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Cover Page Footnote

(1) Edith Wharton, In Morocco (The Moroccan Cultural Studies Center: 2005) 22. (*) Etudiante en doctorat sous la direction du Pr Rachida YASSINE

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The Representation of Moroccan Otherness in Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*

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Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*, written in 1920, is considered one of the classics of American travel literature. It is Wharton's account of her one-month journey through Morocco in 1917. In this book, which relies on colonial French historiography, Wharton explores Morocco and its people, recording her encounter with and impressions of a non-Western culture. She describes Moroccan cities and architecture, provides accounts of religious ceremonies and ritual dances, and depicts the Sultan's palaces and the "mysterious" world of his harem. As a travel narrative dealing with Morocco, Wharton's *In Morocco* is representative of Orientalist discourse and is informed by an intent to see the Other through the Western imperialist gaze. As I will attempt to show in the present essay, Wharton's representation of Morocco raises the issue of essentialization and orientalization of Morocco as the exotic other. The aim of this essay then is to analyse the ways in which Wharton's representation of Morocco as the Oriental Other conforms to the Orientalist discourse on the Islamic Orient.

Wharton's first impressions of Morocco convey typical Orientalist views on the Oriental Other. For instance, her first encounter with real Morocco is what she calls a foray into the "emptiness", the "untamed" land of Morocco, "a country so deeply conditioned by its miles and miles of uncited wilderness that until one has known the wilderness one can not begin to understand the cities."(1) While Wharton describes her journey as frustrating and shrouded in danger; her encounter with Morocco involves enormous risks and suffering. The purpose of her journey, which she considers a trip into the realm of magic, is to discover the mysterious land of Morocco and its people. From the beginning, Wharton establishes the distinction between the West and the Orient by immediately representing Morocco as the savage exotic other. In her depiction of Morocco, she establishes an analogy between Moroccans and Orientals, thus seeking to find in real Moroccan life representations that not only match but corroborate her previous readings on the Orient.

Wharton came to Morocco with a set of preconceived ideas on Morocco shaped by a whole repertoire of Orientalist texts whose epistemological claims on the Orient are taken for granted. Wharton confirms in strong terms the authority of those existing texts

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in establishing the truth about the Orient. For example, she states that "every step in North Africa corroborates the close observation of the early travellers... and shows the unchanged character of the Oriental life as the Venetians pictured, and Leo Africanus and Windus and Charles Cochelet described" (IM, 22). Wharton can neither dissociate her judgements from the 'idées reçues' nor resist reproducing the ideas of other Orientalists. For instance, she duplicates Orientalist discourse by reproducing the same commonplace stereotypes and biased judgements about Morocco and its people. Wharton's *In Morocco* is caught up in the network of Orientalist cross-references, so much so that it exemplifies Said's argument that "Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors because Orientalists use each others' texts to help them describe the Orient" (Said, 20).

For Wharton, the East is a construct and a pre-existing entity firmly lodged in her mind before she came to Morocco. For this reason, her journey was prompted mainly by a determination to find in reality what she had read about to such a degree that she felt frustrated whenever Morocco failed to come up to her perceived ideas: "The silence and emptiness of the place began to strike us: there was no sign of the Oriental crowd that usually springs out of the dust at the approach of strangers" (*IM*, 15). This is also conveyed by the extent to which Wharton's reading of the Arabian Nights, with its marvellous city of Baghdad, its exotic settings, and its markets and public places, certainly shaped her perception of twentieth-century Morocco. Accordingly, in one of the passages, she draws an analogy between the market of Baghdad as portrayed in the Arabian Nights and the Moroccan market: "Every thing that the reader *of the Arabian Nights* expects to find is here" (IM, 27). What this conveys is that Wharton comes to the East expecting to find people, places and traditions that would reflect what she has read in an old book; and by doing so, she violates both time and space. In view of this, Wharton's East is a construct of pre-established images to which she, like other orientalists, helps herself with dazzling self-confidence. The intertextual cross-referencing between the Arabian Nights, and Wharton's own documentation of Morocco as the exotic Orient, conveys the Orientalist overtones of *In Morocco*, and it provides a fitting example of how

> Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous Knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works." (Said, 20)

Wharton's reliance on Orientalist texts gives her the authority to see Oriental life from a Westerner's viewpoint rather than from an Oriental one. In her narrative, she establishes her authority by representing the other from "a position of power" by means of which she excludes the native's voice and robs him of the opportunity of self-representation. Obviously, Wharton establishes the voicelessness of the Other and his inability to speak for himself by excluding meaningful instances of dialogue between Moroccans themselves or between Wharton and Moroccans. For instance, Wharton reduces verbal exchanges between the Sultan's ladies, whom she portrays as "fairy-tale

figures", to mere "laughing", "babbling", "chattering", or "rustlings" produced by "humming-birds". For her, those "things" do not amount to human beings capable of linguistic interaction. In fact, Wharton's lack of knowledge of the Arabic language (she was accompanied by an interpreter), with words that are "unintelligible" to her, hinders real and unmediated verbal interaction with Moroccans. Such deficiency is overcome both by establishing herself as an unquestioned authority and by silencing her subjects. That reality makes us question the validity and subjectivity of her judgements, knowing that, as Said points out, "the Oriental silence is the outcome of the West's cultural hegemony and its "will to power over the Orient" (Said, 94).

Because Wharton is inspired by a hegemonic culture, she does not refrain from making sweeping generalizations despite her limited knowledge of and familiarity with Morocco and its people. For this reason, her observations turn out to be a set of generalizations that add nothing new to the established Western knowledge about the Orient and Orientals. Throughout her narrative, which is the product of an insignificantly short trip, Wharton describes some aspects of Moroccan life, traditions, religious ceremonies and ritual dances. However, the originality of such descriptions is questionable because her representations become mere misrepresentations since her short encounter with Morocco and its people was not a genuine one. In other words, her descriptions were not based on actual physical and verbal interactions, but rather on distant observations that misrepresent and even distort the Moroccan reality.

Wharton's contempt for Morocco as the Oriental Other is obvious in her condescending descriptions and unfounded judgements. Wharton's Moroccans are 'unusual creatures'; while some are "gregarious Lazaruese" drowzing under the brown walls of the medina, others "temporarily resuscitated, trail their grave-clothes after a line of camels and donkeys" (*IM,* 21). According to this view, Moroccans are in a permanently death-like state, disempowered by their 'eternal lethargy'. In addition to this, Wharton judges rich Moroccans as dishonest and corrupt by sarcastically questioning the legitimacy of the wealth, "some rich merchants with 'business connections' in Liverpool and Lyons" (*IM,* 27). Wharton has reservations about the nature of business relations a wealthy Moroccan might have with the West. For her, an Oriental can become rich only through fraudulent means. What this implies is that, according to Wharton, Moroccans do not abide by any system of moral principles, functioning as the framework regulating peoples' behaviour within society. For her, possessing ethical values is beyond the reach of 'uncivilized' Orientals whose society is 'founded upon corruption'. Wharton's contempt is further emphasized by her depiction of Moroccans as "indolent merchants with bare feet crouching in their little kennels" (ibid). This description of Morocco obviously reduces human beings to the rank of animals by attributing animal characteristics to them; hence, subordinating and excluding them as the inferior Other.

Wharton conveys such biases in the very language she uses in her travel narrative. For example, in one of the passages, she describes the daily Moroccan life as being "woven of greed and lust, of fetishism and fear and blind hate of the stranger (*IM*, 75). Such a view of Morocco reproduces the same recurrent negative images and metaphors characteristic of Orientalist discourse. She judges Moroccans as harbouring hatred for the stranger from the way they look at her in the souk. So, the question arising here is: on what basis is she accusing Moroccans, of whom she knows very little, of hatred towards foreigners. Again, if she really knew native Moroccan culture, as she claims, she would understand that the way bystanders look at her is less harmful than she thinks. Indeed, their attention must have been simply attracted by the presence of a foreign woman in a Moroccan souk, especially as Moroccans were not yet accustomed to the presence of foreigners at that historical conjuncture. What this conveys is that Wharton's narrative reflects an Orientalist outlook, combined with describing the Arab Muslims in derogatory terms. Such reliance on Orientalist images accounts for her misrepresentation of Morocco. For example, Wharton pictures natives as barbaric, "fierce tribesmen with inlaid arms in their belts", and "fanatics in sheepskins glowering from the guarded thresholds of the mosques" (*IM*, 75). Every single word in these statements is loaded with preconceived bad intentions and blatant misconceptions. For her, Muslims are potentially dangerous people who are still living in the Medieval Age. Wharton's superficial acquaintance with Moroccan culture leads her into mistaking "djellabas", the Moroccan traditional dress, for a sheep-skin, in total ignorance of the simple fact that the harmless wearing of decorative knives in belts is part of the Moroccan traditional dress of the time. Treating Muslims emerging from a mosque as being fanatic is, the least we can say, jumping to conclusions. Such views of Morocco in Wharton's text, in fact, reproduce the established image of Islam, in the West, as a traditional enemy and a constant threat to the Western world. Such views also express her biased attitude towards Islam, as conveyed by her characterization of Islam as having a "strange soul...with its impetuosity forever culminating its impassiveness" (*IM*, 44).

Wharton takes her subjective impressions for objective truth to produce a prejudiced and distorted image of Moroccans. As a case in point, she depicts black Moroccans as "mad Negroes standing stark naked in niches of the walls and pouring down Sudanese incantations upon the fascinated crowd" (*IM*, 55). Here, Wharton's interpretative authority has no limits; she grants herself the right to judge the Other because he stands out as an aberration from Western standards. One can easily prove the falsehood of such a description since it is very highly unlikely that Muslims, be they black or white, would display their nakedness in the ways suggested by Wharton. Again, Wharton not only represents blacks as indecent and immoral individuals, but also as superstitious and debauched. Although she has no knowledge of the local dialect, she assumes that they are uttering Sudanese incantations. In her mind, Blacks are definitely associated with magic and sorcery; they are only good at deceiving the gullible crowd into stupid beliefs. Wharton's prejudices are also exemplified by her portrayal of "consumptive Jews with pathos and cunning in their large eyes and smiling lips." Here she is making

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use of an age-old stereotype describing Jews as wily and consumptive creatures. Her biased attitudes are drawn from the Orientalist repertoire of images of the Orient, and these include negative images and representations of Jews.

Furthermore, Wharton's association of Morocco with exotic sensuality and lasciviousness is typical of the Orientalist tradition and its sexual investment of the Orient. In several descriptions of Oriental women, Wharton incessantly associates them with lust and sensuality, emphasizing the sensual aspect of their bodies. For example, she describes Moroccan women as "lusty slave girls with earthen oil-jars resting against swaying hips". Moreover, Wharton ironically states that Morocco is "a prolific land" (*IM*, 53) and that sexuality is the predominant characteristic of Moroccan households: "precocious sexual initiation prevail(s) in all classes," and "both sexes live till old age in an atmosphere of sensuality without seduction" (*IM*, 52). Again, Wharton allows herself to make hasty generalizations about Moroccans' sexuality by claiming that Moroccan intimate relationships, unlike those of Westerners, are based on animal physical desire rather than on true love. Thus, she reduces Oriental sexuality to the rank of animals dominated by their sexual drive and lacking the rationality of Westerners. In another example, Wharton considers that Moroccan children's innocence is violated by introducing them to sexuality at an early age. Such statements are extremely dangerous because they are not based either on scientific evidence or genuine scrupulous study of actual Moroccan society and its people. Wharton's description of Moroccans' sexuality conforms to Orientalist discourse. For Orientalists, the Orient suggests, as Said puts it, "sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire," and "deep generative energies" (Said, 188).

In relation with her depiction of Oriental women, Wharton devotes an important section in her book to her own impressions and representation of the Moroccan harem (section five). Like her predecessors, Wharton is fascinated by the idea of disclosing what lies behind the closed doors of the harem, a forbidden space which is typically symbolic of the Oriental world. Wharton's interest is part of Orientalists' interest in Orientals' social institutions especially the seclusion of space and gender, which was the subject of abundant fetishizing and romanticized descriptions. For example, Orientalist paintings (such as Dominique Ingres's, Jean Leon Gerome's, and Eugene Delacroix's) served as a Western gaze intruding into a private female space, and creating stereotypical erotic and exotic scenes for the Western viewer. So, ideas imbued in those artistic works on the Oriental harem fuelled Western stereotypes exploiting the Orient as a realm of fantasy. In view of that, Wharton's impressions convey an Orientalist attitude, since she accentuates the bewildering Exoticism women in the Moroccan harem bathe in. Departing from her insignificant encounter with that harem, Wharton concludes 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" (IM, 101). In addition to this, Wharton's representation of the Moroccan harem reflects the Western established biases towards the Other; Wharton foregrounds the 'cruelty' and 'emptiness' of that world by stating that

> These languid women on their muslin cushions toil not, neither do they spin. The Moroccan lady knows little cooking, needle work or any household arts...The great lady of the Fassi palace is ignorant of hygiene as a peasant-woman in the bled. And all these colorless 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.(*IM*, 102)

In many other instances, Wharton insists on the idleness and passivity of Moroccan women though one of them informs her that Moroccan women belonging to a high class devote themselves to their household, children and needlework. Wharton's response is sarcastic and demeaning, because such information defies her ready-made picture of Oriental women. Thus, Wharton rejects even verifiable 'facts' simply because they do not figure in her Orientalist cultural repertoire. The consistent view of Oriental women as the exotic other accounts for Wharton's insistence on representing her subjects as her antithesis. For example, she projects herself as liberated while those women with their "resigned and vacant eyes" as submissive oppressed and forced to live behind the enclosing walls. Wharton's need to highlight this opposition is rooted in the Orientalist fetishizing tradition, which is founded on the historical belief that there is fundamental opposition between the East and the West.

Obviously, Wharton uses her own culture as the norm to interpret the Moroccan one and foreground its 'aberrations'. For her, the scene describing "almond-eyed boys leading fat merchants by the hand" (IM, 36) insinuates homosexuality. By doing so, she is ignorant of the fact that significant differences exist between cultures, and that what is accepted as the norm in one culture may not be so in another. If gestures of physical proximity such as holding hands among two people of the same sex are generally frowned upon as a sign of homosexuality and a violation of the interactional space in Western culture; in Morocco, they are accepted as part of culture and are important for the establishment of communication, and the expression of friendliness and sympathy. The sexual innuendoes suggested by Wharton in the scene in which "almond-boys" are holding hands with "fat merchants" shows the superficiality and the rashness with which Wharton passes judgments on a culture she hardly knows. The 'fat merchants' to whom she attributed such lewdness were most likely holding hands with their own children or grandchildren. Such hasty generalizations illustrate Wharton's carelessness in representing the Other. Wharton relies heavily on her own perceptions and imagination to translate the Moroccan reality, giving her impressions the authority of absolute universal truth about the Other and Otherness.

For Wharton, Morocco as "a novelty" embodies "mystery" and represents a threat to her security as a Westerner. Wharton's Morocco is "a land of confusion" that is wrapped up in an alienating otherness. For Wharton, the setting, which is characterized by the 'stifling dust' and "oriental promiscuity", is disturbing; it overwhelms her and disrupts her sense of order and peace of mind. In one of the passages, she clearly conveys her fright of the different Other: "from all these hundreds of unknown and unknowable people, bound together by secret affinities, or intriguing against each other with secret

hate, there emanates an atmosphere of mystery and menace more stifling than the smell of camels" (IM, 113). Apparently, Wharton's irrational phobia is obvious in her persistent description of the huge 'frightening' Oriental crowds.' Apart from this, she falls into a contradiction by referring to Moroccans as "unknown and unknowable" and by claiming at the same time that she is telling the truth about them. Wharton's feelings of insecurity emanate also from what she considers the Moroccans' reciprocal hatred and conspiracy towards each other. In fact, Wharton's presumptuousness and insignificant knowledge of Moroccans do not allow her to understand and appreciate the distinctive features of Moroccan daily life. Since she is describing a souk, she has most likely seen people trading and bargaining in loud voices and waving their hands; but for her, they are conspiring against each other and are filled with "secret hate" for one another. So, Wharton's feelings about Morocco as the Oriental Other are but part and parcel of the "West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in -or fear of-novelty" (Said, 59).

In this travel narrative, Wharton sets the parameters between the civilized rational West and the primitive irrational East. This is perceptible in her descriptions, which underline the long-standing binary opposition between the Western superiority and the Oriental inferiority. Indeed, Orientalists' attitudes in different textualities and various periods of history view the Orient as the antithetical counterpart of Western culture. Such descriptions of Morocco as the Oriental Other provide a fitting example of how all Western writings on the Orient depart from such ontological difference between the West and the Oriental Other, qualified by Said as follows:

> Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient and (most of the time) the "Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers...have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as a starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind", destiny, and so on." (Said, 22)

The difference between the two worlds, as the following passage from *In Morocco* indicates, is colossal and unbridgeable: "and we are alone in the old untamed Maghreb, as remote from Europe as any medieval adventurer. If one loses one's way *in Morocco,* civilization vanishes as though it were a magic carpet rolled up by a Djinn" (*IM*, 22). Wharton's journey is an adventure into the primitive East whereby she is "carried out of the bounds of time." Wharton believes that time and precision are associated with the West; whereas, the pre-modern and timeless Orient lacks precision and rationality. She is sarcastic about the fact that Moroccans are possessed with a passion for clocks and other mechanical objects, and that that passion, according to her, is common to "all unmechanical races". Her Morocco is a land where non-functioning clocks serve as ornaments.

Such association of the Orient with timelessness is characteristic of Orientalist representation. Wharton maintains the same tradition by linking Morocco with the notion of time as a fixed, unmoving, and frozen phenomenon. In her description of Fez, the cultural capital of Morocco, pre-eminent for the foundation of the oldest university in the world, Alquaraouyine (established in 857A.D), Wharton underlines the 'agelessness' of the city and the eternal renewal and refurbishing of its original architecture:

> Fez, is in fact, the oldest city in Morocco without a Phoenician or Roman past, and has preserved more traces than any other of its architectural flowering-time; yet 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.
>
> When we rode forth the next day to visit some of the palaces of Eljdid, our pink -saddled mules carried us at once out of the bounds of time. How associate anything as precise and Occidental as years or centuries with these visions of splendor seen through cypress and roses. (IM, 53)

Here Wharton stands in awe in front of the majesty of Fez and its glorious past, but this majesty is a flawed one since it has an "immutable" quality and it is "forever crumbling". Fez, for her, is caught in a state of 'timelessness', or as she puts it, "it is out of the bounds of time." In contrast to this 'agelessness', Wharton returns to "Occidental precision", armed with charts and tables that she uses to set a contrast between the state of Moroccan education, commerce and health-care before and after General Lyautey's administration (From 1912 to 1918). Wharton foregrounds in laudatory terms General Lyautey's effectiveness in decision-making. At the outbreak of the First World War, he was asked to send Moroccan troops to France and leave the interior of Morocco. Wharton uses occidentally precise terms to state that it took General Lyautey "Forty-eight hours" to take his decision (IM, 110). While Wharton celebrates General Lyautey's achievements over "five years of unexampled and incessant difficulty", she insists on relegating Morocco outside the boundaries of time, or outside modernity. Her view that Western precision is meaningless to Moroccans underlies an imperial stance that the Other's "timelessness" and "agelessness" serve as a legitimate pretext to exert Western imperial and colonial domination.

Wharton's belief in the hegemony and superiority of her culture leads her to firmly conclude that Western standards of civilization can never be matched by those of Orientals. In her view, civilization is far beyond the reach of Moroccans because nomadism is the predominant characteristic of their life in spite of the presence of palaces and other aspects of sedentary life:

> since the nomadic nature of African life persists in spite of palaces and chamberlains and all the elaborate ritual of the Makhzen, and the pompous rites are likely to end in a dusty

> gallop of wild tribesmen, and the most princely processions to tail off in a string of half-naked urchins riding bareback on donkeys." (*IM*, 43)

According to Wharton, the apparently civilized aspects of Moroccan life are just deceptive means to disguise natural savagery, because the inherent barbarity of Moroccans is a big impediment to civilization. Though Wharton recognizes the sumptuousness of some native Moroccans, and the important presence of aspects of modern civilization, she maintains her belief in the 'inferiority of Oriental life'. For example, during her visit to the imperial harem, she is surprised by its European contemporary style; however, she condescendingly comments that "the apartment of the Sultan's ladies falls far short of Occidental ideas of elegance" (*IM*, 92).

Wharton further emphasizes the 'universal inequality' between the two worlds by highlighting the Moroccans' inability for self- government and control. In fact, she legitimates the French Protectorate by suggesting over and over again that Morocco is like an 'immature child' craving for parental tutelage; for this reason, she approves of the paternalistic role of the French protectorate in providing the necessary protection' for the backward and helpless Moroccan people. In order to justify her own assumptions, Wharton would even go so far as to falsify established historical facts about Morocco under the French rule. One significant example, is when she authoritatively claims that Sultan Abdelhafid "had asked France to establish the French protectorate" (*I.M.* 108) because of the country's tumultuous situation. In fact, Sultan Abdelhafid resented surrendering Morocco to the French rule, and his abdication from the throne was the outcome of Lyautey's incessant pressure. Lyautey then proclaimed the Sultan's brother "Moulay Yusuf" Sultan in Rabat. Indeed, the then new Sultan was neither an obstacle nor a threat to the French authority because he did not have his deposed brother's activism. Lyautey, subsequently, took the effective management of the country in his own hands[(2)]. What the aforementioned example suggests is Wharton's carelessness as to the kind of knowledge she is providing in her text, which is meant to be a travel-guide to Morocco.

For Wharton, Moroccan civilization is "stagnant", living in a perpetual state of inertia, and is characterized by dullness and passivity; it is a civilization that repeats itself and never goes forward. For Said, the essential and the unchanging Orient is a "myth" that has been perpetuated among Orientalists. From this viewpoint, Wharton's essentialist view of Morocco is deeply entrenched in her culture. Such essentialization of the Orient, whereby essential oriental cultural characteristics are listed and defined by the Orientalists as an essence, underpins Wharton's representation of Morocco. Throughout her narrative, Wharton celebrates the achievements of Resident General Lyautey and glorifies his administrative competence and his role in modernizing the

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(2) Moshe Gershovich, *French Military Rule in Morocco : Colonialism and its Consequences* (Routledge : 2000) 10 nov2007<http//www.questia.com> Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses.

'barbaric' and the "unchanged" land of Moroccans. For her, Lyautey contributed to preserving the national monuments, and restructuring the "monotonous" architecture of Morocco. Hence, Wharton expresses her confidence in the Western civilization and the significant changes it brings to 'ignorant' Orientals. Accordingly, she adheres to the imperialistic view that sees colonization as an instrument that brings civilization to the 'primitive' societies and liberates them from perpetual backwardness.

As mentioned before, Wharton honors and expresses admiration for the work done by General Lyautey under the French protectorate in Morocco. Such admiration conveys her intention to foreground the West's supremacy and rationality. Lyautey, 'the savior of Morocco', as she calls him, managed to strengthen and develop the colonial presence of France in Morocco. Nevertheless; she seems critical of his policy about this specific point, that is, the "protection" and "preservation" of native arts. As Brian Thomas Edwards indicates, Wharton showed reservations about Lyautey's project because, for her, it sought to achieve the "museumification of Morocco" through "the framing of Moroccan architecture within the walls of medieval medina"(4). Such a project meant for Wharton, as Edwards goes on to say, transforming Morocco into a "museum, bound by French infrastructural projects as well as by the walls of a museum" (Edwards, 54). Wharton does not have a clear attitude about matters such as Lyautey's "preservation" of Moroccan difference, the French modernizing work, and colonialism. While she acknowledges the destruction brought by European colonists in general for distorting the distinctiveness of Arabic architecture and violating the privacy of the old Arab towns, she never identifies the French Protectorate as colonialism. Indeed, she sees Lyautey's undertakings in Morocco as an unparalleled achievement of an experienced colonialist administrator.

It is important, however, to indicate Wharton's motive for expressing her misgivings about Lyautey's "museumification of Morocco", as Edwards has put it. Indeed, for Wharton, as she herself reveals in the preface of *In Morocco*, such a transformation of the country will lead to the loss of its "mystery and remoteness." For her, Morocco's 'essential ancientness' has to be safeguarded against Western decadent modernity. So, Wharton reproduces the nostalgic romanticism typical of the Orientalist discourse by expressing nostalgic yearning for pre-colonial Morocco's primitiveness and exoticism, which would be destroyed by the process of modernization. Wharton's attitude towards Lyautey's modernizing projects is contradictory since, on the one hand, she is appreciative of his 'philanthropic civilizing' of the 'uncivilized', but she seems to be, on the other hand, for the preservation of its oriental 'primitiveness'.

Wharton's representations and views on Morocco throughout the text raise the issue of Morocco's orientalization. Because her representations of cultural differences operate within an Orientalist framework, what Wharton portrays is Morocco she has created to conform to those representations. Hence, she is sharing the Western legacy of

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(3) Brian Thomas Edwards, *Morocco Bound : Representation of North Africa,1920-1998* (Yale University, 1998)52. Subsequent references to this edition appear in parentheses.

approaching the Orient as a "unified system" characterized by What the West is not. Wharton incessantly judges Moroccans as 'inscrutable', 'apathetic', 'lethargic' and 'possessing a curious mixture of barbarous customs'. As a Westerner, she was repelled by the barbarity, the bloody spectacles and "the bestial horror" performed by the Aissaouas and the Hamadchah (*IM*, 39). She also describes the female merchants as "malicious", and the rich wool merchants as primitive pleasure-seekers who lack refined manners of eating; thus, Moroccan communal eating is described in these terms: "the guests would squat on rugs of Rabat, tearing with their fingers the tender chicken wings ...plunging their fat hands to the wrist into huge amounts of saffron and rice" (*IM*, 38). Here, Wharton's Eurocentric attitude precludes the possibility of any understanding of the essence of Moroccan life style. She is obviously ignorant of the far-reaching implications of Moroccan communal eating habits. In her descriptions of Moroccans, Wharton generally sketches postures, gestures, facial expressions, types of clothes and the way they were worn; and by doing so, she relies on scarce encounters to reveal values and tell the truth about the Orientals, sparing herself the hard work that a profound exploration of a country and its people would require. Wharton's representations are again typical of the discourse of Orientalism based on schematic and essentialist representation of the Other.

The Orientalization of Morocco in Wharton's travel narrative is interwoven into her text and narrative. Wharton's awareness of Orientalist texts conveys, what Said would term, the "lenses" through which she perceives Morocco. So, her work can not be considered an objective study of the reality of Morocco, its people and its culture, since she is unable to detach herself from the idées reçues. In fact, she completely discards the native's perspective since, as Orientalists claim, she knows Orientals better than they know themselves. Wharton believes her Knowledge of the Other to be more reliable than any insider's view. As was the case for other Orientalists, Orientalism controlled her thought about the Orient, and this is something she could not avoid because, according to Said,

> Even the most imaginative writers of an age, men like Flaubert, Nerval, or Scott, were constrained in what they could either experience of or say about the Orient. For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them") (Said 43).

Wharton's work is far from being a disinterested and disimpassioned quest for knowledge, especially that Wharton came to Morocco upon the invitation of General Lyautey, the major instrument of the French hegemony over Morocco, who wanted her to record his achievements and justify the importance of the French presence in Morocco. Accompanied by General Lyautey, she had the opportunity to meet the country's dignitaries, visit palaces, and even had access to the 'impenetrable' Sultan's harem. So, her 'representation' of Morocco, which is the outcome of an insignificantly short trip, was carried out within the official institutional framework of French colonialism. Wharton never identifies the French Protectorate as colonialism; she

considers Lyautey as different from the European colonialist, who distorted the distinctiveness of Arab architecture and violated the privacy of the old Arab towns. Indeed Lyautey established the French administrative quarter outside the boundaries of the native quarter, thus, containing Moroccans within their own walls. In this view, Wharton adheres to the colonialist dogma and avoids recognizing Lyautey's separatist schemes as mechanisms of exclusion to which natives were subjected. She also escapes considering the confinement of Moroccan's as the 'threatening Other' as a way to keep them "out of the bounds of time" and 'primitive' in order to assure the durability of French authority against potential native subversion.

Wharton's text can also be qualified as lacking academic authoritativeness. Her biased and subjective impressions, which she considers "authoritative utterances", are largely influenced by her previous readings of travel narratives on and imaginative appropriations of the Orient. For this reason, her impressions cannot be taken as reliable knowledge about Morocco and Moroccans. In this respect, Wharton's work is but a contribution to the library of Orientalism whose power Said locates at the level of textuality. As a system of representation and textual production, Orientalism was the means whereby the Orient is domesticated, schematized, controlled and dominated, and, thus, made less unfamiliar and less threatening. The growing interest in the Orient emerged when Orientalists set off to study and provide textual definitions and representations of the silent, submissive, and weak Orient longing for conquest and domination. Since Orientalism as a discourse is affiliated with power and paved the way for imperialism, then any claim to pure scholarly knowledge is rejected because all Orientalists, as Said maintains, are unable to avoid complicity with the will to power over the Orient. Accordingly, Wharton's book is part and parcel of a long-standing tradition that misrepresents Oriental peoples as inherently backward. Her biased attitudes emanate from her inability to transcend the frame of reference of her Western culture, which she believes to be 'superior'

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