Tétouan, from White Dove to Natural Spring Bird

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The complex relations between Spain and Islam is an exception in the usual imperial relations, and is characterised by an ambivalence that, in the case of Tétouan, has very rich nuances that illustrate diverse discourses about Spain's domestic Orient represented by Morocco. After the Spanish colonisation of the country, many travellers visited Tétouan, the capital of the Protectorate, and wrote about their experiences. Tétouan, a commercial and very beautiful city in constant growth and transformation, had a diverse population and a notable Jewish and Spanish presence along with a Muslim majority. Travellers approached the charms and mysteries of the city with fascination and often many prejudices, frequently justifying civilising colonialism as the only possible solution for the Moroccan territory.

"Tétouan is a city with many histories
that can be meaningful to any traveller.
It is a border.
It is part of the history of Spain, of Europe.
Part of Morocco, of Africa."

Esther Bendahan
[Tetuán]

Map to Read the Words of Those Travellers Who Found the Natural Spring

Throughout the world there is an existential need to know beyond the known world and everyday geographies. One way of satisfying such a need has always been the practice or experience of travelling, getting closer to the poetics of the place through literature, always a combination of realism and chimera. Who has not travelled by reading? Literature disseminates the experiences of travel, imbues the places with emotion and, with varying literary quality, always records the biographical and the geographical aspects. In fact, since Antiquity, travel has been one of the mechanisms of representing the world, as well as a practice of creating geographical imaginaries. Beyond the pleasure of reading, travel books generally invite us to discover other worlds and realities.

Although Spanish literature has a long tradition of travel related to exoticism, which in its turn constitutes the imperial process of territorial expansion, its re-reading has rarely addressed the impact and consequences of its colonial matrix of power, what it really reveals. In the following pages, based on the

exotic – in other words, otherness and travel as a colonial practice in territories beyond the Western sphere – I introduce part of the Spanish imaginary on Tétouan between the Hispano-Moroccan War (1859) and its transformation into the capital of the Protectorate of Spanish influence.

For Edward Said, there is a profound ontological difference between the desire to know with the aim of understanding and coexisting, and the desire to know and dominate with the aim of controlling. Thus, all cultural devices, such as literature, feature marks of domination that have been building a simplified, binary and dual vision of the world, underpinned by unequal imbrications of power in which the vision of the Orient, Islam or its women, for instance, is the result of several centuries of imperial strategy – and its concomitances between power and culture – and of a wide range of ramblings and evocations of the remote that forge stereotypes halfway between attraction and repulsion faced with otherness, difference.

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Within this interpretative framework, the subsequent clarifications are essential, particularly to address its specificities, such as Spanish Orientalism. After familiarising himself with the work of Américo Castro and Juan Goytisolo, Said spoke of the extremely complex and dense relationship between Spain and Islam, which could not simply be characterised as an imperial relationship and had to be understood as a notable exception. Our contact with the Muslim world has a long history and has been distinguished by very ambivalent relations. Juan Goytisolo, in his *Crónicas sarracinas* (1982), describes it clearly and analyses the two sides of the "Moor" in our literature, in a sincere self-criticism, from the Orientalist point of view, and highlights mistreatment of the Arab world by Western writers. In the same vein, the book by Eloy Martín Corrales *La imagen del magrebí en España* (2002) is also illustrative as it comprehensively addresses the visual imaginary from a historical perspective dating back to the 16th century.

In the creation of the scheme of European domination and beyond its inner borders, a key role was played by geographical determinism and social Darwinism, ideas that built an implausible notion of Morocco, portrayed as a "frozen" image of the Moroccan empire. Moreover, the Hispano-Moroccan War marked the start of the Orientalisation of Morocco, as well as the opportunity to know it more, although not always better. Thereafter, the Spanish presence – male but not yet female travellers – increased almost exponentially, providing a wide range of visions of its geographies that evolve over time, but mostly still with a profound misunderstanding of the Moroccan reality.

The Coordinates of the Natural Spring and Its Literary Mapping

The city of Tétouan, located on the flanks of Mount Dersa above the fertile valley of the Martil River, has a truly exceptional location, as recorded in most of the books that mention it. Its etymological origins come from the Berber language, and it means natural spring or spring eyes, as noted in some of the narratives, which enables us to give free rein to the evocative imaginary of the exotic. However, Tétouan, as it is known today, was founded in the early 14th century, a time when the borderline was located further north, on the Penibaetic System of the Iberian Peninsula. When, in 1492, the Catholic Monarchs enacted the first decree

of expulsion of Spanish Muslims and Jews, most of them re-founded Tétouan and settled there, thereby becoming the Andalusian capital in North Africa. This would be constantly mentioned in the travelling descriptions of the city, as we will see later, nourishing such an Andalusian mirage and making it shimmer when the border between both cultural worlds moved to the Strait of Gibraltar.

Until the 18th century, it was one of the cities with most trade and cultural relations with the West and maintained a close relationship with Spain beyond the migratory flow. In the mid-19th century, it became the object of European colonialist cravings, travellers began to arrive and the first travel books were published, in which Tétouan featured prominently. The Spanish occupied the city between 1860 and 1862, and took it again on 19 February 1913, after the Hispano-French agreement signed in Madrid on 27 November 1912, which established an area of Spanish influence in Morocco. This new colonial occupation, during which Tétouan was the military and administrative capital of the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco, lasted until 7 April 1956, with the signing of the Hispano-Moroccan Protocol, by which the Spanish state recognised the full sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco.

The case of Tétouan is particularly unique as it brings together the myriad of visions of its characteristics and illustrates the large variety of concomitant discourses on its domestic Orient, which oscillate between the Andalusian foundation – which provides the place with common and shared characteristics –, the patriotic epic of the Hispano-African War – which spurs the colonial action –, and the transformation of the city into the capital of the Protectorate – as an example of a civilising mission. Generally, these narratives were both a privileged and popular means to influence public opinion in the metropolis in support of Spanish colonial policy. As Aziza Bennani rightly noted in her *Tetuán, ciudad de todos los misterios* (1992), some of the texts that refer to this city were written by professional and renowned writers, but most of them were either second or third category writers or people outside the literary world who only wrote when travelling or spending a period of time in Morocco to tell their compatriots about an experience they believed was worthy of interest.

Prior to the colonial presence, it is worth mentioning the three classical enlightened travellers, romantic explorers with undefined itineraries, who travelled in disguise to conceal their identity

The list is varied and changing between the early 19th century and today. In general, travellers were mostly men; there are few examples of women, who only appeared in the early 20th century. Prior to the colonial presence, it is worth mentioning the three classical enlightened travellers, romantic explorers with undefined itineraries, who travelled in disguise to conceal their identity. These were Domingo Badía y Leblich, better known as Alí Bey el Abbasi (1767-1818); José María de Murga (1827-1876) – Hach Mohammed el Bagdadi or the Moor from Biscay –; and Joaquín Gatell y Folch (1826-1879), called Caíd Ismail on his travels. With the Hispano-African War there was an increase in the number of people who travelled to Morocco and were active in a wide range of different fields (military, journalism, diplomacy, science, art...), in which the stories of Pedro Antonio de Alarcón and Benito Pérez Galdós stand out (along with the paintings by Fortuny, Tapiró and other artists). Thereafter, a constant flow of travellers of all kinds visited Tétouan until the last traveller mutated into the first tourist.

Among the examples of scientific expeditions that narrate the colonial transformation of the Moroccan territory, it is worth highlight-

ing the contributions of the geographer Juan Dantín and the zoologist Ángel Cabrera, the latter commissioned on four occasions to travel to the Spanish Protectorate between 1912 and 1921. The endeavours of the military men César Juarros (doctor) and Andrés Sánchez Pérez (auditor) are more informed because of their personal experiences. They published their books at a critical time for Spanish public opinion in relation to Morocco due to the crisis after the fateful year of 1921. A special mention should be made of one of the most important publications written by women concerning the Western experience in Moroccan territory. This is *Marruecos sensual y fanático* by Aurora Bertrana, who travelled to Morocco chiefly to get to know "her Muslim sisters" – there is a Spanish version published in 2009 of the original in Catalan from 1936. Moving forward in time, we find a not insignificant output of colonial literature during the Protectorate and less after independence. In terms of the presence of Tétouan in travel literature, we reach the present with, for instance, *Siete ciudades en África* (2013) by Lorenzo Silva or the recent *Tetuán* by Esther Bendahan (2017).

Imaginary Mappings of the "Eye of the Natural Spring"

Most of the narratives stress the idea that Tétouan brings together all "the charms of a completely Morisco town" which "has lost nothing of its character, habits or customs." Apparently one reaches "the promised land", "the holy land", and the city emerges in the landscape as a "white dove", to borrow the natural expression of the country, as some of the most informed travellers mention. Generally, it is introduced with a panoramic view, which mainly emphasises the beauty of its surroundings, repeatedly described as "picturesque" or "magnificent" and often evoked with all the pompous lyrical flow of the 19th century.

The discovery of the city becomes one of the most emotive moments of the journey. Some say that "Tétouan appeared before my eyes even more poetic than I dared to dream" or that "everything was Arab around me, and my imagination delighted in seeing itself transported to another civilisation which until then I had only glimpsed in the brilliant descriptions of the poets." In terms of the morphology of the city, its traditional segregation is particularly noted: "It is divided into two parts, linked by several gates that close at dusk: the part where the Moors live is bigger, and is called the Moorish quarter; the Jewish quarter is inhabited by Hebrews." However, the description of the urban imaginary confirms, particularly in the case of Tétouan, the suggestive idea pointed out by Nieves Paradela in relation to the ideological component inherent in travel literature, which goes beyond emphasising what is different and, consequently, highlights what is characteristic, personal or national. According to José Boada, "in Tétouan, whether because it is the most familiar city for Spaniards because of the Hispano-African War, its proximity with Tangier and Ceuta, the special conditions of its residents, or for all these reasons together, the truth is that a large number of Spaniards live there, most of them working in retail."

Tétouan is a city in growth and transformation. An example of this is the gradual expansion of the Spanish presence

In addition, there is the idea of change, that Tétouan is a city in growth and transformation. An example of this is the gradual expansion of the Spanish presence – already noted by Boada –, as well as the references to demographic evolution, where the population doubles, growing from Fernando Amor's

twenty thousand souls to Victoriano Fernández Ascarza's forty thousand. The accounts also emphasise what has been built by Spain from the occupation to the decisive moments of colonisation. As early as 1860, Gaspar Núñez mentioned that "in our hands it has gained, as it is commonly said, one hundred per cent," and he illustrates this by mentioning that the seven gates of the city "already have a Spanish name" and that "the best square in the city, the Tedam, is now called Plaza de España." Moreover, Spanish patriotism also evokes a unique imaginary in relation to the city of Tétouan by eliciting the euphoria of the epic Battle of Wad-Ras (1860).

One of the activities preferred by travellers is "wandering through its more secluded streets, its most remote little squares." These urban ramblings are the act of discovering otherness, of the secrets kept by the native culture, and, usually, show the attraction for the exotic. There are allusions to the variegated souks, the particularities of the races and people found there, and the diversity of traditional celebrations is described in painstaking detail. It is a narrative of the oriental experience, which includes both a kind of visual and sensorial ecstasy and some "inability" to express in writing the sensations experienced. Proof of this are the lamb festival, the dance of the *guinaui* or the gunpowder races, where all travellers point out a "primitive purity" that "hurts the imagination with particular delight" and "eventually produces a feeling of hallucination and a confused maddening vertigo."

Another of the most emblematic moments in travel literature, an "indescribable sensation", is related to the solemnity of the staging of the Muslim religion and crystallises in the contemplation of the last call to prayer, which leaves the traveller speechless. To refer to such an overwhelming moment, they turn to the sensitivity of art: "Such a magnificent painting! No one could have transferred the grandiose effects of that landscape to the canvas!" And we read: "There is nothing more fantastic to see in the final moments of dusk than the strange figure of the muezzin capriciously outlined in the space, tenuously illuminated by the last glares of the dying light. This scene has a pathetic tone, which reminds the Spanish and Christian heart of the bells ringing Ave Maria, at the time when everything is vague and indefinable, light and shadow, memories and thoughts, and which, according to Byron, focuses on invoking in the most intimate part of the soul everything we have loved and lost in the world."

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But, undoubtedly, the differential fact of the Spanish Orientalist discourse about Tétouan is the use of the historical bond between its people, the shared common past, which attracts, seduces and creates great recognition of the familiar in what is remote and exotic. On the one hand, there are references to the "customs and very special character of this strange town, made up mostly by Jews and Moors descending from those that the barbaric fanaticism of the House of Austria expelled from Spain." For instance, it is noted that the Sephardic Jews "speak Castilian with antiquated formality," referring to the Haketia, the language they retained after being expelled from the Peninsula. Moreover, this argument is also used in the double construction of the stereotype to re-shape a unique imaginary, now emphasising the "truly oriental luxury" of the palaces and the "proverbial hospitality" of its patriarchs in the entertaining conversations of the banquets offered to the travellers. For many, "Tétouan enjoys the old reputation of having the most beautiful palaces in Morocco," a reputation

which is due, as they note, to the fact that "the Tétouan residents have preserved in their homes the traditions of their Moorish grandfathers of Granada, who had raised fortresses and mosques that still amaze intelligent people." When it is mentioned, a more evocative poetic language is used to express the admiration they felt for the aesthetic values of Orientalism.

The main exponent of this is the book by Muñoz Llorente. From his urban walks he remembers the "perfumes of orange blossoms in the mysterious bay windows, and very ardent gusts, a pungent and harsh aroma that comes from far off and mixes with the smell of the desert and lion furs." When he visits the Tétouan social elite, he describes, in every detail, both the "lavish appearance" of the houses and the "idolatrous attitude" of the hosts, always including clear reminiscences to al-Andalus. He pays special attention to describing the decoration of each room and, for instance, in the "library of the wise minister" he notices the "very strange, old and precious Arab volumes, which contain the age-old and eternal science of Islam" and emphasises that the courtyard is "the most ardent and exquisite expression of today's Arab art" and its rooms "are the most intense and delicate evocation of what the shiny rooms of Medina Zahara must have been in the magnificent time of our Abderrahmans."

However, in the polyphony of opinions, we see the persistence of significant connections, especially when the urban is appreciated in situ. Despite the existence of a well-established collective imaginary, the visit shapes what has been preconceived. Indeed, the impressions are always determined by the mental and observational play of scale and, in some cases, the city can lose its apparent qualities and become the militant repulsion of the stereotype of the Other. In reality, many travellers record "its dirty, narrow streets", "narrow, winding, dark because of the many passages and arches that populate them"; and "the houses, although magnificent inside, have a miserable appearance outside." In short, "this strange, monotonous and cold setting, where the man is unrefined and the woman a mystery, both surprises and fatigues."

In the process of shaping the Muslim stereotypes all the slogans of the Reconquista emerge, and a generalist and frankly pejorative stereotype is repeated and spread. It is a "distrustful people and a degraded race" who are guided by a "disproportionate fatalism." Thus, "the Moors, like all ignorant and vulgar peoples, are extremely superstitious" where "the market and the mosque are the only two social elements of the Muslim." As for the Tétouan Jewish population, there are different views, which range from the "sacked and oppressed Hebrew people" to being perceived as the "unfortunate Hebrew race, false, low, mistrustful, suspicious, self-interested, lying and effeminate."

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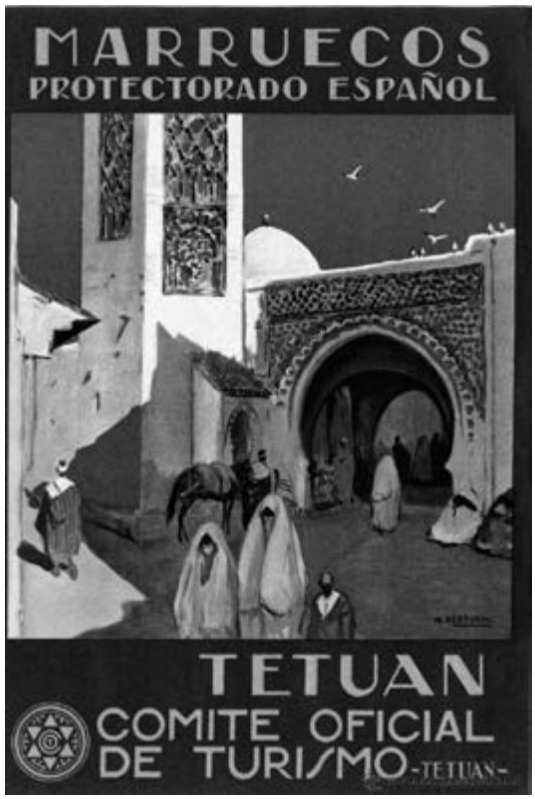
The discursive foundation of Orientalism is located in the method of "binary opposition": two worlds, two styles, two cultures, the East and West, which creates a kind of unsurpassable world between the two. In other words, within the Orientalist spirit, on the one hand, there are the Westerners, who are "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, civilised, capable of maintaining real values," and, on the other, the Orientals, who do not have any of these values. Nevertheless, Europe appears halfway between the capacity to define, study, express its views on the East and the seduction of otherness, with some ambiance of mystery and exoticism which may be attractive. This theory of the dominator and the dominated fits



Poster by Mariano Bertuchi, painter from Tétouan.

very well for the Spanish example in relation to Tétouan. Travellers, after the ephemeral attraction to and seduction by "Moroccans of distinction", with their "proverbial hospitality" and all their "truly oriental luxury", turn towards a unanimous discourse that condemns the coarseness of Moroccan society, which must redeem itself with colonial penetration and the influence of Western civilisation. The central axis of the dichotomy between civilisation and barbarism always revolves around religion: "I thought it was an allegory of the brutal power of Islamism which left that city to enable the soldiers of civilisation to enter."

All the ideas contained in these texts would legitimise a vocabulary and a particular discourse on its domestic Orient. In short, they would build a vision of the world of great strength that would be gradually included in the collective mind of readers, insistently incorporating its figures and symbols until forming part of the common legacy, of the collective ideology that lies at the base of their identity. Undoubtedly, "if civilisation left its fertile mark here, this country would be incomparably beautiful and rich."

Be that as it may, Tétouan blows the imagination of travellers wide open. It will be both the city of mosques and the holy city, the African Seville, and also "the lazy midwife lying on her bed." In its geography lies the whole weight of the Orientalism of the time, and travellers, through what Ziauddin Sardar considers the "pathological Orientalist gaze," reformulate the city in female terms, using both the European romantic tradition and the Orientalist imaginary awoken by the commonplace of the Muslim woman: "I adore Tétouan with all my soul as a romantic. I adore the veiled women, who will perhaps be ugly, but walk concealed, and they seem to us odalisques from a poetic tale. I adore its crossroads, its arches, its façades, its smell... Tétouan exudes a strong, intoxicating smell of Morocco. It is a strange scent of well-kept gardens and women's brown skin."

In such a delirium, Tétouan becomes a dreamful narrative space in which the houri "virgins" live in Mohammed's paradise. Other travellers conceive the city directly as the body of a woman, as the "female city", "the lover and accomplice" or the "fermenting city". When it stops being a woman, it becomes a mirror to eventually evoke more familiar places. Generally, Tétouan is the "Moroccan Granada", and its palaces are reminiscent of the Alhambra. It also recalls Seville and, ultimately, "the Córdoba of the sultan's smile." In short, the urban imaginary of Tétouan creates and reinvents itself to rise up as the flagship of al-Andalus, as the new Morisco capital.

In contrast to other European Orientalisms, the treatment of women by the Spanish Orien-

talist current emphasises their vulnerability in order to justify and encourage colonial penetration. The gaze of the traveller, of the onlooker in this case, is never innocent: it is loaded with romantic images, many prejudices and so many other fantasies. We should highlight the major differences between references to first impressions and later assessments, although, for all of them, the woman in Morocco is a great mystery. For Gaspar Núñez, for instance, "I have seen only a few women Moors," but for Julio Cervera "the women of Tétouan are famed for being real models of Arab beauty, the prettiest daughters in the Maghreb."

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In the initial allusions, we can distinguish between those that speak of "the seen" and those that refer to "the unseen". In the former, we see a paradox in the relation with the woman's visibility/invisibility, leading to a portrayal of the woman who has an "invisible visibility". Nevertheless, for Muñoz Llorente, "among the enigma of the veils, their black, fatal eyes phosphoresce, full of fascination and tragic sensuality." In reality, the invisibility reflects the supposed inexistence of women in the public space of Tétouan. Such invisibility (or inexistence) is explained, according to travellers' views, by the fact that women are locked up in what José Boada considers the "eternal mysteries of those impenetrable homes." There is only one space, in the eyes of travellers, which is the "only point that lets Europeans glimpse the existence of the woman and the family." This is the rooftop, a place where the segregation established between the public and the private is blurred. According to Gaspar Núñez, "some curious and unoccupied military men also wander around the rooftops, undoubtedly with the desire to get a glance of a Moorish woman from time to time, and break, although only half-heartedly, the mysteries in which the Muslim woman lives."

But when visibility appears and the female element is recognised, we find another type of invisibility: women's clothes and the use of the veil. Here, the early approaches build a vague image of the Muslim woman, which is compared to a handful of clothes, a form or even something phantasmagorical: a "strange figure, which can be both of a man or a woman."

Meanwhile, other contributions refer to the never seen woman. On these occasions, the portrayals illustrate an entelechy inherited from the Orientalist evocative imaginary of male 19th century Europe. In Tétouan it will refer to the wealthy class, whether in urban palaces or in leisure gardens on the outskirts of the city. On one occasion, Fernando Amor is invited to one of them, where the owner "spends money like a prince, lives like a European and throws frequent parties for his friends in his garden, which start in the evening and end at dawn." When he arrived, "they made me enter first, and I could only see some Moorish women who, covering their faces, entered in a hurry in one of the buildings of the garden. They were the women who, following the customs and laws of the country, ran to conceal themselves. Such style, such precaution, can rouse in the foreigner the most vivid desire to see them, a desire which, unfortunately or fortunately, is almost impossible to fulfil."

Thus, many of the travellers eventually give free rein to their imagination when referring to those women, often slaves, who in one way or another they relate to the canon of the Orientalised woman, where the seduction process is embodied in the image of the odalisque and the traveller as the main character. Alfonso Jara explains that, in one reception of the dignitaries of Tétouan, they were first served by a "Sudanese woman with an ugly face,"

but after a while and being satiated with the exquisiteness of the attention, the ambiance "was filled with perfume and very voluptuous smoke, among whose light muslins, the shapes of the black woman, far from vanishing and blurring, appeared increasingly provocative and tempting."

Another of the Orientalist commonplaces spread is the supposed lasciviousness of women regardless of their condition of confinement and reclusion. Despite the real ignorance, it is presented through the speculation and suspicion towards the female world, as one of the travellers describes in great detail: "These countryside tours, the visits to the graveyard on Fridays and the bath or hamman on Saturdays are the only leisure of the poor Muslim women, condemned to idle and boring seclusion, who only entertain themselves by putting on make-up and embellishing themselves to please their husbands. But if they devote most of their lives to them, there are some who suspect that a minority do so to their detriment and that these outings for pleasure and visits to the graveyard and baths are not as innocent, pious and pure one might think at first sight. It is possible that, as they are always confined, they seek to make the most of the rare moments of freedom they have. It is probable that, made uniform by the haik garment, they do so without difficulty or danger. And it was easy for the roguish Ziu-Ziu to take advantage of the afternoon. Tall, slim, very elegant, with a pale face, almond-shaped eyes and gentleman's hands, I am sure that this Moor finds many of those women who stray on their way to the graveyard and entertains many of those who are delayed on their way back from the bath."

Although the Muslim woman is the most mentioned in the Orientalist discourse, in the case of Tétouan Jewish women also take centre stage. As they belong to another religion, they dress differently and have their own traditions, and a differentiated place in the stories. Moreover, they also differentiate the Muslim women living in cities, where the idea and the consequence of the existence of the harem of the "classy ladies" is emphasised, and the Berber women living in rural areas, "modest peasants", who distinguish themselves as slaves of work and family, do not cover their face and are the image of oppression. Antonio Pareja records this and explains that "a shape, which from the distance I could not say was a man or a woman, was ploughing the land with a cow and a donkey. It was Zama, the wife of ben Yacub. Then I learnt that the unhappy women of the farmers and gardeners, like all those in the Rif, work the land, while their husbands get some fresh air or calmly smoke lying on the grass or on mats; Zama was heavily pregnant, as far as I could tell, which did not prevent her from working in the vegetable garden until sunset."

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In terms of the construction of the female gender, we see different assessments that, together, build a very efficient complex discourse to justify the need for colonial intervention. In this respect, they consider that the Orient and its men underestimate and enslave women in Morocco, especially Muslim women. Moreover, they also refer to the oppressing effects of seclusion. And most accounts note that religion is the big problem and also the only solution to bring dignity to the social status of women. With the comparative dialectic between the East and West, or Islamism and Christianity, travellers believe that "it will only be possible to overcome the moral relaxation of the East if the Islamic influence is annulled," which undervalues women with practices such as slavery, polygamy and divorce. At the same time, although travellers see Muslim women

as beings who do not know chaste love, who are lustful and voluptuous, they also condemn their sexual use by their dominating husbands. As a result, the Muslim woman is portrayed as the most banal and helpless in the social hierarchy. According to Nicasio Landa, "there [...] the status of the woman who has not been redeemed by Christianity is that of a thing, rather than a person, without rights of her own at any age, and, relegated to the harem of her husband, rather owner, social life is almost unknown, thus demonstrating that only the woman can create and support the multiple relations of our civilised society."

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In fact, the essence of the Muslim woman is reduced through lifelong degradation from birth: they treat her as an object. And this is precisely the discourse used as a strategy to encourage the "saving" colonist action.

Re-Readings of the Literary Map of Our Natural Spring

Within the Orientalist literature on Morocco, Tétouan deserves special attention because it was, for the Spanish collective imaginary, the most emblematic Moroccan city. Emblematic because it had the ability to intertwine, in the same place in a unique way, the shared legacies of the Middle Ages with the euphoric and patriotic repercussions of the Hispano-African War (1859-60) and, also, with the fact that the city eventually became, in 1912, the capital of the Protectorate. The shared historical vicissitudes, the attraction created by colonial geopolitics, the geographical closeness with the Iberian Peninsula, the existing voluminous literary production inspired by the city, along with the urgent need to Orientialise what was on the other side of the Strait, meant that everyone stepping on Moroccan soil should visit and discover Tétouan and share its particular features.

Within the critical interpretative framework opened by Edward Said, the books describing travels or brief periods in Tétouan should be seen as "colonial witnesses" – alluding to the title of the book by Manuela Marín – which dialogue with each other – and sometimes also plagiarise each other –, and create and recreate a rich network of contents concerning the Spanish collective imaginary of its domestic Orient, Morocco. However, the traveller often turns the Orient into something different from what it actually is, and does so to their own benefit, to their outlook and culture, which they consider superior by definition. It seems as if, from the outset, Orientalism takes on its political dimension at the service of a given culture, in this case Spanish culture, which needs to demonstrate its superiority to itself. In this respect, for the case of Tétouan, it is interesting to open a bridge of dialogue between the critical interpretations of Spanish literary endeavours and the work of Youssef Akmir, who complements the discursive production or the existing documentary archive with local historical sources.

Travel books have created imaginative geographies of the colonialism framed within the Orientalist tradition, which presented, represented and distorted reality, and this distorted reality was passed on to readers. In Spain, as in the rest of Europe, the "Muslim enemy" became for centuries a kind of catalyst designed to give cohesion to the efforts of a Christianity which, by virtue of its closeness and verve, felt directly threatened. Therefore, the gaze of the traveller will never be innocent; it is the result of an amalgam loaded mainly with prejudices. But for Spain – and not so much for the rest of

Europe –, the re-founding of Tétouan by Andalusians in the late 15th century and the subsequent repopulations with Jews and Moriscos expelled from the peninsula are foundational elements to which, because of proximity, travellers refer. A great fascination with Tétouan is revealed in which an unusual yet immediate and strange beauty stands out, which recalls, almost in the first instance, Spain's historical Islamic past and confronts the curious people with the mystery of the unknown, while they must question themselves faced with their own Andalusian mirror. However, the travelling theme rambles between myth and reality using the Orientalist patina to justify colonialism and defend the Spanish presence in its domestic Orient. They are documents whose main objective is to provide information on a place where there is a common history; a history that is both remote and fervently current. In the words of the ever present Juan Goytisolo, they are "living and beating vignettes of the Tétouan urban space that exist with those forged in the Hispanic subconsciousness since the time of the Reconquista, but which, in a unique form, exude for us a melancholic familiar feeling." In keeping with the foregoing and to conclude, the existence of the Other (their geography, economy, religion and culture) almost means a challenge that unleashes a double impulse of attraction and repulsion, which has remained alive until today, perhaps more than ever.

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