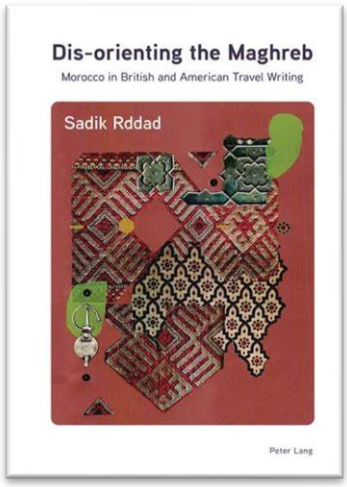


Sadik Rddad -. *Dis-orienting the Maghreb: Morocco in British and American Travel Writing* (Oxford-New York: Peter Lang, 2025), xvi, 278p.

Most previous works on Western travel writing in Morocco have primarily focused on the French-language tradition, limiting our comprehension of the genre. In his *Dis-orienting the Maghreb,* Sadik Rddad offers a valuable perspective that challenges this narrow view. His book examines the structures of imperial discourse as they relate to gender, history, geography, time, empire and nation, with a particular emphasis on the American and British Orientalist experiences in Morocco throughout various phases of international relations. The author highlights a significant yet overlooked body of English-language writings by British and American travelers. He trailblazes four major paradigm shifts or turns that define the evolution of knowledge in travel writing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period that began to integrate Morocco into the narrative of Western civilization. These turns are the national(ist), the secular, the transnational and the imperial.

As a crucial contribution for scholars and students interested in travel literature, colonial history, and the broader context of the Maghreb, Rddad's study significantly deepens our understanding of Anglo-American Moroccan relations in the era of imperialism. Furthermore, it broadens our insights into the travel genre's role in facilitating intercultural exchanges and reflecting inter-European competition. The author excels in situating the texts within their historical and contextual frameworks. Through his compelling analysis, the travelers are portrayed as observers, commentators, propagandists, and ultimately as interpreters of Morocco for their audiences back home.

The analysis of *Dis-Orienting the Maghreb* centres on the representations of Morocco within American and British travel accounts from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, specifically focusing on texts produced between 1880 and 1920 by two British travel writers: Philip Durham Trotter and Frances Macnab and two American ones: George Edmund Holt and Edith Wharton. Although the selection of this specific timeframe and these particular writers may appear random, it enables Rddad to delve into a diverse array of viewpoints during an essential era in Moroccan history, distinct from the more frequently examined periods of 1830–1912 or 1830–1944, which align with the French conquest of Algiers in 1830 and the emergence of Moroccan nationalism in the 1ate 1930s.

Although history and time play a key role in his analysis, Rddad adeptly emphasizes the importance of geographical factors as a basis for comprehending the intricate dynamics of Orientalist representation. This emphasis on geography facilitates a more profound examination into the unique features of the Maghreb region, providing a sophisticated perspective that transcends the oversimplified binaries frequently found in postcolonial discussions. *Dis-orienting the Maghreb* highlights the significance of exploring Anglo-American travel narratives within their unique historical and geopolitical frameworks, thereby contesting the uniform perspectives often found in conventional Orientalist scholarship.

By analyzing travel accounts such as Philip Durham Trotter's *Our Mission to the Court of Marocco* (1880), Frances Macnab's *A Ride in Morocco among Believers and Traders* (1902), George Edmond Holt's *Morocco the Piquant* (1914) and Edith Wharton's *In Morocco* (1920), Rddad unearths the intricate relationships between power, knowledge, and representation that define these texts. These narratives, which encompass a fundamental era in Moroccan history, provide a lens through which to probe the evolving perceptions and political dynamics of the time, as well as the varying Euro-American interests in the region.

The initial chapter establishes the theoretical foundation and historical contexts that guide the methodological and conceptual frameworks of the book. It fleshes out the ideological and discursive ramifications of the development of travel theory, drawing on the postcolonial reading strategies of leading postcolonial figures such as Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, Sara Mills, Lisa Lowe, Reina Lewis, James Clifford, Ali Behdad, *inter alia*. In this vein, the study investigates the increasing rhetoric of European nationalism, elucidating how travel literature concerning the Maghreb/Morocco reveals more about the ideological shifts of European nationalism during the colonial era than it does about Moroccan history and society.

British travelogues concerning Morocco exhibit characteristics similar to those found in other European travelogues from the same era, as they predominantly reflect comparable imperialistic objectives. For instance, both British and French travelogues deploy nearly identical discursive and narrative techniques. Additionally, British travelogues embody the *mission civilisatrice* often associated with French colonial and imperial literature. Ultimately, it can be asserted that the narratives produced by Orientalists, irrespective of their nationality tend to reiterate the same themes and visual representations, even when addressing places with distinct historical backgrounds, such as Fes, Alexandria, Damascus, or Istanbul.

The first paradigm shift, that is, the national(ist) one, is conspicuously substantiated in Philip Durham Trotter's travel account, *Our Mission to the*

Court of Marocco (1880). Unlike the ordinary traveler, Trotter is trapped in ideological and political closures of his nation's agenda due to the official nature of his trip and the overshadowing presence of John Drummond Hay, the British Representative Plenipotentiary to Morocco and the head of mission to the Royal Court of Moulay Hassan. Being part of a mission, Trotter is not allowed to interact with the natives the way he wishes or to visit the places he chooses. Interwoven within Trotter's colonial narrative, the indigenous discourse challenges the British narrative of precedence. The representation of Morocco is shaped by the concept of nationhood, establishing distinct narrative boundaries among various European nations.

Although this travel narrative is strongly dominated by the British nationalistic discourse and manipulated by the authorial I/ eye, Trotter sometimes loses control of the narrative as the native's counter discursive voice slips into the narrative and enters in an interactive interrogative dialogue with the colonizer. In this vein, we can borrow Michel Foucault's trope of "heterotopia" as places of Otherness from which this Other/narratee/travellee can criticize, resist, enunciate, and even revolt. This leads to moments of shift of agency from the colonizer to the native. In other words, the natives resist all types of imperial infringement, regardless of the originating nation. Their standpoint towards Europe is fuelled by the stark dichotomy of *bilad al-islam* and *bilad al-kufr.*

Following Philip Durham Trotter's footsteps, Frances Macnab, the pseudonym for the globe-trotting and undaunted journalist Agnes Fraser, emphasizes in her work, *A Ride in Morocco among Believers and Traders* (1902), the "Priority Discourse," which is premised on the exclusive right of Britain to transmit modernity to Morocco through the imperial machine. Yet, Macnab, who journeyed in Morocco at the beginning of the twentieth century, recognizes the multiple facets of Western travel accounts in such a way that gender matters in the production of knowledge about Morocco. Her account echoes the promotion of a secular perspective/shift in the knowledge production regarding the East, particularly in late nineteenth-century British travel literature about Morocco. Macnab highlights the conflict between religious and secular narratives, and how this enduring discord extends beyond Europe, probing into the ideological and discursive underpinnings of the European secular initiative, which is in direct opposition to the political and cultural framework of Morocco. It is true that Macnab's travel text is inscribed within the British voices of empire. She can be regarded as an emissary of commerce, education, and civilization, not of the so-called rigid 'three Cs': civilisation, Christianity and commerce. She is against evangelists and proselytizers in Morocco, demonstrating that if the British want to successfully disseminate modernism and colonialism in Morocco it is through

secularism – as a colonial hegemonic tool – not through military or religious means.

As American travel writers, George Edmund Holt and Edith Wharton examine the discursive shift in travel writing to a broader transnational and international colonial discourse of the beginning of the twentieth century based on their accounts *Morocco the Piquant* (1914) and *In Morocco* (1920), respectively. In these two accounts, the prevalent nationalist/colonial discourse recedes in favour of an apology for imperialism and cosmopolitanism.

George Edmund Holt's work, *Morocco the Piquant: Or, Life in Sunset Land* offers an in-depth analysis of the discursive shifts brought about by the negotiations between the United States and Morocco during a significant international period. The account also explores the contradictory nature of isolationist and internationalist narratives within American cultural politics, investigating, therefore, how the representation of Morocco and Tangier in *Morocco the Piquant* is positioned within the intricate dynamics of nationalism, colonialism, anti-colonialism, modernism, traditionalism, and enforced transnationalism. The interplay of transnational experiences, translational responses, and a static, atemporal reality within Holt's narrative exposes the discursive tensions stemming from the author's struggle between the immediacy of the reality he depicts as a travel writer and the intertextual influences, institutional obligations of diplomatic duty, and his own personal aspirations.

This transnationalist rhetoric is more conspicuous in Edith Wharton's account *In Morocco,* being imbued with an imperial shift. Her travel text, which was the result of a three-week journey in French Morocco in 1917, serves as a call for the United States to abandon its long-standing isolationist stance in global affairs. Wharton did not advocate for the United States to establish an immediate protectorate over Morocco; instead, she supported a French protectorate that could serve as a paradigm for America's potential role in global history, eulogizing the engineer of the French protectorate in Morocco, Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey. Still, Wharton's discourse is split in that she feels that the exotic and the erotic she aspires is constantly threatened by the overwhelming "European drift" caused by the encroachment of European powers on the East, leading to the erosion of the "authentic East" which is the primary object of her desire. Wharton's fluctuation between two contrasting narratives regarding Morocco reflects the intricacies and tensions within her storytelling.

When considering these paradigm shifts, Anglo-American travel literature concerning Morocco reveals intricate dimensions of discursive anxiety, ambivalence, and a challenge to singular interpretations related to

time, geography, gender, and nationality. *Dis-orienting the Maghreb* makes a significant contribution to the fields of travel literature and postcolonial studies. Rddad's focus on geographical specificity, along with his attention to the frequently overlooked travel narratives of Morocco, serves as an essential counterbalance to the dominant trends in the discipline that emphasize temporality and continuity. His research enhances our comprehension of Orientalist discourse and enriches the study of travel literature by showcasing the diversity and intricacy of Western portrayals of the Maghreb.

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