

Ambivalent Spaces: The Moorish City and the Instability of Colonial Discourse in Anglo-American Travel Writing on Morocco

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Introduction

Anglo-American travel literature has long been regarded as a problematic genre in postcolonial studies due to its persistent entanglement with colonial discourse. This entanglement produces a discourse structured by what Edward Said terms Orientalism, defined as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (Said 1978, 2). This style of representation is inscribed in early twentieth-century Anglo-American travelogues on Morocco insofar as they reproduce spatiality as an “act of representation” (Bhabha 1994). Rather than approaching space as a neutral setting, this article treats Moroccan spatiality as discursively charged, shaped by colonial perception, and implicated in the construction of cultural difference and the mediation of colonial encounters (Mills 1991; Youngs 2013).

In light of this, spatiality emerges as a recurrent trope through which Orientalist interpretations are both reproduced and destabilized,

revealing the ambivalent dimension of colonial representation. The term “Moorish city,” as employed in this article, refers to the colonial-era designation adopted by Anglo-American travelers to signify historic Moroccan urban zones characterized by kasbahs, medinas, walls, and crowded markets. The term is approached critically here as it appears in Anglo-American travel writing, not as a neutral term but as a historically charged category deeply entangled with Orientalist modes of representation.

In this article, “cognitive” alludes to mediated perception rather than fantasy alone. The Moorish city is therefore approached not as a neutral physical setting, but as a space understood through representation. It is thus inscribed within the same discourse insofar as it echoes Orientalist fantasies associated with *The Arabian Nights*. Yet such representations do not remain fixed. In her travelogue *From Corsair to Riffian*, Isabel Anderson presents the city of Fez through a colonial gaze while simultaneously portraying it as inseparable from its inhabitants, whose openness and conviviality offer an alternative account of native agency and resistance. This complicates the fixed Orientalist notion of the Orient as a closed and hostile spatiality.

This study draws on a selection of early twentieth-century Anglo-American travelogues on Morocco, including Frances Macnab’s *A Ride in Morocco among Traders and Believers* (1902), Isabel Anderson’s *From Corsair to Riffian* (1914), and Edith Wharton’s *In Morocco* (1920), to examine how the Moorish city is discursively constructed across different narrative perspectives. These narratives are also the product of distinct travel forms: Macnab’s journey-based narrative, Anderson’s socially mediated romanticized travelogue, and Wharton’s reflective prose shaped by architectural and historical observation. Their points of divergence render comparison especially useful for rethinking colonial discourse.

Within the present corpus, the Moorish city constitutes a recurrent trope as a privileged site of representation. Among the cities

highlighted in the corpus, Tangier and Fez are especially significant since they crystallize two contrasting colonial spatial imaginaries: the port city symbolizing first contact and the interior city of opacity, ceremony, and contested authority. Tangier typically represents a portal to Africa and a transitional point of crossing from West to East, while Fez emerges as a space of intellectual prestige.

Gender equally informs the politics of space in these narratives, even if this article does not adopt gender as its primary analytical framework. Recent studies of women's travel writing have highlighted the need to approach such narratives as heterogeneous rather than ideologically uniform (Turner 2023; Chouchene 2020). In the Moroccan context, Lhoussain Simour (2020) likewise examines how gender influences modes of witnessing and narration in Anglo-American travel literature. Female travelers could at times gain access to domestic or gender-exclusive spaces less available to male observers, while nonetheless remaining implicated in colonial modes of seeing and representation. Their authority is therefore neither identical to that of male writers nor wholly external to imperial discourse. In the present corpus, gender operates less as a guarantee of sympathy than as a factor shaping what may be seen, how it is articulated, and what configurations of proximity, distance, or authority are rendered possible within the colonial encounter.

Although these three travelogues engage colonial modes of representation, they diverge in important ways. Macnab often frames Morocco through visual pleasure and dehumanizing distance, Anderson through romanticized and theatrical imagery, and Wharton through architectural witnessing and hierarchical comparison. The significance of these women's travel writing lies less in a binary opposition between colonial and anti-colonial discourse than in the distinct ways their narratives reproduce, renegotiate, and occasionally destabilize Orientalist logic.

Methodologically, this article adopts a close textual approach informed by postcolonial discourse analysis to examine how representations of

space are produced within the discursive layers of these travelogues. Such a framework is especially suited to travel-writing scholarship that has stressed the inherent complexity of these texts, which fluctuate between empirical observation, narrative construction, and ideological mediation (Pettinger and Youngs 2020). This article argues that Moroccan urban and architectural spaces in Anglo-American travel writing are cognitively constructed but operate as ambivalent contact zones in which colonial authority is both enacted and destabilized. Drawing on postcolonial theories of discourse and contact zones, the study outlines the spatial dimension of colonial discourse while highlighting how agency redefines space and unsettles colonial power relations.

Orientalist Spatiality: The Discursive Construction of the Moorish City

In Anglo-American travelogues, the Moorish city is frequently framed as a site of fantasy, chaos, opacity, and stagnation in contrast to the supposedly progressive sphere of the West. Said notes that “The Orient was almost a European invention” (1978, 1), which is materialized through the fixation of the city as an imagined geography that reveals the traveler’s unconscious framework of thought, shaped by inherited fantasy. Yet these urban descriptions are not merely aesthetic, as they reveal how travelers approach Moroccan spatiality through inherited visual and textual inscriptions that transform the city into a knowable entity subjected to the Western reader’s consumption. In colonial travel literature, the “Orient” is spatialized through the lens of the urban-rural divide, expressed in architectural forms such as walls, minarets, and courtyards, as well as through differentiated access to domestic, commercial, and political spaces. This form of spatiality foregrounds the idea that space is ideologically constructed, which is an idea theorized by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*, where he argues that “representations of space... are tied to the relations of production and the ‘order’ which those relations impose” (Lefebvre 1991, 33). Anglo-American travelers’ experiences of the city are

predominantly cognitive rather than purely objective, shaped by the interpretive frameworks or “mental maps” that mediate their perception of the world (see David Spurr 1993).

A closer look at the corpus suggests that this spatial discourse is manifested through specific acts of observation and gazing. Frances Macnab’s first encounter with Tangier symbolizes this process as she writes: “The red flag of the Sultan, the minarets of several mosques, the rounded dome of a koubah, the square, ragged outline of the Kasbah crowning the hill and overlooking the town, added the last touches of the Orient. Yet it was Africa!” (Macnab 1902, 17). This statement reveals a colonial metageography in which “the Orient” and “Africa” are imagined as culturally distinct symbolic zones instead of two historically entangled regions. Macnab’s astonishment reveals the instability of such inherited classifications when encountering Moroccan space. Tangier is visualized as a threshold city whose existence and legibility depend on inherited habits of categorization and classification. What Macnab first recognizes is not Morocco in its specificity, but rather as part of a visual pattern that perpetuates a pre-existing imaginative geography. Her fascination is therefore already informed by a discursive logic, for the city is understood through minarets, narrow alleys, and the kasbah before it is recognized as a lived urban space. This endorses the idea that spatial perception in travel writing is profoundly mediated by prior knowledge and representational strategies.

Isabel Anderson’s spatial imagination operates somewhat differently. Where Macnab’s Tangier is framed through visible architectural codes, Anderson rather envisions Moroccan spatiality through a more theatrical and romanticized language. In one striking passage, she imagines “a region of white-shrouded ghosts, of mountain bandits, a place of pearly cities where magnificent sultans lived luxuriously and ruled harshly” (Anderson 1914, 23). This passage visibly rehearses the alluring yet hostile Orient of popular Western imagination. Anderson’s rhetoric frequently recalls *The Arabian Nights*, turning movement within

Morocco into a theatrical narrative of wonder rather than a simple description of urban space: "I felt like a child reading for the first time the Arabian Nights" (Anderson 1914, 46). This contrast makes the differences among women's travel narratives more visible, in that Macnab tends to spatialize difference through visual forms and architectural codes, whereas Anderson more consistently dramatizes space through the tropes of fantasy, romance, and theatrical performance. Both remain shaped by Orientalist discourse, though they articulate it differently.

Macnab's depiction of Moroccan subjects often reflects the way she approaches urban scenery. Elsewhere, Macnab refers to "the dark forms of the Moors in their cloaks" (Macnab 1902, 19), dehumanizing Moroccan figures as ghostly silhouettes and visual figures rather than individuals. The description is instrumental in unraveling the forms of romanticization that abstract Moroccan agency and presence. The inhabitants of the Moorish city become part and parcel of the spectacle or the theatrical performance emanating from the traveler's perception. Therefore, her gaze fluctuates between captivation and dehumanization, exposing the ambivalent logic of colonial frameworks.

These representations are not confined to depictions of people but extend to spatial configurations as well. Travel writing participates in this process by portraying the Moorish city through an Orientalist lens, rendering it more knowable and intelligible to both the traveler and the Western reader. These spatial representations of the Moorish city are not solely descriptive in nature, but are deeply implicated in broader structures of power. This suggests that the traveler approaches the Moorish city through preconstructed "mental maps," that is, cognitive frameworks consisting of prior assumptions of Otherness strictly shaped by imagination and prejudice. The city thus appears not as a novelty but as a familiar entity already mediated through the multiplicity of representations that define and organize the Orient within the Western imaginary.

In the present corpus, cities such as Tangier and Fez are frequently described through Orientalizing motifs of enclosure, exoticism, disorder, visual opacity, and historical depth. These features are not necessarily Orientalist in nature, but they become Orientalized when framed as tropes indicating backwardness, alterity, and exoticness from the traveler's perspective. Such descriptions reinforce the Orientalist trope of the East as a spatial configuration outside modernity and civilization. However, these representations simultaneously reveal moments of colonial anxiety and tension, what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the simultaneous fascination with and repulsion toward colonized subjects. This foregrounds the interpretive dimension of spatial experience over seemingly factual descriptions of streets, walls, markets, or architecture. The cognitive space is approached as a space informed by observation, emotional disturbance, and biased representation. It ultimately sheds light on the traveler's inability to fully contain the urban environment, therefore causing a disturbing instability at the level of the colonial narrative.

The Contact Zone and Spatial Encounters

Based on this spatial framework, the concept of the contact zone deepens the understanding of how these encounters unfold within the asymmetrical relations of power. Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the contact zone refers to social spaces in which cultures meet, interact, and negotiate meaning within asymmetrical relations of power (Pratt 1992, 4). This concept is intrinsic to understanding spatiality as a site of social and cross-cultural interaction and contestation rather than a mere physical setting. In the context of Anglo-American travel narratives on Morocco, the Moorish city operates within this zone of colonial ideology. Colonial ideology refers to the system of representations through which colonial discourse is sustained. The Moorish city becomes a site of encounter where colonial observers engage with Moroccan subjects, negotiate cultural differences, and experience moments of uncertainty and tension.

This “space of encounter” symbolizes a dynamic terrain in which cultural difference is not merely represented but actively negotiated and contested. It is a colonial framework in which geographically and historically separated cultures come into contact and often clash. Pratt’s analysis of travel writing emphasizes that the genre itself is deeply implicated in the dynamics of the contact zone, as it both documents and participates in colonially structured cross-cultural encounters. In this sense, travel literature incorporates and reproduces colonial discourse through its representation of cultural interactions and the power imbalances that shape them; therefore, it actively contributes to the construction and circulation of colonial paradigms. As Pratt explains, the term “contact zone” refers to “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict” (Pratt 1992, 6). The contact zone then constitutes a structured site of unequal power relations shaped by historical, social, and political determinants.

The contact zone can thus be understood as a form of spatiality in which different cultures interact within unequal power relations. Typically, one group assumes a position of dominance, while the other is subjected to forms of control or exclusion. A stable balance of power is rarely achieved in such contexts, as these encounters are structured by coercion and inequality. Moreover, this spatiality is not purely physical but also social, cognitive, and ideological, functioning as a site where meanings and power relations are continuously negotiated.

These asymmetrical relations of power likewise highlight the presence of resistance, as Michel Foucault argues, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1978, 95). Within this framework, Orientalism can be understood as a discourse that produces knowledge about the Orient while simultaneously exercising power over it. Urban spaces are, therefore, not merely passive backdrops for colonial observation but

active sites in which resistance can emerge. Markets, mosques, and palaces become arenas where Moroccan subjects assert their presence, negotiate authority, and challenge assumptions. These moments of agency and resistance ultimately uncover the ambivalent nature of colonial encounters, in which both domination and disruption can coexist.

Spatial Ambivalence and the Limits of Colonial Discourse

While the contact zone highlights contact and interaction, Homi K. Bhabha's notion of ambivalence instead reveals the instability and heterogeneity inherent in these encounters. This notion also fosters a critical framework for understanding the spatial dynamics of colonial authority (Bhabha 1994, 122–23). The latter is never fully stable or complete; rather, it is marked by anxiety, contradiction, and internal instability. Moroccan spatial imaginary in travel narratives exemplifies this ambivalence, as they function simultaneously as sites of colonial control and as spaces that resist such control.

Bhabha links ambivalence to the contradictory movements of desire and disavowal that structure colonial discourse. These tensions expose the instability of colonial power and undermine its claims to coherence. As Bhabha writes:

In the ambivalent world of the “not quite/not white,” on the margins of metropolitan desire, the founding objects of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental objets trouvés of colonial discourse—the part-objects of presence. It is then that the body and the book lose their representational authority. (Bhabha 1994, 128)

For Bhabha, ambivalence disrupts the foundations of Western supremacy embedded in colonial discourse. It destabilizes colonial authority at both the material and representational levels, revealing its

dependence on repetition, difference, and incompleteness. The colonized subject is positioned as “not quite/not white” (Bhabha 1994, 128), occupying a liminal spatiality that resists full assimilation into discursive structures of meaning.

This condition gives rise to what Bhabha conceptualizes as hybridity, whereby colonial knowledge is transformed through processes of translation, negotiation, and reinterpretation. As a result, the authority of colonial discourse is never absolute but is continually rearticulated through alternative meanings and what Bhabha terms “incommensurable differences” (Bhabha 1994, 157) that arise during the contact between cultures. These differences produce spaces that are neither fully aligned with the colonizer nor entirely reducible to the colonized, but instead exist in an interstitial, in-between condition.

Such spaces can be understood as what Bhabha describes as the “in-between” (Bhabha 1994, 2), or third space, from which new forms of agency and subjectivity emerge. This space is not anchored in a fixed past or projected toward a unified future; rather, it is constituted through the ongoing negotiation of temporalities, identities, and cultural meanings.

In travel writing, cities, courts, and domestic interiors are thus represented not only as sites of colonial observation but also as spaces of resistance and negotiation. The traveler’s authority is repeatedly unsettled by spatial encounters that exceed colonial frameworks of understanding. These moments expose the limits of Orientalist logic and open up possibilities for alternative narratives and forms of representation.

Fez and the Moorish Court as Emblems of Colonial Instability

Descriptions of Fez in Anglo-American travel writing often oscillate between infatuation and apprehension. Reiterated references to the walls of Fez are equally telling. These walls do not merely represent material or physical boundaries, but they are symbolic of colonial

fragility. They evoke ideas of enclosure, limited access, and the traveler's inability to fully penetrate the social and cultural boundaries of the city. In this sense, the walls are discursively transformed into spatial tropes of resistance and agency against colonial dominance.

This oscillation becomes clearer when Wharton is read alongside Anderson. She describes Fez as “the city of wealth and learning, of universities and counting-houses, and the merchant and the *oulama* - the sedentary and luxurious types - prevail” (Wharton 1920, 62), a statement that recognizes the city's intellectual and aesthetic prestige. Wharton further observes that “Fez is above all the city of wealth and learning, of universities and counting-houses, and the merchant and the *oulama*” (Wharton 1920, 90). Anderson simultaneously refers to Fez as a “city of culture, art, and erudition, indescribable and unique” (Anderson 1914, 42), suggesting that even within colonial travel narratives, the city remains an emblem of resistance against the reductionism of Orientalist frameworks. Across the corpus, Fez is repeatedly portrayed as a site whose intellectual prestige weakens narratives of inferiority regarding Orientalist spatiality.

These descriptions render the simplistic claim that the city is represented merely as backward or stagnant more complex when both authors are read together. Fez is deeply othered in these narratives, but it is equally marked as intellectually dense, economically powerful, and historically relevant. The contradiction lies precisely in the colonial gaze that seeks to categorize Moroccan space as belated or opaque, but is also compelled to document institutions of intellectualism, commerce, and prestige that do not necessarily dovetail with the rhetoric of cultural inferiority. The Moorish city is thus stripped of its geographical specificity and transformed into an ambivalent site that reflects both accommodation and resistance, or what Homi K. Bhabha terms “desire and disavowal” (Bhabha 1994, 96), that is, how the colonizer can simultaneously experience an infatuation with and a rejection of the colonized subject.

The city is portrayed as both a remnant of the past and a nucleus of political influence and cultural vibrancy. Within the spatial confines of the Moorish court, colonial travelers are confronted with structures of authority that renegotiate the hegemonic dynamics of the colonial encounter. Here, the Moorish court refers to the political space of the Sultan's authority; it is also where power is exercised, negotiated, and symbolically consolidated. Furthermore, encounters with the Sultan and court officials within this space frequently reveal a reversal of power relations. The traveler, who arrives as an observer, instead becomes the observed subject within the ceremonial and political space of the court. These spatial reversals disrupt the logic of colonial dominance and expose the instability of imperial authority. Such reversals can be comprehended as moments where the colonial gaze is challenged, as the observer's position is redefined within the field of observation.

Moorish architecture occupies a central place in travel narratives. Palaces, mosques, and *Medersas* are described in aesthetic terms, often emphasizing exotic ornamentation and spatial complexity. While such descriptions can reinforce Orientalist fantasies, they also reveal moments in which Moroccan agency emerges through forms of spatial renegotiation, access, and exclusion.

Architectural spaces are frequently depicted as inaccessible or incomprehensible to the Western traveler. The inability to penetrate certain spaces, such as private quarters or sacred sites, marks the limits of colonial knowledge, that is, the failure of the traveler, as a representative of imperialism, to fully envision or access Moroccan spatial practices and meanings. These spatial boundaries function as forms of resistance that preserve the inhabitants' autonomy.

Edith Wharton was one of the travelers who journeyed extensively across Morocco, producing a guidebook that was later used by foreigners wishing to travel through the country. She pictures Fez as the hub where learning and knowledge prosper, attracting scholars

from across the world. Female travelers such as Wharton similarly articulate a colonial framework understood here as a system of representation that produced knowledge about the other while maintaining power structures. Her description of the city of Fez, for instance, suggests a discourse that is at times oppositional to other representations within the same narrative. At certain moments, Morocco is inscribed within the familiar rhetoric of Orientalism as a backward, inferior, and stagnant place, even as the same narrative repeatedly acknowledges forms of erudition, wealth, and prosperity that challenge such claims. Wharton's Orientalist tone thus becomes marked by slippages and inconsistencies, as she continually destabilizes her perspective on Morocco.

At other moments, however, Wharton further reinforces Fez's intellectual prestige by connecting the city to its universities, commerce, and religious scholarship. The city is also depicted as economically prosperous, inhabited by numerous merchants. Consequently, the discursive framework surrounding Fez complicates Wharton's earlier Orientalist rhetoric of inferiority, dehumanization, or cultural deficiency. Civilization, in this context, emerges as a relative concept, contingent upon culturally specific frameworks of meaning and interpretation. This suggests that Moroccan forms of social and cultural organization may be unintelligible within Western frameworks. Wharton's gaze then shifts from the general view of Fez to its populace. The trope of the Western gaze that fundamentally operates through a position of elevation and surveillance, thus reinforcing asymmetrical power relations, as Wharton writes:

Seen from the terrace of the upper town, the long thatched roofing of El Attarine, the central bazaar of Fez, promises fantastic revelations of native life; but the dun-colored crowds moving through its checkered twilight, the lack of carved shop-fronts and gaily adorned coffee-houses, and the absence of the painted coffers and vivid embroideries of

Tunis remind one that Morocco is a melancholy country, and Fez a profoundly melancholy city. (Wharton 1920, 94)

This elevated perspective does not grant Wharton visible access to Moroccan urban life. It rather stages a specifically colonial mode of spectatorship. From the terrace, Fez becomes visible as a scene to be observed, surveyed, and compared. Yet the discursive rhetoric produced by this vantage point remains fragile, because the city is envisioned through distance, partial visibility, and analogy – most notably through Wharton’s comparison with Tunis. Her tone, therefore, reveals authority and uncertainty at once as she writes from above, but not from within. Her gaze captures much, but only through partial observation permitted by her own position as an outsider. This underscores the multiple ways spatial ambivalence emerges in the text.

Through this passage, Wharton reinforces her position of authority and surveillance over the native population. This authority derives from her elevated vantage point, which functions both materially and symbolically as a position of power. She gets to observe both the inhabitants and their environment from a position of visual dominance. Such a perspective enables her to construct a detailed representation of Moorish culture.

This constitutes a rhetoric of differentiation grounded in hierarchical perception, through which Wharton exercises her authority as a narrator and as a Western female traveler who identifies with the logic of imperialism. Yet this authority remains partial, since the city is mediated through distance, selectivity, and analogy. Her comparison with Tunis further exposes that authority is constructed discursively through cross-cultural benchmarking rather than direct cultural involvement. This rhetoric then is deeply informed by subjective impressions, as she incorporates judgments based on evaluation regarding both Morocco in general and the city of Fez in particular.

Moreover, her discourse is marked by internal contradiction. While she initially appears captivated by the “central bazaar,” this sense of fascination is quickly displaced by a more critical perception of the surrounding environment. This shift reveals a discursive slippage, culminating in her characterization of the scene as lacking vibrancy and imbued with an atmosphere of “melancholy,” thereby unravelling the instability and inconsistency of her Orientalist narrative. While these narratives may articulate discourses of resistance and opposition, they remain embedded within the tradition of Orientalism, which ultimately limits the scope of such subversion.

Conclusion

This article has argued that Fez and Tangier constitute pivotal urban spaces in early twentieth-century Anglo-American women’s travel literature on Morocco as ambivalent colonial terrains. Rather than operating merely as exotic tropes, these cities are redefined as discursively dense sites through which fantasies around difference, chaos, and spectacle are performed. Yet these Orientalist representational patterns fail to fully contain the urban complexity of these cities, where narratives of resistance and colonial anxiety continue to emerge. In the travelogues of Frances Macnab, Isabel Anderson, and Edith Wharton, Moroccan urban space repeatedly defies the uniform categories imposed upon it. These authors reproduce Orientalist habits of representation, yet their narratives also capture moments of uncertainty, infatuation, and contradiction that unsettle any claim to the absoluteness of colonial authority.

By outlining the spatial dimension of Anglo-American travel writing on Morocco, this article has demonstrated that the trope of the Moorish city functions as an interpretively charged site within the framework of colonial discourse. This space enables alternative forms of agency that destabilize the discursive authority of colonial discourse. Rather than serving as inert terrains, Moorish cities operate as dynamic settings,

inviting processes of negotiation and resistance. This perspective on space contributes to postcolonial studies by treating it as an interpretive and ideological category, which remains a recurrent leitmotif in early twentieth-century Anglo-American travel writing.

Drawing on the theoretical insights of Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, and Homi K. Bhabha, the analysis has demonstrated that the Moorish city articulates an ambivalent contact zone in which asymmetrical relations of power are both enacted and contested. These findings simultaneously reveal distinctive forms of colonial authority as these women travelers often exercise authority through movement, privileged access, visual observation, aesthetic classification, and the textual mediation of Moorish spaces for Western spectatorship.

Rather than communicating a fixed or coherent image of the Orient, Anglo-American travel narratives expose a spatial imaginary marked by overlap, uncertainty, and continuous instability. Cities such as Fez and Tangier, along with ceremonial spaces such as the Moorish Court, unsettle the presumed authority of colonial observation through restricted access, layered meanings, and what Abdelkebir Khatibi would frame as plural and relational Maghrebi subjectivities. Such spaces exceed singular and uniform colonial interpretation. This exposes the limitations of colonial knowledge and the overlapping contradictions within its discourse. In these encounters, the traveler's gaze is repeatedly unsettled, revealing the weakness of the epistemological and representational structures that consolidate the tradition of Orientalism.

These spaces generate forms of agency that expose colonial modes of representation as partial and inherently unstable. Through practices of spatial opacity, restricted access, and uneven cultural negotiation, Moroccan spatiality constantly interrupts the traveler's presumed authority. Rather than fully reversing the colonial gaze, these instances reveal its limits and show that colonial discourse remains partial, unstable, and vulnerable to disruption. This dynamic demonstrates the ambivalent nature of the colonial narrative, in which domination appears to be repeatedly associated with interruption and resistance.

By conceptualizing the Moorish city as both physical and cognitive, this study contributes to postcolonial scholarship by highlighting the trope of space as a critical category of analysis in travel writing. It reveals that spatial representations are neither static nor neutral reflections of reality, but are continually reshaped through discursive tensions that both consolidate and undermine colonial power. The three travelers studied here do not reproduce colonial discourse in identical terms. Macnab privileges visual display, Anderson dramatizes fantasy and mobility, while Wharton essentially relies on analogy, elevation, and spatial evaluation. Fez and Tangier emerge not as passive colonial objects, but as dynamic terrains in which colonial uncertainty begins to unravel. Through these urban scenes, the travelogues demonstrate that colonial logic depends on unstable acts of representation rather than transparent observation.

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