the tourist industry also produced was the phenomenon of Western travel writers coming to Morocco to find the exotic, find the foreign, and reproduce their experiences of them often through the features of Orientalist discourse. What I find interesting in the case of Morocco is that there are clear examples of white women traveling to the country to write about it at distinct points in its history – both during its time as a French protectorate and in the years following. Each of these women was put in a position where they had to navigate the use of Orientalist discourse and its unique articulations based on both their gender and their race. It is three of these women around whom I focus my analysis of women's travel writing in Morocco. My reasons for focusing on women's travel writing in Morocco stem partially from personal interest. One of my final research papers during my undergraduate work was on Paul Bowles' novel *The Sheltering Sky*, which is set in Morocco and works with many of the features of Orientalist discourse. When sketching out ideas for this thesis, I considered continuing with my examination of Bowles' writing, either in his fiction or non-fiction, as a means to continue my writing on Orientalism. What steered me away from Bowles was the feeling of redundancy – he has already been written about extensively – along with what I perceived as simplicity. It would be too easy, I thought, to point out his Orientalism or explicit racism, even though those are important things to point out. Even if Bowles did not end up as my focus, I still wanted to keep my research bound by location, and so I sought out other authors who had written about Morocco. There were a number of travel accounts I could have pursued, but I found myself more drawn to the accounts written by women. I noticed the complexities that accompanied white

women engaging in travel writing and the ways in which Orientalism – either conscious or unconscious – slipped into their texts. White women travel writers inhabit a subjectivity that influences how they write, whether that leads them towards identification with “Oriental” women by virtue of shared female oppression or towards articulating Orientalism through a thin veneer of feminist politics, much like Le Pen and her supporters. There are so many ways such writing can be done, but I am going to restrict myself to three distinct women, with each of their texts serving as examples of approaches white women can make to travel writing.

The first of the three texts I will examine is American novelist Edith Wharton’s *In Morocco* (1920), a travel account she composed during the month she spent in the country in 1917. Wharton enters Morocco at the very start of its time as a French protectorate, her motorcar journey sponsored by the Resident General, with the conscious goal of writing to support the French. It is with this mission in mind that Wharton adopts the explicit features of colonialist language. Similar to Marine Le Pen, Wharton uses vaguely feminist language as a means to invoke this discourse when she enters the harems and meets the women who live in them. After Wharton, I will examine *A Street in Marrakech* (1976) by Elizabeth Fernea, a professor in Middle Eastern Studies whose work is closer to ethnography than a straightforward account of travel. Settling in the city of Marrakech two decades after Moroccan independence, Fernea’s more unconscious Orientalist tendencies flare up in response to her feelings of alienation, whether that comes from the privacy of Moroccan life or from her inability to relate to specific cultural rituals. Nonetheless, Fernea’s goal in Morocco is to get close to the women of her neighbourhood, write about their lives, and establish a bond based in female solidarity. Following a similar trajectory to Fernea, the final text I will examine is Suzanna Clarke’s *A House in Fez* (2007), also focused on settlement but with a different goal at its core – the

restoration of an old *riad* in the city of Fez. Clarke, a journalist from Australia, sees the restoration as something she is morally obliged to do, paying little attention to the implications of a white foreigner intervening on behalf of a culture that never asked for her help. Her Orientalism surfaces along three major fronts: her fetishism of an “authentic” Moroccan past, her desire to “rescue” the *riad* – along with the Moroccan women she befriends – and her desire to exert control over the space of the *riad*. What emerges in all of these texts by white women is a focus on Moroccan women and women’s spaces, whether those are the forbidden spaces of the harems or the spaces they try to carve out for themselves. By placing these texts in conversation, I want to arrive at a better understanding of the various ways Orientalism is articulated by white women engaged in travel writing. To reach that understanding, I pursue the following question: How does Orientalism inform these three women’s travel texts about Morocco that are focused on women’s spaces?

1.1 Knowledge of the East: Orientalism and Travel Writing

When discussing how the apparatuses of colonialism operate, there is a temptation to focus more on direct forms of intervention: the seizing of territories, the occupation by foreign military, and the claiming of resources. There remains a preoccupation with the masculinist spectacle of “penetrating” a country and forcing it to “submit” to the power of foreign rule. At the same time there are less direct forms of influence, infiltrations that can come before and after a country is overtaken. They might lack the visual spectacle of war and conquest, concerned more with the dissemination of knowledge, but they are driven by the same goal of colonization. One form of influence, described by seminal postcolonial scholar Edward Said, is Orientalism, a “discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice” as well as a “collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to

anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line” (Said 73). What he means by this is that the Orient, the East as it is seen by the West, is made into a subject of study and discovery even though what is “discovered” by the Orientalist is a fantasy disconnected from any physical place, the sum of the West’s imagining of the East. The Orientalist ascribes a series of stereotypes to the Orient and its people, stereotypes that speak more to how the Orient is conceptualized by a Western observer than to how it is in reality.

The use of these stereotypes ensures a binary opposition between the West and the East, structured in such a way as to legitimize Western superiority. This kind of legitimization shows up in the specific sets of stereotypes described by Said: “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’ ... thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal’” (40). Said locates Orientalism in the realms of word choice and style, language curated to recreate a specific series of representations. He exposes how Orientalism is organized – as a system of knowledge production. Said sums this up beautifully when he writes: “Knowledge of the Orient, because it is generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world” (40). The knowledge produced about the Orient arises from that same space of flexible positional superiority, or out of more direct forms of domination, and the knowledge produced through Orientalism in turn produces the Orient. At the core of Orientalism is the generation of knowledge and its dissemination in an effort to ensure that the superiority of the West remains undisputed. As for how such knowledge is produced and disseminated, one of the many kinds of texts Said points to is travel books. He observes that these works serve to say that “a country *is* like this” and reinforce the notion that “people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes” (93). Travel writing can reify an image of a country and those who inhabit

it. It can make intelligible practices deemed foreign or alien. Where Orientalism plays out within the text is in its language, the evocation of a vocabulary of stereotypes: a culture is deemed “backwards,” its people are deemed “savage” or “indolent,” and its architecture is seen as imbued with the flaws of the culture that produced it. It appears in *how* the author observes the place of their travels, what descriptors the country is afforded.

In terms of who has access to this style of writing, the primary contributors to Orientalist travel writing have been white European men. Said observes that white men were envisioned as the ones responsible for carrying out colonizing projects, of lifting up the “savage” parts of the world by spreading European civilization. Being a white man in a colonized region “was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend ... [it was] a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language and thought. It made a specific style possible” (227). Producing Orientalist knowledge through writing, deploying that “specific style,” is one of the ways in which white men were able to gain this control over truth and language. Of course, men are not the only ones who have contributed to travel literature – there have been women travel writers for as long as travel writing as a genre has existed. While it seems reasonable to ask about whether women had access to this kind of power, Said is more interested in the contributions of men. He seems to view Orientalism as entangled with patriarchy, describing it as “an exclusively male province” (207). According to him, it would not be possible for women to contribute to Orientalism’s production of knowledge or help justify colonizing practices. Other critics in the field see Said’s neglect of women’s travel writing as a flaw in his theorizing about Orientalism. Sara Mills, author of *Discourses of Difference*, observes that “Said’s views of Orientalist discourse are too monolithic and unified; that is, he describes Orientalism as if it were unchanging and consistent” (52), which she

counters by examining Orientalism as “made up of diverse elements which both contest and affirm the dominant discourses and other discourses of which it is composed” (55). There is not one series of representations or images that are wholly constructed – even Orientalist texts can have room in them for contradictions or fragmentations. That does not diminish the harmful consequences of such colonial discourse, but rather shows the way such discourse is deployed in subtle, sometimes confounding ways. Mills does acknowledge the usefulness of Said’s work on this subject, but also points out that “he risks becoming entangled himself in [a] very male view of imperialism since he ignores that many women were actively engaged in colonialism” (58). The omission of such a vast collection of works as women’s travel literature means that the Orientalism proposed by Said here is incomplete, something that scholars like Mills have attempted to fill out by examining the unique positionality of such authors and noting the complexities produced in their writing.

In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt attempts to account for the legacy of women travel writers by examining the fragmentations and contradictions in women’s texts. She says that “irresistible complexities” seem to abound “wherever women protagonists appear in the lore of the colonial frontier” (21) and that “women protagonists tend to produce ironic reversals when they turn up in the contact zone” (100). These ironic reversals can spring from the assumption of agency that seems relegated to male authors, or from the power dynamics between the woman travel writer and the indigenous cultures she observes. While the notion of “ironic reversals” feels nebulous, digging into the complexities that Pratt observes in women’s travel narratives is a good way to expand upon Said’s initial writings on Orientalism. Reina Lewis focuses on women’s relationship to colonialism, and in *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* teases out the meaning of these

complexities. She proposes that some of the contradictions found in the subject positions “occupied by women in Orientalism can ... reveal some of the fictions of the discourse and of imperial power,” and that the assumption that women could not play a role in colonialism “allowed women the positionality from which a counter-hegemonic discourse could be enunciated” (20). In other words, the fact that Orientalist discourse is characterized as masculinist means that women who do occupy a role within Orientalism have more license to expose the contradictions they create in the discourse. These ironic reversals and unexpected complexities seem to hold open a space in the discourse where counter-hegemonic forms of knowledge might be allowed to counter Orientalist knowledge production.

While the apparent contradictions that critics like Pratt, Mills, and Lewis see in women’s travel writing seem to represent the hope for a broader articulation of counter-hegemonic and anti-colonial discourse, there are some elements of Orientalism left unaccounted for within this framework. Critics such as Meyda Yegenoglu, author of *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, oppose the idea that the contradictions of women’s writing work against Orientalism, putting forth the notion that they represent the flexibility and resilience of such a body of discourses. She observes that when an Orientalist seeks to “re-announce [the] truth value” of a text, that “this announcement is often predicated upon its renunciation of the truth claims of a previous text” (71). For an Orientalist to assert the truth of their account of the Orient, a proven way to do so is to disavow the truth of an account that came before, to say, “This person got it wrong – this is what the Orient is *actually* like.” Even in this case, the Orientalist seeks to benefit from opposing an established piece of Orientalist discourse, and what might temptingly be construed as writing against the hegemony is building the mechanisms for a brand-new articulation of that same hegemony. This kind of flexibility is a testament to

Orientalism's longevity – as pointed out by Yegenoglu, “if the legacy of Orientalism is with us today, and if it has been able to survive despite the collapse of empires, it is because it has articulated itself differently in each instance” (72). For a system of knowledge as enduring as Orientalism, it has to shift in its manner of expression and the stereotypes bundled within it in order to sustain itself. In this case, even contradictory forms of writing can carry Orientalist discourse within them, however fragmentary that discourse is. Despite the sometimes counter-hegemonic interventions that can appear in women's Orientalist writing, Yegenoglu also notes that within such literature women can act as supplements for the gaze of the male Orientalist by infiltrating spaces to which only women have access, such as harems and baths. While the works of women writers that are preoccupied more with the lives of Oriental women might be seen as less masculinist than traditional Orientalist writing, there remains the chance that the experiences gleaned by these women can fill in the gaps in colonial discourse and knowledge production.

1.2 New Articulations: Tracing Patterns of Orientalist Discourse

Orientalism appears, to some degree, in each of the three women's texts I examine. It manifests in the language they use, in how they navigate Moroccan society, in how they understand their goals in pursuing travel in that specific place. At the same time, these manifestations of Orientalism are most intriguing when they are refracted through two lenses layered on top of one another – how these women write on the basis of their race and gender, and how they write about the Moroccan women they encounter. The former always exerts influence on the latter. How they understand their position as white women, how willing they are to recognize that position within the text, and how that understanding appears within the text all impact the ways in which they represent Moroccan women and themselves, in both conscious and unconscious ways. If Orientalism, as Yegenoglu claims, can be articulated in different ways

over time, then those articulations need to be examined to see the ways Orientalism has endured and the complex ways it is articulated by white women.

Because of how much scholarship on Orientalism is informed by French philosopher Michel Foucault's discourse analysis, my method for examining the Orientalist discourse of these texts is similarly Foucauldian. This kind of analysis is "concerned with the way in which texts themselves have been constructed, ordered, and shaped in terms of their social and historical situatedness," and aims to "uncover the unspoken and unstated assumptions implicit within [a text]" (Given). What I will be examining is how specific linguistic and stylistic choices are connected with the broader field of Orientalist discourse, whether the use of this discourse is conscious or unconscious. Due to this method of analysis, I will be casting some harsh judgments on the writing contained in these three texts, delving into problematic descriptions and colonialist discourses. While I believe that such a critique is warranted, there are two aspects of my analysis I want to state outright. Firstly, in each of these women's texts, I will be examining the "textually constructed self" present in each one. I am not looking to levy charges of colonialist thinking against Wharton, Fernea, or Clarke as *people* – I am looking at the Wharton, Fernea, or Clarke that is expressed within the space of the text in terms of what observations they make and what details or events they include. It would be disingenuous to act as if I know these three authors beyond the textual selves they present, and I plan to bring up extratextual information insofar as it illuminates the contents of these texts. Second, I will not be looking at these three women as if they are exemplars of their times. My observations about the Orientalist discourse used by Wharton, for example, are not meant to be abstracted onto every other woman travel writer of the early twentieth century or any time before. There are a number of other women writing either before or at the same time as her, all of whom pursue the project of travel

writing in differing ways. I do not find such wide-ranging abstractions useful for this kind of study.

Though the texts I am concerned with stretch over a vast period of time, from the beginnings of French colonialism in Morocco through to its independence, my goal is not to chart a seamless narrative of progress between them or a chronology of how women's travel writing about Morocco has "improved" – I doubt whether "improvement" is a meaningful metric in this case. What can be charted between these three texts is not progress so much as an ongoing set of patterns, individual shifts in how the authors use Orientalist discourse with respect to their race and gender. I observe that there are four identifiable patterns that appear across these texts to varying degrees and in varying permutations. The first is *intimate relationships with Moroccan women*. What I mean by "intimacy" is how close they allow themselves to get to the women they meet and how that connection manifests in the text. This accounts for the kinds of friendships these authors forge – or neglect to forge – with women they encounter in Morocco. These relationships are often tied to *women's spaces or sacred sites*, whether these secluded spaces are where they seek out intimate relationships or whether relationships with Moroccan women provide the authors with access to these secluded spaces. These three texts all include scenes wherein the authors enter into spaces of exclusivity, like the harems occupied by women or religious sites kept off-limits to white travelers. While the authors consider how Moroccan women relate to these spaces, they must also consider how they relate to these spaces as white women. How they see Moroccan women and understand their place in the lives of these women is underscored by their observations about *Orientalism and architecture*. Observations about Moroccan architecture bring up the Orientalist tropes described by Said, with the crumbling or ancient buildings signifying the supposed timelessness of Morocco. Architecture is also

constructed as a synecdoche to Moroccan culture as a whole or as an analogue to one of its parts, most frequently the lives of Moroccan women, and their descriptions of architecture align with their attitudes towards the women. The means by which these authors observe Moroccan women is connected with the fourth pattern: the use of *the gaze*. Given how much travel writing is built upon descriptions of places or accounts of experiences, it is important to look at how the observing eye is cast specifically over the women encountered by these authors. What I am interested in is how the subject positions of these authors influence how the gaze is used and how they either include or erase their positions when carrying out such observations. All of these patterns are interwoven – the gaze can manifest in their relationships with Moroccan women; the architecture of women’s spaces can be scrutinized through an Orientalist lens. The ways in which they are entangled with one another speaks to the ways in which Orientalism informs these three texts. Of course, I think it is important to clarify that the way these patterns spread throughout these texts is not neat and seamless either. Some of the patterns are not as notable in one text compared to another, and some of the patterns are woven together differently in one text compared to another. What I am pursuing is less of a clean inventory and more of an ongoing study that leaves room for the messy shifts and complexities that lie between and within these texts.

That messiness can be glimpsed both in the patterns woven across text and the ways in which each text slots into the genre of “travel writing.” I remain ambivalent as to whether “travel writing” is a term that can encapsulate all of these texts, although I use it primarily for the sake of simplicity. Wharton’s text is the closest match with what one considers travel writing, given that the central thread in the text is her travels between a number of locations in Morocco. What makes this categorization somewhat problematic is that Wharton seems to abandon the “travel”

element of the text towards the end, veering off course to praise the French colonial government, give some notes on Moroccan architecture, and provide a summary of Orientalist writing about Moroccan history. Though she claims it is an attempt to write a guidebook for the country, it lacks both the breadth and depth of what one would now expect from such a text. Fernea and Clarke only present more problems when it comes to categorization by genre. While both do travel to Morocco, these travels are not discussed within the text, and in both cases their experience of Morocco is confined to the space of a single city – Marrakech for Fernea, Fez for Clarke. Both of these authors stay in Morocco for much longer than Wharton, choosing to live in the urban sectors of their respective cities and adapt – in varying degrees – to the practices of the Moroccan people there. It would be tempting to classify these two texts under a nebulous term like “settlement literature,” but even that would have its gaps. Fernea’s writing is more concerned with parsing out the social relationships and customs of the women in her neighbourhood, and the text ends up much closer in form and focus to the ethnographic writing she has already done while living in Iraq and Egypt, other predominantly Muslim countries. She is more participant-observer than traveler. Clarke dabbles in some ethnographic observations of her own, but these only become relevant insofar as they are connected with her mission of restoring the *riad*. She is not seeking settlement in Fez so much as she is carving out a space for temporary habitation – a more exotic version of what is in essence a summerhouse. Even if there is no clean line connecting Clarke to Fernea to Wharton on the basis of genre or time period, they are all situated in Morocco and focus on women. When they are placed in conversation with one another these patterns between them start to emerge.

Over the course of the next three chapters I examine the emergence of each of these patterns, with each chapter focusing on one of my three texts. Though I plan on analyzing them

in chronological order, this is not so much to tease out a sense of linear development as it is to contradict such a narrative of progress. Chapter 1 examines Edith Wharton's text *In Morocco* (1920), paying attention to how she consciously appropriates Orientalist discourse, and how that discourse influences her writing about Moroccan women. I analyze how she wields Orientalist discourse in her descriptions of Moroccan architecture and that this reveals the colonialist ideology that undergirds the whole text. Expanding on that, I analyze how she exerts her gaze on the women she meets in the harem, how even the women she interacts with are held at a cold observational distance, and how the space of the harem itself is constructed as oppressive. Though these patterns are often threaded through with what seems like sympathy for Moroccan women, what becomes clear is that Wharton's concerns are a means to drape her imperialistic ideas in the thinnest of pseudo-feminist platitudes. Moving on from Wharton, Chapter 2 focuses on Elizabeth Fernea's *A Street in Marrakech*. While the gaze is a less prominent pattern in her text, I begin by examining the sort of unconscious Orientalism that informs her views of Moroccan architecture. I want to examine how she views it as a synecdoche for Moroccan culture's emphasis on the privacy of home life. From there I analyze her friendships with Moroccan women, particularly her neighbour Aisha, a woman who affords her access to the private spaces of Morocco and acts similarly to what Gayatri Spivak would call a "native informant." Finally, I examine how Fernea interacts with the private spaces of Marrakech, paying particular attention to her time in the *zaweeyas*, religious places exclusive to women. What Fernea's text captures, even in its unconscious Orientalism, is the ambivalence inherent in her position as a white woman, something that manifests as a tension between her American identity and her desire to be a part of the world of Moroccan women. From there, Chapter 3 analyzes Suzanna Clarke's *A House in Fez*. The most dominant pattern that emerges here is

Orientalist descriptions of Moroccan architecture, as it interlaces with every other pattern, but the Orientalism is expressed as a longing for authenticity and a fetishism for the past. I examine the politics behind Clarke's decision to restore the *riad* in the first place, how it stems from her position as a white woman, and the colonialist entitlement with which she decides to "rescue" part of a culture that does not belong to her. After looking at her descriptions of architecture, I examine the relationships Clarke forms with both Ayisha – a "modern woman" who functions similarly to Fernea's Aisha – and Khadija, her housekeeper, observing how both relationships are laden with mistrust on Clarke's end. By examining these relationships, I analyze how Clarke uses the gaze as a means of surveillance within her *riad*, attempting to exert power over the space she has made for herself. She seeks out authenticity in Fez as a way to escape what she sees as the soullessness and inauthenticity of the West. What Clarke's text conveys is how little Orientalist discourse has changed – she buys into the myth of the "white saviour" and her decision to intervene without anyone's permission turns back towards the colonialist ideas of Wharton.

What makes this kind of work important now is the rising flames of Islamophobia, stoked and spread by far-right nationalist politicians like Le Pen. It is becoming more apparent that Western ideas about the East have not undergone a meaningful shift, that many are still drawing from the contaminated well of Orientalist discourse without realizing where that language comes from or how and why they use it. These ideas can become even more dangerous when knotted through with platitudes about "women's rights" – whether those are the rights of white women put in danger by "invading Muslims," or Muslim women that are supposedly oppressed by their religion. The latter idea can be particularly dangerous, as it not only deprives Muslim women of their agency but can be just a step away from justifying Western imperialism, a white saviour

project of false liberation. Though there are plenty of white men who wield these discourses, driven by imperialist machismo, white women find themselves in a unique position when confronted with these discourses, both in terms of how they use them and how they could disrupt them. If white women are to be held accountable for use of Orientalist discourse, and if we ever want to have a hope of establishing more self-conscious forms of travel literature, then the way white women travel writers place such discourses about Muslim women in their texts needs to be thoroughly analyzed. While my study may only cover a small range of territory, it is my hope that through examining these three texts that it might be more possible to envision a future project of travel writing, one that calls into question the assumptions and subjectivity of the writer, one that breaks down, deconstructs, and casts aside ideas about “the West” and “the East.” Perhaps such a project would have the potential to move beyond Orientalism.

2 The Imprint of the Harem: Edith Wharton's Colonialist Concern for Moroccan Women

In 1917 the American fiction writer Edith Wharton was invited to stay in Morocco as a guest of the French administration. This visit came at an interesting and turbulent time in Morocco's history – a French protectorate government had been established there five years prior after an initial military intervention that overcame the resistance of the Moroccan people. New infrastructure was being established to open the country up to European tourists. The visit came at an interesting time for Wharton as well. By 1917 she had gained a considerable reader base through the publication of works of fiction like *The House of Mirth* (1905), *Ethan Fromme* (1911) and *The Custom of the Country* (1913). Her fiction tends to focus on the lives of upper class Americans and Europeans, and her protagonists were often women navigating the social expectations tied to their class and gender. Though she wrote works of non-fiction, they focused mainly on travel through Italy and France and did not gain her the same clout as her fiction. Her time in Morocco presented her with another opportunity – the chance to write a piece of non-fiction about a country that was new to her, a country whose customs and culture were unknown to most of the Western world. Driven by motorcar, Wharton surveyed all the major sights of Morocco over the course of a month and wrote of her experiences in her book *In Morocco* (1920).

Wharton begins *In Morocco* by claiming that she is traveling through “a country without a guide-book” (3) – something she seeks to remedy by writing down her own account of the country. In the first few pages Wharton makes her motivations for the writing of this book clear. She desires to break new ground, to participate in a kind of discovery process, to lay out the content of the country for an American or European eye. Given what she perceives as a lack of a guide-book, she notes that for any prospective traveler, there is no way to know what lies beyond

the international city of Tangier “in the sense understood by any one accustomed to European certainties” (4). Wharton’s goal in composing *In Morocco* is not just discovery, but also opening up the country for tourists to come and experience its exotic wonders. Her excitement at this project and her willingness to accept the French government’s invitation are characterized by Wharton’s broader ideas about colonialism – in one of her letters she describes herself as a “rabid Imperialist” (quoted in Wegener 784). Given her colonialist sympathies, it makes sense that she would be willing to work with General Hubert Lyautey, the head of the French administration at the time. Lyautey was the man behind the military campaigns that placed Morocco under French control. He was also a thought leader in colonial administration: when describing the process of Morocco’s takeover, he claimed he sought a peaceful occupation “that showed the benefits of French civilization” that would allow French influence to “seep gradually, like an oil stain, into an ever expanding spread of territory” (Berenson 230). Bringing the greatest elements of French society would not only consolidate control over Morocco, but also establish the kind of infrastructure that would make Morocco attractive to tourists. In order to bring in that kind of business, there would need to be literature available back in Europe – something he wanted Wharton to write. Her clout as an American writer made her a perfect candidate to, as she says, write the first “guide-book” about Morocco. He paid for her motorcar and set up appointments for her to speak with authority figures in the cities she visited. The book is even dedicated to Lyautey and his wife, the latter of whom accompanied Wharton through much of her journey but is barely mentioned. The context surrounding the text is baked into the writing and structure of this travel book. There is a whole chapter dedicated to praising Lyautey’s work, a moment in which the text veers from travel writing into unabashed

propaganda. These pieces of exterior information cannot be divorced from the text, in part because it seems Wharton wants them to be there.

Because Wharton's colonialist ideals are inextricable from the text, they are also threaded through the patterns of discourse that appear within it. Her Orientalism is expressed through her observations about Moroccan landscapes and architecture through the specific use of Orientalist tropes. Most of it is expressed through two tropes described by Said: the Orient as *timeless*, and the Orient as *dream-like* or *unreal*. Whether the architecture she describes is the crumbling buildings of Fez or the interior of an ancient mosque, in both cases the architecture becomes emblematic of what Wharton deems the essential characteristics of Moroccan culture: an inability to achieve progress or attain modernity, a flaw that French colonialism seeks to correct. Examining her observations about architecture is integral to parsing out the colonialist ideals that motivate her writing. Once those ideals are laid bare, they can also be glimpsed in Wharton's writing about the women in the harem. Her Orientalism manifests in the gaze she directs at the harem women, one that renders them as stereotypes and takes inventory of the exotic elements of their appearances. That gaze keeps her at a distance from the Moroccan women she encounters, as she is unable to foster any intimate relationships with any of them. At the same time, her experiences in these private women's spaces also give rise to a vague sense of concern for them as she comes to view the harem as a sort of patriarchal prison. This concern contradicts some of her judgments about the women, and it becomes another way for her to articulate her colonialist goals, using the oppression of Moroccan women to justify French rule. Each of the patterns that appear in the text are interwoven with Orientalist discourse and colonialist modes of thinking. While Wharton's text demonstrates how Orientalism can be articulated by a white woman as

concern for Oriental women, it is also an example of how Orientalism can infect every element of a text so that no part of it can be separated from that system of discourses.

2.1 “A People in the Making”: Moroccan Architecture and Wharton’s Orientalist Discourse

Wharton’s combined discourse about Orientalism and architecture in Morocco is part of her goal to depict Moroccan culture as stagnant, unmodern, and in need of Western intervention. The production of colonialist “knowledge” about such architecture becomes another method by which the colonization of Morocco can be carried out. It becomes an additional means by which she can perpetuate the stereotypes associated with Moroccan people and Moroccan culture – the flaws in their architecture are rendered as reflections of the flawed nature of both the people who built such architecture and the culture that shaped such practices. She also works to set up a binary opposition between European and Moroccan culture that leaves the latter looking inferior by comparison. She replicates the features of Orientalist discourse outlined by Said: she constructs Morocco as a place untouched by modernity, a place of backwards people who do not care to restore their crumbling architecture and who are incapable of development on their own. Because of how much she reproduces the Orientalism Said describes, there is a distinct lack of observations about Moroccan women in her writing about architecture. Before she arrives at the harems she seems largely unconcerned with women, as the Orientalist discourse she is working with leaves no room for reckonings with gender, including her own. English scholar Lucas Tromly argues that, in erasing her gender from the text, Wharton “takes on a masculine agency and, consequently, presents an androcentric account of her experiences” (241). In other words, Wharton’s masculine agency encapsulates her ability to wield Orientalist discourse for political ends, while the “androcentric account” that emerges from that discourse is an account concerned

with men. While Wharton does focus on a variety of men and neglects writing about women for the first few chapters, I find myself bristling at this notion of a “masculine agency,” because the notion that Wharton’s use of Orientalist discourse is “masculine” seems to reinforce the idea that Orientalism is a male province. I would argue instead that the agency Wharton takes on is less “masculine” and more “Occidental,” given that she appeals most frequently to her status as white and Western in her use of Orientalist stereotypes. Because she is an Occidental subject, regardless of gender, she has the authority to draw up comparisons between the West and the East.

The comparisons Wharton works with are based on colonialist notions of “progress” – where the West moves forward, is modern, the East remains the same. Anything Wharton identifies as “change” is brought about by the intervention of a Western power. Within Orientalist discourse the East is essentially timeless without a colonial force to pull it into the present. This temporal dimension of Orientalism has already been examined at length by Said, who observes that “[Orientalism] views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West” (Said 108). Through the knowledge produced about the Orient, it is distilled into a single reified image of a place through Western eyes, an image from which there is no escape. There is no progress to be found there, no alteration in the content of the image to signal the passage of time. Said observes that “Orientalism assume[s] an unchanging Orient, absolutely different ... from the West” (96). This further establishes a binary wherein the West has this capacity for movement and development, including movement and development within the Orient, while the East is relegated to a stagnant existence. Orientalism ensures that “[t]he very possibility of development, transformation, human movement ... is denied the Orient and the Oriental ... [as] they come to be identified with

a bad sort of eternity” (208). When the Orient is characterized in this way – as unmodern, as unable to achieve what might be called progress – that legitimizes any colonial efforts to introduce modernity to Oriental culture, to “lift up” this backward group of people.

Wharton’s characterization of Morocco as “timeless” is made most explicit in her descriptions of Moroccan architecture. The lack of progression in the design of Moroccan cities or religious sites becomes a metaphor for the lack of progression in Moroccan culture. One notable instance of this is when she observes Fez and writes that “it would be truer to say of it, as of all Moroccan cities, that it has no age, since its seemingly immutable shape is forever crumbling and being renewed on the old lines” (Wharton 83). The timelessness of Morocco is hewn into the stone of its buildings and cities, as it is written as though it is in a constant state of disrepair. The characteristics of this architecture serve as reflections of both the architectural sensibilities of Moroccans and the religion that shaped them. Wharton makes this connection when she writes: “Nothing endures in Islam, except what human inertia has left standing ... nothing remains intact, and nothing wholly perishes, but the architecture, like all else, lingers on half-ruined and half-unchanged” (79). While this preoccupation with Islam is by no means shared among all Orientalist works, it is a common trope that can arise in Orientalist accounts of North Africa or the Middle East. Wharton engages with this trope by constructing an us-them dynamic whereby the Christian Occident is contrasted with the Islamic Orient. The unchanging nature of the scenery in Morocco is an extension of the supposed timelessness at the “unmodern” heart of Islam. Much of Wharton’s judgments concerning the state of the architecture in Morocco are also reflections of how she looks at the people of Morocco. She states that the typical Moroccan “has, like all Orientals, an invincible repugnance to repairing and restoring” (20) and claims that “but for French intervention, the [architecture] of the college of the Oudayas

would by this time be a heap of undistinguished rubble” (22). The crumbling nature of the architecture, the aspect that makes it so unchanging, is made to seem like a symptom of some sort of moral deficit on the part of the Moroccan people. This deficit is essentialized, made to not only comment on Moroccans, but the disparate groups that are all designated as “Orientals,” erasing any sense of unique or specific Moroccan identity under a blanket of Orientalist discourse. The language here also justifies colonial intervention whereby the French are undertaking the task of saving Moroccan culture and saving Moroccans from the consequence of their own supposed laziness, as if the Moroccans lack the agency to do any of that work themselves.

Wharton’s preoccupation with the architecture of Morocco extends beyond characterizing it as unchanging and untouched by progress – it becomes a benchmark by which the cultural value of Morocco is measured against the supposed touchstones of European culture. This kind of measuring manifests as a comparison between Moroccan culture and Greco-Roman culture. One moment in the text where Wharton engages in this kind of comparison occurs when she and her companions come across the ruins of Volubilis, a former Roman colony that stands along the road to the holy city of Moulay Idriss. She constructs the scene:

So the two dominations look at each other across the valley: one, the lifeless Roman ruin, representing a system, an order, a social conception that still run [sic] through all our modern ways; the other, the untouched Moslem city, more dead and sucked back into an unintelligible past than any broken architrave of Greece or Rome. (45)

Though the Roman ruin is “lifeless” and long abandoned, its symbolic representation of Greco-Roman ideals – democracy, order, aspects she sees as essential characteristics of “Western culture” – makes it seem even more alive. Moulay Idriss, on the other hand, is characterized as a

dead city, one that has been absorbed by an “unintelligible” history, even if it is the city that is still inhabited. There are many ways to read Wharton’s word choice here, but I would argue that the past of Moulay Idriss is unintelligible in the same way everything about the life of the “Oriental” is rendered unintelligible. Within the field of Orientalism, the voices of those who live in the Orient and whatever narratives they might have are not given the freedom to speak – the knowledge production of Orientalism ensures that Orientalism is the only valid way of knowing. The knowledge that is produced through passages like these denies Morocco the capacity for development outside of the context of French colonialism.

As with the trope of the Orient as timeless, the trope of the Orient as dream-like is also used by Wharton to characterize Moroccan culture as backwards and incapable of change or progress. This motif first appears as Wharton is journeying towards Moulay Idriss, when she stops to comment upon the landscape: “The light had the preternatural purity which gives it a foretaste of mirage: it was the light in which magic becomes real, and which helps to understand how, to people living in such an atmosphere, the boundary between fact and dream perpetually fluctuates” (39). Part of this passage could be read as praise of the beauty of Morocco, but whatever praise might be present here is undone by the exoticism and the way the landscape reflects the character of Moroccan people. Describing Morocco as dream-like and its people as switching between fact and dream designates them as backwards or illogical. Wharton reuses this dream-like description when she writes of her visit to a Saadian mausoleum. Writing of the aesthetics of the chapel, she comments that it possesses “an air of dream-like unreality” before asking herself: “[H]ow can it seem other than a dream? Who can have conceived, in the heart of a savage Saharan camp, the serenity and balance of this hidden place?” (157). What Wharton seems to find most unreal in this situation is that this piece of “perfect” architecture could have

been built in the deserts of Morocco. The “who” she refers to implies a Western audience, as she is expressing not only her own astonishment, but also the astonishment of any other Westerner that Morocco would contain such a perfect place. More than that, the use of the word “savage” – a word that, in the early twentieth century, denoted a person or a culture “regarded as primitive and uncivilized” (*OED*) – calls back to another prominent Orientalist trope: the civilized West versus the uncivilized East. She seems bewildered that something so orderly could spring out of a place of supposed chaos. Once again, she seems incapable of paying a compliment to any aspect of Moroccan culture without qualifying it with Orientalist discourse, and even the pieces of Moroccan architecture she deems aesthetically valuable do not contradict her Orientalist characterizations of every other piece of architecture.

Because the flaws that Wharton identifies in Moroccan architecture are also deemed to be essential to Moroccan people, she expresses these flaws through a kind of biological determinism. Every division she notes between European sensibilities and Moroccan lifestyles is based on a division of races. She makes note of the presence of clocks in the house of a Sultan and observes that “[t]he passion for clocks and other mechanical contrivances is common to all unmechanical races” (Wharton 172). She is not clear as to why this passion might exist, what that passion might mean, and who these supposed “unmechanical” races are. She does not even note that a passion for clocks would contradict the idea of an “unmechanical” race, nor does she notice that such a passion for time-measuring devices contradicts the supposed “timelessness” of Morocco. As with Wharton’s broad characterizations of Moroccans as synonymous with all other “Oriental” races, this characterization also erases any specificity of Moroccan culture and makes it symptomatic of being another one of many races with the same set of preoccupations. The moment when Wharton makes this biological determinism most pronounced is also the

moment where she ties it into her most explicit legitimization of colonial intervention in Morocco. This moment comes mere paragraphs after her time in the dream-like atmosphere of the Saadian mausoleum, when she writes: “these gifted races, perpetually struggling to reach some higher level of culture from which they have always been swept down by a fresh wave of barbarism, are still only a people in the making. It may be that the political stability which France is helping them to acquire will at last give their higher qualities time for fruition” (157-8). This is Wharton’s Orientalism at its most explicit and most ugly. According to her, the Moroccan people *do* possess certain natural talents, certain “gifts,” but their own tendencies towards “barbarism” are what keep them from realizing their potential and make them their own worst enemies. They are trapped in a state of timelessness and arrested development. They remain a “people in the making” and Morocco, with its crumbling architecture, remains a “country in the making.” What Wharton suggests is that French colonial intervention will allow the people of Morocco to reach their highest state, as the French will keep their self-sabotaging barbaric tendencies in check. The French will keep Moroccan buildings from destruction and decay, prevent the country from being “sucked back into an unintelligible past.” What Wharton has arrived at, through all of her Orientalist judgments of Moroccan architecture, is a justification for colonial rule. There is no feature of Wharton’s writing about Morocco that can escape Orientalist discourse, as her writing about Moroccan architecture demonstrates just how invested she is in legitimizing the existing colonial paradigm.

2.2 The Orientalist Gaze and the Women of the Moroccan Harems

At this point, I think it would be reasonable to say that much of Wharton’s writing that has been discussed up to this point has been uncomplicated in its embrace of Orientalist discourse, reflecting much of what Said has observed about Orientalism. Wharton herself seems

to have no illusions about the kinds of consequences her account could have on the lives of Moroccans, and even offers explicit approval of France's colonial occupation of the country. Much of her writing here slots into the Orientalist niche described by Said. What must be considered now is how her gender is inscribed into the text and how her position as a Western woman influences her use of Orientalist discourse. For most of the text, the account Wharton presents is one in which her own gender is hardly ever mentioned. In his article on the text, Lhoussain Simour observes that while she relishes in the authority to depict "the wretchedness and anguish of the landscape and its people" she does so from the "distant position ... of an outside observer but which is fundamentally a position of power" (51). In other words, she ensures that she enters the text as an actor as little as possible, except to convey what she witnesses in Morocco through a filter of Orientalist language. She makes herself invisible without sacrificing any authority. The distance she assumes in her interactions with the women exposes her ambivalence towards them, as she oscillates between degrading them and expressing concern for them. What Wharton demonstrates through this ambivalence is how articulations of Orientalism can take the form of observations about the bodies of Oriental women and how justification for colonialism can occupy the same space as expressions of sympathy for those women.

The distance that Simour glimpses in Wharton's writing is characteristic of both her attempts to erase her gender from the text and her use of the gaze, another one of the patterns between her, Fernea, and Clarke. In defining a term as ambiguous as the gaze I believe it is useful to return to Laura Mulvey's description of it in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In it she claims that "[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" and characterizes the *active* and *male* gaze as

a look that “projects its phantasy on to the female figure” (11). The ability of the man to look at the feminine body, which is meant to passively receive the look, arises out of a patriarchal and heteronormative social order. The gaze serves as the expression of a power relationship through visibility, enacted between an active subject and a passive object for the purpose of experiencing pleasure and/or (as I will discuss later) exercising power. To reframe the gaze in an Orientalist context, something many scholars have already done, what needs to be accounted for is the colonial order of things. In such a context the gaze would be exercised by an active, Occidental subject – most often codified as white and male – against a passive Oriental object that is feminized by virtue of being in the Orient, a place characterized by its “feminine penetrability” (Said 206). Of course, if we go by that definition alone and try to apply it to someone like Wharton, we arrive back at the flawed notion of her exercising a “masculine agency” by virtue of her gaze. To better understand Wharton’s use of the gaze it might be tempting to look to Reina Lewis’ examination of the *female gaze*, a mode of representation in which women are able to exchange gazes with other women and women are afforded a more active role that “[challenges] the traditionally passive status of women in the narrative” (163). This does not quite suffice either, as Wharton goes to such great lengths to erase her gender from the text that her gaze cannot be accurately called *female*. It seems that the foremost characteristic of Wharton’s gaze is her position as a white Western subject, her status as Occidental regardless of her gender. Her gaze is wielded to reinforce Orientalist power structures and modes of categorization.

Wharton’s use of an Orientalist gaze manifests in her experiences in the harems of Morocco, wherein she levels that gaze upon the bodies of the women that inhabit them. It becomes a mean by which all of the visual information about the women, from their clothes to their bodies, is catalogued and then interpreted through the lens of Orientalist fantasies. One of

the first instances of this type of observation takes place when she and Mme. Lyautey enter a Rabat harem and glimpse “a princess out of an Arab fairy-tale” (Wharton 171). When they are further into the harem, Wharton observes that “the door of the *mirador* was always opening to let in another fairy-tale figure” (173). She is once again wielding the same Orientalist discourses of unreality and timelessness that she used to observe Moroccan architecture, only now she is turning those discourses on the women in the harem. While her use of these discourses is initially broad in terms of how it focuses on the women, there comes a point where she begins to catalogue the features of their bodies. She describes the Sultan’s “favourites” within the harem: “[R]ound-faced apricot-tinted girls in their teens, with high cheek-bones, full red lips, surprised brown eyes between curved-up Asiatic lids, and little brown hands fluttering out like birds from their brocaded sleeves” (173). This passage is devoted to encapsulating details about the appearances of these girls, paying particular attention to features deemed “exotic” like their “Asiatic lids.” The way she writes echoes the kind of colonial rhetoric focused on the examination of bodies identified by David Spurr: “The eye treats the body as a landscape ... noting color and texture, and finally passing an aesthetic judgment which stressed the body’s role as object to be viewed” (23). The discourse she uses here is one that treats the women of the harem first and foremost as objects to be examined, sights to be “viewed.” It is not one in which their humanity or individuality can be recognized, as the power of the gaze places Wharton at a distance fit more for observation than interaction. The interesting thing about her exertion of this gaze is that it is not about experiencing pleasure in the sights of these women. Rather, it seems as if she is taking inventory of the women’s appearances in much the same way as one would take inventory of the aesthetic elements of a foreign object or the architectural geographies she surveys on her travels.

The distant posture assumed by Wharton means that, through her exertion of the gaze, there is a lack of intimate relationships forged with Moroccan women. None of the women she meets in the harems are even afforded names – when they are referred to at all, they are referred to on the basis of their rank or their ethnicity. The one woman that Wharton does seem to hold some admiration for is the Empress Mother of the Sultan, but this admiration does not produce intimacy. Instead, the presence of the Empress Mother enables Wharton to write even more derisively about all the women in the harem by comparing them to the Empress. When the Empress enters, Wharton describes feeling “that at last a painted window of the *mirador* had been broken, and a thought let into the vacuum of the harem” (Wharton 177-8). The harem is a vacuum of thought until it is entered by the intelligent and erudite Empress, which means that the women of the harem are characterized as vapid. Wharton continues to make such comparisons: “Here at last was a woman beyond the trivial dissimulations, the childish cunning, the idle cruelties of the harem” (178). The women are represented as vacuous and concerned with trivial things. Wharton does not express any interest in their lives, does not view them as individual people, and does not afford them anything more than insults against their personhoods and exoticized inventories of their bodies. The way she represents these women feels in line with Said’s observations about representations of women in *Orientalism*, most of whom are caricaturized as “more or less stupid” (Said 207). She does not feel any connection with them by virtue of her gender, and her race places her in a position to subject them to an Orientalist gaze. Even the Empress disappears from the text as quickly as she enters, more a tool for Wharton to use than a person in her own right. Not even a woman worthy of Wharton’s admiration is afforded any sense of intimacy.

The other woman that Wharton neglects to foster any connection with is the “French-Algerian girl” she meets in a harem in Rabat, the girl who acts as an interpreter between Wharton and the women of the harem. Like the Empress, this girl is not given a name and is referred to solely on the basis of her ethnicity and her gender. When the girl first emerges, Wharton describes her as “a rosy fair-haired girl, dressed in Arab costume, but evidently of European birth” (Wharton 184). It seems Wharton’s initial interpretation of the girl’s appearance is that she has taken on the norms of Moroccan dress, but beneath that she still possesses those qualities that Wharton associates with European lineage. What strikes Wharton is that although this girl has been designated as an interpreter, the brother-in-law of the harem’s host seems to do most of the talking. When Wharton has the chance to ask the girl a question, she asks her what part of France her mother comes from, to which the girl responds that she thinks her mother is from Switzerland. Wharton sarcastically notes this as a “shining example of the Higher education,” lamenting that “[i]n spite of Algerian ‘advantages’ the poor girl could speak only a few words of her mother’s tongue” (186). The revelation that the girl knows little of what is supposed to be her language disappoints and even disturbs Wharton, leading to her derision of Algerian education. The most illuminating moment in this encounter is when Wharton comments that the girl “kept the European features and complexion, but her soul was the soul of Islam. The harem had placed its powerful imprint upon her, and she looked at me with the same remote and passive eyes as the daughters in the house” (187). This excerpt inverts Wharton’s initial impression of the girl – now she is no longer a girl of European birth in Arab costume, but rather is a girl with only the most superficial denotations of European heritage with a soul more African than French. The trope with which Wharton characterizes the French-Algerian girl is a profoundly Islamophobic one – the trope of a white woman being trapped within the harem. Her use of this trope aligns her

with the kind of Islamophobia expressed by Marine Le Pen, wielding the image of a white girl “consumed” by Islam. By representing the girl as being “imprinted” she both perpetuates that harmful trope and creates grounds to further distance herself from the girl. She is unable to foster any meaningful connection with the women in the harem. At every turn she must maintain her distance of observation and remain stringent in her “rabid Imperialism” – no space is made for the counter-hegemonic interventions that might spring out of an authentic friendship with one of these women.

2.3 Panopticism in the Harem and Wharton’s Feminism-as-Colonialism

As insulting as the majority of Wharton’s writing is to the women in the harems she describes, there are moments where she expresses what seems like sympathy for the women – a vague “concern” for them and the ways she sees them as oppressed. Though the pattern of interest in women’s spaces appears in her prior experiences in harems, she seems to view most of these spaces as dominated by an atmosphere of triviality and vapidness – it is only when she inhabits the space of the harem with the French-Algerian girl that she demonstrates an interest in the politics of that space. Her description of the women in the harem as imprinted already says a lot about how she views the harem – as a prison that strips away the agency of the women and girls confined within it. The prison comparison feels apt, as Wharton’s description of the harem’s function echoes Foucault’s concept of panopticism. Panopticism is a mechanism for the exercise of power – extrapolated from the architecture of prisons – that is predicated upon the observation of individuals by a subject who cannot be observed. Its primary effect is to induce “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (201). The behaviours and gestures of the observed are placed under such heavy scrutiny that they must regulate their actions, continuing to do so even when not under observation. The goal is for the

observed to internalize their visibility to the point that they exercise this power on themselves – as Foucault states, “[one] who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it ... becomes the principle of [their] own subjection” (202-3). The way that panoptic power functions surfaces in Wharton’s descriptions of the harem, as the harem places the women under the observation of a man, something they internalize until that observational power is “imprinted” on their consciousness. Though Foucault claims that anyone is capable of looking out from the Panopticon, here Wharton identifies the panoptic gaze in the harem as a distinctly male gaze. Even Wharton herself comments that after a time she too “felt my own lips stiffening into the resigned smile of the harem” (Wharton 187). Wharton’s presence in the harem causes her to feel drained of the agency she has exerted through much of the book, something that stems from having the brother-in-law continue to observe her and control her ability to converse with the Moroccan women in her company. After spending mere moments in the harem, Wharton writes as though she has become subjugated under the panoptic power of the harem. This is one of the rare moments when her gender is acknowledged within the space of the text. The way her agency is diluted seems to align her with the women in the harem on the basis of gender, even as she echoes Orientalist discourse in her description of the French-Algerian girl. It is in this moment that the relationship between Wharton’s gender and her use of Orientalist discourse is made more complex.

The dissonance between Wharton’s concern for Moroccan women and the way she uses Orientalist discourse further manifests in her account of a visit to another harem in Fez. This dissonance shows itself as a sort of pity for the women of the harem accompanied by a racist patronization of them. The start of her account encapsulates this dynamic: “What thoughts, what speculations, one wonders, go on under the narrow veiled brows of the little creatures destined to

the high honour of marriage or concubinage in Moroccan palaces?” (187). Her sudden interest in the lives and experiences of the girls arranged to live in these harems stands in conflict with her previous characterizations of harem women as shallow. There is a shift in her attention towards the supposed helplessness and oppression of the harem’s inhabitants, something that she focuses on in her attempts to converse with the women in the Fez harem. Despite her concerns, she seems unable to get anywhere in her conversations with the women, something she chalks up to the notion that “there are few points of contact between the open-air occidental mind and beings imprisoned in a conception of sexual and domestic life based on slave-service and incessant espionage” (193). She conceives of no way for their minds to meet given the differences of their experiences, but even this frustration and pity brings out Wharton’s Orientalist discourse as she constructs another binary opposition between the free Occidental mind and the imprisoned Oriental one. Even as she sympathizes with what she sees as the stifling character of the lives of these women, she cannot express her concern from outside of a colonialist framework – the “rabid Imperialist” in her keeps rising to the surface. Her Orientalist gaze renders the women as passive in much the same way as the panoptic gaze does – they are “seen, but [they do] not see,” each one “the object of information, never a subject in communication” (Foucault 200). Despite her imaginings about what their lives might be like, women like the French-Algerian girl are made into passive objects of her inquiry, even as she claims to pity their lack of agency. Her pity seems to transform into a kind of indignant anger at the women’s situation, writing:

[A]ll these colourless eventless lives depend on the favour of one fat tyrannical man, bloated with good living and authority, himself almost as inert and sedentary as his women, and accustomed to impose his whims on them ever since he ran about the same *patio* as a little short-smocked boy. (Wharton 193-4)

This passage is a clear critique of patriarchal order of the household, as it observes how the “tyrannical man” of the household controls the women of his harem, as he was taught as a young “boy” that he had the authority to do so. It is because of this man that the lives of these women are made “colourless” and “eventless” as they are confined to the harem, a place where they are either trapped in stasis by the panoptic gaze of their patriarch or consumed by an obsession with trivial things. At the same time, this passage returns back to Wharton’s descriptions of Moroccan architecture, when she characterizes the crumbling buildings as standing only by virtue of “human inertia” (79). The impossibility for progress or development Wharton sees in the architecture is tied in with the patriarchal order of the harem. It is a place where nothing happens in the lives of the women, a place where movement is made impossible and their lives are defined as timeless and “sedentary.” Wharton is tying in her Orientalist descriptions of Morocco with the lives of the women in the harem, only now those tropes are being used to portray what Wharton sees as the injustice experienced by these women. This is where her critique becomes problematic, as her Orientalist language starts to occupy the same space as expressions of sympathy towards the women.

Wharton’s concern for the women of the harem becomes interwoven with her contributions to colonialism. The dynamic by which concern for women is combined with colonial expansion is described by postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in which she coins the adage, “White men are saving brown women from brown men” (48), to describe a feature of the relationship between colonizer and colonized. In other words, the concern of white men for the lives of brown women – authentic or not – becomes a justification to “save” those women from brown men, salvation brought about through colonial expansion. It becomes a means of further othering the men in this equation while turning

the women into damsels without any agency. Although Wharton herself is not a man, Tromly observes that she “is a white woman exhorting white men to save brown women from brown men, and her feminism . . . becomes a moral ratification of French colonialism” (Tromly 242). While I take issue with Tromly’s characterization of Wharton’s “masculine agency,” I agree with him on this subject. The way that Wharton’s concern for Moroccan women becomes steeped in the language of legitimizing colonial administration means that even in her preoccupation with the lives of Moroccan women, there is no possibility for any counter-hegemonic interventions or ironic reversals in her writing. She is writing very much in service of the hegemony of French colonialism and identifies herself with its mission. In this sense, Wharton’s subject position as a white woman puts her in a unique position to articulate Orientalist discourse in a very specific way – as a way to ensure that the colonialist politics of her text can be covered in the thinnest veneer of feminist language.

There is much more to Wharton and her writing than what she produced with *In Morocco*, and she is known much more now for her works of fiction than for her works of travel writing or non-fiction. She does not have the reputation of a career Orientalist – partially because this text stands alone in its Orientalism among Wharton’s non-fiction, and partially because such a reputation is rarely afforded to women. Despite my criticisms of the book and my own distaste for the discourse it contains, I would not go so far as to call Wharton an Orientalist. What I would say is that she nevertheless draws from a number of Orientalist stereotypes and descriptions, that she spends much of *In Morocco* emulating the style of Orientalist travel literature with the very specific goal of bolstering support for the protectorate government and the newfound tourist industry of the country. She makes repeated use of discourses surrounding timelessness and unreality when discussing Moroccan architecture, reflecting her unfavourable

observations onto Moroccans as a people. She does not foster any sense of intimacy with the women she meets, subjecting them to a dissecting gaze while portraying them as stupid and superficial. Even when she seems to lean into her sympathies for the women she meets in Morocco and attempts to characterize their spaces as oppressive, those sympathies are still coated with the same colonialist ideology that undergirds much of her writing about the country. She does not allow her writing to have the space for any ironic reversals or anti-hegemonic interventions. If, as Reina Lewis says, Wharton's position as a woman in travel writing might provide her with the position to engage in counter-hegemonic discourse, it is a position that she does not take.

So what place does *In Morocco* have within the greater discussions of women's relationship to travel writing and colonialism? What I believe it exposes is that Orientalism is not an exclusively male province, and that Wharton is a prominent example of a woman utilizing Orientalist discourse. Wharton is also an example of a woman writer who had the access to power within the colonial hegemony of Morocco and played a role in legitimizing the power of the French protectorate regime. The favour of General Lyautey and her clout as a writer at the time ensured that she had the ability to say that Morocco was "like this" while integrating a chapter that amounts to a puff piece about the sponsor for her trip, even going so far as to claim: "It is not too much to say that General Lyautey has twice saved Morocco from destruction" (209). Her descriptions of architecture and art in Morocco were also integrated with interests of the French government to penetrate elements of Moroccan culture left previously unknown to them. All of this supported the ongoing efforts of French colonization and bolstered interest in tourism in Morocco, working with the same imperial language as tourism propaganda to attract Western eyes. It cannot be argued that Wharton did not play a role in supporting the French

protectorate government, something she had the agency to do. While it might be tempting to categorize this agency as “masculinist,” given how much support she had from Lyautey, I believe that her role as a woman is part of what allowed her to enter spaces forbidden to men, such as harems, to fill in the gaps of Orientalist knowledge. Her work in Morocco can be taken as an example of a thoroughly Orientalist piece of travel writing by a woman and as a piece of writing about Morocco distinct in its time of composition, one that captures the moment the French gained power and shows in itself all the ways they sought to solidify that power through the production of travel writing.

3 Between Inside and Outside: Elizabeth Fernea's Ethnography of Ambivalence

Nearly twenty years after Moroccan independence, Elizabeth Warnock Fernea moved to a house in Marrakech. She was accompanying her husband Bob, an anthropologist and professor of Middle Eastern Studies, on a year-long study of Moroccan business practices. They relocated their family – including their children David, Laura Ann, and Laila – to an old house in the medina of Marrakech, on a small street called Rue Trésor. Though they were ostensibly there for Bob to pursue his research, Fernea saw their residence in Marrakech as an opportunity to pursue her own interests. Prior to her stay in Morocco, Fernea had stayed in Iraq and Egypt, using her time in both countries to conduct her own ethnographic research. She had particular interest in the lives of Middle Eastern women, from their customs to their traditional forms of dress, and sought to use her time in these places to get close to them and understand their world. Over the course of these residencies she published such works as *Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* (1965) and *A View of the Nile* (1970). Though these were more ethnographic texts mixed in with personal reflections, Fernea's next project was more personal. Over the year she spent in Marrakech, she gathered up stories about her family while pursuing friendship with the women of Rue Trésor. The women, though initially suspicious, accepted her and decided to expose her to the many features of private life in Morocco. From these experiences, Fernea produced her 1976 text *A Street in Marrakech*, with the subtitle *A Personal View of Urban Women in Morocco*.

Despite Fernea's prior experience in writing ethnography, none of her previous works are mentioned in this text. The most that she is willing to include is the occasional allusion to her time living in both Egypt and Iraq while occluding her reasons for pursuing residence in those places. For the most part, she adopts the pose of a housewife accompanying her husband on his

work-related travel to Marrakech. Her willingness to forsake whatever “clout” she might hold in her field for the sake of this text is one way her account is set apart from Wharton’s. Another way Fernea differs from Wharton is in the breadth and depth of their texts. Whereas Wharton is afforded the support of the colonial administration in her motorcar journey across the country, Fernea remains in the city of Marrakech. She is more focused on gaining a deeper knowledge of a single place over the course of a year as opposed to skimming the surface of Morocco over the course of a month. These differences mean that Fernea’s text slots less easily into the category of travel writing, taking on more of the conventions of what interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford identifies as “the new ethnography.” There are a number of characteristics he ascribes to the new-style ethnographer that manifest in Fernea’s writing: their stays in other countries “seldom exceeded two years” (*The Predicament* 30); their work was “marked by an increased emphasis on the power of observation” and “intended to focus on particular institutions” rather than the entirety of a culture, aiming to “get at the whole through one or more of its parts” (31). The length of Fernea’s stay is suitable for a “new-style ethnographer,” and the elements of Moroccan culture she pursues as a means to understand the whole are the lives of the Moroccan women of Rue Trésor.

Most of the scholarship on *A Street in Marrakech* tends to positively contrast Fernea with Wharton as a way of demonstrating Fernea’s avoidance of Orientalist writing. In a 2012 article for *The Journal of North African Studies*, Karim Bejjit draws up the differences between the two writers. He delves into the Orientalist core of Wharton’s writing about women: “What she pretends to possess and convey as firsthand knowledge of the colonial harem follows from short formal visits to the households of some Moroccan notables arranged beforehand by the colonial authorities” (496). Bejjit contrasts Wharton’s Orientalism with Fernea’s ethnographic writing,

claiming that “[Fernea’s] reflections on Marrakechi families are the product of a sensitive, unassuming observer fully engaged in her surroundings” and that her kind of writing “presents a liberal model of writing Otherness based on a sharp sense of critical awareness and rigorous questioning of stereotypes and dogmas” (496). A 1988 article by John Maier claims that “Fernea carried none of the imperialist rhetoric of Wharton” and that her writing “reveals a decidedly post-World War II American concern with the cultural ‘other,’ one that falls just short of ‘going native,’ certainly, but one that approaches the other in anything but the Orientalist mode criticized by Edward Said” (69). While these two articles demonstrate a narrative of Fernea as a “better” travel writer than Wharton, a 2016 article by Rachid Agliz instead claims “Fernea’s trip to Morocco turned out to be a pilgrimage from the mundane West to the exotic Orient” (461) and that the exoticism she seeks is in the world of Moroccan women. My approach is dedicated to finding the nuance that lies between these positions, as I believe that Fernea is neither an example of a “better” travel writer nor an American motivated by exoticism. The kind of sensitivity Fernea possesses is preferable to the overt Orientalism of someone like Wharton. At the same time, Fernea is not forthright about the ethnographic style of her writing, and her decision to obscure her experience in the field allows her to conceal her motives. There are moments where her writing takes on some of the tropes of Orientalist discourse, but these tend to manifest in response to experiences of culture shock. Exoticism is not what motivates her so much as the pursuit of a form of cross-cultural bonding with the women in her neighbourhood. While she does attempt to engage with her surroundings, what emerges from her text is a pervasive ambiguity about her place in Moroccan society and in the lives of the women she befriends. She wants to foster a connection with them and be a part of the same spaces that they are, but her status as an outsider that stems from her whiteness prevents her from achieving that.

It is from this tension over her belonging based in her subject position that the patterns threaded through the text emerge. She sees Moroccan architecture itself as a barrier to her inquiries, glimpsing within the high walls of Marrakech an expression of a deep-seated cultural practice of privacy. She fears that such an emphasis on private life will prevent her from forming bonds with Moroccan women. In order to break through these barriers, she befriends her housekeeper Aisha, a woman who provides her with information about life in the medina while affording her access to private rituals. By forging an intimate relationship with her, she is able to gain acceptance into the private lives of the women in Marrakech. What awaits her when she finally enters into the private religious sites and women's spaces of Marrakech is not an affirmation of her bonds with the women, but rather a series of experiences that force her to reckon with her feelings of alienation and her inability to navigate what she perceives as a cultural divide. It is in moments like these that she sometimes allows herself to succumb to the use of a distant Orientalist gaze almost as a coping mechanism, something that leads her to incorporate some of the stereotypes used by Wharton. Because of the tension over Fernea's ambivalent belonging that runs through these patterns, what *A Street in Marrakech* captures is the inescapability of Fernea's subject position.

3.1 Behind the High Walls: Architecture and Intimacy with Moroccan Women

Though the context and objectives of Fernea's writing are very different from those of Wharton's text, Fernea also demonstrates the pattern of connecting Orientalism and architecture by viewing the architecture of Morocco as a synecdoche for characteristics of Moroccan culture. There are a couple of unique, interesting elements of her construction of this synecdoche: the first is that the architecture is characterized as representative of the Moroccan emphasis on

privacy rather than as the expression of a flawed nature; the second is that the architectural emphasis on privacy becomes an analogue to what she sees as the sartorial emphasis of privacy in Moroccan women's clothing. She makes this connection at the beginning of her residence on Rue Trésor, when she contemplates how difficult it is going to be for her "to get to know anyone who lived behind the high, thick, rose-red walls, so private and shut off from each other, to get to know the women behind their face veils and all-enveloping *djellabas*" (Fernea 24). The walls of the medina act as barriers to the interior elements of Morocco, the parts that Fernea wants to know, and the privacy provided by the veil to Moroccan women becomes a barrier to her getting to know the women. Both of these barriers speak to each other in the text, encapsulating the privacy that Fernea sees as the heart of Moroccan culture. Because of this, her observations about Moroccan architecture are integrated into her intimate relationships with Moroccan women.

This vaguely Orientalist obsession with privacy – Orientalist in that there is the tendency for it to echo the colonialist goal of infiltrating the interior of a place – is part and parcel with the new ethnographic style in which Fernea writes. The role she is taking on, beneath the textual guise of the accompanying housewife, is that of the participant-observer. Participant observation is a practice described by Clifford as one that "obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as an intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation" (*The Predicament* 24) and requires "a continuous tacking between the 'inside' and 'outside' of events" (34). To carry out participant observation is to be able to engage in cultural translation, to transmute raw experience into greater generalizations. The participant-observer invests in the moment of that intercultural experience as they decide how to prescribe a clear meaning through ethnographic writing. Of course, to engage in that translation, to tack between "inside" and "outside," one must first have

access to the “inside.” In order to both participate and observe, Fernea needs to become a part of the elusive interior of Moroccan life and the private lives of Moroccan women.

Before she has access to the broader private lives of Moroccan women, Fernea first engages her housekeeper Aisha in friendship – one in which Aisha informs her about the features of life in Marrakech, such as telling her where to shop or informing her about religious customs. The role in which Aisha is seemingly cast is that of the “native informant,” an ethnographic term used to describe the native members of a culture who provide the ethnographer with knowledge about that culture. Within ethnographic writing the creation of one or more “native informants” tends to propose a hierarchy of textual authority, one in which “one voice [is given] a pervasive authorial function and to others the role of sources ... to be quoted or paraphrased” (Clifford “Introduction” 15). The informants orbit around the authorial voice of the ethnographer, pulled in when they are needed to provide some necessary insight. Though Spivak is not concerned with ethnography, she borrows the term and describes the “native informant” as one “denied autobiography ... [they are] a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe” (6). Though the native informant’s experiences and insights are the raw material translated into text by the Western ethnographer, they are not afforded an authorial voice. The inclusion of the informant provides the text with a sense of polyvocality without allowing the ethnographer to forsake the authority that underlines their experiences. While Fernea pursues this kind of polyvocality, gaining insight from a number of Moroccan people, it is Aisha who becomes her primary source of information.

The notion of “native informants” in the fields of ethnography and anthropology is a controversial one, as it tends to play out as a form of appropriation. The experiences of the “native” are made intelligible by the ethnographer and absorbed into their text, while the

ethnographer retains authority over the appropriated experience because they choose how it is written. These criticisms have been sharply laid out by filmmaker and literary theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha, whose text *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* examines the problematic implications of this role. She writes: “Native informants,” as rendered in an ethnographic text, can become “the handicapped who cannot represent themselves and have to either be represented or learn how to represent themselves ... entrapped in a circular dance where they always find themselves a pace behind the white saviors” (Minh-ha 59). In such a rendering, the “native informant” is one who cannot speak for themselves and requires the ethnographer to speak for them – even in a text of supposed polyvocality, wherein the ethnographer retains authority, their appropriation of the “native’s” voice becomes tantamount to speaking with the “native’s” mouth. That said, I do not read Fernea’s text as constructing Aisha in this way. While taking on a native informant role constitutes part of their relationship, Aisha is not a “blank” and does not act exclusively as a “source.” While the nuances of Aisha’s position as a native informant will be further explored later in this chapter, it is important to note that the relationship she forms with Fernea is complex, particularly in how Aisha shapes the story the text.

Fernea’s initial conversations with Aisha are where the contours of this relationship begin to form. One of the first elements of life in Marrakech that she learns about from Aisha is where the people of the medina go shopping. When Fernea asks Aisha to take her shopping, she reacts badly, and Fernea worries that she has “[b]roken some unwritten law of Moroccan ladies’ friendships” (Fernea 23). Even at this early point in her residence in Marrakech, she is anxious about violating the customs surrounding friendships between women and sees Aisha’s reaction as a chance to learn more. Aisha’s feelings about shopping are clarified when she picks up one of

Fernea's jars of strawberry jam and says "We don't eat things like this," prompting Fernea to reflect: "Aisha did not go far afield to make her meager purchases. Vegetables from the peddler. Meat seldom. And her husband probably bought it [...] I realized that she did not know where to purchase ... the luxuries ... that she assumed that I, a foreigner, would want" (23). From Aisha's response she makes a series of observations about what life is like for women like Aisha who live in the medina. In turn, Aisha suggests that Fernea and her family shop in Gueliz, the marketplace where all the foreigners go, a prospect that Fernea feels conflicted about. She notes that "marketing was one thing that everyone had to do, every day, and presumably one could strike up acquaintances, even with veils, over the marketing. [...] To go to Gueliz and shop with the other foreigners would only cut me off further from the traditional city, in which we had chosen to live" (24). For Fernea to engage in her role as a participant-observer, she has to do her shopping in the space of the medina, the place where all the women she wants to know go shopping. She has to live as close to where the "authentic" happenings in the lives of Moroccan women take place, and she has to live as close to Aisha, her viable native informant. It is in this interaction that Fernea is given some clarification by Aisha as to how residents of the medina live, valuable information that will enable her to engage in this practice of participant observation in the world of Moroccan women.

Part of the process that allows Fernea to better glimpse the private lives of Moroccan women involves being invited to participate in rituals specific to women. One of these rituals is the wedding of one of the women of her neighbourhood named Rabia, the first event where she is able to get to know the women behind their veils. After she and her daughters wait for hours for the party to begin, she describes the process of the women entering the room: "[O]nce they stepped across the threshold, everything changed. The public mien was cast aside. One was at

home, and one assumed a different personality. Off came the veils, hoods, and *djellabas* [...] The ladies emerged in their caftans, those garments designed for private life” (140). The traditional garbs of the women are configured as blockades to intimacy, preventing Fernea’s access to private life in Morocco. This moment where the women shed their veils is a symbolic instance where, for the first time, Fernea gets a glimpse of the women’s world in which she wants to participate. This moment where the women render themselves visible for the author is a familiar trope in women’s travel writing in accounts of Islamic countries. It appears in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s early-18th century account of traveling through Turkey, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, when she enters the women’s baths in what is now the city of Edirne. Once inside, she first notes that the women are kind to her, noting a lack of “those disdainful smiles [and] satiric whispers that never fail in our assemblies” before observing the absence of “any distinction of rank by their dress” (101). The women participating in these private rituals show a kindness to Montagu she would not know in Europe, and their willingness to be unconcealed in her presence conveys an openness to her, an invitation to be a part of the ritual. The way the Moroccan women unveil themselves also serves as a signal for Fernea that she can become a part of these women’s private lives. As she realizes this, she echoes her lamentation from when she first arrived in Marrakech: “How many months had I spent wondering what lay behind the high, thick walls of Rue Trésor[?] ... Here it was before me at last: color! light! sound! action! I realized I could have seen all of these women at one time or another ... but I would not have recognized a single one of them as they were dressed at this moment” (Fernea 140). Now that the women are uncovered, their faces and colourful caftans visible to Fernea, they are equated with an authentic vision of the private lives of Moroccan women. The space of the wedding is a space without the anonymity afforded to the women by their veils. Her presence at the private spectacle

of the wedding means that later on she finds that women in veils, few of whom she recognizes, begin approaching her on the street. She admits that she “did not know them all, but they had obviously been at the wedding. Since I had been at the wedding too, I must be socially acceptable for some reason. Therefore, presumably they had decided to speak” (157). Attending this celebration makes Fernea a familiar face in the eyes of the other women of Rue Trésor, something that provides her with access to the private sphere of their lives. Her experience of the wedding ensures her continued work in participant observation within the private lives of these women. She is given access to the world behind the high walls of the medina.

Once Fernea is accepted into the private lives of the women of Rue Trésor, she begins to feel some measure of solidarity with them – a solidarity that extends beyond Fernea’s status as a foreigner. When she encounters the sexist beliefs of the men of her neighbourhood and their beliefs about the women she has befriended, Fernea places herself alongside them and gets defensive on their behalf. When an argument erupts between Aisha and another woman of the neighbourhood named Glaoui, the men watching them remark how they cannot control themselves and how they need a man to put them in their place. She says that the comments make her freeze at her door, “mute and furious, wanting to shout at them ... [b]ut I realized, even in my anger, that such a speech would be ridiculous, the men would turn and stare at me and shake their heads [...] All women (and perhaps foreign women more) obviously have trouble controlling themselves” (372). While she acknowledges in an aside that her position as a foreign woman might influence the men’s perception of her, her drive to defend Aisha – and all the other women by proxy – shows the solidarity she experiences with the women of the neighbourhood. Beyond their positions based on race or class, she seems to envision a cross-cultural bond based on gender. Imagining a connection with the women based on common experiences of sexism is a

part of Fernea's writing that contrasts with Wharton's experiences in the harems. While Wharton experiences a sense of resignation among the women of the harem, something she attributes to the panoptic and patriarchal power exercised by the harem itself, she renders them as passive objects and does not afford them any agency. What sets Fernea apart in her bond with the women of Marrakech is that she is able to acknowledge that her position as a foreigner means she has no right to intervene on behalf of the women. They are afforded enough agency by her to be able to work through their problems on their own. Fernea refrains from wielding any ethnographic authority to exhort any sort of Western action to resolve the concerns of Moroccan women. Instead, she tries to honour the agency of the women she encounters, something she is better able to do through her means of fostering intimate relationships with them.

3.2 “Not My Music”: Women's Spaces, Sacred Sites, and Fernea's Ambivalent Belonging

Fernea's intimate relationships with Moroccan women, particularly her relationship with Aisha, thread into her interest in women's spaces and Marrakech's sacred sites. Her dedication to observing the private elements of life extends into these secluded spaces despite her awareness that many of these places are forbidden to a white Westerner like her. Much of the second half of *A Street in Marrakech* focuses on Fernea's visits to a number of religious sites during *moussems* – festivals held in celebration of specific saints – over the course of spring and summer, with Aisha being the primary sponsor and instigator behind these visits. It is both within and surrounding these sites that a number of disruptions occur within the text. Aisha's role as a native informant is complicated by the agency she assumes in deciding which secluded spaces Fernea will enter. Fernea's own position as a participant-observer is ruptured, as she finds herself in the spaces of cultural rituals from which she feels separate. What these disruptions spring from

is a tension at the core of the text – the tension of Fernea’s ambivalent state of belonging. After all of her attempts to forge intimate bonds with the Moroccan women on the basis of gender, the fact that she is a white Western woman prevents her from feeling any complete and enduring sense of belonging

Fernea’s ambivalent belonging surfaces in response to Aisha’s decision to bring her into the private religious sites of Marrakech, something that also problematizes the idea of Aisha as a native informant. Though she demonstrates a reluctance to enter these sites given that she would be identified as a Christian due to her whiteness, in nearly every instance Aisha is the one who decides to bring Fernea into these spaces – often without her permission. When they go to the tomb of Moulay Ibrahim, Fernea assumes that “Aisha would visit the shrine and I would browse in the market while I waited for her” (286), but she is forced forward by the rush of people at the entrance while Aisha shouts for her to keep moving. Though Fernea has expressed her desire to be a part of the private experiences of Moroccan life, she does not seek out entrance into secluded spaces but ends up carried into the space against her will. This kind of scene is repeated later when they are entering a *zaweeya* (religious sisterhood), a space exclusively for women. As they stand at the doorway, right as Fernea plans to tell the guard “I would wait right here for my friend ... Aisha took my hand and led me across the threshold,” and before she can protest Aisha “had already pulled me into a large, open courtyard, filled with women” (301). Once again, Fernea tries twice to protest against her admittance into a sacred space, but in both cases she does not voice her concerns in time before Aisha brings her in. The way these scenes are constructed remove any agency from Fernea in entering these places that are forbidden to her, instead affording that agency to Aisha. On the one hand, Fernea’s unwanted entrances can absolve her of accusations of colonialist intention and make her entrance into these spaces legitimate. She

enters these places without making any conscious decision to trespass, and her entrance is enabled by a Moroccan woman, ensuring that she remains innocent of any transgression. At the same time, Aisha's agency in these scenes means that she is no longer an ethnographic "source" meant to convey information about cultural practices. She determines what Fernea will experience, and in doing so influences the shape, breadth, and depth of Fernea's ethnographic writing.

Even if Aisha is able to act as Fernea's sponsor in these journeys to Moroccan religious sites, entering these places and witnessing the rituals within often confronts her with her own position as an outsider, something that causes her to retreat into the distant view of the gaze. While this gaze does not exert power in the moment in the same way the panoptic gaze can, it is one that has power in how it represents what it witnesses in the text. In the shrine of Moulay Ibrahim she finds herself witnessing rites she has no sense of connection to, religious experiences that alienate her. She describes how a woman next to her "suddenly stood up and threw herself across the tomb, kissing and embracing it passionately, and weeping as she did so [as] several other women broke from the ranks and followed suit," leading her to remark that she "felt quite alone, with Aisha, in the shrine of Moulay Ibrahim" (288). Fernea finds herself surrounded by people caught up in religious ecstasy, but the intensity of their experience only solidifies just how separate from this kind of experience she is, even if the *djellaba* she wears conceals her identity as an outsider. The alienation she feels causes a rupture in her position as a participant-observer – she is too distant from the ritual to participate, so all she can do is observe. The act of glimpsing the tomb's interior, written almost like an account of discovery, becomes "a purely passive experience – that of seeing" (Pratt 198). This is when her Orientalist gaze surfaces. As she sits, waiting for Aisha to finish with her prayers, she tells herself "the hysteria of

the women throwing themselves on the tomb, combined with my own nervousness, made me think I was hearing voices” (Fernea 289). Describing the experiences of the women as “hysteria” ties back into the Orientalist stereotypes of irrationality and savagery while leveling them at the women in the scene. At the same time, she seems to be experiencing a “hysteria” of her own as she believes she is “hearing voices.” Even if she is affected by witnessing the religious ecstasies of the women, she still occupies an ambivalent space where these hysterias remain separate. She is too disconnected to feel the desire for intimacy with women that motivates her for much of the text. The only balm to her anxiety in the space of the tomb is the sight of the clocks lining the walls and photographs of “the present King Hassan and of his father, the late beloved Mohammad Cinq” which soothes her, making her think “[p]erhaps it was going to be all right” (289). Turning her gaze on images of familiar technology and familiar figures of Moroccan history give her something to hold on to, saving her from her alienation. The appearance of clocks ties Fernea back to Wharton, who also wrote of Moroccans’ supposed fascination with such devices. Noticing the presence of clocks in a secluded space and using them as an emotional anchor reflects Wharton’s descriptions of Morocco as timeless – while the tomb might seem a place out of time, the clocks and the photos depicting the sequence of Moroccan rulers remind Fernea of time’s passage. Her experiences within the tomb of Moulay Ibrahim seem to convey to her that, regardless of how close she gets to the women of Rue Trésor, there are elements of Moroccan life to which she will have a constant sense of separateness, a separateness that is eased by her recognition of time shifts, and in this connection her clinging to what is already familiar.

Her experiences within the women’s spaces of the Marrakech’s *zaweeyas* encapsulate her ambivalence. When she first enters the *zaweeya* of Moulay Ibrahim she is once again disoriented,

describing herself as “stunned, dazed, as though I had been hit on the head and emerged, like the wanderer in old fairy tales, in another time, another place” (301). By making comparisons to fairy tales and describing herself as “in another time,” Fernea again echoes the kind of rhetoric used by Wharton – the rhetoric that constructs Morocco as a dream-like and timeless place. Her language here is tinged with exoticism, describing her entrance into the *zaweeya* as wondrous because of how unusual it is to her. She searches for something familiar in the sights of the *zaweeya*, some image she can latch onto and understand, but she admits that “[n]o familiar images came to my rescue so that I could compare, put together, relate to something within my own experience” (302). This unfamiliarity is contrasted against her time in the tomb, a place where she could look up at the clocks on the wall and the pictures of Moroccan officials and feel like she was still in a world she understood. In the *zaweeya* there are no such features of familiarity for her gaze to settle on, leaving her to face her bewilderment at this new world with nothing but Aisha’s company to anchor and direct her. Instead of closing herself off, she decides to observe the *zaweeya* and structure her thoughts, after which she admits “[t]he initial rush of strangeness faded” (302). Once she acclimates to the elements of the *zaweeya*, Aisha insists that it is time to leave, something that disappoints Fernea: “Now that I had overcome my panic and nervousness, I found it pleasant and peaceful in the *zaweeya* ... The different sounds and images that had seemed so overwhelming at first sight now blended together and fitted into a pattern. [...] I wanted to stay longer in this harmonious women’s world” (304-5). That sense of separateness seems to dissipate the more time Fernea spends in the *zaweeya* because it is a place where she can bond with the women of Morocco, one of the goals central to her writing. A further visit to another *zaweeya* brings her back into that ambivalent space, one in which she is more observer than participant. She experiences the same separateness she felt in the tombs

when she witnesses a dancing girl: “[She] looked to me as though she had reached a state of trance and was almost out of control, her head lolling back and forth, her arms limp” (316). What she sees in the girl is akin to the hysteria she glimpsed in the women throwing themselves across the saint’s casket – an emotional expression she has no ability to grasp. Even when the girl seems to settle down and Fernea’s friends ask if she wants to dance, she says, “[T]hat’s not my music” (317). Though she wants to stay in the women’s spaces of the *zaweeyas*, she feels a sense of cultural division that she cannot cross over. As much as she would like to bond with the women and nurture a sense of solidarity based on gender, her whiteness and her role as a writer still make it difficult to be a part of their world.

While the tension of her belonging runs through the text, it is a tension left unresolved, as her sense of belonging is called into question at the very end of her stay in Morocco. Before Fernea leaves, she and Aisha decide to go to the mosque of Sidi Bel Abbas. Aisha tells Fernea she does not need to wear her *djellaba*, leaving her garbed in her “yellow summer dress and sandals, obviously a Westerner” (407). She does not obscure her identity as a foreigner in the same way she did in the tomb of Moulay Ibrahim. When they arrive at the entrance to the mosque Fernea wonders if Aisha intends to take her, the “unfaithful infidel,” inside such a holy site, only for Aisha to tell her to wait outside. Fernea, in her surprise, realizes that she “was not to go into the shrine at all. I didn’t have to make any final decision. Aisha had made it for me” (410). After pushing Fernea to enter places closed off to her, after being the one to authorize her passage into the shrines and *zaweeyas* of Marrakech, Aisha is the one who signals to Fernea that there are some places central to Moroccan life to which she will never have access. What this moment also represents is a final negation of Aisha’s role as a native informant, whether or not this is something intended by either Aisha or Fernea. Rather than acting as a source for

information or as a legitimizing sponsor for Fernea's inquiries, she ends up denying her the means to obtain ethnographic knowledge of this shrine. She places Fernea in a position where her ambivalence cannot be avoided. Standing alone in the courtyard as Aisha prays inside, Fernea confronts her status as an outsider without any local dress to disguise her. Her alienation comes into sharper relief when a beggar in a wheelchair notices her standing outside the mosque and moves towards her, examining her. As the beggar gets closer to her, she realizes "what an incongruous figure I was in this setting, far more incongruous than the beggar ... for the beggar had a place in the shrine, he belonged here, this was his territory. I was a stranger, and alone" (412). The scrutiny of the beggar suggests that while Fernea has grown close to the people she knows in Marrakech, that closeness cannot prevent her from being read as a foreigner and has not changed who she is. There remains the fact that for all of her participation in the holidays and rituals of Moroccan life she will always be a Westerner, and that on some level she will never completely belong. Her position as an American leaves her connection with Aisha and the other women of Rue Trésor in a state of unresolved tension.

From the moment Fernea arrives in Marrakech, she pursues a sense of belonging in the world of the women in the medina, but a concrete notion of what that belonging looks like never comes to her. Part of that belonging is necessitated by her half-cloaked goal of ethnographic writing about the women of Marrakech – part of it seems to spring from her own wish to bond with the women on the basis of gender, across the lines of nationality and race. She envisions the high walls of the city and the veils of the women as analogues to one another, symbols of Moroccan private life and a metaphorical blockade to her inquiries. It is only through her friendship with Aisha, partially constructed as a "native informant," that she is able to enter into the spaces of the women's private rituals. At the same time, when she locates these secluded

religious spaces, even those exclusive to women, she manifests a distant gaze as she is confronted with practices she finds too alien to participate in. These moments of alienation cause her to defer to the familiar discourses of Orientalism, even if she does this to an unconscious degree. When this sense of alienation fades, she is left with the sense that she cannot fully cross over into the world the women inhabit. Her final interaction with Aisha proves that belief correct, as her time with Marrakech ends with her friend leaving her behind as she steps into a sacred site where Fernea cannot follow. What concludes her text is ambivalence, as she leaves Morocco with the unspoken conclusion that, regardless of good intentions or some desired cross-cultural gender-based bond, she cannot elude the subject position she inhabits based on her race.

Given the ambiguity that ends her text, it is important to consider the place of *A Street of Marrakech* with respect to white women writing about Morocco. Despite the presence of some Orientalist tropes, the way Fernea writes of her time in Marrakech does more to leave room for the counter-hegemonic interventions described by Mills and Lewis. She is resistant to the French elements of the city, wanting to learn as much as she can about life away from the remnants of colonial occupation. She leaves space open in her text to reflect upon how the country has changed and even improved since Moroccan independence, while allowing the people she encounters to comment upon what must be done to heal the wounds of colonialism. When it comes to her interactions with other women, she does not paint them as damsels to be saved by white men but rather as complete individuals who are capable of dealing with their problems on their own. The bits of Orientalist language that underwrite Fernea's account of life in Marrakech can be seen as the vestiges of long period of Western authors writing about the East – while they may slip in unintentionally, that does not make them any less problematic. Fernea might not be an out-and-out Orientalist, but her writing should not be seen as a progression towards “good” or

“ethical” ethnography or travel writing. What *A Street in Marrakech* represents is a shift in dynamics and a growing sense of complexity when it comes to how Westerners write about the East. It introduces a number of questions about the practice: What does it mean for a foreigner to seek out an “authentic” experience of Morocco? Is there an ethical way to build a life in a country with a legacy of colonial occupation? While we might not find our answers looking at Fernea’s work in isolation, we might get closer to them by looking at the writing of Suzanna Clarke, another Western writer who sought to make a home in Morocco.

4 Atavistic Desires: Suzanna Clarke, Culture Collection, and the White Saviour Myth

Suzanna Clarke begins the account of her time in Morocco by admitting that it might have been “a fit of madness” that caused her and her husband Sandy to purchase a *riad* in Fez, a place where they “[couldn’t] speak the language and [had] virtually nothing in common with the locals” (1). What she is attempting to convey is the notion that her choice to make a new home in one of Morocco’s oldest cities was not a calculated one. She describes it more as an impulse borne out of her love of Morocco and her love of Fez in particular, as she says that despite the country’s “confrontational” aspects it was “a country where we both felt more alive than anywhere else, our every sense engaged” (3). According to Clarke, they did not have to learn to love the country as they lived there – they were already infatuated enough to choose to build a life in Fez. That decision to build a life would prove to be literal, as Clarke’s goal in her first years of living there was to oversee the restoration of an old *riad* – a restoration that she claimed would preserve an important piece of Moroccan architecture while remaining faithful to the traditions that shaped it. Her project of restoration would be chronicled in her book *A House in Fez: Building a Life in the Ancient Heart of Morocco*.

Clarke’s place as a white woman writing about Morocco differs from the other two women’s texts I have already discussed. She does not have the same sort of authorial clout that made Wharton attractive to the French protectorate government, nor does she have the same expertise in ethnography and Middle Eastern studies that Fernea possessed. While she has a long career as a journalist and photographer, these talents were not what brought her to Fez – rather, they informed the work she did once she started living there. What sets her apart from those two writers is that Clarke’s writing is not only on paper, but online as well. She started the blog *The View from Fez* in tandem with the writing of her book, a blog which still has new posts over a

decade after its inception. It is a place where Clarke and other writers stationed in Fez publish photo essays, reviews of musical festivals, and accounts of everyday life in the city. Whereas both Wharton and Fernea wrote about Morocco within specific time constraints – a month and a year respectively – Clarke’s writing about Morocco has continued long after her text was published. Another difference from both Wharton and Fernea is that Clarke was born in New Zealand and has lived most of her life in Australia, both places with their own unique relationships with their colonial pasts and presents. She is not writing from an American perspective, an interesting consideration given that another part of Clarke’s writing that sets her apart is that she is writing a few years after the September 11th attacks. While this fact does not slip into the text more than a couple times – she says that she personally did not experience any anti-Western sentiments (184) – it is interesting to note that she is writing about a predominantly Muslim country in the aftermath of an event that accelerated a lot of nascent Islamophobia.

While the circumstances of Clarke’s account reflect Fernea’s, what with her lengthier stay and focus on settlement, the actual content of her writing tracks much closer to that of Wharton’s text. She sees herself entitled not just to live in Fez like any other expat, but to intervene and work to preserve the *riad* even if not one Moroccan asked her to do so. Though she introduces the contours of her mission as if it sprung from some romantic impulse that she just had to pursue, that apparent spontaneity disappears into a text that feels obsessed with control, both in terms of how Clarke’s textual self is constructed and in how she goes about restoring the *riad*. The linchpin of the text is Clarke’s attempt to construct herself in the image of a figure I will call the “good white woman,” one whose interventions in another culture – prescribed by her race and gender – are justified because it is “the right thing to do.” I call it an “attempt” because what is exposed instead is an underlying colonial mode of understanding the world, one in which

Western appropriation of foreign cultural artifacts is justified because the people of that culture cannot properly preserve them.

It is this colonialist viewpoint, working in tandem with the idea of the “good white woman,” that emerges in the patterns that tie this text back to both Wharton and Fernea. The most prominent pattern, the one that spreads out into all the others, is that of Orientalism and architecture. Clarke sets up a binary opposition between Moroccan architecture and broadly Western architecture that seems to privilege the former, one in which Moroccan architecture is seen as expressing an interconnectedness Western architecture lacks. This superficial flip of the binary does not prevent Clarke from exoticizing an imagined Moroccan past or appealing to the timelessness trope of Orientalist discourse. Where Orientalism and architecture intersect the most is in her mission to restore the *riad*, as she describes the dilapidated buildings of Fez as yearning for foreign intervention, something she uses to justify her own project. She fashions herself as a “white saviour” for preserving the architecture, something that bleeds into her relationships with Moroccan women. Clarke views the women she encounters in much the same way as she views the architecture – in need of Western intervention to improve their circumstances. Her white saviour tendencies towards Moroccan women brush up roughly against her *riad* restoration, as she tries to exert a power of surveillance over the *woman's space* she has claimed for herself. When she finds her generosity unreturned by the women, she subjects them to a scrutinizing, policing form of the gaze, as she suspects them of trying to cheat her out of her money and her time. By tracing how these patterns spread throughout the text, I will demonstrate how Clarke's *A House in Fez* serves as a troubling portrait of the ways in which white Western benevolence, gendered as feminine, can become an alibi for colonialist forms of appropriation and continued articulations of Orientalism.

4.1 A View from the Old Testament: Clarke's Atavism and the Architecture of Fez

Clarke's construction of a binary between the West and Morocco centers around her observations about architecture, and on both ends of this binary the architecture serves as an expression of some underlying cultural truth. The way she writes about the architecture of both the West and Morocco encapsulates much of how she sees both worlds. The pattern of Orientalism and architecture still emerges, even if the binary between Occident and Orient is flipped. Within this binary Western architecture is characterized as lifeless, capturing the undercurrent of emptiness Clarke sees as the core of Western life. She describes the "suburban houses in the West with their vast expanses of lawn, essentially empty space, with the house as the central feature" and reflects on how such houses do not mesh with the land on which they are built, "certainly not in the sprawling estates of poorly designed housing that were the bane of Western cities" (123). The emptiness that surrounds these Western houses seems to characterize the kind of life one lives within them, and the misalignment of the architecture with the land surrounding it only exacerbates the sense of artificiality observed by Clarke. In contrast to the emptiness of Western architecture, Moroccan architecture is seen as capturing a sense of order wherein the space is filled up. When Clarke asks her developer friend Rachid why the architecture in Fez is so different, he answers: "The Arabs were desert people and they found emptiness frightening [...] So they created a way to formally control the space. [...] In Fassi houses, symmetry is used as a way of making the space intelligible" (123). Rather than allowing emptiness to permeate the space inside and outside the home, those who built the homes of Fez sought to make the space manageable so as to keep emptiness from overtaking them. These architectural principles are seen by Clarke as aligned with the cultural aspects of Moroccan life that produced them. She also sees these architectural principles as an antidote to social ills that

are much more prevalent in the West, such as criminality and drug abuse. She reasons that “[t]he loneliness and alienation that is often the reason for people in wealthy countries turning to drugs does not appear to be as much of a problem [...] And the fabric of community is as intricately interlocked as the houses themselves; everyone knows what’s going on with everyone else” (99). She is once again constructing the West as a place rife with alienation and separateness, with the interconnectedness of Fez representing a way to escape from the monotony of one’s homeland.

Despite constructing a sort of binary opposition meant to point out the emptiness of Western culture, she continually returns to the features of Western culture as a means of comparison to what she encounters in Fez. Her knowledge of Western pop culture becomes a cultural anchor, a means by which she makes some of the unfamiliar elements of Moroccan life understandable. She makes this kind of comparison when she learns about the Moroccan practices surrounding magic from her friend Ayisha. Clarke observes that the women who purchase potions and ingredients for spells “were seeking magical solutions to their problems from people they respected” before asking: “Were they greatly dissimilar to those Westerners who bought endless self-help books, or tuned in to Dr. Phil and Oprah for advice?” (120). This question seems rhetorical, and Clarke seems to be implying that the mysticism one finds in Moroccan culture can be equivocated to Western obsessions with self-help gurus. She continues to make comparisons about the spiritual elements of Moroccan life when she describes how the Fassis working on the restoration discuss the Koran with each other. She observes how they “would talk in great depth about the characters in the Koran ... as though they were real people whose habits and foibles they knew well. It was a bit like office workers in Western countries chatting about characters in a soap opera around the water cooler” (217). Her use of Western pop culture as a means to render the religious elements of Moroccan life understandable comes off as

reductive, as she makes discussions about the Koran seem similar to discussions about *All My Children* or *Days of Our Lives*. While the apparent mundanity of these comparisons prevents Clarke from engaging in Orientalist exoticization, they also paint the beliefs of Moroccans, signaled by “the Koran,” as equal in frivolity to forms of mindless Western entertainment. Clarke’s “rejection” of the soulless West cannot help but feel performative to some degree given how often she appeals to the West as a means for making sense of the East.

Clarke’s investment in Western ways of seeing the world appears beyond her use of pop culture, as she recycles a number of Orientalist tropes when describing Moroccan architecture and Moroccan life. One trope she loves to call upon is the ancientness of Fez, from the architecture to the dress to the customs – the word “medieval” comes up many times, echoing the *timelessness* discourse used by Wharton and Fernea. She refers to the process of buying the *riad* as a “medieval transaction” (31); she describes the people of Fez looking “medieval in their *djellabas* and headscarves” (34); and she writes of going into the *souks* of Fez and feeling “transported back to the Middle Ages” (68). The space of the *souks* is written about by Clarke as an atavistic space, something that pulls her back into an imagined Moroccan past. That atavism is also expressed when she compares the sights of Fez to images described in ancient biblical passages. One such comparison comes when she paints a picture of the view from their *riad*’s terrace: “If you removed the satellite dishes, the view could have been straight out of the Old Testament” (27). Save for some of the features of the landscape that are reminders of technological development, Fez would still look as ancient as it always has. This relationship between the country’s glorified ancientness and the reality of how it has changed is encapsulated in the prologue of the text when Clarke writes, “Morocco has the mystique of a land from the Old Testament yet appears to be coping comfortably with modernization” (2). While she seems

to have a clear sense of how Morocco has altered since the ancient times that she is drawn to, using the verb “coping” to describe the country’s relationship with modernity is an interesting choice. It makes modernization seem like an event that must be struggled through, an inevitability that must be dealt with that is tantamount to a period of mourning. Despite being a foreigner, Clarke seems to reject this process of modernization in order to indulge in a fetishistic form of atavism, a misplaced nostalgia for a history that does not belong to her.

Clarke’s love for Fez is a love that springs out of her affection for an exotic image of its past – she is infatuated with these traditional elements and skeptical of how they might be altered by the passage of time. She admits as much when she is looking for a house to buy and specifies that she wants one “that had been spared the process of modernization,” as opposed to one filled with modern amenities, which “can spell disaster for an ancient house” (18). She refrains from rendering Morocco as unchanging or timeless in the way Wharton’s Orientalist discourse does, but Clarke has a persistent affection for the romanticized features of the past rather than the reality of the country’s present. She seems driven by a Western notion of authenticity wherein “[o]ld objects are endowed with a sense of ‘depth’ ... [and] [t]emporality is reified and salvaged as origin, beauty, and knowledge” (Clifford *The Predicament* 222). It is the age of the *riad* that is the source of its authenticity, which further produces its aesthetic value and historical significance. Clarke’s decision to buy the *riad* shows her indulging in the thinking of a culture collector, the kind of thinking described by Clifford wherein authenticity is paramount. He identifies this authenticity as “produced by removing objects and customs from their current historical situation” (228). In this sense, Clarke’s fetishistic atavism is what produces the *riad*’s authenticity – the present of the *riad*, crumbling and dilapidated, is the ground on which to justify the work of the restoration, something that can allow for a return to a more authentic

image of history. Part of her yearning for authenticity no doubt stems from her view of the West as soulless and artificial, as “every imagined authenticity presupposes, and is produced by, a present circumstance of felt inauthenticity” (Clifford “Allegory” 114). The promise of resurrecting an authentic cultural past is conceived by Clarke as a means to escape an inauthentic Western present. While Clarke’s atavistic desires are half of what leads her to restore the *riad*, the rest of her reasoning stems from a desire to intervene, to prevent the destruction and further perversion of Morocco’s historical architecture. It seems that inauthentic Western present she flees is able to infiltrate Moroccan life as well. She seems to imagine the restoration project as a means to preserve authentic elements of Moroccan culture, even if the preservation of these authenticities “would be at best artificial aesthetic purifications” (*The Predicament* 4). Perhaps maintaining this aesthetic purity is enough for Clarke, even if the restoration of the *riad* is a small project, one that cannot abate the tide of modernity she fears.

Part of this dismay at the country’s modernization stems from Clarke’s caution about the development of tourism within Fez. This caution comes up when Clarke goes into a *souk* and describes feeling “dismayed to see a modern, fluorescent-lit boutique between the stalls. It seemed only a matter of time before this market would resemble those in any tourist city” (Clarke 219). The boutique in the *souk* becomes a symbol for the encroachment of tourist influence, something she views as a threat to everything she loves about Fez. She further comments on this by highlighting her misgivings about tourism: “It seems that in catering to tourists, cities shape themselves according to Western cultural values, and in so doing destroy their individuality, the very uniqueness tourists have been seeking in the first place. Mass tourism sanitizes a place, making it appear like everywhere else, then moves on in the relentless search for somewhere different, where the same thing happens all over again” (220). Tourism is

configured as some all-consuming force bent on eroding the authenticity and history of a place, either erasing what makes a place unique or capitulating to the exotic stereotypes that have nothing to do with reality. By describing tourism this way, Clarke is “drawing on a colonial discourse in which progress and industrialization [are] seen as synonymous with Westernization, while the rest of the world is seen as caught up in tradition and culture” (Frankenberg 205). The development of the tourist industry in Morocco is described as a capitulation to Western ideas, something that will cost Morocco in terms of its culture. The problem with this is that it reinforces the colonialist notion that industrialization or commercialization are inherently Western – while it might paint this as a negative, the binary thinking this idea presupposes remains unchallenged. Clarke continues to draw on this colonial discourse as she begins to think like a culture collector. Most of what Clifford describes as the motivating factors of culture collection are shared by Clarke: “Collecting – at least in the West ... implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss ... [with a focus on] what seems ‘traditional’ – what by definition is opposed to modernity” (Clifford *The Predicament* 231). Though Clarke might not be a collector in the anthropological sense, she is operating on the same logic, attempting to “rescue” the ancient, traditional *riad* and prevent it from vanishing beneath the encroaching tide of modernity spurred on by Western tourism and Moroccan affections for “modern amenities.” Clarke’s project of culture collection also drives her to accumulate smaller cultural artifacts of Fez which she seeks to repurpose for her restoration project. Clarke pursues this impulse to collect when she sees a set of doors from a house in the Mellah (Jewish quarter) of Fez being sold by a carpenter. She worries that these doors will be sold to foreigners and become “more pieces of cultural heritage lost to Fez” (130) and purchases them with the goal of keeping them in the city, even if that means the possibility of “fueling a market in cultural

heritage I did not agree with” (133) and being saddled with a set of doors she has “no idea” (134) what to do with. She is preserving for the sake of preservation, collecting cultural artifacts even when she has no purpose in mind for them. What is expressed through this Western form of culture collection, even when practiced by someone like Clarke, is an insidious form of appropriation justified by Western notions of benevolence. While Clarke is represented as pursuing this project out of good intentions, what undergirds her writing – both in terms of how she sees Morocco and how she sees herself – is a distinctly colonialist worldview.

4.2 “Crying out for Restoration”: The Moral Obligation of the Good White Woman

The project of restoring the *riad* brings to the surface Clarke’s colonialist ideas surrounding her entitlement and obligation – she operates under the notion that her intervention in another culture is morally justified. Although she initially claims it might have been a “fit of madness” that led her and her husband to buy the *riad*, it is important to examine how Clarke writes of the process of purchasing the house and restoring it – it is in these moments that the pattern of Orientalism and architecture becomes most prominent. Her impression of the medina at the beginning of the text highlights what seemed to inspire her to undertake this mission, as she describes “gazing down over the ancient walls of the Medina and the decrepit houses within, just biding their time for people with the vision, money, time, and energy to restore them. We confirmed to each other that those people should include us” (10). Being reasonably wealthy foreigners, they seem to view their newfound mission to restore one of these houses – another word she uses is “rescue” (10) – as an obligation. They have the resources to perform this undertaking, and therefore they must, or risk leaving these houses to collapse. Part of this rhetoric of rescue involves the feminization of architecture, something that manifests in how the

aesthetics of certain houses are described. One house Clarke sees in the Mellah is described as having “graceful proportions,” though it is seen as “sliding into an irrevocable decline” (130). The borderline erotic description of the house’s proportions is paired with the description of its decay in order to justify restoration. That feminization of space also happens in the *riad* when Clarke learns that it once belonged to a Sudanese woman, a former slave girl and the secret third wife of a Fassi silk trader who purchased the house for her (110). The space of the *riad*, though purchased by a man, is feminized by virtue of its former inhabitants – the Sudanese woman and her two daughters. The *riad* was, after the Sudanese woman was deserted by her husband, a space for women. This revelation about the *riad*’s history prompts Clarke to wish that she could show the woman who once owned it “what we were doing to preserve her beautiful house. I had the feeling she would approve” (101). As the space is feminized, there is this self-congratulatory moment that feels a bit tone-deaf considering the context – rather than wanting to talk to this woman out of any interest in her life, she daydreams about the approval she is sure she would receive for her work on the *riad*. This self-congratulatory moment is nothing compared to the heaping of praise that she and Sandy receive from their friend Rachid once their work on the house is complete. He tells them: “You have respected not only the architecture but the spirit of this place. [...] Usually ... people want to make it their own fantasy, but you have not done that” (259). He positively contrasts Clarke and her husband to the other Westerners buying up real estate in the Medina: “If they come to invest money, or with an Orientalist, Arabian-nights fantasy, they do not understand it. [...] People who want to make a fantasy should build it somewhere else” (260). Clarke’s decision to include this brief speech from Rachid that validates all the work she has done – and deciding to conclude the text with that – is very revealing. What this concluding speech provides is vindication of Clarke’s restoration project, and that

vindication becomes the concluding message of the text. There is no ambiguity, no questions left as to her place in Moroccan society, no trace of the ambivalence – it seems to say that she did everything right all along, and that the authentic image of the *riad's* past has been realized by her. In a way, Rachid's validation serves to resolve any insecurities on Clarke's part about the success of the project while also resolving any ambivalence felt by the reader as to the ethics of the *riad's* restoration. What Clarke does not seem to understand is that she has been making a fantasy the entire time she has worked on the *riad* – the fantasy of the “good white woman,” the fantasy of the “white saviour.”

The idea of Clarke positioning herself as a “good white woman” stems from the way her language about rescuing and restoring echoes some of the discourses of white Western women in development work. Barbara Heron's text *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative* explores how white middle-class women doing development work believe they are obliged and entitled to help some disenfranchised Other. While much of Heron's analysis focuses on the dynamics between white Canadian women and communities in the Global South, the underlying impulses can be extrapolated onto Clarke's writing. What Heron describes as obligation is constructed as something based in a sort of white middle-class morality, something she repeatedly describes as “bourgeois.” In pursuing such a moral obligation, “[t]he moral self is secured as innocent of any hint of implication in domination, even as this very relationship of power is enacted through the panoptical, judging, and unmarked gaze of white bourgeois subjectivity. White women who choose to do development work are thereby definitively self-established as ‘good persons’” (44). Because the intervention of a white subject is constructed as moral, those that do such work are given license to act upon the place they pursue development in while remaining secure in their identities as good white women. Working

in tandem with this sense of moral obligation is entitlement, the idea of “[taking] for granted that we can go to, live in, and be active in other people’s countries – and lives – *if we choose* to do development work” (45, emphasis hers). Undergirded by the morality of such work, this entitlement means that whether or not the white subject pursues this work is a function of their agency alone. The dynamic described by Heron can be seen as yet another manifestation of the “white savior” myth, one that ensures that “varied intercultural and interracial relations are often guided by a logic that racializes and separates people into those who are redeemers (whites) and those who are redeemed or in need of redemption (nonwhites)” (Hughey 2). The white savior has the obligation and entitlement to rescue these disenfranchised groups along with the agency to do so. There is a dark imperialistic undertow to this idea of salvation at the hand of a generous, good white person, as it cloaks the colonialist objectives of domination and conquest with a veneer of selflessness and care: “Whiteness emerges as an iron fist in a velvet glove, the knightly savior of the dysfunctional ‘others’ who are redeemable as long as they consent to assimilation and obedience to their white benefactors of class, capital, and compassion” (8). Whiteness legitimizes this sinister project of rescue and restoration, as the white subject is afforded the agency to act upon a racialized or cultural Other, to save those who, according to the white subject, will not save themselves. All the while the decision to exercise this agency is rendered as moral. The white subject, a distinction that includes the white middle-class woman Heron describes, is always right.

Clarke remains textually constructed as a kind of white saviour, inhabiting the same space of white middle-class female subjectivity as Heron’s development workers. Her mission to restore the *riad* stems from thinking of it as a moral obligation. The way she writes it, these decrepit houses are asking her and her husband for help, and so they are entitled to move into

Fez to see that this work is accomplished. She even imagines the kind of congratulations she would receive from figures of Morocco's past, like the slave girl, for being so true to the spirit of the house while ensuring that her journey ends on a final note of approval from an expert on restoration. In the end, they are reassured that they are "good whites," saving this dilapidated house from inevitable destruction. Her initial choice is made even more moral through the language she uses to describe other houses in the same situation. As she and her husband walk through the medina, she writes of the "once magnificent but now forlorn houses that were crying out for restoration, deserted by wealthy families who'd left for Rabat when the French protectorate made that city the capital instead of Fez" (Clarke 17). The houses are described as more than sad, crumbling buildings – they are configured as living entities that are "crying out" to be returned to their former glory after many decades of neglect. They are depicted like damsels in distress, in need of a wealthy patron to rescue them from inevitable decay. To rescue such a house from this pain becomes tantamount to saving another person from pain. More than just constituting a moral choice, Clarke's decision to restore the house also constitutes an engagement with Morocco's colonial past. There is a lingering detail in her description of these houses – that they were abandoned and left to decay when the French protectorate government changed Morocco's capital from Fez to Rabat. The state of these houses is the result of colonial upheavals that wracked the lives of Moroccan people – their decay can be understood as symbolic of the ongoing consequences of French rule, at least through Clarke's perspective. By choosing to restore one of the houses affected by this desertion, Clarke is playing out some sort of process of healing the wounds inflicted upon Moroccan culture through colonization. She is perpetuating the myth of the white saviour on a cultural level, a "good white" restoring the damage inflicted by "bad whites."

4.3 “The Picture of a Colonial Administrator”: Moroccan Women and Surveillance in the *Riad*

Clarke’s role in the text as a white saviour is compounded by the ways in which she attempts to form close relationships with Moroccan women. She, like Fernea, seems to view Moroccan architecture as an analogue to Moroccan women, but in Clarke’s case that analogue springs from her apparent belief that the women she encounters, much like the crumbling houses of the medina, need her to intervene on their behalf. Helping the Moroccan women she meets becomes just as much of a means for her to prove herself as a “good white woman.” There are two women with whom Clarke attempts to form relationships: her initial housekeeper Khadija and her “modern woman” friend Ayisha, though the former is less successful. Both women are positioned, to some degree, as native informants, constructed similarly to Fernea’s Aisha but lacking her agency. They become sources for information about Moroccan customs, voices that fall into distant orbit around Clarke’s textual authority and are either relied upon or discarded when necessary. Both women become objects for her concern, her generosity, and – just as often – her judgments and suspicions. These interactions play out within the space of the *riad*, a place where Clarke attempts to maintain control, order, and security. Her interest in women’s spaces seems tied less to the secluded spaces of Moroccan women – she makes a few trips to the *hammam* spas, but that is all. What she is attempting to do is turn the *riad* into a woman’s space, with that woman being her. Her efforts to organize the *riad* in such a way leads to her indulging in the gaze – one through which she can scrutinize and police the actions of others, those deemed worthy of her suspicions

Khadija is the first Moroccan woman to become a recipient of both Clarke’s colonialist generosity and her suspicions. When she has to decide on her initial payment to Khadija, she admits that she “wanted to be generous, but I had both read and been told that if you paid for

much more than the going rate in Morocco it was taken as a sign of gross stupidity” – something she tries to avoid by compromising and “[giving] Khadija a gift in addition to payment slightly better than usual” (44). Clarke’s drive to be generous informs most of her interactions with Khadija, and her willingness to risk looking like a fool in paying more than usual is meant to convey the depths of this generosity. Her attempts to be altruistic to Khadija are not returned with gratitude. In one instance, after Khadija has helped Clarke unpack a number of deliveries, Clarke pays her fifty dirhams: “This was as much as Abdul got for an entire day as a parking attendant, yet I saw disappointment in her face, and realized I’d got the amount wrong with the initial payment I’d given her for the big clean” (53). While she acknowledges to some degree that Khadija’s disappointment is because of her own miscalculations, there remains the sense that Clarke’s generosity is being met with ungratefulness. The fact that she compares the paltry earnings of Khadija’s husband to what she is able to pay highlights her “white saviour” thinking even more – she, the benevolent white woman, is attempting to improve Khadija’s situation in a way her husband cannot. Khadija’s apparent ungratefulness reappears when Clarke notices the absence of a yellow hand towel. She becomes suspicious of Khadija almost immediately: “It was such a stupid thing to steal that I wondered whether Khadija thought I hadn’t paid her enough. Yet I had given her as much for three hours’ work as Abdul used to get for eight hours as a parking attendant. [...] I didn’t care about the towel itself; it was the betrayal of trust that disappointed me” (116). Once again Clarke reiterates that she pays Khadija much more than she should, along with how little she works in comparison to her husband for such a degree of payment. Of course, there is no conclusive evidence that Khadija was the one who stole the towel, or that the towel was stolen, or that Khadija believed that Clarke did not pay her enough – Clarke reads all of that into the situation on her own. The moral obligation she feels to restore the

riad doubles as a moral obligation to help Moroccan women, and Clarke attempts to frame herself as someone being taken advantage of, even if that framing does not quite fit. Just as swiftly as she extends a generous hand to Khadija, she pulls it away.

In contrast to the financially fraught relationship she has with Khadija, Clarke's interactions with Ayisha come the closest to developing into an authentic friendship. Clarke claims that Ayisha "typified the young Moroccan women who were causing a seismic upheaval in their extremely traditional culture" (94). She is constructed as a modern woman, one who is focused on her education rather than marriage while still following traditional Moroccan social customs by remaining a virgin until marriage. Ayisha's "modernity" in this case makes it possible for Clarke to bond with her without having to navigate a wide cultural or linguistic gap, while her knowledge of Moroccan traditions makes it possible to fulfill her obligation as an informant. There is a kind of transactional undercurrent to their relationship, one in which Ayisha "volunteer[s] [her] insights into Moroccan customs" while Clarke provides her insights on "the mysteries of academic writing" (142). At the same time, Clarke exhibits some of the concern for Ayisha both Wharton and Fernea express for Moroccan women. Her concerns tend to arise in response to Ayisha's mistreatment at the hands of men she pursues for romance. When discussing the American man Ayisha is carrying on a long-distance relationship with, she remarks that "[i]t sounded to me like he used her for fantasy material, and had no intention of making the relationship real" (201). As the relationship continues, Clarke worries that "Ayisha [is] forgoing the prospect of a good job because of a Cinderella fantasy" (255). In every instance, the concern demonstrated by Clarke is one centered around the fear that Ayisha is being used by these men – and because most of these men are American and British, there is the added fear that she is the object of their Orientalist fantasies. Though Clarke never intervenes or tries to put an

end to these relationships on Ayisha's behalf, there remains the sense that Clarke has the clarity to see the unhealthy aspects of these relationships to which Ayisha is oblivious.

Although Clarke seems to foster something close to friendship with Ayisha, that relationship succumbs to the same suspicions that characterized her relationship with Khadija. She seems to view the experience of being cheated – whether out of money or labour – as a defining aspect of her relationships with Moroccan women. Even the relationship she has with Ayisha is not immune to this suspicion. When Ayisha is having trouble writing a “critique of what Fez offered in the way of cultural tourism” (199), Clarke decides to rewrite it herself, a decision even she does not seem to understand. She admits to knowing that “[i]t was supposed to be Ayisha's work, and if she failed it would be her own fault, but I knew she had no place to study at home, and getting a degree was her best chance of improving her situation. I was in a position to help her, so why not?” (200). Clarke seems willing to accept this extra work because she believes it is what a good friend would do, but there is something problematic about the idea that she needs to do it to help “improve her situation.” Even if Ayisha did not earn such a degree, Clarke's drive to be a “good white woman” compels her to intervene, to assist in Ayisha's development. Her intervention does lead to Ayisha obtaining that degree, and once Clarke learns this she “[gets] the feeling I'd been played for a sucker, but at the same time I couldn't help admiring the skillful way she'd done it” (200). While Ayisha might not have stolen any money or material possessions from Clarke, she is still depicted in the text as a thief – both of the degree she obtained and of Clarke's personal time. Clarke is motivated to do what she thinks is good, but what is “good” is still tinged by a Western perspective wherein Clarke has to help “improve the situation” of the women she meets rather than let them live their own lives and make their own mistakes. And once again, the notion of “being played for a sucker” is something Clarke

projects onto the interaction with no evidence – it was her decision to help Ayisha, but she depicts herself as a victim and excuses her participation in academic misconduct. She remains constructed as a white saviour, and though it is a role she finds thankless, she sees it as a role she is obligated to fill.

The suspicion Clarke directs at Khadija and Ayisha stems from a desire for surveillance. To a certain extent, Clarke seems to wish to exercise a form of panoptic power within the space of the *riad*, even if she is unable to keep watch at all times. She cannot exercise any power to keep Khadija from supposedly stealing, and she cannot create a situation in which Khadija will exercise that power on herself. Though her use of the gaze affords her some power of representation within the text – she has the final word on how she depicts events and how she depicts other people – it is not a power she can manifest within the *riad*. The most she can do is refrain from hiring Khadija again. At the same time, the position Clarke occupies as someone who has the material wealth to employ people is recognized within the text. Sandy remarks, after watching her pay their workers, that she looks like “the picture of a colonial administrator” (143). Clarke admits that this idea makes her uncomfortable, imagining herself “as the patron of a rubber plantation, doling out a pittance to exploited workers. Yet the reality was that we were giving six people full-time work for several months on above average wages” (143). She attempts to sidestep this way of characterizing her mission, but she does so by reminding the reader of the generosity that stems from her position as a “good white woman.” She betrays a lack of understanding for any nuance that could be read into her position. Since she is not a colonial administrator, or a seeker of Orientalist fantasy – groups designated as “bad foreigners” – she can feel more assured in her position as a “good white woman.” She treats her workers with respect, she pays them well, she has respect for Moroccan traditions, and she is generous to

the point of letting downtrodden Moroccan women take advantage of her. Yet she does not question her own sense of obligation, her own entitlement, her own surveilling eye and the suspicions she heaps upon the Moroccans she meets. Even if she expresses sympathy to both Khadija and Ayisha because of the conditions they must grapple with, that sympathy amounts to little when she is just as willing to describe them as thieves or swindlers. Clarke seems ignorant of the fact that, as Spurr would say, “[t]he sympathetic humanitarian eye is no less a product of deeply held colonialist values, and no less authoritative in the mastery of its object, than the surveying and policing eye” (Spurr 20). The gaze Clarke wields is one of policing, one of ordering and categorizing others as potential threats and thieves. The way her eyes scan the space of the *riad*, the space she has claimed for herself in Morocco that she works to secure, do not feel so dissimilar from the way a colonial administrator would scan the space of their plantation.

Clarke’s generous actions, informed by self-interest – whether they include her decision to restore the *riad*, to pay someone more than usual, to help women even when she has no place to do so – stem from her desire to fashion herself as a “good white woman.” She intervenes to restore the *riad* and preserve Moroccan culture, but motivations are self-serving – she does it to escape from a hollow Western existence and to act out the colonialist sport of culture collection. She generously helps Moroccan women, even if she has no place to try and “improve their situation” and suspects them of theft. Despite her respect for Moroccan architectural traditions, she attempts to carve out the *riad* as a space for her in Fez. She does not seem to realize that her overzealous efforts to assume this pose reveal the colonialist underpinnings of her actions in Fez. By the same token, she does not seem to realize that becoming the figure of the “good white woman” is not the same as recognizing the complexities and power dynamics that come with being a white woman pursuing this kind of travel writing. If she possessed that recognition, she

might not have worked to restore the *riad* in the first place. As long as she refrains from reckoning with the complexities of her position as a white woman in Morocco, she cannot write outside the realm of colonialist and Orientalist discourse.

If there is a lesson that can be taken from reading Clarke, I believe it is that Orientalist language and the assumptions behind it are flexible and durable, possessing a definite sense of longevity. This longevity informs many of Clarke's descriptions of Moroccan culture and customs. Her constant comparisons made to the Old Testament or medieval societies recycle the well-worn Orientalist trope of timelessness, and the further comparisons to *Arabian Nights* echo the exoticizing rhetoric of an old tourist brochure. Even if she is unaware of these connotations, her intentions do not make much of a difference. These kinds of discourses and the stereotypes they enforce have a life far beyond being used by a travel writer who is ignorant to their meaning. They live on, perpetuating Western ideas about the East wherever they arise. This is especially problematic given that Clarke, writing in a post-9/11 world, needs to be cautious when writing about Islamic customs and people through a Western perspective, given that Orientalist misrepresentation can become a ratification for Islamophobic stereotypes. There are moments where she tries to do this – she brings up how Morocco has one of the best records for women's rights in the Islamic world (Clarke 98), she argues against the Western tendency to view all Muslim countries “as a monolithic block” (8) – but these efforts become counterweighted by the Orientalist language she dabbles in along with her white saviour tendencies. In the text she occupies a fraught position, one that comes with a series of appropriate questions: How does one go about ethically restoring this house while remaining faithful to the tenets of a culture one does not belong to? Is it even possible to do such a thing ethically? But Clarke does not seem interested in those complexities and seems willing to leave some of the more problematic

elements of her account to speak for themselves. Having said that, I do not want it to seem as if I see Clarke as another point on some binary – one in which Wharton is bad, Fernea is good, and she is somewhere in the middle, closer to Wharton than Fernea. What *A House in Fez* is a testament to is the degree to which Western conceptions of the East have been (and continue to be) influenced by the language of Orientalism and colonialism. It is an example of the adaptability of these forms of discourse and the new ways – both conscious and unconscious – in which they can manifest, such as in the case of the white saviour trope. It seems to say that while Western writers are struggling to find new ways of writing about the East, perhaps methods that are more ethical or conscious of the implications of such work, the language of Orientalism is not dead and can be reanimated at even the most unconscious whim.

5 Conclusion: The Durability of Discourse

Throughout this project I have been hesitant to construct a narrative of progress between these works, and I have attempted to thread this hesitancy into each chapter on each of these three women's texts. It would have been easy to construct a time-based binary centred around Morocco's colonial history. Wharton would have been held up as an example of "colonial travel literature" while both Fernea and Clarke would be characterized as writing "postcolonial travel literature." The narrative would have charted a move from the more overtly Orientalist travel literature written prior to and during the early 20th century towards the ethnographic and enlightened contemporary travel literature. Clarke's writing proves troublesome in such a narrative, given that she mixes in some of the colonialist condescension of Wharton with the settlement-focused writing of Fernea. The fact that one of the most recent pieces of travel writing about Morocco folds back upon the colonial discourses of the past shows that this critical reading would not work.

Part of my apprehension to utilize narratives of postcolonial progress is best expressed by feminist scholar Anne McClintock who writes: "[T]he *term* 'post-colonial' ... is haunted by the very figure of linear "development" that it sets out to dismantle. [...] [T]he term heralds the end of a world era, but within the same trope of linear progress that animated that era" (McClintock 85, emphasis hers). To think in terms of "the postcolonial" is to imply progress away from the colonial era and into a more enlightened age while still configuring history around colonialism. Progress was an idea crucial to colonial expansion – it was the idea that animated the French protectorate government, drove them to force progress upon a people who they deemed incapable of progress on their own. Breaking away from the idea of progress is necessary to read Wharton, Fernea, and Clarke together – what shifts in the patterns traced between the three of

them cannot be understood so much as “progress” but as a more general sort of change, one that does not lead to more “good” or more “bad” but is understood as change in itself. There are many changes between these three texts, but one of the most important ones is how each author accounts for their subject position.

Wharton’s position as a white woman is made more complex because of her work with the French protectorate government. That she describes herself as a “rabid Imperialist” makes sense – her colonialist ideology spreads through her writing like a virus. For most of *In Morocco* her gender is not remarked upon, allowing her whiteness to take primacy and afford her greater authority in justifying French rule of Morocco. When her gender does enter the text, as it does in her interactions with the harem women, she does not reckon with how her gender and race interact – her gender is instead a means to justify colonialism under the pretense of “rescuing” the women in the harem. Fernea’s more ethnographically focused account of settlement in Morocco does not indulge in the same “rescuing” discourse because she is much more able to reckon with her position based on race, gender, and class. She recognizes that she is much more privileged than the women in her neighbourhood, but she does not see herself as obligated to intervene on their behalf. Questions of belonging remain at the forefront of her experiences in Marrakech. She holds no sense of entitlement to enter the sacred sites that Aisha takes her to, and while she is able to be a part of these hidden places for a few brief moments, the ending leaves her sense of belonging in Morocco in more ambivalent territory. While her gender puts her in a position to bond with the women she meets, her race and class position her as an outsider. Clarke occupies a similar position to Fernea given that her text is also more focused on settlement than travel, but she returns to the discourse of “rescuing” with a strange obliviousness to its colonialist implications. She sees herself as morally obligated to intervene and preserve the *riad*, driven in

part by some misplaced nostalgia for a more authentic Moroccan past. Part of this obligation she feels springs from her subject position as a middle-class white woman – restoring this cultural artefact is what a “good white woman” would pledge their resources to do. Though she acknowledges the privilege she has that stems from class, she uses her class position to perform acts of generosity while still painting herself as an exploited party, whether she is being stolen from by Khadija or “played for a sucker” by her friend Ayisha. The selective acknowledgment of her privileges prompts no self-reflection or real questioning of whether it is ethical for her to pursue this mission, and the ending of the text implies that she was right all along. Her position informs the text, but it rarely enters into the text to be analyzed or questioned. Even in the moments where she questions herself, such as in response to Sandy’s “colonial administrator” comment, she quickly paves over any ambiguities that could arise and moves on to the next segment of her restoration project.

Paying attention to your subject position as a travel writer is a vital exercise. If you want to prevent yourself from producing writing that is irresponsible, you have to grapple with the questions of how your race, gender, nationality, and class inform both how you travel and how you write about it. It is not enough to selectively acknowledge certain forms of privilege you might hold, to bring them up and then brush them off with the claim that you are not as bad as the careless tourists or the oppressive colonists. Every overlapping facet of the author’s identity must be accounted for. What I am proposing would be, to borrow a term from critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, an intersectional approach to travel writing. While Crenshaw uses the idea of intersectionality to “articulate the interaction of racism and patriarchy” (Crenshaw 1265) – particularly to examine the unique forms of oppression faced by women of colour – intersectionality can also be used to examine how privileged identities (being white, straight,

middle or upper-class, male, cisgender, able-bodied, etc.) can interact with each other as well as with marginalized identities (being a person of colour, queer, lower-class, female, transgender, disabled, etc.). The goal is to analyze these identities not as distinct or separate segments but rather as a continuous whole.

Perhaps taking such an intersectional approach is one method of changing a facet of travel writing that did not change nearly as much between these three texts – the use of Orientalist discourse. To varying degrees of explicitness and intentionality, each of these authors indulges in some of the linguistic features of Orientalism, and the language in each case causes the stereotypes associated with them to resurface. In Wharton's text there is a more overt objective to her use of Orientalist tropes. She wants to justify French colonialism, to make Morocco attractive to European tourists, and she does this by working with a style cemented by Orientalists. With her goals in mind, however heinous they may be, using this style makes the most sense. What becomes more troublesome is when an author like Fernea takes a different approach, one that seeks a more honest and less stereotypical account of Moroccan life, and yet still ends up dipping into the same system of discourses. There is something more unconscious about her use of Orientalist style, whether in her writings about women's veils or the private religious spaces of Marrakech. Even if her use of such discourse is unintentional, it still serves as a perpetuation of Orientalist stereotypes and preoccupations. The same could be said of Clarke's text. There are points where she attempts to work against Western stereotypes about Muslim cultures, but those efforts seem less admirable given how often she compares Fez to a land out of the Old Testament, evoking the trope of timelessness. It can be hard to parse how aware she is of the entitlement she displays in the restoration of the *riad* or how problematic it is for her to suspect half of the Moroccans she encounters of theft. The text itself does not adequately

demonstrate such self-awareness, and it too ends up affirming Orientalist stereotypes and colonialist ways of thinking. Orientalism is by no means dead – it has shown itself to be a remarkably durable means by which to understand the world.

Travel writing and its relationship with Orientalism has shifted in much the same way as the mechanisms of colonialism itself have shifted. Globalization and the free flow of financial capital have altered the way that colonialism is exercised, allowing for what McClintock dubs “imperialism-without-colonies.” She claims: “The power of US finance capital and huge multi-nationals to direct the flows of capital, commodities, armaments and media information around the world can have an impact as massive as any colonial regime” (McClintock 89). The methods by which imperial power manifests have altered, whether through invasive military operations or organizations like the IMF and World Bank, but the undergirding ideology remains unchanged, meaning Orientalist discourse can still be wielded. A consequence of this kind of change is that one cannot be a career Orientalist in the same way they could over a century ago. You no longer have to be granted the authority to write about the Orient – anyone can do it at any time. Orientalist discourse has become decentralized, no longer wielded by a specific class of literary personalities, meaning that it can be picked up and perpetuated by anybody. The flexible positional superiority Said describes is still appealed to in modern Orientalist discourse, and the same tropes and stereotypes are being used, whether that is by Marine Le Pen or Donald Trump or some white travel blogger who keeps comparing Morocco to *The Arabian Nights*. There are still those who write off African and Muslim countries as inherently less civilized than Western countries. There is still the same fascination with veiled women, only now the kind of Orientalism-draped-in-feminism practiced by Wharton is used by other white Western women to decry the veil as a symbol of oppression – whether as a symbol of oppression for Muslim women

or as a symbol of potential oppression for white women. The agency of the veiled women in question is not acknowledged, and the same exhortation to save brown women from brown men plays out again and again. If Orientalist discourse has spread to the degree that anyone can use it, then anyone who uses it assumes some of the power that comes with it – the power to say that a country or a culture *is* like this or *is* like that. If so many people can wield such power, regardless of gender, what are contemporary travel writers supposed to do?

The easy answer would be thus: do not write travel literature. Then you do not run the risk of carelessly misrepresenting a group or culture that already has a great deal of xenophobic rhetoric leveled against it. I doubt anyone would listen to me if I made that my sole conclusion, so what I suppose would be useful is to map out some loose contours of good practice in the event that someone decides to pursue travel writing regardless. One thing to acknowledge is that the accessibility of Orientalist discourse and the ease with which it can be disseminated means that contemporary travel writers have even more of a responsibility to question their subject position. If they are to question their subject position, they should also question the tropes they use within their writing. It is vital to ask questions like: “Why am I comparing this place to something out of a dream?” “Why am I making comparisons to *The Arabian Nights*?” “Why am I so preoccupied with seeing under the veils of these women?” It is also important to acknowledge the colonial history of the place you write about as well as its colonial present. Do not freeze colonialism in the past or appeal to myths of progress – pay attention to how colonialism still affects this culture and how you, the hypothetical travel writer in question, are a part of that. If these questions prove too difficult or too troubling to answer, defer to my first conclusion. To continue playing with the same tropes of Orientalism, to keep returning to the same contaminated well, is both profoundly lazy and profoundly irresponsible. What I hope to

see instead is the development of a more ethical dimension of travel writing. I hope to see travel writing that finds new modes of representation, new ways of writing about cultural difference, new methods of moving beyond the discourse of Orientalism.

WORKS CITED

- "savage, adj. and n.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2019,
www.oed.com/view/Entry/171433.
- Agliz, Rachid. "Fernea in Morocco: The Women's Exotic World." *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, May 2016, pp. 453–69. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*,
 doi:10.1080/13629387.2016.1151790.
- Bejjit, Karim. "Female Spaces, Cross-Cultural Encounters, Elizabeth Fernea and the Moroccan Experience." *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, June 2012, pp. 491–501.
Taylor and Francis+NEJM, doi:10.1080/13629387.2012.658645.
- Berenson, Edward. *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa*.
 University of California Press, 2011.
- Clarke, Suzanna. *A House in Fez: Building a Life in the Ancient Heart of Morocco*. Pocket
 Books, 2007.
- Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Allegory." *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of
 Ethnography*. Edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. University of California
 Press, 1986, pp. 98-122.
- , "Introduction: Partial Truths." *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.
 Edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. University of California Press, 1986, pp.
 1-26.
- , *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard
 University Press, 1988.

- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241–99. JSTOR, *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/1229039.
- Fernea, Elizabeth. *A Street in Marrakech*. Anchor Books, 1976.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books, 1995.
- Frankenberg, Ruth. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Routledge, 1993. www-taylorfrancis-com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca, doi:10.4324/9780203973431.
- Given, Lisa M. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008. *SAGE Research Methods*. Web. 26 Aug. 2019, doi:10.4135/9781412963909.
- Heron, Barbara. *Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative*. Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007.
- Hughey, Matthew W. *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption*. Temple University Press, 2014.
- Hunter, F. Robert. "Manufacturing Exotica: Edith Wharton and Tourism in French Morocco, 1917–20." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, Jan. 2010, pp. 59–77. *Taylor and Francis+NEJM*, doi:10.1080/00263200903432266.
- Le Pen, Marine. "Avec Moi, Les Françaises Resteront Libres!" *Carnets d'espérances | Blog de Marine Le Pen*, 8 Mar. 2017, <http://carnetsdesperances.fr/2017/03/08/moi-francaises-resteront-libres/>.
- Lewis, Reina. *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity, and Representation*. Routledge, 1996.

- Maier, John. "Elizabeth Fernea's Moroccan Pilgrimage." *MELUS*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1988, pp. 67–81. JSTOR, *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/466987.
- McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism.'" *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 1992, pp. 84–98. JSTOR, *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/466219.
- Mills, Sara. *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism*. Routledge, 2003. www-taylorfrancis-com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca, doi:10.4324/9780203379882.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. *The Turkish Embassy Letters*. Edited by Theresa Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn. Broadview Press, 2013.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen*, vol. 16, no. 3, Oct. 1975, pp. 6–18. academic-oup-com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca, doi:10.1093/screen/16.3.6.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge, 2007. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uoguelph/detail.action?docID=324986>.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.
- Simour, Lhoussain. "The White Lady Travels: Narrating Fez and Spacing Colonial Authority in Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*." *Hawwa*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 39–56. brill-com.subzero.lib.uoguelph.ca, doi:10.1163/156920809X449535.
- Smith, Saphora. "An Army of Women Quietly Backs France's Far-Right Would-Be President." *NBC News*, 21 April 2017. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/french-elections-marine-le-pen-backed-quiet-army-women-n748136>.

- Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the Subaltern Speak?". *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Edited by Rosalind C. Morris. Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 21-80.
- , *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Spurr, David. *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration*. Duke University Press, 1993.
- Tromly, Lucas. "'The Small Talk of the Harem': Discursive Communities and Colonial Silences in Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*." *Studies in Travel Writing*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2009, pp. 239–50. *Scholars Portal Journals*, doi:10.1080/13645140903080040.
- Wegener, Frederick. "'Rabid Imperialist': Edith Wharton and the Obligations of Empire in Modern American Fiction." *American Literature*, vol. 72, no. 4, Dec. 2000, pp. 783–812. read.dukeupress.edu, doi:10.1215/00029831-72-4-783.
- Wharton, Edith. *In Morocco*. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920.
- Yegenoglu, Meyda. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.