

Inhabiting the Exotic: Paul Bowles and Morocco

by

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Abstract

The American writer Paul Bowles lived in Morocco from 1947 until his death in 1999, apart from visits to North Africa, Europe, Ceylon, India and the United States during this period. Bowles' expatriation and subsequent itineraries are quite well known, but this thesis explores his interest in – indeed, preoccupation with – mediations and a state of being 'in-between' in a selection of his texts: the translations, his autobiography and his fiction.

Only a few commentators on Bowles' work have noted a meta-fictional dimension in his texts, possibly because the facts of his life are so intriguing and even startling. Though not explicitly meta-fictional, in the manner of somewhat later writers, Bowles does not tell us directly how he understands the various in-betweens that may be identified in his work, and their relationship to the individual and social crises about which he writes. His work unravels the effects of crises as not directly redeemable but as mediated and over-determined in complex and subtle forms. There are no explicit postmodern textual strategies; rather, Bowles draws on the basic resources of fiction to locate, temporally and spatially, the in-between: plot, character, description and background are intertwined in order, at once, to give a work its unity and to reveal, sometimes quite incidentally, a supplementary quality that threatens to undermine that unity. Bowles' experimentation with different genres and forms may be understood as part of this problematic, even as a form of textual travelling that leaves no single genre or form as a summation of his achievement.

Using close, even – at times – deconstructive readings of a selection of texts across different genres, the thesis supplements the dominant approach to Paul Bowles’ relationship with Morocco, namely a life-and-work approach. It develops what might be called a postcolonial approach to Bowles, but, again, through close reading and an *in situ* use of theory that is appropriate to the texts in question, rather than through a heavy-handed theoretical approach. For instance, liminality as an encounter with the ambivalent process of hybridity is useful across Bowles’ work. Further, narrative ambivalence is helpful in the chapter on the translations, while Derrida’s exploration of a general versus a restricted economy informs my discussion of *Let it Come Down*. Bowles is, of course, vulnerable to a postcolonial critique that focuses on the exotic, and I share some of these concerns, as will be apparent in the following chapters. Chapter 2, for instance, deals with translation and argues that Bowles’ role moves between simple translator and facilitator to initiator and creator of the text in complex and often creative ways, especially in relation to Larbi Layachi and Mohamed Mrabet’s stories. In Chapter 3, the fictional treatment of the transitional stages in Bowles’ journey are analysed to show how Bowles enacts liminality as a non-unitary mode of understanding. The thesis concludes by arguing that there is always a pattern in Morocco. It suggests that Bowles is more subtle and more ambivalent than some of the simple oppositions might suggest. This subtlety is conveyed in the first part of my title, ‘Inhabiting the Exotic’.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Realising the Textual Space: Meta-fictional Speculations in Paul Bowles' Work

Morocco has long been a crossroads of civilisations, a point of intersection for various encounters, and a site coveted by different writers. Among those to be attracted to Morocco, and even to fall captive to what they regarded as its magical spell, have been Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, Djuna Barnes, Jean Genet, Tennessee Williams, the Beat generation and their friends and associates (notably, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Alfred Chester and William Burroughs), George Orwell, Truman Capote and Gore Vidal. American anthropologists Clifford Geertz, Paul Rabinow and Vincent Crapanzano have also had access to Morocco as a supposedly alien space that they would wish to have speak. Paul Bowles was an important part of this trek to Morocco and, in particular, to Tangier, its international city where he lived as an expatriate for fifty-two years. One can hardly mention Paul Bowles without evoking Tangier. The city and the man are connected to the extent that it seems logical to end this study with *Let It Come Down*, a novel set in the International Zone. As I argue in the thesis, Paul Bowles has his limitations, his blindness and insights. Still, if we compare him with most, if not all, of those mentioned above, Bowles is, arguably, a much more perceptive traveller in Morocco. He travelled extensively and showed tremendous curiosity in what we tend to call 'the other'. He knew the local dialect (Moroccan Arabic). He collected folk music and translated Moroccan oral stories. This engagement

with other cultures as well as his own literary abilities make him a writer of unusual complexity and distinctiveness.

Paul Bowles was born in New York in 1911. At the age of nineteen, he left home and country and travelled to Paris, seeking the company of Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas and other literary expatriates. He stayed only briefly, before Stein and Toklas suggested that he travel to Morocco. In the summer of 1931 he headed, with Aaron Copland, to Tangier, which he came to love more than any place he had ever seen in his life (Caponi 1993: 10 and 41). So strong was the impact of his first trip to Morocco that Bowles returned again and again over the next decade. During the Second World War, he lived in New York and Mexico, but in 1947, he went back to Tangier.

Bowles' travel to Morocco was distinctive. Unlike a tourist who visits a place for a while and returns, Paul Bowles inhabited Morocco. And, unlike the expatriates of the 1920s who settled in metropolitan centres of Europe such as Paris, Bowles was less attracted to these cultural hubs. He made other distinctions, referring to a 'new "lost generation" which America turned loose on the world after the recent war'. This one, he continues, 'is so thoroughly lost that the generation which came before seems undeserving of the epithet' (Bowles 1951: 654). Along with Alfred Chester, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, Bowles left New York City when the rest of the world had begun to see it as the centre of culture. More important still, Bowles' expatriation turned out to be much more thorough-going than that of the previous generations of American writers. Bowles never returned home, and died in Morocco in November 1999. In his

quest – both a geographical journey and a journey in writing – Paul Bowles seeks to invest the exotic with greater intensity. Bowles’ writing is not ‘at home’ in the United States – a powerful place of knowledge and growing history. This privileged place is challenged by the exotic, meaning, in general, the strange and unfamiliar. Foster refines the definition: ‘the exotic immediately evokes a symbolic world of infinite complexity, surprise, color, manifold variety and richness’ (Foster 1982: 21). Bowles travelled farther toward the borders of the exotic, as he and others saw Morocco’s space, powerfully driven by an urge to explore as much of the unknown, as well as by – crucially – an impulse to leave behind the place where he was born.

Bowles’ writings remain on the margin of American literary history in spite of the efforts of some fine critics, whose research has assisted the writing of this thesis, and his works circle around and even inhabit the now-current concept of the exotic. They may be thought of as trajectories, articulating distances, dialogues, cultural differences, in-betweenness and liminality. With an eye on the setting up of a clear framework of concepts to be used throughout the thesis that will help to re-position Bowles, I will now define some key terms in my discussion, namely liminality, mediation, in-between, translation, dialogism and ambivalence. Where appropriate, I will associate these key concepts with certain theorists whose works will inform subsequent chapters. My general reason for using these concepts is that they can all be associated with Bowles’ general position as an in-between, a mediating literary force that crosses the boundary between the inside and outside. From time to time in this introduction and in

specific chapters, where appropriate, I will make distinctions between specific instances of how other critics use Bowles and my own criticism.

Bowles' work presents a dimension that opens our eyes to the concept of liminality. But what is liminality exactly? Derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning a threshold between two spaces, the 'liminal' is a revealing concept and can be usefully deployed to describe Paul Bowles' space and to investigate how he mediates Moroccan culture, crossing a range of genres and forms. By liminality I refer to the concept of the threshold, the space in-between that Bowles inhabits, suspended between cultures. I have sought, throughout this thesis, to refine a general understanding of Paul Bowles' in-between position, deriving from biographical studies, by exploring a more complex model of interrelatedness. It is appropriate here in the introduction, to expand upon liminality, and to summarise the contribution of Victor Turner, the major theorist of this concept.

The idea of liminality goes back to anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep in his study *Les rites de passage*. Gennep identified three phases in the passage from one culturally defined state to another: pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition), and post-liminal (reincorporation). Anthropologist Victor Turner discussed and deepened Van Gennep's original concepts of liminality and 'betwixt and between' (Turner 1997: 95). Accordingly, from its earliest theoretical use, liminality has been seen as a phase of transition. Turner borrowed Arnold Van Gennep's structure of rites of passage and the 'transition rites' which 'accompany every change of place, state, social position and age' (Turner 1997:

94). Focusing entirely on the middle stage of rites of passage, Turner expanded theories on the 'liminal' in his works – *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals*, 'Liminality and Communitas', from *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, and 'Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas' in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*. For Turner,

Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and, more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.

(Turner 1967: 97)

In 'Liminality and Communitas', Turner significantly defines liminal individuals or entities as 'neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial' (Turner 1997: 95). Using a remark of Jean-Paul Sartre, Turner sees that liminality represents the midpoint of transition. In 'Passages, Margins, and Poverty', he writes: 'I see liminality as a phase in social life in which this confrontation between "activity which has no structure" and its "structured results" produces in men their highest pitch of self-consciousness' (Turner 1974: 255). It remains to discover the relevance of liminality to Paul Bowles' texts in order to show how this concept relates to the intersection of oppositions, particularly when understood spatially.

This thesis makes a case for geographic space and poetic geography coexisting simultaneously as an interconnected space, combining Bowles' writings and his geographical journey. I use the concept of liminality to denote a space of in-betweenness, in which Bowles is able to capture the intersecting and simultaneous nature of mediation throughout geographical space, textual sites and genres. I suggest that geographic space and poetic geography are concurrently entwined and experienced for Bowles who, in many writings and interviews, seeks to explain and explore his mobility as a writer: 'I'm always happy leaving the United States, and the farther away I go, the happier I am, generally' (Hibbard 1993: 146). In his autobiography, *Without Stopping*, Bowles frames himself as a traveller in motion. He recalls that his unending journey begins as an escape from the United States to Paris, and continues on, to end in the supposedly more distant, culturally, historically and aesthetically more complicated destination of North Africa. The autobiographer recalls his travels as he moves: on ship, by train, on buses, on foot, or as he drives 'open topped' (Bowles 1985: 322). He recalls his travel to Paris, to London, back to Paris, to Barcelona, along the Mediterranean Coast, via Valencia and Alicante to Elche (*ibid.*: 146-147). From Spain, Bowles crossed over to Tangier, on to Fez (*ibid.*: 148), back to Tangier, to Agadir, to Paris, and to Monte Carlo, where he 'began to dream of North Africa' again (*ibid.*: 152-153, 155), thereby distancing himself even more from his native New York and reinforcing 'altered states of being' (Messent 2008: 138) through the 'in-between state' he occupied.

From Europe, Bowles travelled back to North Africa, beginning with Algiers in Algeria, then to Ghardaia via Laghouat, to Bousaada, back to Algiers, to Touggourt (Bowles 1985: 159, 160), to the region of the Souf, to Nefta in Tunisia, to Karouan, to Sidi Bou-said, to Carthage, back to Algiers again, and back to Tangier (*ibid.*: 164). Clearly, in Morocco, Bowles is frequently on the move. He refers to ‘a fine long trip through the mountains and the desert’ (*ibid.*: 287). He tells of visiting a number of cities: Tafraout, Tiznit, Tinghir, Figuig Agadir, only to go back to Tangier. These places and cities in Morocco, North Africa and throughout the world, become sites that attract diverse meanings accorded them by the traveller. They also become signposts, directing itineraries that, to use de Certeau’s words, ‘articulat[e] a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning’ (de Certeau 1984: 105). Bowles is almost a modern-day Odysseus, whom Homer described as *polutropus*, that is widely travelled. Indeed, Bowles prefers a nomadic, transitional life, with its constant novelty and diverse landscape in contrast to the comfortable life in New York. Bowles’ appetite for movement, the irresistible impulse to act, drives him away from his original home toward exile and homelessness, toward ‘the dissolution or destructuring of many of his stereotypes’ (Turner 1974: 168), removing – and/or reinforcing – in Malcolm X’s words, “‘the white” from [his] *mind*, the “white” from [his] *behaviour*’ (quoted in Turner 1974: 168-169, emphasis in original).

In his autobiography, Bowles writes:

Had I believed that my constantly changing life, which I considered the most pleasant of all possible lives ... would go on indefinitely, I should not have pursued it with such fanatical ardor. But I was aware that it could not be durable. Each day lived through on this side of the Atlantic was one more day spent outside prison.

(Bowles 1985:165)

It is important to stress here how Bowles' rites of passage are highlighted. While 'happy leaving the United States' denotes Bowles' phase of separation, signifying his unconcerned detachment from the United States, phrases that we regularly encounter in *Without Stopping* – 'farther away', 'my constantly changing life' – coupled with the incessant travels that I have glossed above, interestingly show Bowles' awareness of occupying a liminal space, on the fringes of society. Bowles' never-ending journey, his shifting between spaces, is his attempt at understanding the world, the other, and the self, an understanding that is located and displaced at the same time, that appropriates and resists. This said, concepts of liminality are most relevant and most interesting in the context of Bowles' texts – autobiography, translations, short stories, travelogues, and novels – where, like many of his protagonists, he is 'neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification' (Turner 1974: 232). The subsequent chapters argue that Bowles crosses various spaces. His position is that of a mediating agent between the States/Europe and Morocco in a way that affects both sides. It is this position that concerns me in this thesis: an in-between

position that, itself, can be considered a margin of the States/Europe and Morocco.

Bowles' writings have the taste of the exotic that Morocco offers, beyond the social and spatial boundaries of domesticity. Though Bowles' name and fiction are associated with the remotest corners of the globe (South America, Ceylon and the Far East), it is Morocco that attracts him most. The lure of the alien, that which is foreign and beyond limits, finds a real outlet when Bowles physically enters Moroccan territory. For Bowles, Morocco seems vastly different from any part of the world he has seen before, possessing a tremendous energy and an air of magic (Bowles 1985: 125), almost a paradise for which he has apparently been longing. In his writing, Bowles' awareness of the exotic is clearly expressed in *Without Stopping*: 'My curiosity about alien cultures was avid and obsessive. I had a placid belief that it was good for me to live in the midst of people whose motives I did not understand' (*ibid.*: 297). Such a statement from the autobiography brings to mind the desire of the American woman writer in Bowles' short story 'Tea on the Mountain', who goes on a picnic with a Moroccan boy, Mjid. During the course of the day, the writer comes to realise that 'The idea of such a picnic had so completely coincided with some unconscious desire she had harbored for many years. To be free, out-of-doors, with some young man she did not know – could not know – that was probably the important part of the dream' (Bowles 1979a: 22). The traveller's experiences and desires – and those of his character – mark the aesthetic excitement of an outsider, for whom the exotic connotes the unfamiliar and spectacular. Such experiences

connect to what Mark Twain recalled after an excursion to Tangier in 1867: ‘We wanted something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign – foreign from top to bottom – foreign from center to circumference – foreign inside and outside and all around – nothing anywhere about it to dilute its foreignness And lo! in Tangier we have found it’ (Twain 1984: 61). For Bowles, as for Twain, James Clifford’s succinct explanation is appropriate: ““Location,” ... is not a matter of finding a stable “home”. Rather it is a matter of being aware of the difference that makes a difference in concrete situations, of recognizing the various inscriptions, “places,” or “histories”” (Clifford 1989: 180).

Bowles’ writing about Morocco also reveals his fascination with the remote past, the most ‘primitive phase’ that will provoke him, and his readers, to question increasingly schematised patterns of everyday life and to re-discover ways of perceiving that, he seems to argue, have been lost in the development of complicated social forms. Foster puts this well. Morocco, for Bowles, appears like ‘a memory bank of how and whom [he] think[s] [he was] in the “primitive” reaches of the past’ (Foster 1982: 21). Bowles inhabits Morocco and circulates within it. He transports himself and lets himself be transported. Rather than exploring ‘Paul Bowles *in* Morocco’, then, this thesis focuses on ‘Paul Bowles *and* Morocco’, that is Paul Bowles’ relationship with Morocco, or rather Morocco as a textual space in the literary imagination of Paul Bowles. Bowles’ sustained desire to come into ‘a magic place’ (Bowles 1985: 165), is a form of romantic restructuring of Morocco, reopening the frontier between logic and magic. Bowles’ writings travel. They construct, to borrow Clifford’s terms, ‘that

“theoretical” place that is no-place and thus potentially every place’ (Clifford 1989: 180), bridging spatial distance but also revealing unbridgeable, untranslatable differences between different views.

In his memoirs, Bowles soon begins asking about empty houses. He wants to appropriate a house, a shelter, a sedentary space that is parcelled out, closed, where he can be at rest. He wants to be absorbed by this space where he can feel his sense of relation to the collective through being at home. The appropriated house is associated with expansion and outside. Bowles tells of buying a Tangier house, and chooses one ‘with what he considered the finest view of all’ (Bowles 1985: 279). From such a house, Bowles sees the world outside and possesses it. For the autobiographer, ‘getting possession of the keys to the house was easy’ (*ibid.*). The space of the house transcends geometrical form to become a space of contemplation and dreams, and, to paraphrase Gaston Bachelard, a topos of commitment to past intimacy (Bachelard 1994: 59). The house becomes, for the autobiographer/traveller, a space of individual security that is precariously sustained by the endless quest of the detective tracking his clues through the dynamism of the crowd on the streets and alleys of Tangier’s medina. (There are many echoes of Poe here, not least of ‘The Man of the Crowd’.) Although Bowles finally settles in Morocco and buys a house in Tangier, making a home somewhere is not momentous as an event. Bowles is constantly caught up in an endless quest that prevents him from settling down or putting his feet on earth. The autobiographer/traveller lives by moving, by escaping the confinement of

home. Importantly, moving through alien territories, in search of the liberation that various drugs and sexual experiences seem to offer, shapes Bowles' writings.

This thesis builds upon, while remedying certain shortcomings in, the biographically oriented studies of Bowles' works. Despite advances in literary theory over the last three decades, attention has been devoted almost exclusively to the 'life-and-work', frequently prompted by Bowles' own words (a reason why *Without Stopping* receives detailed attention, below). Lawrence Stewart's 1974 critical survey, *Paul Bowles: The Illumination of North Africa*, raised Bowles' profile, but it does not go beyond a summary of Bowles' major works and a factual and analytical introduction to his life, which will not satisfy those who seek to understand the complexities and opacities in Bowles' writings. Its chief merit lies in exploring Bowles' self-styled surrealistic method, what he terms 'automatic writing', in stories like 'The Scorpion', 'By the Water', and *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard*. In his study of Bowles' existential preoccupations – exile, anguish and malaise, introduced through descriptions of an alien geography – Stewart misses an opportunity to read closely Bowles' texts and investigate the way he negotiates apparently opposed positions. Wayne Pounds' psychological study, *Paul Bowles: The Inner Geography*, interestingly draws on Freud and R. D. Laing, to present the Bowlesian protagonist as a schizoid personality, symbolically 'driven to encounter primitive landscapes, primitive peoples, or the primitive within his own self' (Pounds 1985: 1). Pounds sees Bowles' work as a direct continuation of Edgar Allan Poe's concerns, as does Catherine Rainwater's dissertation, 'Twentieth-Century Writers in the Poe

Tradition' (1982). Pounds argues that for both Poe and Bowles, the split between inner and social entails self-annihilation. Although Pounds' study reveals many valuable insights and pinpoints the connections between Bowles and earlier American writers, namely Poe, it relies heavily on the 'psychic structure' described by Laing in *The Divided Self*. While Pounds' book remains a useful psychological study of Bowles' Western protagonists, Richard Patteson's 1987 book, *A World Outside: The Fiction of Paul Bowles* explores Bowles' architectural metaphor, which is built around the juxtaposition of two antithetical worlds: the inside versus the outside. Patteson analyses the concepts of security, shelter and exposure, concluding that the Bowlesian character, who encounters flimsy architectural structures, realises that the meaninglessness he is escaping is as much within the safe home as it is outside of it. Patteson's analysis of Bowles' metaphor of space, perceptive as it may be, leaves out the important idea of mediation and the exotic as themes in their own right.

Besides these studies, Michelle Green's *The Dream at the End of the World: Paul Bowles and the Literary Renegades in Tangier* (1992) comes across as an anecdotal, even gossipy, book that helps to anchor Bowles in the popular imagination as a reminder of an era of decadence in the International Zone. Finally, Allen Hibbard's book *Paul Bowles, Magic and Morocco* (2004) examines the influence of North African magic on Bowles' fictions. Hibbard situates Bowles alongside writers such as Conrad and Lawrence who explored a self divided between the modern and the primitive. Hibbard's key motifs are important ways into Paul Bowles' work – the magician, the alchemist, the writer

about magic in Morocco. While these studies are mostly insightful, they seem to have tackled the issue from one single philosophical category or another, disregarding the multifarious and complex aspects of the writers' texts. For these to emerge, a close textual approach may be required, and a quite unusual Paul Bowles then begins to appear.

Rather few commentators on Bowles' work have noted a meta-fictional dimension in his texts, possibly because the facts of his life are so intriguing and even startling. There is only one mention of Paul Bowles, in the company of William Burroughs, in Tony Tanner's *City of Words* (1971). I do not claim that Bowles is explicitly meta-fictional, in the manner of somewhat later writers. He does not tell us directly how he understands the various mediations that may be identified in his work and their relationship to the individual and social crises about which he writes. By mediation – or what I have been colloquially calling 'in-between' – I refer to a phase that is often a space in time that bears the marks of what has been and what is to come, but also what exists in the present.

The idea of mediation is everywhere in contemporary critical discourse. In this thesis, I largely draw upon Jacques Derrida's idea of deconstruction for my understanding of the in-between. The best way to understand such a concept is, perhaps, to define Derrida's notion of *différance*. In *Positions* (1981) and *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs* (1973), he presents a powerful explanation of the in-between. He coins a portmanteau term: *différance*, which he derives from the French 'différence'. The French 'différer' has a reference to spatiality, as the English to 'differ', to be dissimilar,

distinct from something. But it has a temporal component, too, as in the English ‘to defer’ or postpone. In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida maintains that *différance* is:

The operation of differing which at one and the same time both fissures and retards presence, submitting it simultaneously to primordial division and delay. *Différance* is to be conceived prior to the separation between deferring as delay and differing as the active work of difference.

(Derrida 1973: 88)

Différance, Jacques Derrida’s ‘archi-trace’ (Derrida 1981: 14) notion, involves a spatial mediation as well as a temporal difference. Its most formidable role is that it sees meaning as ‘permanently deferred, always subject to and produced by its difference from other meanings’ (Hawthorn 2000: 82). Through *différance*, in every mediation, every exchange, communication always already presupposes the possibility of non-communication, for, as Derrida maintains: ‘being is set in play’. In every mediation there is the trace, ‘the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself’ (Derrida 1973: 156). Through the notion of *différance*, Derrida expresses his overarching concern to oppose Western thought and free it from the ‘concept of centered structure’, what he refers to as ‘logocentrism’ (Derrida 1978: 279-149). While logocentrism posits the existence of fixed meaning, guaranteed by a presence or origin, *différance* sees meaning as unstable. It is, as Derrida puts it, ‘neither simply active nor

simply passive, that it announces or rather recalls something like the middle voice, that it speaks of an operation which is not an operation' (Derrida 1973: 137). As such, *différance* provides a critique of the signifier/signified distinction. It solicits beings 'in the sense that *sollicitare* means, in old Latin, to shake all over, to make the whole tremble' (*ibid.*: 153).

What is the relevance of *différance* when we turn to Bowles' work? *Différance* is an important notion that can be linked to Bowles' way of inhabiting Morocco. The process that Bowles engages with inevitably deals with binary oppositions, but because of the postcolonial context, these oppositions become a hierarchy. Derrida's deconstructive reading helps to dismantle these oppositions and to question the very idea of hierarchy. Contrary to what is said by those critics of Bowles who see him in the context of binary opposition (Abdelhak Elghandor, to give a prominent example), Bowles' writing, to use Derrida's words, 'is related to something other than itself but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element' (Derrida 1973: 142). Potentially, then, *différance* can be usefully deployed to describe and analyse Bowles' rather general in-between position. If Derrida proposes that 'différance is not It belongs to no category of being, present or absent' (*ibid.*: 134), Bowles' way of inhabiting Morocco, both geographically and textually, suggests a mediating position that belongs to inside and outside on the one hand, and to neither on the other. Bowles' state of 'being and not being', of being suspended between cultures also refers to 'the whole complex of meanings' (*ibid.*: 137) conveyed by the concept of *différance*. As such one can say that Morocco in

Bowles' writing is constituted as 'a fabric of differences', a mark of a relation manifesting the intersection of oppositions, 'crossroads', 'sites of passage' necessary for a large number of oppositions, which are not fixed but volatile and unstable. Bowles' reference to Moroccan realities, to its being, is a more provisional process than one might think. Realities are always deferred, in Derrida's words, 'by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces' (Derrida 1981: 29). I am using these theorists and concepts to bring out an implicit meta-fictional dimension in Bowles' work. Using the concept to denote texts that are more explicitly self-conscious than Bowles', Patricia Waugh proposes that meta-fiction is a term which 'self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality' (Waugh 1993: 2). It is this attention to the making of the texts that leads into my study of the meta-fictional speculations in Bowles' work, exploring a theory of fiction through the writing of fiction and drawing attention to the way Bowles constructs and mediates his experience of the world.

Accordingly, this study is a close reading of selected texts by Paul Bowles, which opens up an alternative way of thinking about his work. Close reading does not have to mean a deconstructive reading. However, there is an important sense in which deconstruction has helped me to understand how Bowles somehow inhabits Morocco while never being 'in' it. Deconstruction, Derrida explains, consists of 'dislocating, displacing, disarticulating, disjoining,

putting “out of joint” the authority of the “is” (Derrida 1995: 25). There is a surprising ‘fit’ between Paul Bowles’ apparently un-theorised writing and the insights of Derrida. Bowles experimented with plenty of mediations and in-betweens, and perhaps his travels gave him this kind of insight into the workings of texts. But the jump from life-travels to textual negotiations and itineraries cannot be made so straightforwardly. His work unravels the effects of the crises that arise when one engages with different cultures. There are no explicit postmodern textual strategies per se; rather, Bowles draws on various resources of fiction to locate, temporally and spatially, the in-between: plot, character, description and background are intertwined in order, at once, to give a work its unity and to reveal, sometimes quite incidentally, a supplementary quality that threatens to undermine that unity. This is the significance of Bowles’ plea to critics to focus on how he says things and not on what he says: ‘To me,’ asserts Bowles, ‘the manner of representation is considerably more important than what is represented’ (quoted in Elghandor 1994: 23).

The very process of textual representation is privileged in Bowles’ writing, and the various ambiguous identities and actions that arise in the reading of his texts prompt multiple possibilities that are not so far in their effects, if not in their tone, from the meta-fictional speculations that have become almost a sub-genre in post-1970s fiction. In this light, deconstruction is of use, in the sense that it consists in reversing the relations of power. Deconstruction ‘begins, as it were, from a refusal of the authority or determining power of every “is”’ (Lucy 2004: 11). Further, according to Derrida, ‘deconstruction ... must by means of a

double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an overturning of the classical opposition and a general displacement of the system' (Derrida 1982: 329). In a neither–nor stance, deconstruction inscribes (*loxos*) obliqueness, equivocality into the logic of reversal of traditional oppositions, 'obliquely from above to below, from outside to inside, and from the back to the front' (*ibid.*: xv). The aim is, if not to neutralise the classical oppositions, at least to thwart their functioning, and systematically unsettle the stability of meaning.

This instability lies in Bowles' various works and ideas. It has strong ties with the baroque scopic regime I explore in Bowles' autobiography *Without Stopping*. A compelling example is the way Bowles looks at the city of Tangier obliquely, in the mode of 'small squares built on sloping terrain so that they looked like ballet sets designed in false perspective' (Bowles 1985: 128), illustrating his challenge to 'the dominant scientific or "rationalized" visual order' (Jay 1993: 45). Moreover, the chapter on selected fiction argues that the oppositions I discuss are not fixed, but unstable, and that the feeling of modernity as an existence among fragments, depicted in 'Here to Learn', *The Sheltering Sky*, *Let It Come Down*, and 'A Distant Episode', is but a 'transforming social experience' (Williams 1973: 164). Indeed, the chapter reminds us that the transformed body of Malika is a proof of the loss that marks her transition and distinguishes her from the fixed. Equally important is the very close link between Derrida's notion of restricted and general economy and themes and locations of *Let It Come Down*, which I fully exploit and explore in Chapter 4. Bowles' works are riddled with Derridean aporia when it comes to dealing with such key

concepts as a 'restricted and general economy' and *différance*. A concentrated focus on *Let It Come Down* allows me to stress the idea that there is no fixed presence which can guarantee the meaning of the text, since presence is itself unstable. The chapter argues that in the Interzone of *Let It Come Down*, that which is unethical inhabits its obverse, while that which is fluid and unsettled leaches on to the stable economy gradually to reveal some of its contradictions and instabilities.

Just as Bowles travels through, out of and back to Morocco, so he also traverses different genres and forms. What I propose is to look at Bowles' texts in a different light, eschewing chronological structure. Putting the emphasis on neglected works, namely translations and autobiography, may seem to interfere with the chronology and development of the writer and his obvious relationships with Morocco; however, emphasis on Bowles' translations, as well as autobiography, can be helpful because a chronological structure obscures what I consider to be a deeper pattern. Structuring the thesis across a range of Bowles' works, rather than going for either coverage or over-concentration on the well-known works of fiction, has allowed me to range widely, studying works which are largely taken for granted, and also to cover a range of diverse texts that deal with various locations in Morocco (Tangier, Tetuan, Fez, Saharan Desert). To a degree, the structuring of the thesis across a range of Bowles' works mirrors the instability reflected in Derrida's notion of *différance* explained above and directly links to Paul Bowles' works and ideas. While Bowles' writings are thought of as quite different, my concern in this thesis is to show their

interconnectedness through mediation and liminality, the threshold which permits the passage from one space to another, from one poetics into the other. This is also the justification for a non-chronological approach.

Such an approach offers a welcome answer to a lacuna in Bowles' criticism, in approaching his role of mediating literary force as a role which derives, first and foremost, from his translations as Chapter 2 demonstrates. Bowles knew very well he was creating 'synthetic' stories via the translations – neither one genre nor another. To use Neil Campbell's words, Bowles' later stories 'brought together his American outsider's identity and his increasing knowledge of Moroccan cultural forms in a dynamic, transnational creativity' (Campbell 2000: 180). If Bowles referred to his later stories as 'synthetic', 'as in "putting together" or building up separate elements into a connected whole' (*ibid.*) and related them to translations, it would be naive to ignore or marginalise these translations. This would obscure the complexity of Bowles' role as a translator and its importance for his writing career in general.

Indeed, my chapter on Moroccan translation demonstrates that Bowles' role as translator represents the best example of Paul Bowles as a mediating literary force. Such a claim, drawn from Paul Bowles' work as translator, seems to apply to fiction and to Bowles' writing as a whole. In fact, the idea of a check, a measure or a point of reference that is stronger in translations of Moroccan oral stories than in the fictional work has been prominent in my thinking. Fiction allows Bowles more scope to talk about other peoples and invent characters that may be less subject to the constraints of veridical empirical knowability. Bowles

has much more scope to travel imaginatively and geographically in fiction than in the translations or autobiography. This means that there is some check in so far as the language refers to objects, places, people (even in a pure fantasy set in an imaginary landscape), but the checks are stronger – perhaps – in autobiography and translations, where the ‘I’ is somewhat, though, as we will see, not entirely, restricted by the writer’s life, and by the discipline under which the translator works with respect to the original oral tales. Close, even deconstructive, readings can challenge traditional critical approaches and critically assess the translator, autobiographer, short story writer and novelist. Bowles’ autobiography, the thesis argues, is best conceived as a memory of a memory, and his fiction as a fiction that leads to fiction.

At the outset, in the next chapter, are the issues raised by the various literary translations from the Moroccan oral tradition. That chapter raises the question of translation, mediation, liminality and narrative ambivalence, terms which convey the crossing over and encounters of two cultures. The chapter offers insights from Douglas Robinson, Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, Eric Cheyfitz, Homi Bhabha, Mikhail Bakhtin, Emile Benveniste and James Clifford as theoretical points of reference for an understanding of Bowles’ Moroccan translations. It argues that Bowles is a very unusual case of a writer in a colonial/postcolonial situation where ‘translation, like all (re)writings is never innocent’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 11). The chapter examines the notion of translation as the transportation or transfer of meanings into foreign territories and, as a rewriting of an original text, asserts that ‘rewriting is manipulation,

undertaken in the service of power’ and that translation is ‘a shaping force’ (*ibid.*: Preface). Homi Bhabha confirms this idea when he writes:

translation is ... a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense – imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it *can* be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum.

(Bhabha 1990: 210)

Bowles is aware of the meaning of translation as the ‘transportation’ or ‘transfer’ of meanings. In an interview, Gena Caponi makes the point that in Spanish, ‘*translador*’ is seen on ‘moving vans’, only to mean one who ‘transports things from one place to another, from one country to another’. To this, Paul Bowles added: ‘In some sense, he’s a traitor. I want to carry it over the border intact, but of course, that’s impossible’ (Caponi 1993: 199). In order to set up a clearer framework of the concept of translation, I shall expand these views in the light of recent work in Translation Studies and give the viewpoint of key theorists. For Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere,

Translations are never produced in an airlock where they, and their originals, can be checked against the *tertium comparationis* in the purest possible lexical chamber, untainted by power, time, or even the vagaries

of culture. Rather, translations are made to respond to the demands of a culture, and of various groups within that culture.

(Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 7)

Chapter 2 uses the abundance of recent work in Translation Studies to consider the notion of power and its relationship with Bowles' role of translator. The chapter is most directly concerned with Bowles' translation in a postcolonial context to usefully buttress the argument that Moroccan storytellers were creating stories to meet someone else's agenda in a situation of unequal power. Speaking of translation as exchange, dialogue, bridge-building, suggesting friendship and two-way processes may obscure the complicity of translation in relation to power. In his book, *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained*, Douglas Robinson discusses the political nature of translations enmeshed in history and relations of power. In a typology of approaches to postcolonial studies, Robinson identifies 'Post-independence' studies, 'Post-European colonization' studies, and 'Power-relations' studies (Robinson 1997: 14-15). For Robinson, the translator may be considered a traitor in so far as the translator's goal is dictated by an in-power group:

And in "power-relations" studies, postcolonialism is a way of looking at intercultural power, the psychosocial transformations brought about by the intertwined dynamics of dominance and submission, geographical and linguistic displacement. It does not attempt to explain everything in

the world; only this one neglected phenomenon, the control of one culture by another.

(Robinson 1997: 16)

In this line of thinking, Bowles' translation of Moroccan oral stories does not only reflect the history of translation as 'the control' – 'the shaping power of one culture upon another' (Bassnett 1990: Preface), but it mirrors Bowles' complicated role as well, a role illustrated in the thesis by Bowles' deep speculation about Moroccan culture. As the chapter demonstrates, in the translation of Moroccan oral stories into written stories, of Arabic into English, the locus of authority shifts between two storytellers. This makes it susceptible to various interpretations.

Bowles' work occupies and shifts within certain 'in-between', liminal spaces, out on a road towards an ambivalent state that Bowles inhabits, a fluid position where he moves into and slips out of different situations, constantly produced and reproduced through varying writings and practices from a variety of career functions. It is appropriate, here in the introduction, to define ambivalence as one of the key concepts in this thesis and to outline the contribution of key theorists whose work will inform the following chapters. Though ambivalence is not a strict theoretical concept and therefore cannot easily be defined with reference to specific theorists, some clarification may be achieved, for the purposes of this thesis, by comparing it with the concept of ambiguity.

Unlike ambivalence, ambiguity is quite commonly used in critical discourse. The obvious starting point is William Empson's book *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, which has been a standard reference since its publication in the 1930s. Empson loosely defined ambiguity as 'any verbal nuance, however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language' (Empson 1984: 1). He stressed the way ambiguities produced meaning in a work and how contradictory meanings could merge. "“Ambiguity”“, Empson writes, 'can mean an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings' (*ibid.*: 5). However, Empson narrows his vague definition to seven categories. These may be summarised as follows: first-type ambiguities arise when a detail is effective in several ways at once, as in comparisons with several points of likeness or antitheses with several points of difference (*ibid.*: 22), 'comparative' adjectives (*ibid.*: 23-24), subdued metaphors, and extra meanings suggested by rhythm (*ibid.*: 30-31). The second type of ambiguity 'occurs when two or more meanings are resolved into one' (*ibid.*: 48). This ambiguity produces a 'fluid unity' (*ibid.*: 50), 'fluidity of grammar ... partly given by rhetorical balance' (*ibid.*: 53). The condition for third-type ambiguity is that two apparently unconnected meanings 'can be given in one word simultaneously' (*ibid.*: 102). Empson uses puns from various poets (Milton, Marvel, Dryden, Johnson, Pope, Hood) and examples of allegory, comparisons from Shakespeare, Nash, Herbert, and Gray. Ambiguity of the fourth type 'covers much of the third type, and almost everything in the types which follow' (*ibid.*:

133), a definition that makes one wonder about the value of narrow definitions! In this type, meanings ‘combine to make clear a more complicated state of mind in the author’ (*ibid.*: 133). The fifth type ‘occurs when the author is discovering his idea in the act of writing, or not holding it all in his mind at once’ (*ibid.*: 155). The sixth type shows contradictory, irrelevant statements and ‘the reader is forced to invent statements of his own and they are liable to conflict with one another’ (*ibid.*: 176). ‘The seventh type of ambiguity is, for Empson, ‘the most ambiguous that can be conceived’ (*ibid.*: 192). It is full of contradictions, of confusions in negations and oppositions, which mark ‘a fundamental division in the writer’s mind’ (*ibid.*: 192). How, then, do Bowles’ texts manifest Empson’s meanings of ambiguity and in what way is ambivalence different from ambiguity?

A clear example of Empson’s definition of ambiguity is the one I have endeavoured to show in Chapter 3, when Bowles uses allegory and symbols. Semantically, words like ship, train, car and trolley car form a transportation system considered ambiguous due to polysemy or multiple meaning, which results when an expression has a stated and unstated sense. The stated meaning of these words as a transportation system in *Without Stopping* and their unstated (or connotative) sense as a structure of the imagination are tenable in the close reading of Bowles’ texts. The result is that the transportation system is given a narrative shape or descriptive power. Also, the many economic metaphors that take a specific concern into a more general speculation, for instance currency, money take on an exorbitant meaning (see Chapter 4), and the metaphor of Tangier as a ‘dream city’ creates a new similarity and displays an illusory

perspective as an Interzone, perhaps Bowles' most dramatic contribution to the literature on liminal spaces. Its maze of 'dark impasses' and inextricable 'alleys', 'tunnels', 'dungeons' and 'cliffs' (Bowles 1985: 128) turn out to be details charged with multiple meanings that produce a blurring of texture, and evoke doubt. The study demonstrates how the allegory of the labyrinth resonates with the labyrinth of narrative in Bowles' text of memory, obscuring the route to the centre, or, in extreme cases, entertaining the idea that there exists 'no recognisable centre at all' (Empson 1984: 204).

Empson's definition of ambiguity has some obvious similarity with the looser notion of ambivalence, in the sense that an expression is ambiguous when two conditions exist. However, ambivalence may be distinguished from ambiguity in two main ways, at least in so far as I use the concept in this thesis. Ambivalence describes a position which varies across a number of Bowles' works and therefore helps to describe his overall career. Ambiguity, on the other hand, tends to be more textually concentrated. This explains why it was fashionable for the new critics, whose work owed a lot to Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Critics such as Cleanth Brooks in *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction* see the ambiguity of a text as focused upon an image or a turning point or episteme. He and Empson treat ambiguity in terms of structural balance. Thus the poetic image can contain paradoxical meanings. Ambivalence, though of course sharing some of these aspects, is more of a process, even a narrative in individual texts, but also across his career. Bowles' position vacillates. This suggests an

uncertainty about different positions, adopting neither side and, perhaps, implying a third or fourth, rather than remaining with the usual binaries.

Ambivalence, in the sense of a vacillating position, is particularly evident in the translation of Moroccan oral stories, as I will show in Chapter 2, but beyond individual texts and genres, the process of being an expatriate is characterised by ambivalence. Second, the scale of ambivalence helps to distinguish it from ambiguity. Although the New Critics are known for their concern with spatial form, the concept of space as used in this thesis is quite different. In Joseph Frank's seminal essay 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', even temporal genres such as the novel and short story are shown to have spatial qualities. Time is collapsed into the space of a moment, or epiphany. Joseph Frank writes, 'past and present are seen spatially, locked in a timeless unity which, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of historical sequence by the very act of juxtaposition' (Frank 1945: 653). Such an understanding of space fits well with ambiguity but less well with ambivalence.

Bowles locates his texts in the liminal, interstitial space articulated through unending journeys and encounters with the other. In this context, it is appropriate to mention that ambivalence is a key term for Homi Bhabha. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha uses the term to talk about colonial ambivalence. He argues that from an encounter between an imperialist culture and a colonial culture comes a cultural hybrid that draws from both sources and stands on its own. In many ways, Homi Bhabha's work on hybridity as a version of what lies in between forms of culture is useful for the analysis of Paul Bowles' work on

Morocco. We find Bowles 'in the moment of transit', 'produc[ing] complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' (Bhabha 1994: 1). Bowles' work emerges in the restless movement between here and there, a movement that displays, even as it displaces, the binary logic through which differences are constructed. As Homi Bhabha puts it, 'This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (*ibid.*: 4). Bowles, too, seems to envisage a 'third Space' that 'enables other positions to emerge' and 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority' (Bhabha 1990: 211). In Bowles' texts, Bowles, like many of his protagonists, is neither here nor there. His encounter with Morocco creates a space of enunciation, which, to use Homi Bhabha's words, 'makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, [and] destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as integrated, open, expanding code' (Bhabha 1994: 37).

As we will see in the later chapters, Paul Bowles, along with his protagonists, is in the middle of things, both inside and outside, 'being and not being'. They are all on the move between locations. In Bowles' novella 'Here to Learn', Malika feels that 'she had gone much too far away – so far that now she was nowhere. Outside the world' (Bowles 1981: 76). In *Let It Come Down*, Nelson Dyar is in transit, in 'a waiting room between connections' (Bowles 1980: 143). The thesis argues that Bowles, along with his protagonists, journeys to Morocco and the world, and yet he has never left the American world behind nor

detached himself from himself and his cultural baggage. Dyar of *Let It Come Down*, Ports and Kit of *The Sheltering Sky*, Stenham of *The Spider's House*, as well as the major characters in his short stories – the Professor in ‘A Distant Episode’, Allal in ‘Allal’, Kathleen of ‘New York 1965’, and Malika – are in a state of liminal transition. As Victor Turner confirms, “the moving” is closer to liminality One archmetaphor for that which is outside structure, between structures, a dissolvent of structures is “movement,” “nomadism,” “transience” (Turner 1974: 285). Bowles’ incessant travels from place to place, never staying anywhere for long, attests to a process of mixture where clear distinctions between spaces become blurred. Bowles does not belong to Morocco but nor is he ever re-incorporated into the United States. In such a way, Bowles’ mediating position avoids that simplistic polarity, that binarism which does not reflect accurately what happens in the world. In this way, the thesis seeks to explain the ambivalence that varies across Bowles’ work and to suggest how, ultimately, critics of Bowles cannot abide an unsettled state, and prefer to fix the meanings of his writing in binary distinctions.

Interestingly, Bowles’ translations of Moroccan narratives are in line with Mikhail Bakhtin’s forceful critique of ‘monologic’ tendencies in Western thought in *The Dialogic Imagination*, where he emphasises the dialogue of voices in texts. Bakhtin asserts that ‘the dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is ... the property of *any* discourse’ and that ‘the word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it’ (Bakhtin 1981: 279, emphasis in original). As such, linguistic production is essentially dialogic. Discourse, according to Bakhtin, is

not monologic. It does not have an authoritarian stance vis-à-vis another discourse, but, instead, is a relational, social and shared act. Bakhtin considers that language ‘lies on the borderline between oneself and the other’ (*ibid.*: 293) and that the meaning of an utterance is given by its specific context. ‘Language is not a neutral medium’; ‘it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others’ (*ibid.*: 294). Thus words are all second-hand and have belonged to other people. Such a view of the dialogic connects with the notion of intertextuality since texts are not isolated but constantly meet and illuminate one another. David Murray elucidates the point:

An individual utterance, like the language of a particular group, is inevitably capable of being dialogized, made provisional, shown to be only one part of the social whole, by an increased awareness of the part played by the unheard voices which make up the whole and, therefore, implicitly shape the utterance.

(Murray 1987: 122)

Bowles’ project of translation is justifiably set within the paradigm of the dialogic. It only takes on meaning for us in dialogue. His translated texts are full of the storytellers’ language, and the way they are presented enables them to be held up to the light and, in various degrees, dialogised. And yet, the study keeps in mind how shifty and problematic Bowles’ translations are, and how the dividing line between author and translator seems at times to disappear altogether.

As Bakhtin insists, voices struggle in dialogue for dominance. Different communicative levels (author vs. translator, character vs. translator) get mixed up. *Mise en abyme* (a translation within a translation) and other mirroring techniques may be discerned. More obvious is the use of words from different languages in the translated texts (Moroccan Arabic, Spanish, and English) that reflect ‘the culturo-linguistic layering which exists within them ... and therefore come to occupy a space “in-between”’ (Mehrez 1992: 121). All of these concerns highlight the auto-referential narratives and question their artificiality as representations of the world. They all show that between the real, spoken, and the written exists an infinite space, a space determined by architectonic mechanisms: by forms, structure, style, narration and characters. We encounter the ambivalent ‘I’ as, within different communicative levels, the relation of author and translator becomes the abiding problematic.

With the American translator entering the fictional world of the Moroccan novels and autobiographies, narrative and meta-narrative levels get entangled in a manner reminiscent of the most forceful visual (if fictional) representation of Paul Bowles in Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1990 film version of *The Sheltering Sky*. In the film, Paul Bowles leaves his 1990s present to live forty years back and emerge in a different ontological framework: he reads parts of his novel as the narrator of the film, ‘wearing clothing from 1947’, and watching the characters he created in the 1947 novel ‘play their parts’ (Bowles 1994b: 543). In such a way, Bertolucci’s film has Paul Bowles as ‘The Visible Spectator’, a notion derived also from Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno’s biography of Bowles,

An Invisible Spectator (1989). Bowles' translations, it will be argued, are means of transportation that go beyond the very structure that contains them, connecting the temporal and the timeless, the oral and the written, the Moroccan and American, pre-modern and modern. They indeed show Bowles as more subtle and more ambivalent than some of the simple oppositions in his writings might suggest.

In particular, Chapter 2 aims to assess the output of the circle of Paul Bowles' storytellers, such as Ahmed Yacoubi, Mohammed Mrabet and Larbi Layachi, as a production that cannot be read without continual awareness of a double authorial presence that includes Bowles. The chapter also investigates the translations Bowles ascribes to Mohamed Choukri who, unlike the other storytellers, was literate and brought a script to Bowles. Choukri's literary writing places him at one end of the spectrum, with the oral storytellers at the opposite end. It will be proposed that the Moroccan storytellers are active participants in representing identity and entering into the economic dimension of their literary relations with Bowles. Significantly, the output of Bowles' collaboration with the storytellers offers not a pure Moroccan oral tradition as 'untrammelled imagination' (Bowles 1979b: 7). Rather, it is a hybrid, part traditional Moroccan stories, but as much a product of a modern man, someone in between traditions and values. The combination is not a fixed model but displays a variety of adaptations to modernity. In this vein the translated stories disrupt Bowles' original intention of preserving a record of a disappearing tradition, the power of memory and imagination. The remainder of the chapter connects these elements

to theorisations of the relation between speech and writing, using Jacques Derrida to bring out the postmodernist undercurrents of Bowles' translations. It shows Bowles as a latter-day romantic and connects his quest for orality as unmediated truth with the myth used by Romantic poets and thinkers, notably Coleridge, Wordsworth, and in the United States, Emerson. Bowles' version of the myth of the fall into modernity, as I will show, underpins his translations, his short stories, and long fiction. The translation chapter suggests that the Moroccan oral stories turn up inside modern space.

In this indirect way, via close readings of translations of traditional stories, I seek to make a contribution to what might be called a postcolonial approach to Bowles. I acknowledge that my use of theory is determined by the needs of close reading; that is, I adopt theorists *in situ* and risk taking them out of their own theoretical debates and controversies, though I have, at least, provided working definitions in this introductory chapter. There are, to be sure, important and influential narratives outside the selected translated stories, but to discuss Bowles' translations in full would have left little space for the autobiographical texts and fiction. Instead of providing a cursory analysis of a greater amount of material, I focus on smaller portions of the translated texts or specific aspects of a text relevant to the issue under study. Texts I deem especially significant are selected from the various kinds of narratives Paul Bowles taped, edited and translated from Moroccan Arabic, a range of short stories, novels, and autobiographies narrated to him by Ahmed Yacoubi, Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet, and Mohamed Choukri.

Chapter 3 is a study of Bowles' autobiographical text, *Without Stopping*. As I have noted, this is a rather neglected text compared with his novels, *The Sheltering Sky*, *Let It Come Down*, *The Spider's House* and *Up Above the World*. What slight attention it has received is hostile and it has been mined for illustrations of his expatriate adventures. Some literary critics see *Without Stopping* as 'an emptiness' (Metcalf 1982: 40); others, though Bowles' admirers, see it as a memoir, even if 'we don't learn much about what the subject had in mind' (Bowles 1979a, Introduction). An interesting investigation is by Marilyn Moss in a 1986 essay, 'The Child in the Text: Autobiography, Fiction, and the Aesthetics of Deception in *Without Stopping*'. Moss's study, brief though it may be, is a total departure from mainstream criticism of Paul Bowles' autobiographical text in that it explores the relatedness of autobiography to fiction as a device for concealment. And yet, a close reading of the autobiographical text reveals that Bowles' autobiographical text is as complex and subtle as his fiction and that it is interestingly marked by certain structures of meta-fiction, in which a potentially infinite mirror game of writing and life, a story about life-story and writing, is set to unfold.

Close readings of sections from *Without Stopping* are offered as particularly germane to Paul Bowles' attempt to inhabit the exotic, and as a useful addition to the dominant life-and-work approach to his relationship with Morocco. Space is a persistent concern in Chapter 3: the inscription of Tangier as a topography of the exotic in Bowles' writing provides the chief focus of my discussion. He depicts it as a 'dream city' or rather a city of a realised dream in

whose 'magical streets' he had once wandered (Bowles 1985: 65). The chapter argues that Bowles' meta-fictional aspect comes into focus in that, ultimately, there is no patent reality in his relationship with Morocco, but, rather, a process of tireless making and inventing of events, people and travels. The 'dream city' is overtly partial, a cityscape of traces defined in terms of its omission. It is a passing fancy that flickers in and out of existence like a dream figure recounted as a memory. Bowles' narrative of memory has that quality where one 'itinerary' is said and another 'itinerary' (*ibid.*: 125) is meant.

The chapter argues that Bowles' account of his travels in the autobiography is best approached through the transitional stages in the journey between two extremes connecting the United States and Morocco, the supposedly rational and exotic poles respectively. In so journeying, Bowles enacts liminality and a mode of understanding that can strike us as double, non-unitary and, in Derrida's terms, characterised by *différance*. The chapter further maps Paul Bowles' scopic desire on the city of Tangier, and Fez as a magical city for the *flâneur*. It sheds light on the way the baroque is so interesting in our reading of Bowles' perspectival view of the topography of Tangier. His descriptions are so visual that I have drawn on some visual theory to assist in opening up his text. Following Martin Jay's argument that the baroque consciously conveys 'the confusing interplay of form and chaos, surface and depth, transparency and obscurity' (Jay 1993: 47), meta-fictional speculations in the autobiography come into focus through visual devices that subvert the coherent visual order. Along with the refined depiction of Abdallah's palace in Fez, they are all indices that

connect Bowles to the geographical space of visual constructions, and, to borrow Krauss' words, to 'his beginnings, his "subsoil," his primal need for the geometric, his cognitive apparatus' (Krauss 1993: 162).

The chapter offers Michel de Certeau, Anthony Vidler, Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida as a theoretical framework to explain Bowles' perception of Tangier and Fez in his narrative of memory. A serious visitor shows that what he encounters may be heterotopic, in Foucault's sense of the term. Here, too, critics have tended not to see what constitutes the underpinning problematic of Bowlesian texts. Throughout his works, Bowles uses mixed metaphors of nature and culture. This mixture of metaphors may give the impression that he is a binary writer, and, indeed, this is the conclusion to which we may be directed by the polarities of his life. Yet Bowles is not either/or, but a mixture. His travel throughout geographical space, textual sites and genres attests to this mixture. Approaching the old in a modern way (through the baroque, as well as Benjamin's notions of melancholy and the *flâneur*), Bowles' deformation catches the distorting aspects of the city that have become common in the twentieth century. As such, the remainder of the chapter connects these elements to Bowles' autobiographical perspectives and self, his affinities with Edgar Allan Poe, the postmodernist and surrealist undercurrent in his works.

Distorting, othering the city, is, in a way, like writing an autobiography, 'essentially a process of writing the self as other' (Hawes 1995), and to do this, the autobiographer/traveller must other the self. Using de Certeau's *The Practice of Every Day Life* (1984), the chapter argues that the transformation of the body in

motion to the segmented body of language in motion wraps up ‘the memory of that memory’, not the memory of the real thing, thereby revealing the text’s awareness of the act of writing and of the mediations. The argument of the chapter thus focuses upon Bowles’ autobiography as a mediating structure allowing a disjunction between the author and the subject, a type of liminal space that comes into being, this time at the intersection of genres. As Fredric Jameson insists: ‘texts always come into being at the intersection of several genres and emerge from the tensions in the latter’s multiple force fields’ (Jameson 1982: 322). This leads us to consider Bowles’ narrative of memory as creating the possibility of overlap, co-existence and sedimentation. Indeed, as the argument unfolds, a traveller’s life journey is told, framed by transits through space.

In Chapter 4 on selected fiction, I discuss texts drawn from short stories and novels. The core of Bowles’ fiction that most interests me in this chapter, consists of two short stories, ‘A Distant Episode’ and ‘Here to Learn’, and Bowles’ novel *Let It Come Down*. Into the discussion of the short stories and the novel, I will thread a few digressions on Bowles’ *The Sheltering Sky* and *The Spider’s House*, and such stories as ‘The Delicate Prey’, ‘The Echo’, ‘The Little House’, ‘Allal’, ‘Midnight Mass’, ‘New York 1965’ and ‘The Eye’, where characters travel and encounter disastrous consequences for plunging beyond the ‘normal’ limits of the self. The first section on short stories offers Raymond Williams, Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Derrida for a theoretical explanation of the predicament of the protagonists as they interact with alien and exotic landscapes. The chapter regards with suspicion the notion of a natural life which exposes the

ills of our own condition, showing how, in a curious way, Bowles both idealises traditional life and denigrates it.

Connections between literary forms and structure and questions of identity in terms of authority and order, purpose and direction are mapped onto the physical landscape. The chapter shows how the myth of the fall into modernity connects Bowles to Romantic poets and thinkers and how such a myth underpins not only Paul Bowles' translations, but also his short stories, 'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode', and his novel, *Let It Come Down*. The point is that there is always a pattern, that culture will always be inhabited by nature and nature will always be inhabited by culture. Culture and nature are always already interrelated.

The choice of Bowles' second novel *Let It Come Down* for a close discussion is not random. It is justified by the fact that most critics focus their attention on *The Sheltering Sky*, partly set in Algeria, while Bowles spent nearly two years on this novel, set in the International Zone – 'more time than that given any of his other works' (Stewart 1974: 88). With the International Zone focus and being 'the only book Bowles ever planned' (*ibid.*: 87), *Let It Come Down* helps to reveal complexities neglected by other critics. Derrida's exploration of a general versus a restricted economy informs my discussion of Bowles' second novel. Derrida's 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve' in *Writing and Difference* is a compelling essay in which he considers George Bataille's notion of 'general Economy' as the production of excess which overflows intellectual production. Establishing the relation between a restricted

and a general economy, Derrida suggests that a ‘restricted economy’ is ‘one having nothing to do with an unreserved expenditure, with death, with being exposed to nonsense’ (Derrida 1973: 151), while a “general economy” or system ... takes *account* of what is unreserved’ (*ibid.*: 151, emphasis in original). As such, restricted economy brings about enclosure and self-sufficiency, separating the inside and the outside while, in a general economy, such closure forces open to an outside which cannot be contained. In the light of this definition, attention is particularly given to details that are often overlooked by readers who approach *Let It Come Down* with an eye to the restricted economy of the text. The aim is to move from a restricted to a general economy of the International Zone, paying attention to both the singularity and the production of the text in excess of meaning, excess that is ‘not reducible merely to the effects of textual polysemy’, as Wolfreys puts it (Wolfreys: 1998: 6). Instead, the text locates this excess inside (but at the margins) of the free market economy of the Interzone, the topoi of madness and monstrosity.

Bowles is, of course, vulnerable to a postcolonial critique that focuses on the exotic, and I share some of these concerns, as will be apparent in the following chapters. But nowhere in Bowles’ work are meta-fictional speculations more apparent than in *Let It Come Down*. *Let it Come Down* is of great interest for my argument about mediations because the novel unfolds in transit, depicting the International Zone in terms of an in transit zone, an intersecting space between Morocco and the Poe-like nightmare of restriction in the United States. In this transit zone, puritan shackles are broken to turn away from the realm of the

rational self into the deepest recesses of the zone with its mazes, with experiences of the liminal, a strangeness of framing and borders that forcibly suggests Bowles' cardinal affinity with Edgar Allan Poe.

In *Let It Come Down*, the novelist draws on various resources to locate, temporally and spatially, the in-between. A significant resource is the 'Introduction' (1980) set as a 'supplement' to the novel, something that adds and complements. The 'Introduction', indeed, shows how Bowles remains so fascinated by the economy of the Interzone that it remains with him twenty eight years after he publishes his novel. As such the section on *Let It Come Down* explores how the 'Introduction' depicts Paul Bowles' desire to sustain the International Zone through memory and artistic expression. In *Let It Come Down*, the pre- International Zone is announced in the Introduction as the 'given point in time' when, 'like a photograph, the tale is a document relating to a specific place' (Bowles 1980: 7). As such the 'Introduction' confirms Bowles' temporal and spatial detachment, but also textual displacement, whereby the novelist's voice is presence and absence, a presence through the meta-fictional speculations strongly implicated in the materials of the novel, the settings, characters, narratives, structures, and language, and an absence that camouflages the novelist's voice by the text. The chapter shows how the presence of meta-fictional elements predictably rests on the International Zone, an in-between zone outside recognisable time and space, access to which is gained through the paths of specific artistic realms where changes occur to manage the transition between pre-capitalism and capitalism. And transition cannot be managed easily precisely

because of the residual elements. Meta-fictional speculations are also implicated in Dyar's mediation, which creates an anguished dreamer to ask whether stylisation gives him happiness (or some approximation), a happiness that he never finds. They are implicated in Dyar's mediation to allow an illusory entrance into an exotic universe that lacks the order of the work ethic. Mediation is further emphasised through the aspects of madness and monstrosity in the Interzone which constitute its general economy. The last chapter on fiction thus shows how Bowles unravels the effects of memory as not directly redeemable but as mediated and over-determined in subtle forms. It shows what Bowles still does not tell us directly.

My main aim is to reveal that a blurred subject matter – that is to say, Bowles' referent and creation, Morocco – is characteristic of Paul Bowles' work. All is composition, writing, proximity and artistic expression. If we are to talk about life-and-art, then I am inclined to say it is a story of mediations and transits through space. A confluence of relays is dramatically posed in *Let It Come Down*: the International Zone as in-between, outside recognisable time and space, a space that is also a means of transportation. What these meta-fictional speculations reveal is a sense of alienation and fragmentation, that distinctive area of the exotic that Bowles creates and inhabits.

Chapter 2: Moroccan Oral Stories: Translation and Mediation

We meet the people on terms of equality, which is a healthier situation.

(Bowles 1963: 39)

In the years following Moroccan independence in 1956, Bowles almost abandoned his own fiction writing for the extensive project of translating Moroccan oral tales. Bowles' wife, Jane, was ill, and to write a novel he needed solitude and long stretches of empty time, which he did not have after 1957 (Caponi 1993: 98). Bowles employed translation as a new direction in his career, a new route that enabled him to 'learn a lot about peoples, cultures, and histories different from [his] own' (Clifford 1997: 39). In response to Daniel Halpern's question about the importance of the Moroccan translations, Bowles states: 'I think they provide a certain amount of insight into the Moroccan mentality and Moroccan customs, things that haven't been gone into very deeply in fiction' (Caponi 1993: 98). This is revealing because Bowles' translation is, first and foremost, a crossing over, bridging and connecting cultures wherein he inhabits a mediating position, inside and outside at the same time, a liminal figure traversing the border spaces between languages and cultures.

Bowles is conscious of his role as a translator who preserves the secret world of magic from the incursions of modernisation – in the form of

Americanisation and Europeanisation. The fact that his project of translation was initiated just after Moroccan independence is important. The end of colonialism meant for Bowles not only the departure of the French (and with them a certain school of anthropology that was intent on collecting and objectifying). He also feared that Moroccan cultural forms which he admired would be eradicated by the 'nationalists' in their desire to be European or modern. In this period Bowles wrote against the Moroccan nationalists' temptation to modernise. He believed that Moroccan culture needed to be protected from itself, from Moroccans who advocated the Americanisation and Europeanisation that Bowles saw as a 'disease' in the new postcolonial world, and he severely criticised postcolonial governments who rushed the process of modernisation. He viewed their eager yearning for assimilation of European ways as a threat to the integrity of traditional cultures, which in his words were 'being ravaged not so much by the by-products of our civilisation, as by the irrational longing on the part of members of their own educated minorities to cease being themselves and become Westerners' (Bowles 1963: viii). Bowles, who never claimed to have mastered classical Arabic, the written language used throughout the Arab world, deliberately sought out illiterate 'storytellers'. His preference for oral performance was, as Maier states it, 'an indicator of much that has changed in the Western view of the non-Western world' (Maier 1996, 214). It positions Bowles with the anthropologists of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century for whom anthropology was perceived 'as a science of disappearing societies' (Fabian 1991: 193). Moroccan

orality became significant for Bowles only on condition that it was *en voie de disparition*. Consequently, preserving oral stories took on a note of urgency for him.

Bowles' project of translation and its decisive mediation of Moroccan oral stories was a crucial move to keep the traditional Moroccan world from falling into the pattern of Euro-American thinking based on science and reason. Bowles felt that American culture was smothering him and did not have much to offer. His escape from the hold his civilisation had on him took the form of incessant movement between cultures and within the spaces between cultures, but also as a movement between the oral and the written. The Westerner, as a way of being less US-centric, found it a pressing imperative to talk with the oral storytellers, whom he may have thought were closer to reality. He located a potential value in these analphabetic peoples and expressed his preference for – even fascination with – oral performance, a lost quality that he felt could be textually recovered. Through the 1950s, Bowles' principal pastime was: 'just sitting listening to their [Moroccans'] marvelous stories. It really entertained [him] – much more than any theatre or film or any form of public entertainment' (Stewart 1974: 111).

Bowles taped, edited and translated various kinds of narratives: short stories, novels, and autobiographies narrated to him by Ahmed Yacoubi, Larbi Layachi, Abdesslam Boulaich, Mohammed Mrabet and Mohamed Choukri. These translations include three tales recounted by Yacoubi, a Moroccan youth Bowles first met in Fez in 1947. Bowles translated and collected these in *Five Eyes*. There are also Boulaich's 'Three Hekayas' and Layachi's 'Half Brother', collected in *Five Eyes*, and three other autobiographical books recounted by Layachi to Bowles: *A*

Life Full of Holes, Yesterday and Today and *The Jealous Lover*. Moreover, from Mrabet's prolific narrations, Bowles translated a dozen books of stories and novels, listed in the bibliography. Yacoubi, Layachi, Boulaich and Mrabet were illiterate storytellers and their texts are based on oral performance, but Choukri's texts are based on a written original. Of Choukri's texts Bowles translated and collected 'Bachir Alive and Dead' and 'Men Are Lucky' in *Five Eyes*; 'Gum', 'Against the Current', 'Sheheriar and Sheherazade', 'Men at Work', 'The Warning' and 'The Prophet's Slippers' in *The Converse City: Five Examples*. Bowles also translated Choukri's *For Bread Alone*, *Tennessee Williams in Tangier*, and *Jean Genet in Tangier*.

Given that the translations of Moroccan stories constitute the majority of Bowles' output since the mid-1960s, such a project should not be neglected. Bowles engaged in preserving oral stories throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The more than twenty volumes that make up Bowles' Moroccan translations are the translator's attempt to understand Moroccan culture from within. They reveal Moroccan social relations, their image of the other, and the individual use of cultural and ritual symbols. Bowles' translations of the Moroccan stories are thus ethnological discourse that gives information about the peoples, and Morocco is used as a reservoir of information that provides the necessary factual details for a *mise en scène* of Bowles' relationship with Morocco. I am specifically interested in spelling out the inner dynamics of Bowles' project of Moroccan translations, notably, what these exercises tell us about Bowles' overall literary project, bringing

out the differences between Bowles the translator, the autobiographer, the travelogue writer, the short story writer and the novelist.

Bowles' translations of Moroccan oral stories are important in the ways that they reveal Bowles' effort to let the illiterate Moroccan voice speak. But since he cannot efface his own role, they thus create a space in-between, an intermediary space between the spoken and the written, between voices and traditions. That is, Bowles' role as translator represents the best example of Paul Bowles as a mediating literary force. His position is that of a mediating agent who crosses various spaces. To borrow Victor Turner's terms, Bowles is liminal, 'neither here nor there'; occupying 'betwixt and between' positions (Turner 1997: 95). Such an in-between position contributes to Bowles' status as a writer. In 'Conversations with Paul Bowles 1989–1991', Bowles points out that his primary aim in Morocco is to write, as a way of engaging with the country, and that going back to the United States is out of the question: 'Leave? No, I wrote about it [Morocco]' (Bowles 1994a: 206).

Such a mediating position, shown most clearly in Bowles' work as translator, seems also to apply to his fiction and to Bowles' writing as a whole. Bowles asserts that translation added 'a whole new dimension to my writing experience' (Bowles 1985: 348). This means that the translation project ensures the connectedness of different genres as well as different languages through mediation and liminality, the threshold which permits the passage from one poetics into the other. In this sense, I believe that translations provide a framework for exploring Bowles' other works, a reason valid enough to begin this thesis first with the

translations – before autobiography and fiction. The framework provided by this non-chronological approach to Bowles' texts demonstrates that the thesis is structured not chronologically but by checks and measures. This is significant to the extent that, as the chapter shows, there is more resistance in the translations than in fiction, and reading them first illuminates my study of autobiography and more importantly the novel. The translations offer a way of understanding a point of enormous interest: that Bowles is a traveller par excellence, but he has much more scope to travel imaginatively and geographically in fiction than in the translations or autobiography. That is, the study of translations comes first because it demonstrates how the checks are stronger in translations, whereas the 'I' is somewhat, though not entirely, restricted by the writer's life in autobiography and travelogues, and by the discipline under which the translator works with respect to the original oral tales. In this way the translations enable the reader to understand the constraints upon Bowles and upon the Moroccan storytellers that enter into play during the processes of translation, constraints which 'ultimately have to do with power and manipulation' (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 12). They are a major shaping force that offers an understanding of how manipulative shifts take place.

The distinctive and important element of Bowles' project of translations has to do with Bowles' in-between position, especially because the way in which these texts are produced calls into question the distinction between the 'traditional' and 'modern', the 'oral' and 'written'. Bowles' Moroccan translations are interesting and groundbreaking in that for him catching an authentic Moroccan voice does not necessarily mean restricting Moroccan translations to traditional

material. A single authentic Moroccan voice is unattainable, and in any case Bowles is aware that translation is primarily the ‘transportation’ or ‘transfer’ of meanings into foreign territories, that ‘*traduttore, traditore*’, and that a translator is ‘a traitor’ who cannot ‘carry it over the border intact’ (Caponi 1993: 199). His original is not just oral/traditional, but the product of a modern man, very much someone on the borders and margins, hence reflecting various adaptations to modernity. In this sense he is going beyond the traditional role of ethnographic collector, which he seems uncritically to have played while collecting traditional music. In this chapter, I set out critically to consider the ways linguistic and cultural translations affect each other, in order to show that there is no equal situation and that ‘translation, like all (re)writings is never innocent’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 11). Then I go on to study how Morocco is mediated and to what extent Bowles’ translations of Moroccan stories are expressive of his concerns over authenticity, bringing to the fore the crucial question of authority and asymmetries of power, and the narrative ambivalence that mediation entails .

Linguistic and cultural translations have both affected one another. Traditionally, translation scholars have started with linguistic translation. They concerned themselves ‘with the differences between languages, and with the difficulties attendant upon conveying messages from one language to the new syntactic, semantic and pragmatic systems of another’ (Robinson 1997: 2). Until recently, translation has been considered as a process by which a text in a given language is transferred into another ‘in an airlock where they, and their originals, can be checked ... in the purest possible lexical chamber’ (Bassnett and Lefevere

1990: 7). This means that the cultural underpinnings of language have been ‘regarded as peripheral to the study of translation, or at best somehow “encoded” into linguistic systems so that to study language is to study culture’ (Robinson 1997: 2). More recently, translation has been redefined. Bassnett and Lefevere have described the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies when they envisaged that ‘neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational “unit” of translation’ (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 8). Translation as an activity then comes to be seen as ‘always doubly contextualized’, since, by definition, two languages and two cultures are brought together in ‘mutual harmony’ (*ibid.*: 11). The study of translation, therefore, has moved on from a linguistic approach and turned instead to the larger issues of social and historical context that structure it. As Bassnett and Lefevere explain, ‘with the demise of the notion of equivalence as sameness ..., the old evaluative norms of “good” and “bad”, “faithful” and “unfaithful” translations are also disappearing’ (*ibid.*: 12).

This chapter begins from the position that there is no innocent position, no equal situation, and that translation is a powerful agent in the cultural representation of a language, ‘a representation of representation’. Translation, as Robinson points out, is not merely a matter of “understanding” “the native” “modes of thought” – it is a matter rather of *translating* them from one language to another, across power differentials marked off by the concepts of “first world” and “third world”, “anthropologist” and “native” (Robinson 1997: 3). This is, the metaphor of translation suggests the transfer of texts from one culture to another across a cultural and linguistic gap, and that, as a result, both linguistic and cultural

translations involve inequality. Although there is much more inequality with cultural translation, both linguistic and cultural translations obliterate original texts in ways that serve the dominance of those with the power to translate. In fact quite a number of scholars in recent years (Asad 1986, Asad and Dixon 1984, Bassnett and Lefevere 1990, Bassnett and Trivedi 1999, Niranjana 1992, Robinson 1997) have stressed how cultural translation exercises a 'shaping' force and how it is enmeshed in conditions of power. In *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) stress the manipulative force translation has in the transfer of meanings:

translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems.

(Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 2)

Following the same line of argument, Bassnett and Lefevere argue that translation as a rewriting of an original text is 'manipulation, undertaken in the service of power', with the potential to create 'new concepts, new genres, new devices' (Bassnet and Lefevere 1990: Preface). 'No source text can be fully represented in a

translation, selectivity is essential to the construction of any piece of literature, particularly when the intended audience includes readers who are unfamiliar with the cultural subject' (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 23). It is there that 'power relations' come in.

Interrogating the hierarchical power relations that translation reveals, it is interesting to explore the specific case of Morocco and how it is textually mediated. Morocco, and the Maghreb in general, is most definitely plurilingual and that linguistic plurality survives through the process of translation. In *Maghreb pluriel*, Abdelkebir Khatibi, the Moroccan sociologist, novelist and poet, maps out the plurality of the Maghreb (i.e. North Africa):

Nous, les Maghrébins, nous avons mis quatorze siècles pour apprendre la langue arabe (à peu près), plus d'un siècle pour apprendre le français (à peu près); et depuis des temps immémoriaux, nous n'avons pas su écrire le Berbère. C'est dire que le bilinguisme et le plurilinguisme ne sont pas, dans ces régions, des faits récents.

[We North Africans have taken fourteen centuries to learn Arabic (nearly), more than a century to learn French (nearly), and from time immemorial, we have not learned how to write Berber. That is, bilingualism and plurilingualism are not, in this region, a recent phenomenon.]

(Khatibi 1973: 179, my translation)

This state of linguistic heterogeneity in Morocco is important. Even more important is the implication that plurilingualism is inextricably linked to, and dependent on, translation. As Thomas Beebee puts it, ‘there can be no discussion of polylingualism without its depiction by means of translation’ (Beebee 1994: 66). In his autobiographical narrative, *La mémoire tatouée*, Khatibi stresses the linguistic plurality of Morocco through a reference to his schooling:

A l’école, un enseignement laïc, imposé à ma religion; je devins triglotte, lisant le français sans le parler, jouant avec quelques bribes de l’arabe écrit, et parlant le dialecte comme quotidien. Où, dans ce chassé-croisé, la cohérence et la continuité?

[At school, with a secular education imposed on my religion, I became a triglot, reading French without being able to speak it, playing with some words of written Arabic, and speaking the dialect as my everyday language. Where in this confusion is coherence and continuity?]

(Khatibi 1971: 64, my translation)

The experience of Khatibi, as a postcolonial writer writing in the ex-coloniser’s language, is that of Moroccans par excellence. Moroccans, like many other nations, are plurilingual subjects with complexly layered, stratified languages, socially and culturally differentiated for both individuals and groups: the Moroccan dialect and/or Berber spoken at home, classical (standard) Arabic at school and in formal contexts, and French taught at school as the first foreign language.

As is the case in all North African countries, linguistic heterogeneity in Morocco is a result of the colonial context. Languages are hierarchised differently according to social classes: For some, French would be at the top; in the north and south of Morocco, it would be Spanish; for others, Arabic; for others the Moroccan dialect – as for Khatibi; and for still others it would be Berber. But, as Robinson rightly points out, ‘all three [languages] swirl through the lives of most Moroccans, making the question of a “native” language increasingly problematic’ (Robinson 1997: 102). In the same line, Samia Mehrez (1992) argues that Third World postcolonial plurilingual writers confront ‘the political context’ and ‘power relations’ within which language acquisition takes place:

These postcolonial texts, frequently referred to as ‘hybrid’ or ‘métissé’ because of the culturo-linguistic layering which exists within them, have succeeded in forging a new language that defies the very notion of a ‘foreign’ text that can be readily translatable into another language. With this literature we can no longer merely concern ourselves with conventional notions of linguistic equivalence, or ideas of loss and gain which have long been a consideration in translation theory. For these texts written by postcolonial bilingual subjects create a language ‘in between’ and therefore come to occupy a space ‘in between’.

(Mehrez 1992: 121)

The strategic creation of an in-between language is thus a hybrid possibility for postcolonial plurilingual writers. It suggests an escape route to challenge oppositional thinking and defy all modes of essentialists, whether ‘occidental’ or ‘oriental’. For Mehrez,

the ultimate goal of such literature was to subvert hierarchies by bringing together the ‘dominant’ and the ‘underdeveloped,’ by exploding and confounding different symbolic worlds and separate systems of signification in order to create a mutual interdependence and intersignification.

(Mehrez 1992: 122)

As such, Maghrebi postcolonial texts, like Khatibi’s, are characterised by *différance*, in that they provide a critique of the signifier/signified distinction and unsettle dichotomised patterns. Like Derrida’s deconstruction, Maghrebi’s postcolonial texts threaten ‘to shake all over, to make the whole tremble’ (Derrida 1973: 153). However, ‘these hierarchies’, as Robinson points out, ‘are shaken but rarely destroyed’ (Robinson 1997: 102). Translation, therefore, lies at the heart of the postcolonial condition. It reveals hierarchical power relations and the refractions of meaning imposed by the confrontations of different languages and cultures. Also, it produces hybrid ‘in-between’ languages, languages out of the old dead ends which travel incessantly in search of the future in the metaphors of exile, transit and movement.

By drawing on more than one world experience, more than one language within the confines of the same text, the position of bilingual postcolonial writers is analogous to the liminal space that Bowles inhabits, crisscrossing between languages and cultures. However, where these native writers embody within one figure the multilingualism and postcolonial tensions, in Bowles' writings, since he does not use the sort of multilingual people discussed above, we can see the elements separated into two collaborators, and a series of discrete procedures of recording and translating, which allow us some insight into the complexities of the process. Unlike earlier writers who travel to Morocco (Edith Wharton would be a compelling example of a very authoritative figure), Paul Bowles is a much more perceptive traveller in Morocco. Being a cosmopolitan writer who uses translation to mediate Moroccan culture, Bowles shifts within certain 'in-between' spaces towards a fluid position that he produces and reproduces through his role of translator. Bowles thus acts as an intermediary who transports the Moroccan stories between cultures and across borders. Such an in-between position appeals to Bowles as he explores the tension between ambivalent dimensions in his writings. His translations, in many ways, manifest Derrida's concept of *différance*, sowing confusion between opposites and unsettling binary oppositions. They resist the monolingual to be 'in between' the oral and written, Arabic and English, Moroccan storytellers and an American translator. To use Khatibi's terms, they are 'at the threshold of the untranslatable' (Khatibi 1990: 5).

Bowles creates cross-cultural dialogues and gives the native tellers' voices an enunciative space, thereby permitting 'a constant interaction between meanings,

all of which have the potential of conditioning others' (Bakhtin 1981: 426). As this last quotation suggests, Bowles' translations are in line with the narrative dialogism suggested by Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin 1981). They are justifiably set within the paradigm of the dialogic, whereby Bakhtin emphasises the dialogue of voices in texts. Bakhtin's work provides a main source for the formulation of the idea of dialogue as a possible tool in the dismantling of the monologic. He asserts that 'the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogised heteroglossia' (Bakhtin 1981: 272), and that 'the word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it' (*ibid.*: 279). For Bakhtin, to be in dialogue with the other would mean the individual consciousness achieving a state of outsideness, meeting another consciousness. The way Bowles' translations are presented enables the storytellers to be held up to the light. To varying degrees, the Moroccan voices are dialogised, that is, 'made provisional, shown to be only one part of the social whole, by an increased awareness of the part played by the unheard voices which make up the whole and, therefore, implicitly shape the utterance' (Murray 1987: 122). The relationships between Bowles and the storytellers are reciprocally influential and, in a sense, mutually constitutive. Every translated story serves as a point where the American writer's and the Moroccan storytellers' forces are brought to bear.

As such, Bowles' translation is a space of in-betweenness produced through what Mary Louise Pratt calls the 'contact zone'. For Pratt, '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). This is a place where previously separated cultures come together, a space of multiplicity and negotiation, but also of 'inequality' and 'conflict' where, as Bakhtin posits, voices struggle in dialogue for dominance. The storytellers' voices speak within the translations, inspiring and dialogising Bowles' own writings. In the translated novels and stories, Bowles' Moroccan narrators have enunciative space and narrative perspective. Bowles' 'contact zone' manifests itself through translations as a space in which cross-cultural voices operate. It is a space of negotiation and collaboration with illiterate storytellers in order to produce discourse. Indeed, Bowles' translation project is a way to have Moroccan storytellers speak. They are speaking and not silenced subjects. They are not invisible or passive. In the translations, language is used by both oral storytellers and the writer, and both discourses are dialogic. This means that Bowles is not the author in complete charge, as in his autobiography and his fiction, nor is it the same situation as his parallel activities in collecting music. In 1959, Bowles received a Rockefeller Foundation Grant allowing him to travel through Morocco recording both folk and art music. He was able to collect a huge variety of music from Morocco. This taped music, unlike the original tapes of Moroccan stories, is now housed in the Library of Congress. The Moroccan music was sent in its pure form to the library of Congress, hence this enterprise reflects a much clearer ethnographic objectivity and detachment, though of course we do not know how much Bowles influenced the nature or type of music, if it was performed at his initiative.

Bowles' translated texts are split as much by the processes of translation and transcription as by the self-representation of Morocco through the translated stories of his storytellers. In order to get the knowledge of the Moroccan and his reality, Bowles translates texts in which a diversity of languages and cultural traditions coexist, accommodating a plurality of Moroccan voices. He also attributes that reality to the storytellers who, positioned as conduits for information, took the chance to express their own modernity and took the texts beyond Bowles' original intentions.

Significantly, Bowles' translations are not just a bridge between Moroccan tellers and Bowles, not merely acts of communication and exchange that challenge the homogenised and centralised official discourse, which refuses to allow the voice of the other to speak for itself. The Moroccan translations are also a more general metaphor of the movements, transfers and displacements that mediate imbalances in cultural power and languages. So shifting and problematic are Bowles' translations that they remain extremely complicated and undecidable. The dividing line between author and translator shifts ground constantly, so that at times it seems to disappear altogether. The oral translations are not all authentic, purely traditional Moroccan tales, but as Neil Campbell notes, “‘co-authored’ out of the contact between voices and traditions’ (Campbell 2000: 178). In Bowles' short story ‘A Distant Episode’, as we will see in the chapter on selected fiction, the Professor wants to operate between the Grand Hotel and the desert and shift positions in ‘significant ways’, but the Professor is told that he cannot be ‘there and here’ (Bowles 1979a: 41), both in the comfort of the hotel and in the Sahara's hazardous conditions. In the act of

translation, however, Bowles is close to this position of 'spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect' (Pratt 1992: 6-7).

Yacoubi, Boulaich, Layachi, Mrabet and Choukri produce their texts in collaboration with Paul Bowles, and it is through him, through his translations, that their 'writing' comes to the West as local natives' stories, but also as complex texts in cultural motion. That is, their voices generate translations riddled with ambivalence created by various forms of recording (writing, tape), in order to help getting as close to the original as possible. But the translations are also the product of a modern man who has been for decades 'dwelling in travel' (the phrase is that of Clifford 1997: 2), enquiring into the alterity of Western modernity. The storytellers speak their tales, which Bowles transcribes and translates into English. Their storytelling is an interactive process to the extent that the nature of the stories is to some degree shaped by Bowles' presence and expectations, even before his role as translator begins. For their stories to work, the storytellers had to mould their tales through the desire to please Bowles. Pleasure, for Bowles, simply means something of interest, 'philological and ethnographical interest' (Layachi 1964: 11). It is there that 'power relations' marked by 'first world' and 'third world', 'ethnographer', as a 'cultural translator', and 'native' come into play. It is there that translation is, as Douglas Robinson maintains, 'a lightning-rod for *surviving cultural inequalities*' (Robinson 1997: 6, emphasis in original), transforming original texts in ways that serve the dominance of those with the power to translate or perhaps also laying bare the play of power.

Bowles' translation project has the potential to disturb linear flows and power hierarchies. It ensures the connectedness of different genres through which Bowles travels: from the encounters of storytellers and the inscription of their voices in translations to the most highly wrought novel. Bowles' interest in catching an authentic Moroccan voice does not necessarily mean restricting his translations to traditional material. While the stories contain elements of the old-fashioned ethnographic collector, browsing 'among the artifacts of a defamiliarized cultural reality' (Clifford 1988: 121), Bowles' activities as translator are much more varied and ambivalent, suggesting an uncertainty about his different roles. Their ambivalence stems from the complex relations between Bowles and Larbi Layachi, Mohamed Choukri and Ahmed Yacoubi, involving cooperation as well as economic power over them and sexual exploitation based on using his power and money. The storytellers, as active participants in representing their various identities and the economic dimension of their literary relations with Bowles in postcolonial Tangier, provide the focus of my discussion. Significantly the authorial 'I', Bowles' problematic authorship, and oral stories between tradition and modernity, all bear the marks of mediation and Bowles' liminal position, as he emerges 'in the moment of transit' (Bhabha 1994: 1), 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications' (*ibid.*: 4), bordering two different edges, the oral past and the modern present, the 'pure' and the 'impure'. That is, Bowles' translations of Moroccan oral stories evince mixture and hybridity, as a version of what lies in between forms of culture, blurring boundaries and unsettling the usual binaries. They evidence, that is, Bowles' liminality as 'an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and

hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference' (Bhabha 1994: 224). None of the translations are, strictly speaking, pure. They reveal an intercultural practice that brings together in a new form the mind of the American writer and Moroccan stories and practices, displaying, even as it displaces, the binary oppositions or polarities through which differences are constructed. The translated texts seen as a whole are expressive of a changing Morocco and not just folkloristic.

Dialogic Encounters: Moroccan Oral Stories Go Modern

The translations Bowles renders of the fiction and autobiographies recounted by Ahmed Yacoubi, Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet and Mohamed Choukri contain elements of the ethnographic collector who enquires into the margins of an alien Moroccan nation and its accounts of its own culture. The translations show how Bowles enters into a dialogue with the Moroccan storytellers, a dialogue that transforms the stories from the private realm of conversation into the realm of transcription and translation. Bowles translated the stories of Choukri, Yacoubi, Layachi, Boulaich and Mrabet from Moroccan Arabic. The texts written in English are thus a product of collaboration between Bowles and the Moroccan storytellers. The Moroccan voices Bowles translates demonstrate Bowles as a latter-day romantic in his interest in the exotic and non-Western, but also demonstrate a resistance, subversion, and ultimate delegitimation of the monologic, authoritative discourses of economic development, which is a product of the collaboration.

Bowles' protest against mainstream culture is manifest in his choice of the storytellers. None of the Moroccans who produced stories for Bowles was a traditional or professional storyteller. They were all poor and illiterate and with ill-paid subsistence work. Mrabet, for example, was a bartender and a fisherman, Layachi a bartender and a guard at Merkala Beach in Tangier, and Yacoubi a waiter in Palais Jamai Hotel in Fez. They were all local men from the lower strata of Moroccan society, an assortment of marginalised storytellers, unquestioning servants and partners whose services Bowles buys, and in the process penetrates their conscious or unconscious disguises.

So eager is Bowles to delimit the Morocco of his representations to the marginal and folk voices that he translates realities that have been rejected, repressed and devalorised by the hegemonic 'centripetal' forces. As Neil Campbell writes, 'For Bowles, this was a vision of colonial, global power manifested through language and cultural control by the dominant regime of representation whose "monoglossia" denied and silenced other voices of difference and heterogeneity' (Campbell 2000: 173). Bowles thinks of these marginal voices as one of the more distinctive aspects of Moroccan culture. The heteroglossia of voices juxtaposed in *Five Eyes* – Ahmed Yacoubi's, Abdesslam Boulaich's, Larbi Layachi's, Mohammed Mrabet's, and Mohamed Choukri's – attests to the contrasts between the storytellers, but also to 'an underlying homogeneity among them. They spring from a common fund of cultural memories; the unmistakable flavour of Moroccan life pervades them all' (Bowles 1979b: 8). It is impossible to generalise about the translations because they are all so different. However, Bowles became increasingly

convinced of the value of these tales as a repository of cultural memories. He notes that in most cases they are the products of a rich Moroccan oral tradition, ‘issued from the repertory of Moroccan folk humor, which took a new meaning as it was propelled by ... untrammelled imagination’ (Bowles 1979b: 7). Bowles’ Moroccan translations can be considered as a spectrum that includes at one end Mohamed Choukri and at its other end Yacoubi, Layachi, Boulaich and Mrabet. Such a spectrum shows the multitude of the Moroccan voices Bowles translates into English: from the highly wrought literary writing of Choukri to the most simplified version of the oral stories. Such a proliferation of voices translated into English undermines the hegemony of the dominant discourse, the unitary logic that suppresses the other, viewing them with contempt.

It is possible to trace Bowles’ initial enterprise as a translator of Moroccan oral stories to his experience as the patron of Ahmed Yacoubi (1931–1985). In his preface to *Five Eyes*, Bowles describes the beginning of his personal investment in translations, what would become an important part of his literary output:

I had first admired Ahmed Yacoubi’s stories as long ago as 1947, but it was not until 1952 that the idea occurred to me that I might be instrumental in preserving at least a few of them One day as Yacoubi began to speak, I seized a notebook and rapidly scribbled the English translation of a story.

(Bowles 1979b: 7)

Bowles' friendship with Ahmed Yacoubi thus ignited what began as a mere ethnographic curiosity. The Moroccan youth taught Bowles Moroccan Arabic and was his companion for many journeys all over the world, visiting Egypt, East Africa, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan, Zanzibar, South Africa, the United States, the Canaries, Spain, Europe, Turkey, and many other places. Talking to Simon Bischoff, Bowles says: 'I learned a great deal from Yacoubi' (Bowles 1994a: 226). Bowles relates how Yacoubi taught him Moroccan Arabic during the first months of their encounter. In Istanbul, Yacoubi served him in his dealings with Muslims: 'he knows how to deal with Moslems' and 'he has the Moslem sense of seemliness and protocol' and 'an intuitive gift for the immediate understanding of a situation' (Bowles 1963: 74). While Yacoubi provided Bowles with many insights into Muslims' lives, Bowles encouraged the young man to paint, and he took care of him completely.

Paul Bowles' relationship with Yacoubi shows that Bowles is captivated by the Scheherazade-like fascination of Moroccan tales, as though they were an antidote to the disenchantment that is thought to attend modernisation. It would seem that Bowles was drawn to Yacoubi because, in his own words, Yacoubi was 'very strange', 'very superstitious' and 'primitive' (Bowles 1994a: 224). Such a designation suggests for Bowles the immediacy of Yacoubi's worldly experience and expressions, as well as the 'authenticity' of his Moroccaness. Bowles' rendering of Yacoubi's oral stories into English is revealing in as much as it shows Bowles' yearning to preserve those voices that are in danger of disappearing and would take on new accents in modernised Morocco. Thus, he thinks of himself both

as an anthropologist, whose vocation and project is to preserve a vanishing culture, and a translator who makes foreign texts available to Westerners to help them know what is not generally knowable about Morocco. Bowles considers that the translations provide an insight into Moroccan cultures and peoples, adding that: 'I haven't noticed many good novels about Morocco, so in that sense they are of use to anyone interested in the country' (Caponi 1993: 98). This said, the translation of Yacoubi's oral stories also evidences Bowles' determination to find ways of defying the logocentric discourse by a process of defamiliarisation, of 'making strange' through the contact zone. Yacoubi 'did not speak any French, any Spanish, and ... no English'. 'He spoke a very strange Darija' (Darija means Moroccan Arabic) (Bowles 1994a: 224). In this sense, the translation can be understood, in its metaphorical sense, as a displacement or transportation of Moroccan stories from a familiar base of tradition to an alien context of the modern, obscuring to some extent the constructed borders between 'here' and 'there', between 'us' and 'them'.

Bowles' alienation from the United States explains his interest in Yacoubi's, as well as Layachi's, Boulaich's, Choukri's and Mrabet's tales, which are ontologically different from the subjects of those tales with which Westerners are familiar. Talking about the recognition of the alien other in the space of outsidedness, Bakhtin says that:

Outsidedness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly ... A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered

and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness.

(Bakhtin 1986: 7, emphasis in original)

Outsidedness in dialogical encounters is for Bakhtin the most important moment of understanding. Bowles' attitude in maintaining traditional stories articulates the disruptive aspect of these stories. Their anti-modern values are Bowles' discovery of cultural difference in Morocco: Moroccans act differently from Americans. In this sense, as in ethnography, Bowles' drive to translate Moroccan stories shows how he was a captive of the enchanting power of Morocco and Moroccans, who, he thought, were at earlier stages in an evolutionary process that ultimately produced the American self. In an interview with Jeffrey Bailey, Bowles describes his early conception of Morocco: 'right away when I got here I said to myself "Ah, this is the way people used to be, the way my own ancestors were thousands of years ago"' (Caponi 1993: 130). To see how the Moroccans are, Bowles opts for a project on Moroccan oral tradition which depicts Moroccan culture as 'past', or rather as 'present-becoming past'. His desire to stop time and changes in backward places is expressly stated in his travel essay, *Their Heads are Green and Their Hands Are Blue*: 'the visitor to a place whose charm is a result of its backwardness is inclined to hope it will remain that way, regardless of how its inhabitants may feel' (Bowles 1963: viii). This is one of the justifications for translating oral stories, as well as collecting Moroccan music, while they still exist. Morocco lays its charms on Bowles because he is 'confronted with a mélange of the very old and the most

recent' (*ibid.*: 36). Bowles is fascinated with the magic space and motivated to 'preserve' its cultures and traditions. The anti-modern values of traditional stories are at the same time Bowles' own protests against order, against the certitude that informs the Western tradition of rational thought. Permitting the marginal oral voices to speak in translation challenges the monological imagination of national communities and identities (Anderson 1991), the centripetal forces which tend to downplay social, cultural and linguistic differences, and hold them at bay.

If, like Emile Benveniste, we posit that discourse is 'language put into action, and necessarily between partners' (Benveniste 1971: 223), in which the presence of the speaking subject and of the immediate situation of communication are intrinsic (*ibid.*: 217-230), the oral stories told to Bowles are 'discourses'. The nature of telling is dialogic. According to Benveniste's definition, discourse should not be read outside its specific situation or occasion in which a speaker takes over the resources of language in order to communicate dialogically. This means that by rendering into English the tales that Yacoubi, Layachi and Mrabet tell him in Moroccan Arabic, Bowles transformed the discourse into text. This is 'textualisation' as defined by James Clifford:

The process through which unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual come to be marked as a corpus, a potentially meaningful ensemble separated out from an immediate discursive or performative situation.

(Clifford 1988: 38)

This useful passage helps us to see very lucidly the nature of Bowles' translations of the Moroccan oral stories. They are, to use Talal Asad's terms, 'inevitably a textual construct', 'inscribed records [that] have a greater power to shape, to reform, selves and institutions than folk memories do' (Asad 1986: 163). While the translations Bowles makes out of Yacoubi's stories, as well as those of Layachi and Mrabet, contribute to the displacement of the borders that separate Morocco and the United States, they are also a translation within a translation. Between the real, the spoken, and the written exists an infinite space, a space determined by architectonic mechanisms and the history of literary motifs: by forms, structure, style, narration, and characters. All come between the reader and the real. It is this mediation that matters, mediation of the translator's authority, 'inscribed in the institutionalized forces of industrial capitalist society ..., which are constantly *tending* to push the meanings of various Third World societies in a single direction' (Asad 1986: 163, emphasis in original). Bowles' translations provide Western audiences with knowledge about Moroccan culture; they go beyond the very structure that contains them, connecting the temporal and the timeless, the oral and the written, the Moroccan and American. In this sense, thanks to displacement through inscription, the stories are never wholly there.

Of the countless stories Yacoubi told exclusively to his patron, three tales were translated and collected in *Five Eyes*: 'The Man who Dreamed of Fish Eating Fish', 'The Game', and 'The Night Before Thinking'. Yacoubi's stories were produced by Bowles writing out a running translation as Yacoubi narrated. The

immediate transcription/translation was, in the translator's account, necessitated by Yacoubi's style of composition: 'These complicated improvisations could not be repeated at will, nor on one hearing could they be remembered.' Bowles adds that 'all the oral tales in [*Five Eyes*] were done at one sitting, without a break' (Bowles 1979b: 7). As suggested by the manner in which the first notations were made, such a process was difficult to maintain. The very improvisatory quality of the narration which distinguishes Yacoubi's tales is considered an impediment to their successful preservation. Moreover, the very process of transcription and translation is a means of transportation that leaves oral stories in transit, in-between the oral and written, Moroccan Arabic and English. There is, that is to say, mediation into which different meanings slip and it is in that gap that we can pinpoint the ambivalent process of mixture and hybridity that the coming together of the American writer and the Moroccan subject matter brings about. This gap similarly suggests that 'no text can ever be fully translated in all its aspects: perfect homology is impossible between translation and source' (Tymoczko 1999: 23) and provides a neat illustration of the imbalances in cultural powers across which Bowles attempts to mediate. I will return to the speech/writing issue to remedy the lack in our understanding of Bowles' Moroccan translations. I would now like to explore the complex literary-business relations Bowles had with Larbi Layachi and Mohammed Mrabet based not only on friendship and cooperation, but also on Bowles' economic power over them.

In the mid-1950s, with the purchase of a tape recorder, a prolific and 'accurate' preservation of Moroccan tales became feasible. The first Moroccan

narrator to record extensively with Bowles was Larbi Layachi, a young illiterate Moroccan he met in Tangier in 1962. Layachi was a poor fisherman who worked as a guard of a deserted café at Merkala beach, a secluded stretch of shoreline in Tangier, about a mile from the Itesa, where the Bowleses used to live. Layachi was raised in desperate poverty. He worked as a houseboy for the Bowleses; he also served as Bowles' protégé and companion. Bowles soon established a literary relation with Layachi and kindled his desire to 'make a book'. Bowles was fascinated by Larbi's narrative ability:

To anyone understanding Moghrebi, Charhadi's [Layachi's] tapes are a pleasure to listen to: spacing of words, inflections of the voice in passages reporting conversation, and unexpected means of supplying emphasis.

(quoted in Stewart 1974:129)

Bowles' collaborative translations with Larbi Layachi produced *A Life Full of Holes*, which was published in 1964 under the pseudonym Driss Ben Hamed Charhadi. Layachi's autobiography unfolds the life of suffering and enduring that dates from the 1940s. Bowles wanted to market Layachi's own autobiography 'as a novel rather than nonfiction' (Bowles 1985: 350) in order to compete for a literary award called the Formentor Prize, 'offered each year by an international group of publishers, of which Grove was a member' (*ibid.*: 350). Although Layachi's 'book' did not get the prize, Bowles informs us that:

It sold well in several languages and went quickly into paperback editions in both America and the United Kingdom, with the result that Larbi made enough money from it to look for a bride.

(Bowles 1985: 350)

The central theme of *A Life Full of Holes* is 'injustice and the suffering it causes' (Bowles 1979b: 7). Such a theme sustains Layachi's other autobiographical text, *Yesterday and Today*, and his story 'Half Brother', collected in *Five Eyes*. *A Life Full of Holes* also brings to mind Mrabet's *The Lemon*, which concerns itself with Abdesslam's efforts to earn enough money for food and a place to sleep. Layachi's *A Life Full of Holes* and *Yesterday and Today*, Choukri's autobiography *For Bread Alone*, and Mrabet's *The Lemon* and *M'hashish* are all profoundly shaped by the economic situation in which the authors found themselves. Layachi, Mrabet and Choukri were raised in desperate poverty and deprivation and survived the drudgery of menial jobs and petty crimes before they began to earn money as writers. All of their narratives relate their experiences of surviving at the periphery of Tangier's economic and intellectual life. They all speak from the margins of Moroccan society into which Bowles enquires.

A Life Full of Holes recounts Ahmed's life journey, fraught with harsh, oppressive experiences made more miserable by a cruel stepfather. It is a record of various misadventures on the way to manhood where hardship, exploitation, poverty and homosexuality are dominant themes. Ahmed survives despite poverty, degradation and deprivation and at the age of eight being separated from his

mother. At one point in *A Life Full of Holes*, the protagonist's mother tells Ahmed: 'Ah, you see how hard life is?' (Layachi 1964: 37). He undergoes the mistreatment of his stepfather and the misery of a series of low-paid jobs that range from sheep herding, to farm labourer, to a baker's errand boy, and garbage collector. He is constantly in trouble with the authorities and is put in jail, where the guards brutalise their prisoners. The first jail experience was occasioned by his cutting down trees to sell to 'Nazarenes' for Christmas. Once free from jail, Ahmed sleeps in a café at night, and looks for work during the day. He begs the pickpockets and thieves who frequent the café to teach him how to steal, but they refuse: 'if you came with me only once, he told me, we'd both be in jail fast.' Ahmed responds that 'It's better to be in jail than this way in the street' (Layachi 1964: 151). At the end of the story, Ahmed works as a houseboy for a homosexual couple, Marcel and Francois, who order him to leave after Ahmed's confrontation with Mseud, Francois's new lover. Ahmed comments that after all the work he had done for 'that Nazarene', he had been cursed and thrown out. The European shows no compassion to his faithful worker. *A Life Full of Holes* shows the reader the severe reality of Layachi's life and his various prison experiences, rather than the traditional tales of the past. Throughout his texts, Layachi's unpretentious voice speaks his subalternity, foregrounding the economic and sexual dimension of its production.

Besides Larbi Layachi, Bowles also established a literary-business relation with another young Moroccan street boy, Mohammed Mrabet. The account of Bowles' first meeting with Mrabet already reveals the materialistic aspect of their

relationship. The success of Larbi Layachi's collaborations attracts Mrabet. This is suggested in his autobiography *Look and Move On*:

I write books, he [Bowles] said. I'll talk to you about it some time. That day I did not stay very long at their apartment, but I went back a few days later and he showed me a book with a picture of a friend of mine on the outside. It was a boy named Larbi, who was the watchman for Merri's café at Merkala. I began to laugh when I saw it, because I knew Larbi could not write.

(Mrabet 1976b: 90-91)

Mrabet laughed because he knew Larbi Layachi was poor and illiterate like himself. 'How can that be Larbi's book? He can't even sign his name' (Mrabet 1976b: 90-91). Significantly, Mrabet's question to Bowles: 'Did he get money for doing that?' and Bowles' response: 'of course. ... He made enough to get married' (*ibid.*) challenge Bowles' concerns in preserving these stories and foregrounds the economic aspect of the exchange. Mrabet decided to try his own voice at 'writing' and to earn some money. 'Two or three days later I went to see Paul again. When I was there I said to him: I'd like to make some tapes myself. Could I do that? Whenever you like, he said' (*ibid.*). Mrabet would make tapes for money and concoct stories that would surpass the tales Larbi had devised. Thus Bowles offered a market for storytelling in Tangier and opened an inter-individual competition among storytellers. Bowles' Tangier becomes the scene of translation, not in the

traditional sense as merely a semantic transfer of texts from one culture to another by a trained professional with linguistic and cultural skills, but as itself the basis of changes and exchanges. Its exchange value is survival. As such, it partakes of inequalities in power relationships between the ‘first world’ writer and ‘third world’ natives, between the American translator and Moroccan storytellers.

Mrabet competed with Layachi for money:

Paul had hundreds of tapes in his bookcase. He got one out and played a little of it on a tape-recorder. Larbi was talking about taking care of sheep. It was not very interesting, and it was probably all lies, anyway.

(Mrabet 1976b: 91)

Confident that he could offer better-quality stories – more ‘interesting’ plots, and a more ‘guaranteed authenticity’ – Mrabet returned a few days later to Bowles’ flat and spun out a fable that fascinated Bowles, a fable Bowles would translate into English and publish under the title *Love with a Few Hairs*. This is an engrossing story about Mohammed’s love affair with his beautiful young neighbour, Mina, and with Mr. David, his homosexual lover, who runs a hotel in Tangier. The novel is further complicated by magic potions and witches’ spells. Like Mrabet himself, Mohammed, the protagonist of *Love with a Few Hairs*, moves freely between Moroccan Islamic traditions and values and Mr. David’s expatriate world. Reminiscent of Thami in Bowles’ *Let It Come Down*, the protagonist has contempt for both Moroccan and European values. He is an example of a young Moroccan

stranded between two cultures. Similar to the translation the story is inscribed in, the protagonist, as well as Mrabet, is in a space of in-betweenness, which recalls the liminal position Bowles occupies, the interstitial passage that blurs boundaries and stands between binaries. Both the translation as an activity and Mrabet's oral story coexist simultaneously, to have an interconnected place in two cultures. This interconnectedness, of course, also characterises, as we will see, Bowles' own works – short stories and novels alike. Bowles discovered Mrabet's originality and ability to tell stories and assures us that Mrabet knows what a story is because of his early education, when he had spent his time with storytellers, listening to them. It is thus interesting that Mrabet's stories were presumably modeled on traditional storytellers' and he is adapting what he learned in order to tell stories about modern and hybrid existence.

The translated texts testify both to an oral past and to the modern world of Bowles, in which the storytellers engage in 'strategies of cultural survival' (Mullins 2002: 124) by adapting – by being modern. A reading of the final versions demonstrates that some of the stories are indeed traditional, but most of the narratives are not. Mrabet's tales of 'Hdidan Ahram' collected in *Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins* is a delightful collection that reveals the stylistic combination of the realistic and the fantastic. The stories are variations on the old picaresque theme of the sympathetic trickster manifested through the character of 'Hadidan Ahram', a liminal figure traditionally understood as an alienated, roguish, rootless protagonist. 'Hadidan Ahram', as Bowles explains in his translation note, 'is the traditional rustic oaf, who, in spite of his simplicity, and sometimes precisely because of it,

manages to impose his will upon those who have criticized and ridiculed him' (Mrabet 1976a: Preface). The tales in the collection are the products of a rich Moroccan oral tradition, a 'repertory of Moroccan folk humor' (Bowles 1979b: 7). While some of the stories in *Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins* still exist among Moroccan country peoples, others are, according to Bowles, Mrabet's 'original invention' (Mrabet 1976a: Preface). Both the 'real' and the 'imaginary' can serve a metaphorical function in this collection. The colonial relationship has been reversed. The themes expressed are grounded in the Moroccan folkloric tradition and expressed in different registers: tricksterism manifest in 'The Fire', 'The Hens', 'The Dog' and 'The Diamond'; the pagan figures in 'The Muezzin', where Hadidan Ahram, annoyed at being awakened before dawn for prayer, picks up his axe, hacks off the Muezzin's head and throws it in a well. In 'The Rhoula', he serves the community by chopping up the body of the Ghoul's seven daughters, piling the meat up in a great mound, then maiming and chopping the head off the frightening figure. At the end of the story, Hadidan, who usually lives on the margins of society and embodies many contradictions, moves to the centre when he is given a huge banquet by the Cheikh. The social dimension thus figures in the story: 'Now our children and our cows and sheep will be safe' (Mrabet 1976a: 21). Centrality, therefore, replaces liminality and disrupts dislocation and displacement.

As Mary Martin Rountree notes, 'Although Mrabet dwells upon the acts of violence with more than a little relish, "Hadidan Ahram" remains a sympathetic rogue of legendary proportions' (Rountree 1986: 398). *Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins* features themes like revenge, hedonism, the magical and

exploitation, as in 'The Young Wife' and 'The Millstones', or even the political as in 'The Rat' and 'The Saint'. Hadidan Ahram is the idiot lazy boy as in 'The Owl', but also an earthy, shrewd peasant who would not miss out any available pleasure of making a cuckold of a more powerful rival. In 'The Hens', Hadidan Ahram buys the thinnest hens, feeds them soft bread and gives them plenty of water to drink. Then he blows their intestines full of air and sells them in the market. The stories in this collection also express those most human concerns: love and hatred, life and death, security and fear, honour and shame, conformity and rebellion, and above all the desire to be special, to be an individual within the collectivity. Much of the material in *Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins* ('The Muezzin', 'The Rhoula', 'The Hens') is part of oral tradition not simply because it is produced by a non-literate teller, but also because it circulates among Moroccans as popular culture handed down from the past.

In many ways, the 'Hadidan Ahram' stories embody what anthropologist Victor Turner calls 'anti-structure', a place societies create to temporarily experience a state of freedom from the 'structural', that which constitutes constraints. This is a space of creative 'play' as Turner writes:

These liminal areas ... are open to the play of thought, feeling, and will; in them are generated new models, often fantastic, some of which may have sufficient power and plausibility to replace eventually the force-backed political and jural models that control the centers of a society's ongoing life.

(Turner 1969: vii)

In this line of argument, Hadidan's liminality stems from his grotesque character, his foolish behaviour, and the strange and mysterious world he inhabits. It is the marginal, 'in-between' state of Hadidan Ahram that allows further entertainment, further room for play to extend boundaries and open up new avenues for further difference and critiques of Western society. These stories really entertained Bowles, 'much more than any theatre or film or any form of public entertainment' (Stewart 1974: 111); in them he found much of the 'Nay to all positive structural assertions', and 'in some sense the source of them ... a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise' (Turner 1967: 97).

In his travel essay *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue*, Bowles is disgusted by the dumping of the West's garbage on the rest of the world. He also fears that Moroccan cultural forms he admired would be eradicated by the 'nationalists', in their desire to be 'European' or 'Modern'. If Bowles translates the stories from recordings of oral performances in Moroccan dialect and not from written sources, this is because he dislikes everything Western or 'civilised' and because he believes that the illiteracy of the storytellers is a prerequisite to immediacy, and contributes to the power of their stories. He says:

I am inclined to believe that illiteracy is a prerequisite. The readers and writers I have tested have lost the necessary immediacy of contact with the

material. They seem less in touch with both their memory and their imagination than the illiterates.

(quoted in Stewart 1974: 112)

Having the Moroccan storytellers speak their tales on a tape recorder underscores Bowles' search for orality as truth and unmediated expression. To this end, Bowles uses various forms of recording (writing and tape) quite pragmatically in order to get as close to the original as possible, but the tape recorder is also an instance of mechanical production where there exists a mediation, because the capacity to play back and repeat (iterability) means it is already a sort of textualisation. The originality Bowles seeks is difficult to maintain. The delay does not stem simply from the tape recorder. Rather, the delay or deferral, to invoke Derrida's idea of *différance*, is always already there. Most of the material Bowles renders into English from Choukri's, Layachi's and Mrabet's stories is not traditional in the sense of stories of wonder and folktales. *In Look and Move On*, Mrabet describes the translations: 'Some were tales I have heard in the cafés, some were dreams, some were inventions I made as I was recording, and some were about things that had actually happened to me' (Mrabet 1976b: 91). This said, the varied stories Bowles translates from Moroccan Arabic end up undermining Bowles' ethnographic impulse and his original intention to preserve oral traditional stories – whether because they become an expression of his own ambivalence/marginality or because his informants – Larbi Layachi and Mohamed Mrabet in particular – take the chance to express their own modernity and take the texts beyond his original

intentions. In the texts I discuss here, Layachi, Mrabet and Choukri tell Bowles realistic and contemporary stories that emphasise literary-business as well as the economic dimension in the context of poverty and prostitution in Interzone Tangier.

Mrabet's *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* shows the complexity of Mrabet as a storyteller. It is a novel that expresses a dilemma, because, like Layachi's autobiographical texts – *A Life Full of Holes*, *Yesterday and Today* and *The Jealous Lover* – it is not a traditional story. In *Chocolate Creams and Dollars*, as well as in *Love with a Few Hairs*, promiscuity is highlighted. Tradition is affected from without, by an overturning that shatters its interior, and denatures it. Like Mrabet's autobiography *Look and Move On*, *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* seems to be packaged for a Western reader, and is thus placed 'between nations and between languages' (Mullins 2002: 114). Through Bowles' translations, their narratives are made available for Westerners, but it is necessary that the storyteller's texts be 'authentic', 'really' Moroccan so that Bowles can situate them at the borders as the West's other. As David Murray argues about Indian translations, 'In a situation of dominance, the cultural translation is all one-way, and the penalty to the subordinate group for not adapting to the demands of the dominant group is to cease to exist' (Murray 1991: 6). But the Moroccan storytellers and Mrabet in particular, continue to survive by adapting to the modern world of Bowles. The nature of their narrative demonstrates that they are not childlike or simply to be admired as pristine.

In some way, Mrabet's *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* presents a glimpse of a culture whose relation with the outside world has become 'modernised'.

Throughout the novel, Mrabet depicts Driss, the protagonist, as a rebellious, immoral boy, sexually used by the Euro-Americans. In exchange for money, Driss, a poor fisherman, provides Mr. Hapkin and his guests with house and sexual services. Homosexuality and promiscuity are also brought up forcefully in *Love with a Few Hairs*: even after his marriage Mohammed continues to share a bed with Mr. David, a rich Englishman, breaking all religious taboos (Mrabet 1967: 105). Significantly the protagonist himself makes use of the old settler, extracting the best (money and gifts) from the more than willing Nazarene, like Mrabet in his autobiography, *Look and Move On*. A relaxed view of homosexuality is a focal point for many of Mrabet's stories: 'The Young Wife'; 'The Chess Game' and *Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins*. Likewise, such a theme finds expression in *A Life Full of Holes*, where a policeman attempts to sodomise the young child, Ahmed, but is thwarted by the timely arrival of another policeman. It produces the reality of encounters between Moroccan and Westerners without fully or accurately describing that experience.

The cross-cultural encounter at the beginning of *Chocolate Creams and Dollars*, as well as *Love with a Few Hairs*, sets the mood. Mrabet depicts Tangier with its dual society of Moroccans and expatriates. It is in many ways the same world that Bowles gives us, but the difference is that Tangier is seen through the eyes of illiterate Moroccan storytellers. The complexity of Mrabet's style is manifested through the technique of embedding. The novel is marked by embedded stories in the sense of story within story, analogous to the frame-tale device – tales within tales within tales, a narrative strategy used by Scheherazade in *The One*

Thousand and One Nights (Benaziza 2001). In *Chocolate Creams and Dollars*, Driss speaks into a microphone, ‘and told the story the rais had told him about his father’ (Mrabet 1992: 118). The story of the father embedded in the story of Rais, is itself embedded in Driss’s story, which he speaks into a microphone to be taped and translated into English, as did Mrabet and Layachi, with the intention of selling it for money. All these stories form a fantasy home where time freezes and boundaries blend and blur, a home where that which is ‘alien’ leaches into the official discourse to disaggregate its solidity. Interiority, then, is exemplified by Driss’s self, embedded in conversations. His life consists of talking, conversations, dialogues, monologues and exchanges. Driss’s monologue into the microphone, no less than Mrabet’s, becomes an object of exchange and translation. In this sense, Bowles can be credited for creating a dialogue instead of a monologue, showing the process that works against the idea of silencing the storytellers. Driss’s self is knowable. Knowledge about the self is transferred into a microphone to be translated, constantly reinterpreted as a play of signifiers, a dialogue between the oral and the written.

Driss’s self is also relational. Its fixity is illusory. Living with the English man establishes Driss as an outcast:

They wanted to know, what do you do with these Nazarenes, to make them give you the key to their house and let you live there? ... Driss paid for his tea and left the café with a turbulent state of mind.

(Mrabet 1992: 35-38)

The above statements give us a rich insight into Driss's alienation. Mrabet's protagonist is marginalised, disconnected. Like Bowles himself, the protagonist lives at the threshold, 'neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification' (Turner 1974: 232). Mrabet is a Moroccan who speaks for himself as a Moroccan between traditions and cultures. He produces oral stories as a speaking subject for whom Driss's homosexuality is a journey towards the alien, an effort to alleviate his poverty, the area of safety. The crisis that confronts Mrabet's protagonist is a thematic thread maintained in Bowles' own fiction. A close reading of 'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode' spells out the alienation and disjunction of his characters (see Chapter 4). As such, the translation of the Moroccan stories transports and transfers deracination, the alienation that underlies everything else. It also brings to light a journey far away from the centre into translations that defy it. Bowles' translation retains presence, but 'no longer a representation of an essence'. It is structured around 'the ambivalence of splitting, denial', strategies that make the culture 'open textured' (Bhabha 1994: 114) as they let him discern a 'third Space' that 'enables other positions to emerge' and 'displaces the histories that constitute it' (Bhabha 1990: 211), 'unknown regions' of the world that open up the possibility of ecstatic experience.

Mohammed Mrabet's voice, more than Layachi's, matches that of Bowles in his own fiction (see Bowles 1979a: 36, 196, 197). Mrabet confirms the strange, the violent and erotic in Morocco and seems to justify Bowles' characters' preoccupation with sexuality, languor, witchcraft, spells, rebelliousness,

hallucinations and kif-smoking. Talking to Daniel Halpern, Mohammed Mrabet says:

God gave me a brain that can invent stories. And I feed it with kif. When I drank alcohol I couldn't tell stories. When I gave up drinking and changed to kif, I began to tell stories again I smoke a little, shut my eyes, and then I begin to see everything.

(Mrabet 1971: 125-129)

Most of Mrabet's protagonists are attracted by kif-smoking, drinking and sex. They meet women, denizens of brothels, and European men with whom they live as lovers. In many of the stories, prostitutes attempt to poison the protagonists who use violence as revenge upon them. The story of 'The Dutiful Son' in *The Boy who Set the Fire* (Mrabet 1989b) is a good instance. Another instance of violence is the story of 'Chico' where the protagonist is dangerous when angry. He is the personification of violence. 'Chico could not live without getting into fights. It was only then that he believed he was really a man, and really alive' (Mrabet 1986: 79). In *The Lemon*, Abdeslam meets a dockworker named Bachir who takes him to his house. Bachir becomes his nemesis when, in a drunken frenzy, Bachir tries to force him into his bed. Abdeslam tries to get away, and slashes Bachir's face open with razors embedded in a lemon in his hands (Mrabet 1968: 179-181).

Violence, horror and brutality seem to suggest a revolution. They are reminiscent of Bowles' own works like 'The Delicate Prey', 'The Wind at Beni

Midar', 'A Distant Episode' and *Let It Come Down*, where violence predominates, with themes of revenge, bloodshed and mutilation. Bowles says to Daniel Halpern in a 1975 interview that 'the sensation of horror through reading can result in temporary smearing of the lens of consciousness A good jolt of vicarious horror can cause a certain amount of questioning of values afterward' (Hibbard 1993: 152). As such, the translated texts put into question our normal world-view, and even our sense of being, as presence, as my close reading demonstrates in the chapters that follow. This is what Bowles seems to mean when he says: 'I want to *help* society go to pieces, make it easy' (*ibid.*: 151, emphasis in original). This applies to the translations and, admittedly, to Bowles' own works, where Morocco is cultivated as a locus of violence. Humanly made shelters – social, political and religious systems – are thus dramatised as doomed attempts to render the world habitable. The structure of the world topples through violence, cultural dislocations and the failure of language to make the strange less strange.

Kif as metaphor, as transportation, seems to be the way out. Mrabet has a whole series of stories in *M'hashish*, a collection taped and translated from Moghrebi by Paul Bowles. On the book cover, Bowles informs us that:

The word m'hashish (equivalent in Moghrebi of 'behashished' or 'full of hashish') is used not only in a literal sense, but also figuratively, to describe a person whose behaviour seems irrational or unexpected.

(Mrabet 1969b: cover information by Bowles)

Such a collection brings to mind the power of kif in Bowles' own quartet, *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard*. Significantly, Bowles' interest in magic and kif has proven rewarding in artistic terms. *A Hundred Camels in The Courtyard* is a book of four 'kif- inspired' stories all imbued with magic, ritual, or kif culture topoi and narrative patterns. Its cover features a traditional Moroccan sebsi 'pipe', and a mottoui 'bag of kif', on a portion of woven straw mat. Bowles' stories 'A Friend of the World', 'He of the Assembly', 'The Story of Lahcen and Idir' and 'The Wind at Beni Midar' exhibit Morocco as an ideal location for drug-taking and for estrangement through kif, magic and trances. When we read such stories, we certainly sense the exotic lurking behind every scene of the narrative as Bowles crosses various spaces ensuring the connectedness of different genres through mediation and liminality.

Like Mrabet's *M'hashish*, *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard* introduces the reader into 'another world where life is different' (Mrabet 1969b: 26), a mad universe of kif and 'majoun' where imagination and reality, the rational and irrational blur. This is a world of revenge and treachery, which the reader also witnesses in *Let It Come Down*. Dyar, at the invitation of Thami, takes more and more majoun: "I can see you sitting there," Dyar insisted, "but I'm in another world." "My friend, I'm m'hashish as much as you." Thami answered after he opened his eyes and stopped singing' (Bowles 1980: 280). In such a way, kif as metaphor knits together many of Bowles' texts, weaving the translations, short stories, and novels through a new mode of travel that articulates a second geography 'on top of the geography of the literal' (de Certeau 1984: 105). In this

mode of travel, characters enter regions where they are not altogether at home; they seek freedom not by literally abandoning society, but by undergoing solitude and repudiating psychological boundaries. Much like the stories in *M'hashish*, *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard* catalogues Bowles' interest in Morocco as the land of promiscuity and sexual licentiousness, but also of alienating forces. Morocco provides Bowles an ideal location not just for experimenting with 'mind and mood-alternating drugs' (Lacey and Poole 1996: 144), but for close association with other individuals who take drugs as well. Kif, magic and trances are alienating and powerful agents which produce isolated and (perhaps) criminal subjects. The presence of kif reinforces altered states of consciousness, an in-between state primarily conditioned by travel to free their mind from the interference of reason. They are there as if absent, deranged. For them, kif is used as a means to move outside the ties of the 'phenomenological world' into 'the kif world', a liminal realm 'in which each person perceives reality according to the projections of his own essence' (Bowles 1962: 1).

The Morocco we enter in *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard* is one in which the irrational reigns: it is a world in which superstitions, worship of saints and belief in djenoun (genies) are the operating structures determining reality. The Moroccan characters' behaviour in the four stories, as well as in many other stories, connotes a deviation from Euro-American cultural and ideological norms. Bowles' kif 'quartet' may be considered as a reduction of sense, a transgression. The four stories provide a way of apprehending a different, supposedly more spontaneous reality, an interior that is related to no plenitude, no comfort, no rationality. In order

to preserve aspects of the exotic other, the sovereign form expends itself without reserve. The kif stories enact ways of losing consciousness, all memory of self. They transgress meaning not to maintain non-meaning or ascertain it, but rather to suspend its effect and attain a state of communication with themselves. Indeed, Bowles' concern is to represent aspects of the exotic other/Morocco as a voice of protest, an anti-structure against the extension of mass culture wherein, as Kit expresses it, 'The people of each country get more like the people of every other country. They have no character, no beauty, no ideals, no culture – nothing, nothing' (Bowles 1977: 16).

Through such translations, Bowles brought another point of view into the cultural discourse between Morocco and the West. In introducing such voices as those of the Moroccan illiterate storytellers, Bowles has been instrumental in creating what Edward Said has described as a cultural counterpoint (Said 1993: 51). At the same time, the image of the 'Complicated Orient' (de Gaulle's phrase), of a totally different and distant other is reinforced. Indeed, Bowles celebrated ideas and values and ascribed them to the Moroccan storytellers. The voices of the storytellers weave through and around each other, no one voice more privileged than any other, each of comparable interest and worth (Caponi 1994: 215). But Bowles' presence helped to shape the stories, so that his role was not just at the translation stage. Talking to Abdelhak Elghandor, Bowles says about the storytellers:

They knew what I liked from the beginning. When they began to record things for me, they saw my reactions, they saw that I liked certain things,

such as violence, and bloodshed and hatred, and so on. So they specialized in that, in general. I don't think Choukri did that, no. His long novel I translated, *For Bread Alone*, had enough of violence and unpleasantness to please me.

(Elghandor 1994, Appendix I: 340)

The stories ultimately have to do with power. Mrabet's novel *Chocolate Creams and Dollars*, like Layachi's *A Life Full of Holes*, was banned in Morocco. Layachi wants to "tell them outside" ... what it is like to be shut inside' (Bowles 1979b: 7), which is to say that these stories proceed from the human interior and manifest figures like Larbi to Bowles as 'conscious interiors' (Ong 1982: 74), as persons, as a close-knit group that share Layachi's central theme of suffering. Both stories were seized in Tangier and their distribution prevented. Unlike the two novels, the Arabic version of 'The Chest' published in Assabah newspapers is totally different from the English version with regard to the cultural content transposed in translation. Both versions are unmistakably Moroccan stories where imagination and reality conflate. However, when we compare the Arabic with the English version a double problem arises, because the Arabic version is already involved in translation from Moroccan Arabic to written standard Arabic. Both versions seem to open the possibility of slippage as far as finding the tone is concerned. This means that one cannot easily catch the tone behind the text, with its highs and lows, in either version.

Addressed to a Western audience, the English version of 'The Chest' is less interested in showing its morality because it is in itself a declaration of religious principles as 'the basic source of human meaning and social bondedness' (Turner 1974: 189). In the story, Haddad tells Cheikh that 'instead of giving the Aachor money to the poor people, I put it all into a chest and kept it. And when the chest was almost full, it disappeared' (Mrabet 1983: 78). The tone of the story seems, therefore, straightforward and flat. Although the poor become rich and the rich become poor, connectedness is to be assured through faith, for we read that Cheikh 'bought back the house' for Haddad and 'filled [Haddad's] shops with produce so that they were once again as they had been' (*ibid.*). The story locates this spiritual quest as the core of order in human existence: 'And when Cheikh died he left every-thing behind in perfect order' (*ibid.*: 79). Ironically, it is just such neglect of the religious principle, 'Aachor money', and Haddad's strong attachment to the material world that brings misfortune to the rich farmer that provoked those translations and inspired Paul Bowles in his quest for meaning and telling. This is reminiscent of Bowles' novel *The Spider's House*, where the novelist explores Muslims' neglect of the Islamic tradition as creating frailty, insecurity and distress rather than security and comfort. Indeed, *The Spider's House* is concerned with the destruction of a traditional way of life, with that which has been lost. John Stenham, an American expatriate writer who lives in Morocco, wants Muslims to remain pure: they 'had to tread a narrow path; no deviation was tolerated' (Bowles 1982b: 217). Their weakness and frailty is similar to the spider's house, which, far from

being suitable for protection, 'is built to last one night' (*ibid.*: 398). In *The Spider's House*, Bowles concludes through the character Stenham:

The only ones he judged, and therefore hated, were those who showed an inclination to ally themselves with the course of Western thought. Those renegades ... he would gladly have seen them all quietly executed, so that the power of Islam might continue without danger of interruption.

(Bowles 1982b: 216)

Because of his spiritual quest, Cheikh moves from liminality to centrality, in the opposite direction to the rich farmer. Perhaps for the same reasons that Cheikh of the English version of 'The Chest' searches for spiritual unity, Bowles was drawn to the encounter with Morocco and Moroccans as a way of overcoming Western individualism and the material condition that disunites men.

The English version of 'The Chest' picks up aspects of the original text – a combination of tone and cultural content as a significant element to be transposed in translation. It should be noted that the word 'Aachor' stands out. No translation is provided for it. 'Aachor' is the Moroccan Arabic word for *Zakkat*, one of the fundamental pillars of Islam that is an obligatory charge on the wealth or produce of Muslims. It is mandatory that wealthy Muslims spend *Zakkat* on the poor and the needy because it offers a means for a Muslim to purify his or her wealth and attain salvation. But the reader is left unable to comprehend this. As Brian Edwards rightly notes, 'It is a moment of disjuncture in the text' (Edwards 1998: 299).

Arabic words that stand out, untranslated, figure in Bowles' own stories like 'Mejdoub' and 'The Fqih'. By allowing the Darija word 'Aachor', Bowles brings difference into the standardised American text, challenging the centripetal forces which tend to downplay differences. In addition, the use of such words from Moroccan Arabic in the translated texts reflects 'the culturo-linguistic layering which exists within them' (Mehrez 1992: 121). These hybrid texts both rely on and defy the traditional notion of linguistic equivalence as sameness, or ideas of accuracy and inaccuracy, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, which have long been a consideration in translation theory. To borrow Samia Mehrez' words, these texts 'create a language in "between" and therefore come to occupy a space "in-between"' (*ibid.*).

That the Arabic version of 'The Chest' published in Assabah newspapers is totally different from the English version suggests that the storyteller is aware of being overheard by a Western audience. The stories are clearly aimed at the Euro-American audience, yet at the same time they are a consciousness-raising call to fellow Moroccans. The telling varies from context to context, from relationship to relationship, focusing the flexibility of the storytellers. Such flexibility means that the tellers are aware of the audience, whether Bowles himself or a wider audience, and that this awareness is, significantly, always shaping the story. We cannot be certain, however, because, by virtue of the fact that they were oral, we have lost the original story-telling situation and cannot reconstruct it from the traces in the text. Significantly, Bowles himself was careful to distinguish his own role from Mrabet's, particularly in the wake of the accusation that he invented Mrabet,

notably by Tahar Ben Jelloun, the Moroccan writer who published an attack on Bowles' collaboration with Mrabet in the French daily *Le Monde*. In 'une technique de viol', Ben Jelloun suggested that the 'translations' are Bowles' own writing in disguise, adding that 'everything is wrong in this enterprise' (Ben Jelloun 1972: 21, my translation). But Mrabet was not an invention of Bowles' imagination. Rather, like the other Moroccan storytellers, he was creating stories to meet someone else's agenda in a situation of unequal power.

We sense how 'reality' is a plural affair for Bowles and how there exist many different worlds rather than just a single one. Difference, contrast and diversity appear to Bowles as the first conditions of meaning. He has gone to the source through his Moroccan translations, as he has done through his autobiography and the whole travel collection, through his short stories and novels. Rather than depicting journeys from the point of view of Port Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky*, of Dyar in *Let It Come Down*, of the Professor in 'A Distant Episode' or the 'I' in *Without Stopping*, he translates Moroccan stories to show how (illiterate) Moroccans engage with a constantly changing world, a space of fluidity and dissemination. In this sense, Bowles' project of translation is aimed sharply and polemically against the norms of his time. His inhabiting more than one identity and more than one home is but an attempt to decentralise the centre and to locate it elsewhere.

Mohamed Choukri's career and his literary texts differ substantially from those of Larbi Layachi and Mohammed Mrabet. Choukri met Paul Bowles in 1972, when Bowles recognised Choukri's talent as a writer and encouraged his writing.

The relation Bowles had with Choukri is different from that with Layachi and Mrabet in that Choukri had written his autobiography, *For Bread Alone*, in classical Arabic, before he met Paul Bowles. Bowles' collaborations helped establish Choukri's international reputation (Choukri 1996: 145) and he became famous by having his autobiography translated into English, but he also published in Arabic, which moved him from the margin towards the centre of Moroccan intellectual life. Layachi and Mrabet, on the other hand, remained on the margin of Moroccan society. In *Paul Bowles Wa Uzlat Tanja*, Choukri distinguishes his writings from Mrabet's 'telling': 'I don't tell my stories; I write them for those who can read' Choukri explains, 'but Mrabet does not write, he only narrates and Paul writes his stories. And a story must change once it is written' (Choukri 1996: 118, my translation). In such a way, Choukri, raises the question of readership and authenticity, setting himself as an 'organic intellectual' (Landry and MacLean 1996: 271) because he writes his own stories, unlike Layachi and Mrabet whose stories are re-framed by Bowles.

For Choukri, as for Paul Bowles, 'writing' is a way to expose and 'to protest', and there is a sense of fear in his work:

Each one asked the others the meaning of the circulars. Who is going to blow up the city? Why should anyone want to blow it up? The square of red paper struck them as senseless, but the idea of escaping from the city seemed perfectly logical They go out of their houses. They go back in. They go out again. Fear distorts their features and gestures.

(Boulaich and Choukri 1979: 128)

The ‘fear’ that distorts peoples’ ‘features and gestures’ in this extract from ‘The Warning’ also haunts Choukri’s autobiography *For Bread Alone*. Choukri came to realise that writing is a way to protest against those who have stolen his childhood. Like Bowles, he is convinced that ‘security is a false concept’ (Hibbard 1993: 146) since all the structures that make us civilised are fragile and fail to keep out danger. In an interview with Jeffrey Bailey, Bowles says:

If I’m persuaded that our life is predicated upon violence, that the entire structure of what we call civilization, the scaffolding that we’ve built up over the millenia, can collapse at any moment, then whatever I write is going to be affected by that assumption.

(Caponi 1993: 122)

Violence, horror, brutality and cruelty are determining features of Choukri’s writings and many of Mrabet’s stories. These features also mark Bowles’ fiction, as if to doubly counter Western rationalism and civilisation with forms of the irrational, as if to ridicule and reshuffle its order. Realities do not hold. The bars, restaurants, hotels and places of prostitution all form locations and themes in Choukri’s texts that counter the religious ethics of hard work, the economic valuation of time, and rational thought: ‘The Prophet’s Slippers’, another story in *Five Eyes*, is a modern story about corruption that comes through deception. The

narrator tricks an Englishman into paying an enormous amount of money to buy slippers which are his 'grandmother's very life' (Boulaich and Choukri 1979: 132). 'If she should find them missing, she might lose her mind or have a heart attack' (*ibid.*). Trickery, deception and exploitation underpin relationships. The counterfeit shatters in its impact the transatlantic encounters between Westerners and Moroccans. The counterfeit is dominant in Bowles' own fiction as well, as is evidenced in *Let It Come Down* (see Chapter 4).

In *For Bread Alone*, Choukri's family moves to Tangier when he is a little child to escape famine in the Rif Mountains. They grow up in excessive poverty: 'I was sobbing, and repeating the word *bread* over and over', and his father is extremely cruel. 'He began to slap and kick me, crying: Shut up! Shut up! ... he went on kicking me until his leg was tired' (Choukri 1993: 9-10). Choukri recalls how his father murdered his infant brother Abdelqader in order to stop the starving boy's cries once and for all (*ibid.*: 11). Choukri's life is reminiscent of Ahmed's in *A Life Full of Holes*, in that *For Bread Alone* is a record of his struggle for survival. It is a vivid description of a street boy's life journey with drug use, petty crime and prostitution, breaking all literary rules and religious taboos in Morocco at that time. This is quite significant in the sense that Bowles translates 'what is marginal, what is not established, what is not institutional, what is not mainstream culture' (Elghandor 1994: 319), protesting against the flimsy structure of society that can collapse at any time.

In a 1993 interview with Elghandor, Bowles describes Choukri as 'a very good writer', adding that 'he has an enormous talent' (Elghandor 1994: 319), but

even so, Bowles' uneasiness in translating Choukri's texts is evident. Much concerned about authorship and authenticity, Choukri made Bowles' act of translating his texts difficult. Choukri's translated texts are already a translation within a translation: first, Choukri had to reduce his autobiography, a manuscript in classical Arabic, to Moroccan Arabic. Then Choukri and Bowles used 'Spanish and French for ascertaining shades of meaning' (Choukri 1993: 5). This is a good instance of a linguistic heterogeneity which draws its momentum from translation, but it is also the case that translation is a mundane fact of life for Choukri, as for Khatibi and for all Moroccans. This is what Robinson means when he maintains that 'the mixing of cultures and languages ... makes translation in that traditional sense impossible. But at the same that mixing also makes translation perfectly ordinary, everyday, business as usual' (Robinson 1997: 27). Bowles says that: 'had I known how difficult it would be to make English translations of Mohamed Choukri's texts, I doubt that I should have undertaken the work', adding that 'It was Choukri himself who was obliged to do the translating, sometimes working through the medium of the colloquial Darija, but generally through Spanish, and occasionally even French' (Bowles 1979b: 8). When they were translating *For Bread Alone*, Choukri sat beside Bowles in order to make sure that the translator was making 'a word-for-word version of his text, if he noticed an extra comma he demanded an explanation'. Bowles adds 'I was driven to reiterating: "But English is not Arabic!"' Finally we devised a *modus operandi* which involved our sitting on opposite sides of the room' (*ibid.*: 8). Bowles also translated two more of Choukri's written texts: *Jean Genet in Tangier* and *Tennessee Williams in Tangier*. Bowles'

role as a translator is much more constrained with Choukri, since Choukri himself acts as a check or a control.

Bowles' relationship with Layachi and Mrabet is different. In 'Notes on the Work of the Translator', Bowles writes that 'After Choukri, it was a relief to return to the smooth-rolling Mrabet's translations' because, unlike Choukri, Mrabet 'has no thesis to propound, no grievances to air, and no fear of redundant punctuation' (Bowles 1979b: 8). In contrast, Choukri's checks and controls mean that Choukri, more than Mrabet and Layachi, wants to minimise the drastic difference in translation. Choukri's resistance to Bowles' translation and transfer, whether of concepts or rhetorical or linguistic structures, is a strategy of survival. As Asad maintains, "'resistance" in itself indicates the presence of a dominant force' (Asad 1986: 163). If, for Bowles, 'Mrabet just writes about what he sees without any political overtones whatever' (Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 417), Choukri's checks and controls show him aware of an important fact: 'that translation, like all (re)writings, is never innocent' (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 11), and that, as Tymoczko points out, 'perfect homology is impossible between translation and source' (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 23). Choukri's stories may seem more authentic as the expression of a Moroccan than Layachi's and Mrabet's, but it is more a difference of degree not kind between the Moroccan storytellers.

Bowles is in some ways a latter-day romantic who concentrates on the oral and folkloric in order to preserve stories which are 'the by-product of a pastime' (Bowles 1979b: 7) and can catch the 'unmediated' authenticity of the Moroccan narratives. Nevertheless, the oral stories are denatured from without, overturned by

the very act that preserves them, the highly complex act of translation as ‘a form of literary refraction’ (Tymoczko 1990: 46). Even if Bowles has mastered Moroccan Arabic and Moroccan traditions, he is still the carrier of English language and American authority, ‘inscribed in the institutionalized forces of industrial capitalist society’ (Asad 1986: 163), and performing, therefore, the role of mediator between the oral and the written, Arabic and English. The sheer range of translations that Bowles is involved in, and his self-consciousness and reflexivity about his role makes his work a rich source for any discussion of translation and power. Through Bowles’ translation, the Moroccan oral stories go modern, mediated, yet not inauthentic as Moroccan. I would now like to return to the important issue of Bowles’ narrative position and the way in which these texts call into question the distinction between ‘author’ and ‘translator’. It is within this gap that Bowles’ role of a translator translating Moroccan oral stories makes his authorship in the modern Western sense both fascinating and problematic.

Problematic Authorship

Through translation, both Bowles and the storytellers move in and out of each other’s space, creating cross-cultural dialogues. In terms of authorship, the final version of the stories is ambivalent and generates a particular narrative tension. The dialogic texts where Bowles is both a character in the narrative and the messenger of the narrative raise questions about subjectivity and Bowles’ position in the project. The use of ‘I’, which presupposes a ‘you’ and other deictic indicators – this,

that, now, here, there and so on – signal ‘the individual who utters the present instance of discourse containing the linguistic instance I’ (Benveniste 1971: 218). In Mrabet’s autobiography, *Look and Move On*, many passages elucidate the situation in the translation of the tales: ‘One night Paul and I were busy translating a story ... I went in and told Paul. We finished the story. Then I said good-night and went out’ (Mrabet 1976: 110), and ‘One day when I went to see Paul he said: I’ve got news for you. A letter came from California. They want me to go and teach there’ (Mrabet 1976: 113). In Benveniste’s terms, ‘I refers to the act of individual discourse in which it is pronounced, and by this it designates the speaker. ... It is in the instance of discourse in which I designates the speaker that the speaker proclaims himself as the “subject”’ (Benveniste 1971: 226). Accordingly, discourse should be interpreted within its situation and not outside it. There is no discursive meaning without interlocution and context.

In Bakhtin’s words, language ‘lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else’s’ (Bakhtin 1981: 294). But in Bowles’ work, it is hard to locate the borderline between Bowles and the Moroccan storytellers. Bowles interprets the storytellers’ discourses through the process of transforming them into texts. Textualisation changes Mrabet’s first person narrative in the above texts. We read his ‘I’ in a book labelled as a translation with a preface by Bowles, so we know Bowles is present somewhere between us and this ‘I’. This raises the question of ‘subjectivity’ and consciousness of self. Benveniste defines subjectivity as:

the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as 'subject'. It is defined ... as the psychic unity that transcends the totality of the actual experiences it assembles and that makes the permanence of the consciousness. ... 'Ego' is he who says 'ego.' That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity,' which is determined by the linguistic status of 'person.'

(Benveniste 1971: 224)

The following quotation from Mrabet's *Marriage with Papers* is another example that illustrates the confusion of pronouns:

The Nazarene also came to see me. Everyone asked me questions, but I said nothing about what I had found at home The Nazarene kept saying that he could not understand why she had done such a thing.

(Mrabet 1986: 23-24)

Mrabet uses 'I' when he is describing his story to Bowles, who is a 'you' in his address. However, in both *Marriage with Papers* and *Look and Move On*, texts where Bowles is both a character in the narrative and the messenger of the narrative, Bowles delivers a first person narrative in which he is located in the third person (the Nazarene/Paul). If, according to Benveniste, the subject is constituted in its use of language, the translator does not possess the 'I' as his own pronoun. The transfer of the first pronoun I from Moroccan Arabic into English creates a gap. The translator does not claim possession of the speaker's voice, that of Mrabet. From

that third person position the reader knows that it is, after all, Bowles who is at centre stage. He is finally writing the tales that Mrabet is making (composing).

Equally important, the intriguing status of the tales that Bowles taped, transcribed and translated from Darija Arabic into English is manifest in Bowles' ambivalent attitude towards his own role as a translator translating Moroccan oral stories. The remainder of this section tracks the way this role problematises Bowles' authorship. The title page of *Five Eyes* lists Bowles as having 'edited and translated' the stories told to him by Abdeslam Boulaich, Mohamed Choukri, Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet and Ahmed Yacoubi. Similarly, *Love with a Few Hairs*, Mrabet's first collaboration with Bowles, is listed as being 'translated and edited' by Paul Bowles. Their second novel, *The Lemon*, has the inscription 'translated from the Moghrebi and edited by Paul Bowles in collaboration with Mohammed Mrabet'. Similarly, the title pages of all these books efface Bowles' effort in taping and then transcribing oral tales to written language. Thus, the shortened formula dismisses the significance of Bowles' attempt to narrativise the local Moroccan voices. Equally important, *M'hashish*, *The Boy Who Set the Fire*, *The Big Mirror*, and *The Beach Café & the Voice*, *Harmless Poisons*, *Blameless Sins*, *Look and Move On*, all bear the note 'taped and translated from the Moghrebi', and the title page of *A Life Full of Holes* lists Bowles as having 'recorded and translated' the novel. All these books emphasise Bowles' role as the one who has recorded the stories and translated them directly from Moroccan Arabic. Yet these notes edit out the title of 'editor', as if to make it clear that Bowles was not 'editor' in the sense of one selecting, revising and composing the

material, but rather ‘editor’ ‘as one who tapes, as one who collects’ (Edwards 1998: 283): editor in the sense of one who prepares the life stories of the Moroccan tellers and arranges them for publication. More important perhaps, *The Chest* and *Marriage with Papers* both describe Bowles simply as ‘translator’, omitting his role of taping, transcribing, and editing the tales.

In keeping with Bowles’ fluctuation and unease in naming his own role, the note in the inside jacket of *Look and Move On* underlines Bowles as simply a translator: ‘Mohammed Mrabet’s unusual life, conveyed in direct, uncluttered prose, is vividly captured by Paul Bowles’ sensitive translation’. It is also interesting to note that the back cover of the paperback edition of *Marriage with Papers* carries a quotation by Henry Miller that implies that Mrabet is a ‘writer’: ‘[Mrabet’s] writing is quite unique and an inspiration not only to young writers but to veterans too. He has found the secret of communicating on all levels’ (Mrabet 1986). Such a comment affirms Mrabet as a writer and alters Bowles’ position *vis-à-vis* the text, making him a mere ‘translator’. But in what sense is it really Mrabet’s writing? While Mrabet could read, he did not write any of his books. The production of these stories translated into English through Bowles’ assistance involves issues not only of authorship but of authority and control. Caponi’s remark is quite relevant to this argument: ‘The line between author and translator is indistinct in any translation, but with Bowles it seems to disappear altogether’ (Caponi 1998: 131)

Why should Bowles find it difficult to name his own role if he did not embark on one path while yearning, however subtly, for another, if he did not

represent the ambiguity that articulated the opposed positions? Bowles' oscillation between different positions emanates from an active participation in the composition and distribution of the Moroccan storytellers' works, along with a yearning to establish the reality and authenticity of the Moroccan narratives and their authors, and to preserve as much of the style as possible. This is quite contradictory. It is indeed Bowles' 'paradoxical' subject position that is of concern to us here.

Bowles' ambivalent attitude towards his own role makes more comprehensible the doubling effect of his oral Moroccan translations and arouses confusion – and doubt – about their authorial authenticity. Paul Bowles claims that he lets the Moroccan storytellers speak in translation because 'I thought it would perhaps shed light on the culture that was much despised. I thought it probably did' (Bejjit 1999: 119). He claims that he does not change the narratives when he transcribes and translates them. In a conversation with Oliver Evans, Bowles objects to the word 'collaboration' to describe his interaction with Layachi and Mrabet:

[They] are not exactly collaborations. I only get the authors to talk, you see. The stories are their own. My function is only to translate, edit, and to cut; now and then I have to ask a question to clarify a point.

(Caponi 1993: 53)

Bowles' attempt to 'capture' the reality of the tellers' voices in translation and 'to carry it over the border intact' (Caponi 1993: 199) underscores his will to truth and attests to his search for 'authenticity'. And yet, his attitude is marked by confusion between the writer, translator, and editor. We need to ask about the conditions of production and circulation of these texts. Bowles' mediation shows how complex questions of authorship can become, as it problematises his role and makes it not simply that of an ethnographic collector. Indeed, the translation makes Bowles somehow between translator and author, or rather both a translator and a part-author.

How Bowles has influenced or shaped the text by his presence can be illustrated by the introduction to *A Life Full of Holes*. Bowles writes: 'At the outset I had seen that the translation should be a literal one, in order to preserve as much as possible of the style. Nothing needed to be added, deleted, or altered' (Layachi 1964: 11). This statement emphasises Bowles' claim to be faithful to the mind of Layachi; such a claim evinces Bowles' drift towards an ideal of 'exactitude' as he looks for a pure translation of Moroccan oral culture. However, Bowles soon proceeds to describe the exception to his policy of non-interference. On this occasion, Layachi wanted to leave out an episode in 'The Shepherd'. In this episode, 'the narrator insists on spending the night at the tomb of Sidi Bou Hajja in order to see if the "bull with horns" will appear' (*ibid.*: 12), but Bowles disagreed because the passage in question clearly describes a local belief in a pre-Islamic spiritual figure who appears at night and comes from the tomb of a saint, 'a spot whose initial sanctity has been affirmed by the usurping faith' (*ibid.*). Both Layachi

and Bowles found the episode incidental to the rest of the story, but Bowles insisted that it should be included in Layachi's autobiography because he found the pre-Islamic trace in postcolonial Morocco interesting and he relates it to the reader (*ibid.*: 64-66). In the episode, we read:

I'm going to spend the night here and see what happens. And I went across the stones that were painted white, and walked up to the tomb, to the spot where they light candles on Friday. I spread out my djellaba on the ground and lay down on top of it.

(Layachi 1964: 65)

As Greg Mullins notes, 'In overruling Layachi and including the tomb episode in the published autobiography, Bowles acted the part of the anthropologist/translator who places his own fascinations with and interpretations of Moroccan culture above those of his "informants"' (Mullins 2002: 118). Accordingly, Bowles translates Layachi's story as he feels is right to him. Bowles' interference in Layachi's autobiography confirms that Bowles' translation is, as Asad put it, 'inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power' (Asad 1986: 163). And among these conditions is Bowles' authority 'to uncover the implicit meanings of subordinate societies' (Asad 1986: 163). Nonetheless, Bowles also tells the reader what happened and gives us the opportunity to judge what he has done, so he can be credited for entering into a dialogue with the text, as well as creating a space for Layachi to break silence and speak.

The encounter of the American writer with Moroccan storytellers certainly results in books that are ‘rare if not unheard of, and are almost a new genre of literary expression’ (Harter 1993: 52). Still, the stories Bowles transcribes out of the tales spoken onto a tape raise the interesting issue of whether or not Bowles alters the form of the stories. In the strict etymological sense of the word, literature does not occur without writing, without knowing the art of letters. Accordingly, it is inconceivable to us that illiterate local storytellers like Yacoubi, Layachi and Mrabet would be familiar with literary forms and genres. To get some perspective on this, let us quote at some length what Bowles says to Simon Bischoff:

Bischoff: Do you think you gave their writings a literary form?

Bowles: That would be hard to do without changing the text! If it’s translated sentence by sentence, it would be very hard to give it a different form.

Bischoff: You mean the Moroccans gave their writings the literary form they have now?

Bowles: Yes, the form they have now. I don’t know if they have any form ...

Bischoff: But you had much more technical experience in writing a book, you might have given them some help.

Bowles: Maybe. But if there was a section that I didn’t think belonged, I would tell the Moroccan: So, what does this mean? Or: Let’s cut that out and go from here straight to here. That I did do. Or sometimes I would

say: No one's going to understand this, you have to explain why, what it is. A Moroccan would understand, but a European won't know what's *sous-entendu* [between the lines]. It has to be explained!

Bischoff: You didn't do more?

Bowles: I don't see how I could unless I cut out, changed things around. You can't give a thing a form different from what it has, I think. I don't know if Mrabet has an idea of form. But not every Moroccan has the gift to tell stories ... Mrabet does.

(Bowles 1994a: 245-246)

As this interview demonstrates, Bowles' translation of Moroccan oral stories reveals that 'the process of refraction is a regular part of translation; far from presenting us with a standard of exactitude or objectivity, oral literary translations manipulate narrative frankly, radically, unabashedly' (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990: 52). Bowles' statement 'I don't know if Mrabet has an idea of form' suggests that Mrabet may not have an abstract concept of form, but his stories do have form in practice, and Bowles felt he could not change the format of what was said originally to him, although Bowles' claim contrasts with Choukri's. In *Paul Bowles wa Uzlat Tanja* 'Paul Bowles le Reclus de Tanger', Choukri recounts how Mrabet protested against Bowles' adaptation and recasting of the oral stories he provided in tapes. According to Choukri, Mrabet protested after he had some Moroccans, who had mastered English, compare them with the translated versions. They told Mrabet the original narratives differed substantially from the published versions. Choukri also

wondered why Bowles erased Mrabet's original records, without explaining in what context the erasure took place (Choukri 1996: 153).

According to Greg Allen Mullins, the final version of the Moroccan translations shows that Bowles is an active editor in this process:

The original transcription of, for example, Mrabet's *Look and Move on* differs substantially from the published version. The transcription bears marks of oral story telling, such as repetition and circularity that do not appear in the published book. Passages extending more than thirty pages in length have been entirely cut. The result is a much more streamlined and precise narrative that builds dramatic tension using the convention of written, rather than spoken storytelling ... But it is also important to note that many sentences and even entire scenes in the transcription appear word for word in the published version.

(Mullins 2002: 120)

In the absence of the original, it is hard to judge, but Bowles' shaping of localised speech is reflected in the translations. *Look and Move On* is a life-story told by Mohammed Mrabet himself. Like Western autobiography, Mrabet's *Look and Move On* employs retrospection, looking back, to analyse the meaning of his experience. The problem in Western literary terms lies less in the events than in the flat narrative tone that presents them. Characters, including the narrator, have little depth, and almost no feelings. They have no 'self' as has been assumed in the

modern West. Nonetheless, in *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* Bowles shows the complexity of Mrabet's style. A simple spare style is adopted. Like Ernest Hemingway's, the style in *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* is simple, clean, and powerful. Sentences flow in a natural cadence. Dialogues retain a naturalistic quality, recalling the plain language of the minimalist trend in modern fiction. This excerpt where Driss converses with Rais is a good example.

'You want to hear a little more about your father?

Yes.

He used to give his money to a restaurant keeper in Tangier to save for him.

Much? said Driss.

Sometimes up to one million francs. There was about that much when he died, I think.'

(Mrabet 1992: 117)

To elaborate on the significance of localised speech and plain language, here is another example:

They took a thermos full of café con leche and set out for the sea. He let Zohra steer. Sitting beside her.

Straight to America! He said.

She went on and on, cutting through the waves. Finally he said: Stop!

(Mrabet 1992: 178)

In *Chocolate Creams and Dollars*, the language of the novel is plain. It shows more than it tells, albeit not like Hemingway, where there is a sense of something happening behind or beneath the words, in the not-said. Short words, short sentences that mark minimalism of style abound. To make Mrabet minimalistic means to show that 'Less is more' is the way to strong writing. Somehow Bowles translates Mrabet to make him a modernist like Hemingway as much as he is a primitive.

Very plain style also marks Layachi's *Yesterday and Today* and *A Life Full of Holes*. Bowles was fascinated by Larbi's narrative ability:

To anyone understanding Moghrebi, Charhadi's tapes are a pleasure to listen to: spacing of words, inflections of the voice in passages reporting conversation, and unexpected means of supplying emphasis.

(Stewart 1974:129)

This excerpt from *Yesterday and Today* is illustrative:

"Aren't you going to sleep in the market tonight?"

I said, "No. Tonight I'm going to sleep here."

Mr. Miles said, "It's about time you paid some attention to your job."

I said, "Usually I don't do anything here except to go shopping." I said
goodnight. I went to my room and I went to sleep.

(Layachi 1985: 69)

A stripped down vocabulary and syntax feature in Layachi's autobiography. Never in Layachi's stories will one find a sentence of any syntactical complexity. Only simple and compound sentences are used, no complex subordinating constructions. Bowles uses a simplified version of Moroccan Arabic to show that Layachi's discourse bears marks of oral storytelling and that Layachi is a simple person. His speech is stripped down, purified.

In so far as the translated stories are generated by basic syntactical devices, Bowles makes of the storytellers people with basic thoughts and feelings. Their stories seem to be emotionally and intellectually poorer than Bowles' own stories, both fiction and non-fiction. This impoverishment seems to be elected and strategic: Bowles may have been attracted to the simple way the storytellers think and express themselves, and then chose to accentuate this with the style: simplification in the interest of 'primitivism'. Such an idea closely links to the parallels with Hemingway in the sense that the simple spare style and the natural flow adopted in Mrabet's *Chocolate Creams and Dollars* and Layachi's *Yesterday and Today* and *A Life Full of Holes* demonstrate simplification that serves primitivism, 'The Natural Man. Basic Humanity' (Caponi 1993: 130) that Bowles seeks in the shelter of orality. In *The Sheltering Sky*, for example, strong aesthetic

overtones are associated with storytelling. Inside the exotic space of the tent, Marhnia makes tea and ‘handed them each a glass’, then like Scheherazade in *The One Thousand and One Nights*, she recounts to Port a tale of the three girls from the mountains who want more than anything to have tea in the Sahara. This folk story epitomises the travel from inside to outside and reflects in miniature *The Sheltering Sky*’s overall plot. It also shows Bowles’ sustaining interest in storytelling, an interest that culminates in the translation of Moroccan oral stories.

Speech / Writing

While the translations suggest the mediating, bridging and connecting of the minds of the American writer and Moroccan story-tellers, and while they suggest that Bowles’ authorship is a complex one, Bowles’ procedures also allow us to explore and challenge the assumption of clear-cut difference between speech and writing. Delimiting the Morocco of his representations to the oral tradition, as a more distinctive aspect of Moroccan culture, Bowles conveys an intention to focus on certain aspects of Moroccan culture, thereby establishing a distinctive cultural viewpoint. If Bowles thinks of Moroccan oral tradition as the original Moroccan culture, then it follows that he proclaims the value of Darija to the world, at the same time that he translates that Darija into English. It also follows that anything we encounter as Moroccan literature is already some steps removed from this oral tradition, in that it is in textualised form, including Bowles’ own translations into English. This is important in so far as it shows what is at stake in establishing lines

of difference between Moroccan oral tradition and written literature, as this is related not only to the larger question of cultural difference but also to narrative ambivalence.

Despite Paul Bowles' insights into Morocco, there are certain blindnesses in his translation project, to use Paul de Man's formulation (de Man 1983). The initial blindness is Bowles' assumption of a pre/post structure, an assumption that is common in his translations, short stories and novels. The moment Bowles declares what is 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' in Moroccan culture, he is claiming to speak for Morocco. This is a major aspect of his ethnographic bias and the ethnographic image of Morocco in his writings. As a latter-day romantic, Bowles concentrates on the oral, the folkloric and mystic but the world his storytellers depict is not just one of archaic magic and folk tales. They also provide texts that represent literary-business relations with foreign men in postcolonial Tangier, in the context of poverty, prostitution and economic exploitation, thereby depicting the modern world of Bowles in which they survive, by adapting – by being modern. Bowles picks up young Moroccan men to tell traditional oral stories to the exclusion of Moroccan institutional written culture, which he denounces as a dangerous promiscuity – dangerous because it obscures the origin, and divides it from itself. The 'authentic' or 'original' is thus called into question by the way Yacoubi's, Layachi's and Choukri's texts were produced, which undermines their claim to authenticity and originality.

The project of translation is a way for Bowles to find forms of writing which, in their uprooted or hybrid nature, do not just reflect an oral tradition per se,

but are caught in modernity's inevitable momentum. This raises the question of whether Bowles wants to use the translations and collaborations to reach back to something that their authors are themselves not so interested in – so we get a conflicting or mixed set of agendas. The translated stories thus disrupt Bowles' original intention of preserving a record of a disappearing tradition, the power of memory and imagination. The translations are complex and ambivalent. Pure orality is yielding to promiscuity and original narratives are dispersed between nations. Their exchange value is survival, not only as texts kept alive by changes, exchanges and translation but also as tellers securing their positions, adapting their lives to the rush of history by selling their stories in English abroad.

Bowles' view is very similar to that of the Romantics, in favouring the directness of childhood and innocent childlike visions. Negotiating the boundaries between the traditional and the modern, Bowles attempts to restore the freshness of a pristine world, of a culture perceptually lost through modernity, through rationalism and the entropy of Western civilisation. Indeed, Bowles' search for orality as unmediated truth connects his Moroccan translations with the Romantic theorists of the imagination. This is a myth used by Romantic poets and thinkers, notably Coleridge, Wordsworth, and in the United States, Emerson. Bowles 'sees' Morocco in similar terms, that is, as a 'before' and an 'after'. Bowles' version of the myth of the fall into modernity, it may be argued, underpins his translations and, as we will see in subsequent chapters, his short stories and long fiction.

Bowles wants to preserve tales that are 'the by-product of a pastime' (Bowles 1979b: 7). This means that Bowles' translations pull the tales out of time to

be preserved, contained, studied, admired, or detested. As such, Bowles idealises Moroccan culture only as a product of a time that is apprehensible in its pastness or temporal emptiness, only as an entity that belongs to the past, or one that is located outside time rather than a viable nation that faces political and social realities. Yet his own texts seem to be more perceptive or self-reflexive than this – for example, the Professor in ‘A Distant Episode’ harbours the same assumptions as Bowles in the translations, an assumption that depicts ‘Moghrebi dialects’ as past or rather as present becoming ‘past’. As we will see in the close reading of ‘A Distant Episode’, Bowles ironises the Professor as a romantic. He shows how the linguistic reality remains beyond the Professor’s grasp when the Professor is tortured by local tribes and gets lost in the desert. The framework in which Bowles places his translations as a ‘pure’ oral versus ‘tainted’ written seems to condemn all development as a corruption, so that writing is less pure than orality, and all other forms of change and mixing would diminish Moroccaness. Bowles’ focus on Moroccan oral culture at this stage can be called essentialism. The negative charge behind it is that it assumes a fixed and ahistorical essence or identity.

Jacques Derrida convincingly writes that there was never a time out of historical time. History is always already there. There was never a ‘before’ or an ‘after’ because there was never, even in storytelling, a time without language. This said, the history of Moroccan society informs the text. It comes as part of the meaning in the text. The past will always haunt the present, for the spectre is invisible in the mirror, and this condition can either haunt us in the manner of the ghost of Hamlet’s father, reminding us that ‘the time is out of joint’ or we can

remember our past, learn from it in the present, and use the lessons to devise a better future. The oral stories Yacoubi, Layachi and Mrabet told Bowles are an outside which find a way in the text, falling between languages and engaging strategies of cultural and economic survival. Translating Moroccan oral stories, Bowles introduces temporality and therefore the historical context into the situation. This was always already there in the 'oral' culture, which means that Paul Bowles is merely acknowledging what happens to any myth of presence before the 'fall' into language, that is text in Derrida's sense. This is to say that the pre/post opposition that Bowles sets up between pre-colonial 'authentic' and post-contact modern Morocco and which he makes parallel to pre- and post-literate is inevitably destroyed not just by the incursion of modernity and history into his informants' narratives but by the inextricability of voice and text. Derrida's useful phrase is 'always already', that is speech is always already textualised in the sense of being language and having rules, not being unmediated, and the timeless past is always already in history. In this vein, the translations bear the marks of Bowles as a mediating literary force, crossing and even blurring the in-between space, the moment of transit to produce complex figures of the oral and the written, the past and the present, the traditional and the modern. Bowles' liminal, interstitial space is no less a 'transitional' reality, than a 'translational' phenomenon, an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and mixing that sows confusion in boundaries and unsettles the usual binaries. In the project of translation, the Moroccan oral stories turn up inside modern space. They cannot be held at a distance.

Chapter 3: *Without Stopping*: The Memory of that Memory

Inhabiting the Exotic / Deferring Memory

Perhaps no American writer has committed himself so completely to a life far away from home in exotic locales, and as a result, more than any of his American contemporaries, Bowles has an outsider/insider perspective. He registers complex encounters, assuming he can get close to the other both in his fiction and non-fiction. Morocco becomes an allegorical mirror for Bowles, an act of writing his existence as the effect of memories and dreams. Bowles' writing about Morocco and Moroccans also means thinking and writing about the exotic. This section, therefore, is an extended exploration of how Bowles, as a result of his sustained interaction with Moroccan peoples and culture, produces the other. The central questions I critically address are whether Bowles' writings and representations of Morocco actually domesticate Morocco and how his work becomes part of a preoccupation with the exotic.

Bowles' awareness of the exotic is clearly expressed in his autobiography *Without Stopping*, published in 1985. He writes: 'My curiosity about alien cultures was avid and obsessive. I had a placid belief that it was good for me to live in the midst of people whose motives I did not understand' (297). His inquisitiveness about the other is, at the same time, the curiosity of a man, a traveller and a writer. This shows Bowles' permanent concession 'to an

ungraspable absolute', to 'wisdom and ecstasy' (125). This is how he puts it in his autobiography, written nearly forty years after the events described:

Like any Romantic, I had always been vaguely certain that sometime during my life I should come into a magic place which in disclosing its secrets, would give me wisdom and ecstasy – perhaps even death. And now, as I stood in the wind looking at the mountains ahead, I felt the stirring of the engine within, and it was as if I were drawing close to the solution of an as-yet-unposed problem. I was incredibly happy as I watched the wall of mountains slowly take on substance, but I let the happiness wash over me and asked no questions. (125)

The reader infers that Bowles' sustained desire to come into 'a magic place', along with his 'preoccupation in dreams with the Strait of Gibraltar' (165), is a form of Romantic restructuring of the exotic. The autobiographer's vague certainty, refracted through the prism of memory, is of supreme importance precisely because it shows the sustained effect of Bowles' construction of his first encounters with the Maghreb, a construction that overwhelms him with feelings of exhilaration as he depicts it in the language of romance. The autobiographer/traveller's memory marks the aesthetic excitement of an outsider, for whom the exotic connotes the unfamiliar and spectacular. Thus, as I will seek to demonstrate, Morocco is what Bowles makes of it, a magic place. To use Foster's words, Morocco stands for 'an image about which gathers the hoped for

realization of one's fantasies and the fulfillment of all one's secret dreams' (Foster 1982: 24) and in Bowles there is the fascination with the remote past, concretised as the allure of ancient Morocco.

The exotic in Bowles' writings is posted as a beginning, a return to the most 'primitive phase' that will provoke him, and his readers, to question increasingly schematised patterns of everyday life in the age of a world economy driven by post-war America. Talking to Jeffrey Bailey, Bowles describes his early conception of Morocco: 'Right away when I got here I said to myself "Ah, this is the way people used to be, the way my own ancestors were thousands of years ago. The Natural Man. Basic Humanity. Let's see how they are"' (Caponi 1993: 130). Living in Morocco, for Bowles, was a form of experimentation beyond established limits, the desire to physically and artistically re(dis)cover the ancestral hearth. The other, for Bowles, appears like a 'memory bank of how and whom he thinks he were in the "primitive" reaches of the past' (Foster 1982: 21). Hence Bowles' writing comes as an affirmation of a basic humanity – a truer, simpler, more intense way of being – that embodies the complicity of our intimate relations with other beings. Likewise, it asserts the human qualities that reside within people against the day-to-day responsibilities by which we become alienated from ourselves. The end is to find what lay beneath the veneer of a sophisticated society, a metaphysical challenge for any connection between humans.

No one can deny that Bowles' narratives about Morocco use stereotypical images of the other, at once an object of desire, fantasy and

derision. Yet, in his quest – both a geographical journey and a journey in writing – Bowles seeks to invest the exotic with greater intensity, using his writings as a site for its exploration. I treat his work with generic attentiveness, across the translations, autobiography, travel essays, novels and short stories. These are successive visions of the unfamiliar, recording encounters of Americans with alien peoples and settings. In this chapter, the inscription of Tangier as a topography of the exotic, the mapping of Paul Bowles' scopic desire on the city of Tangier, and Fez as a magical city for the *flâneur* provide the focus of my discussion. The remainder of the chapter connects these elements to Bowles' autobiographical perspectives and self, the cardinal affinities with Edgar Allan Poe, the Postmodernist and Surrealist undercurrents in his works.

Bowles' *Without Stopping* is a neglected text, compared with his better-known novels, *The Sheltering Sky*, *Let It Come Down* and *The Spider's House*, and it has usually been mined for illustrations of his expatriate adventures. In *Without Stopping*, we can discern traces of Bowles' initial fascination with the exotic in his meeting in Paris with Kay Cowen at the American University Women's Club. The American girl had just returned to Paris from Morocco and shared pictures of Marrakech with Bowles. Upon seeing the pictures, Bowles at once expressed a sense of wonder and novelty, deciding that Marrakech was 'one of the world's really extraordinary cities' (92). In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer/traveller recalls that he was delighted with Morocco, unlike his friend and tutor Aaron Copland, who claimed that 'all the things that struck me as so exotic were nothing new to him because he had seen and heard their

counterparts as a child on President Street in Brooklyn' (130). Bowles' account of this first encounter with the Maghreb in *Without Stopping* is of particular interest for my argument about the exotic.

Bowles who, for a variety of reasons, felt cut off from the modern world, discovers a new 'itinerary' that leads aesthetically and culturally to 'a magic place', an exotic sphere that 'contained more magic than others' (125). Bowles' definition of magic assists our comprehension of the nature of his encounter with Morocco. Magic, he writes, is 'a secret connection between the world of nature and the consciousness of man' (125). For Bowles, magic reconciles man's inner vision and his reason, man's true nature (being) and his self-consciousness. Magic, Bowles explains, is 'a hidden but direct passage which bypassed the mind' (125). By 'direct', he means unmediated, bypassing rational thought and structures, an issue that we will need to inspect more critically in the following pages. Thus, Bowles' voyage to the exotic is an attempt to draw aside the veils laid across his senses in order to re-discover the truth about the way man perceives, but also creates, qualities that have been lost in the rush of history. His fascination with the exotic draws on the Romantic *Sehnsucht* / *Sehoucht* – the anxiety of desire as German Romantics called it – which is one of the reasons for escape through time and space via imagination. Through such a desire, the traveller achieves an escape from the present not simply by substituting a future, but by locating the present in transit, neither the past (the traveller's present heretofore), nor yet the future. As the argument goes, such a desire also stimulates the artistic creation of an 'elsewhere'. In this sense,

Bowles' view is very similar to the Romantics' favouring of the directness of childhood and innocent childlike visions. Indeed, his search for magic as truth beyond consciousness connects his autobiographical text with Coleridge, as perhaps the key Romantic theorist of the imagination. Specifically, magic, the 'direct' passage which 'bypassed the mind' (125) relates Bowles' Romanticism to Romanticism of the Coleridge version in the latter's 'Kubla Khan', written in the winter of 1797–8, but published in 1816.

In *Without Stopping*, Bowles writes engagingly of his fascination with the Maghreb and his 'preoccupation in dreams with the Strait of Gibraltar' (165), southwest of which lies Tangier. He thus relegates the decision eventually to settle in Tangier not to a conscious choice of a literal geographical area, but to a dream he had once had, a dream of a city in whose 'magical streets' he had once wandered. 'Happily', Bowles recalls, 'daydreaming on the subject of escape was not given the opportunity of growing into an *idée fixe*; the decision was made for me' (274). It was made for him in a 'dream' that was not fully under his control. 'Since early childhood,' the autobiographer/traveller writes, 'it had been a fantasy of mine to dream a thing in such detail that it would be possible to bring it across the frontier intact' (165). Likewise, 'Kubla Khan' begins with an apologetic preface in which Coleridge presents it as a dream vision, induced by an 'anodyne' (opium). Coleridge's notion of the imagination is of supreme importance precisely because 'the imaginative capacity is ushered into being only by the dilemmas that it works to resolve' (Roe 2005: 264); it 'reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness

with difference' (*ibid.*: 264). For Coleridge, 'the character and privilege of genius' is 'to carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which everyday for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar' (Coleridge 1983: 80-81). This quality of genius, as Coleridge puts it in his *Friend*, is defined as 'originality of intellectual construction' (*ibid.*: 80-81). It is the placing of 'things in a new light' (Roe 2005: 596). The artist's job is thus to restore by descriptive power the freshness of a world perceptually lost to us through adulthood. Still, the reader may be skeptical that imagination can achieve the impossible.

It is important to note the stylistic devices that Bowles uses in his autobiography to describe how he comes to settle permanently in Morocco. The notion of poetic symbols is particularly worth noting. As for Coleridge, a single word or form might bring together two antithetical concepts. The word 'itinerary' (125), for instance, is a concept taken from the guidebook's vocabulary, but which Bowles uses in two ways: the first literally being Bowles' itinerary of outward journeys to different places in the world to end up in Morocco, the second being the itinerary of an imaginary inner journey, often, in Bowles, including a phase in transit by sea. Bowles' account of his travels in the autobiography is best approached through the transitional stages in the journey between two extremes connecting the United States and Morocco, the rational and the exotic. Bowles wishes to experience 'consciously' the 'vague' certainty that 'I should come into a magic place' which 'in disclosing its secrets would give me wisdom and ecstasy' (125). How Bowles transforms the real substance

of Morocco into an interior journey is better explored in the ambivalent and richly suggestive space between interior and exterior, between imagination and reality.

The transportation system in the text is worth spending some time on because it functions as a structure for the imaginative 'getting there' of Paul Bowles. The various means of transportation Bowles uses in his journey are the in-betweens, but given a narrative and a descriptive shape. 'Ship', 'trolley car', on foot 'we got down' 'walking', by road 'on the same car', 'an other [car]', 'a narrow gauge train', 'buses' (125-126), are strings of words in Bowles' narrative of memory which enable us to understand the way the in-between is spatialised. In this, the autobiography may be a little similar to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a classic text in the engagement with other cultures and one which begins with the narrator, Marlow, on a boat on the Thames and ends up in the higher reaches of the Congo. Transportation systems are the connectors which, in certain ways, help bridge spatial distance, but also reveal the displacement of travellers. The traveller is never stable and is constantly displaced: from sea to land, and once on land, from car to foot, to car again to train, to buses. In such routines of travel, we encounter Bowles or the Bowles' persona as a restless traveller between spaces, a man in perpetual motion who can never stay in one place because he has no place. He is constantly caught up in an endless quest that prevents him from settling down or putting his feet on earth. Even when he is on foot, he is walking, moving through space. Never does he stand still. 'Real' travel begins when the transportation system finishes, or rather, it goes on at the same time and

therefore transport is a motif that sometimes carries rather specific resonances – on board ship is different from being on a bus, and being in a car is different again, and walking is different from all the other means of transport. Still, these are the links between the United States and Morocco, transitional stages in Bowles' journey that are quite important in signifying altered stages of understanding.

In this interesting way, the transportation system in Bowles' autobiography is a figure of in-betweenness that denotes what Victor Turner calls 'transition rites' which 'accompany every change of place, state, social position and age' (Turner 1997: 94). As I explained in the Introduction of this thesis, Turner defines liminality as representing the midpoint of transition. He also sees liminal individuals or entities as 'neither here nor there'. In the light of Turner's definition, the transportation system mirrors mediation and Bowles' liminal position, as he emerges 'in the moment of transit' (Bhabha 1994: 1), 'this interstitial passage between fixed identifications' (Bhabha 1994: 4). The various means of transportation Bowles uses in his journey, show that Bowles belongs without belonging. Bowles' autobiography, as well as his fiction, traverses the threshold, a liminal realm that Bowles inhabits. This is to say that the various means of transportation evidence how Bowles lives between cultures, in a geographical journey and poetic geography, combining the complexity and uncertainty of crossing a threshold, with an experience of liminality. The forms of transportation that punctuate Bowles' texts and, as the title of his autobiography confirms, keep him in motion, are accompanied, throughout his

career as a writer, by constant experimentation with different narrative forms and genres. These too, constitute the ‘in-betweens’ that are a central factor in any study of the engagement between cultures.

Setting out from New York, Bowles’ ship was bound for various North African ports. It passes through Spain along the Gibraltar Mountains, landing at Oran in Algeria, where Bowles, along with Aaron Copland, walks through the city to get down at Eckmuhl-Noiseux, putting in at Ceuta to finally settle in Tangier. On board the *Iméréthie II*, Bowles ‘had been listening to conversations among the French’ and overhears that ‘Morocco’s much wilder’ than Algeria (126). The picture of Morocco through French colonial eyes, made repulsive by dangers and perils associated with wilderness, does not discourage Bowles from going to Morocco. During the journey various nationalities are encountered: ‘the French’, ‘the Spanish’, who are compared to ‘a lot of Italians’, Algerians, and Moroccans (126). Thus, we are dealing here with so much more than a USA–Morocco relationship. Yet, Bowles wants to transcend these in-betweens, crossing the boundary between the inside and outside, making them – one might claim – more important and interesting than the final destination, whether that is understood geographically or conceptually.

Bowles uses transportation terms antithetically as symbols to go beyond the very structure that contains them, connecting the temporal and the timeless, the real and the ideal and providing readers with an epitome of the Romantic imagination at work, albeit in the mid-twentieth century. ‘Approaching the land’, Bowles feels ‘as if some interior mechanism had been set in motion’ (125). The

‘land’ the traveller is approaching, ‘the mountains ahead’ (125), ‘the wall of mountains’, are all signs that stir ‘the engine within [him]’ (125), marking ambivalence in his autobiographical account, crossing and even blurring the in-between space bordering the inside and the outside. As for the Romantic poets, whether Coleridge or, in an American context, Emerson, Bowles uses symbols to unite the surface sign and the deeper meaning. The symbol takes on a privileged status in his work. One sense of the symbol ties the autobiography to history and its locations by referring to specific geographical areas, here ‘the Strait of Gibraltar’ (165) and the city of Tangier; but in another sense releases it. In the words of Christine Buci-Glucksmann, the symbol, which moves from the general to the particular, is image: ‘inexhaustible, infinite, intuitive thought, caught in the opaqueness and irreducibility of the signifier in which the Infinite “becomes finite”’ (Buci-Glucksmann 1994: 69-70). It is worth stressing, however, that the in-between, which I have identified in the autobiographical text, is of particular significance in that it prevents simple transcendence or immediacy. It is this area between two spaces, associated with intermediate forms, which provides a bridge which links Bowles’ autobiography and the history of postcolonialism and modernisation.

Morocco contains the quality of magic that Bowles, in common with a tradition of American writing, felt Western societies had destroyed in themselves. It seemed a place where the waking ‘reality’ of Western culture did not hold. In the autobiographical text, Bowles notes that ‘Tangier must be the

place I wanted to be more than anywhere else' (274). As late as 1992 Bowles refers to spells, trances, and traditions as his life-long interests:

There are many things in Tangier that I have loved; I have loved its weather, its people, and all of the different things that it has given me, things which would not be within my means to find in Europe or America. For the elements of civilization that have overwhelmed me the most are those things that I could never come across in any other place: the types of magic, and the way people get married, for example.

(quoted in Lacey 1996: 144)

In *Without Stopping*, Bowles remembers that he studies 'obsessively' a 'Baedeker' (126), the classic Western guidebook. This is revealing to the extent that the traveller's use of the Baedeker points to a desire for objectivity and impersonality, even as he may be seeking to escape from these perceived constraints. The guidebook provides a familiar environment for the traveller, but at some cost. Indeed, Paul Bowles is to be given credit for resisting the conventions of (Western) travel, searching for the names of 'suburb[s]' (126) and outskirts to which he would ride out, not as narrative but rather as pure information related to destinations and routes that may satisfy the curiosity of travellers with scientific or economic interest in far off regions. When Bowles states that, along with his tutor Aaron Copland, he disembarks in Morocco 'with so much luggage' (126), he acknowledges carrying a lot of cultural 'luggage'

too, based on the guiding strength of Western ideology and ethnocentrism. Yet Bowles needs 'a small detachment of porters to carry it' (126). This is suggestive, especially if we examine carefully the meaning of the word 'centre' and its derivatives in the autobiographer's account of his eventual settlement in Morocco.

Bowles' reference to 'central plaza' and 'center of town' (126) provides a mixture of geographical, social and textual images. The 'centre' is a geographical position that has also been expressed in relation to the margins. Both the centre and margins echo not only the inside and outside, but also the home and the distant, the familiar and unfamiliar. In the light of Derrida's now classic essay 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', it may be claimed that the recurrences of 'center'-terms is an attempt to give the space 'a center' or refer it to 'a point of presence, a fixed origin' (Derrida 1978: 278). Positioning himself in the centre of the place, the autobiographer/traveller, in Derrida's words, 'make[s] sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *free-play* of the structure'. As Derrida argues, 'The center is not the center': It is at once inside and therefore part of the structure and outside to the extent that he, alone, limits the space by 'escaping it, and not being part of it' (Derrida 1978: 279). This central position assumed in the autobiography returns us to the relation between the traveller and his approach to Morocco as the exotic space. He desires to enquire into the alterity of Western modernity and approach the Arab and Islamic culture with the intention of constructing new worlds, of removing the barriers between logic and magic,

between culture and nature in the form of cross-cultural experiences. Such an approach, which confronts the inside with the outside, seems particularly challenging for an examination of the blurring of boundaries and of the in-between perspectives which, in my view, characterise cultural transactions in general, and Bowles' representations of the exotic in the Maghreb in particular.

In the Morocco portrayed in *Without Stopping*, Bowles chooses a world of interiority in the face of the social life around him, thinking of himself 'as a registering consciousness' (52). Along with Copland, he 'looked around'. He 'sat and watched' what is 'offstage' (126), inventing himself as a child who uses his imagination, as well as the tools of language as a means of receding into his safe world, hidden behind a world of silence. This borderline fantasy, fictionalised in the autobiography as a remembrance, is a way to retreat from the modern world and see with his eyes what is happening. He records the event in itself, or rather, as he puts it in *Without Stopping*, he sought 'to see whatever was happening ... as if [he] were not there' (131). Bowles glories in the rapt stare that enables his detachment, and uninvolvedness. It indeed enables him to achieve a 'contemplative abstraction from the world' (Krauss 1993: 5). He is peculiarly delighted to pass through the streets of alien cities without understanding what anybody says: 'My curiosity about alien cultures', he writes, 'was avid and obsessive. I had a placid belief that it was good for me to live in the midst of people whose motives I did not understand' (297).

Bowles uses the old novelistic image of the theatre, with the unfolding of the drama before him and his companion as the world's great stage: 'Each

Moroccan', Bowles writes, 'gave the impression of playing a part in a huge drama' (127). A split divides appearance and truth: the verb-phrase 'gave the impression' evokes the way that the 'Moroccans' seen in the street are portrayed in terms that conjure their theatricality. They present a spectacle, and thus they are governed by appearance rather than truth. In this way, the autobiographical text exposes the scene, in Guy Debord's words, as a 'negation of life – and as a negation of life that has invented *a visual form for itself*' (quoted in Bishop: 2003: 246). The theatrical continuum gives the traveller/spectator great 'satisfaction'. The very experience of voyeurism, an exaggerated scopic desire, is at once 'an experience of rescue and retreat', 'a preserve of play and thus a model of freedom', as Rosalind Krauss puts it (Krauss 1993: 8). Bowles looks at the Moroccans and thus travels through the country and experiences it with his eyes, condensing all of these experiences 'into a single, luminous ray' (Krauss 1993: 11). When Bowles states that 'even before getting to Tangier, I knew I should never tire of watching Moroccans play their parts' (127), he presents the desire to see and describe otherness as being, by definition, anterior, and otherness as being evanescently present through the medium of his text. Significantly, Bowles' statement echoes what his compatriot, Mark Twain, had written on his first visit to Morocco. Sixty years before Bowles' first visit, Mark Twain wrote this: 'Tangier is the spot we have been longing for all the time ... we wanted something thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign ... and lo! In Tangier we have found it' (Twain 1984: 61). Bowles' statement resonates with Twain's, where the pronoun 'we' indicates not just a secure position from which

to recognise alterity, but rather a fetishisation of the other as a collective cross-cultural experience. Fetishisation is based on desire, the desire to explore, and desire requires a necessary otherness, or it withers into boredom. Such a desire significantly marks the autobiographer/traveller's exoticism. Bowles' statement reveals a stage that permits the spectator to glimpse all the phases of the conflict, a world where there are no obligations and where everything is permitted, where culture is a Tower of Babel and where only the individual self has reality. In this connection, the text and reality are always/already entwined. The desire of the writer-spectator triggered, he begins a voyage whose central characteristic is the play between presence and absence. It is this play of presence-absence, moreover, that doubly installs Tangier in the realm of the virtual, the imaginary, where it is first placed through the autobiography.

Reality, as Timothy Mitchell (1991: 29) reminds us, is always set up before an observing subject as though it were an objective picture that evokes some larger truth. What we call the 'real world' is organised as an order of signs that represents or recalls some larger referential world of denotative meaning, a world of structure. Thus, the real world 'outside' of Tangier city is something experienced as an extended series of further representations designed to signify some prior, original reality to the traveller-spectator. Bowles' autobiography becomes as much about its own process of production as about Moroccans' reality and the world of Tangier beyond it. Exteriority and interiority, appearance and truth coil around each other in an interminable process, and yet do not enclose themselves.

Bowles has fallen victim to the spell of the cityscape and the landscape, to which he responds differently across his writing. In *Without Stopping*, as well as in *Let It Come Down*, *The Sheltering Sky* and *The Spider's House*, he uses the metaphor of the labyrinth to represent the city of Tangier. Unlike his wife, Jane Auer, who 'loved the hybrid seedy quality of Tangier', Bowles stated that he preferred 'the medieval formality of Fez, even in its state of decay' (284). When he states that 'my taste for Fez was a touristic one' (284), the assumption which underpins 'touristic' is largely of a voyage whose rationale is imitative to the extent that he desires to see and do what other tourists like him have seen and done. The Sahara landscape, on the other hand, is associated with the 'absolute' in many of his works, especially in his travel essay, 'Baptism of Solitude' (Bowles 1963). Besides the cityscape and the landscape, Bowles also falls victim to the spell cast by the traditions of Morocco. Although he would always be a traveller, Tangier became his adopted home up until his death. His settlement more or less permanently in Tangier for fifty-two years suggests that there is a motivation in his life and writing that he transfers to Morocco, the same motivations that impel many of his fictional characters to travel.

Indeed, Bowles' works are dominated by journeys out, away from the domestic, towards the alien, from a secure inside to an unknown outside, far into the interior regions of human experience. Leaving home, and the sense of repose to which all human beings must periodically return, as Gaston Bachelard proposes in his book *The Poetics of Space* (Bachelard 1994), is a central theme in Bowles' fiction. His is a 'nomad' discourse where characters set out 'through the

most remote regions' 'toward the bright horizon' (Bowles 1977: 165). Port Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky*, Nelson Dyar in *Let It Come Down*, Malika in 'Here to Learn', and the Linguistics Professor in 'A Distant Episode', all go outside, and risk their safety to penetrate the other's culture, just as in the canonical novelistic form of Europe's nineteenth-century encounter with alien cultures. But unlike the imperialist romance, Bowles' work, following that of Joseph Conrad earlier in the twentieth century, calls human assurance into question and creates a new context in which domestication and alienation can be explored. Much of Bowles' fiction sets up situations with the degenerate protagonist who feels able to cope with his own culture but once he deals with another culture, he loses disastrously. Bowles' vision verges on the apocalyptic.

Interestingly, there is an instance in *Without Stopping* where the autobiographer falls prey to the spell of the city of Tangier. He has this to say: 'If I said that Tangier struck me as a dream city, I should mean it in the strict sense' (128). The reader infers that what is meant is that Tangier has the property of a dream for Bowles. Tangier is not actually a dream city, but when it appears in Bowles' text, it can become so and display an illusory perspective. The metaphor of the dream city creates a new similarity, and the metaphorical process opens up to imagination and feeling. As Bachelard points out, 'the imagination is never wrong, since it does not have to confront an image with an objective reality' (Bachelard 1994: 152). Rather, 'the dreamer sends waves of unreality over what was formerly the real world' (Bachelard 1994: 157).

That Bowles finds Tangier's topography 'rich in prototypal dream scenes' (128) is revealing in so far as writing about Tangier is writing about bodily locations, the very space of existence. The topographic representation of the city captures the conditions of the body projected in the space of Bowles' dream, his very unconscious space: the contours of the city, its boundaries and geographies, are called upon to stand for the contested realms of the subject's identity that, as Anthony Vidler points out, 'replicate ... internally the external conditions of political and social struggle, and are likewise assumed to stand for, and identify, the sites of such struggle' (Vidler 1992: 167). Bowles' topographical mapping of Tangier city is a means of individual control. The 'covered streets like corridors with doors opening into rooms on each side' and the 'alleys leading off in several directions' (128) tie the city space to the space of the body of the autobiographer. The 'doors' and many different 'rooms' designate interior space, the very architected space in which 'doors' and different 'rooms' of the mind anticipate unsuspected avenues of opportunities or multiple ways forward. The 'streets consisting only of steps' show how details gradually reveal themselves and patiently take their places as, one after the other, each step leads further into the world of images. The reader sees at the centre of Bowles' character what he himself calls the 'strong residue of infantilism' (Bowles 1954: 51).

Tangier's 'small squares built on sloping terrain' (128) designate a miniature world into which Bowles enters, producing evidence of such 'residue of infantilism'. These tiny 'squares on sloping terrain' evoke what Bowles points

out as ‘a great pile of child’s building blocks strewn carelessly over the side hill; when you huddle or recline inside the miniature rooms of the homes you are immediately back in early childhood’ (Bowles 1954: 51). In other words, Tangier and its houses become miniaturised for the writer. They become a ‘toy cosmos’, a ‘playing house’ (*ibid.*) that takes Bowles back to childhood, to a familiarity with toys. They show how he penetrates the garden where children see the world in a magnified way. The world in miniature thus returns Bowles to ‘the refuges of greatness’, where, in Bachelard’s words, ‘right away images began to abound, then grow, then escape ... thanks to liberation from all obligations of dimensions, a liberation that is a special characteristic of the activity of the imagination’ (Bachelard 1994: 154-155). Bowles describes his entry into the world using the city of Tangier as a symbol. In this internal exile, he senses that ‘the forgotten but suddenly familiar sensation of being far inside is complete’ (Bowles 1954: 52).

A Baroque Scopic Regime in *Without Stopping*

From the Greek *skopêin* (to observe/consider), the word ‘scopic’ conveys various observational/interpretational codes and strategies. *Without Stopping* presents a dimension that opens our eyes onto a world of the baroque that Bowles has created. But what is the baroque exactly? Derived from the Portuguese word for a term describing a misshapen pearl, the adjective ‘barocco’ was used from the time of Saint Simon to connote the bizarre, strange and peculiar, traits which, as Martin Jay puts it, ‘were normally disdained by champions of clarity and transparency of

form' (Jay 1988: 16). The baroque is largely confined to the seventeenth century by commentators. It is seen as a moment of transition between the religious struggles of the Reformation and the consolidation of the absolutist state. In fact, the baroque emerged in connection with the Catholic church's response to the challenge of Protestantism, the scientific revolution, the institution of the Counter Reformation that replaced carnivals with the fasting of Lent. Nevertheless, and as Jay notes: 'it may be possible to see [the baroque] as a permanent, if often repressed, visual possibility throughout the entire modern era' (Jay 1988: 16). From its earliest days, the word has been characterised by uncertainty.

Following the Renaissance, the baroque style started to emerge when the early painters' proposed aesthetic creation in the manner of the great artists of the Renaissance (such as Raffaello Sanzio and Michelangelo Buonarroti), but they departed from it and dissolved its order. In the preface to his book *Renaissance and Baroque* of 1888, Heinrich Wölfflin states that 'the baroque changed so much that it is difficult to think of it as a single whole. Beginning and end have little resemblance to each other and it is difficult to distinguish any continuity' (Wölfflin 1964: 16). The baroque continued and distanced itself from that early phase to overtly construct aesthetic forms that are proper to it, and include various scopic/observational devices such as parody, repetition, change, metamorphoses, disorder, chaos, mirroring and spectacle. In her works *La raison baroque* and *La folie du voir*, Christine Buci-Glucksmann has spoken of a postmodern baroque. She celebrates the dazzling, disorienting, ecstatic surplus of images in baroque visual experiences as an alternative to the hegemonic visual style that Jay calls

‘Cartesian perspectivalism’ (Jay 1988: 16). As Buci-Glucksmann argues, it is precisely the baroque as a force of subversion of the dominant visual order that makes it so attractive in our postmodern age. The baroque consciously conveys ‘the confusing interplay of form and chaos, surface and depth, transparency and obscurity’ (Jay 1993: 47), disparaging as a result any attempt to reduce the multiplicity of visual spaces into one coherent essence. It remains to discover the interest of the baroque scopic regime in connection with Bowles’ autobiographical text in order to show how it challenges any attempt to associate Bowles’ normal point of view as perspectival.

Bowles’ text of memory can be seen as rooted in the baroque, the force that violates social-normative property and all encompassing explanations, including the notion of a consistent, coherent self ‘behind’ an autobiography. The very incoherence and fluidity of the baroque worldview prompts geographical displacement and the morphing of form(s). The autobiographical text explores what Buci-Glucksmann calls ‘the madness of vision’. It opens our eyes onto many scopic/observational devices, such as mirroring, the labyrinth, distortion, instability, and fragmentation, a surplus of images which seems to opt for movement and to advocate the irrational at the expense of the rational. Being both everywhere and only in a specific place, the baroque scopic regime in *Without Stopping* seems to dazzle and distort the world of Tangier.

The mirror that Bowles holds up to Tangier city is an example of the relocation of the baroque’s basic scopic regime. It is what Martin Jay calls ‘the anamorphosistic mirror, either concave or convex, that distorts the visual image’

(Jay 1988: 17). In *Without Stopping*, Tangier struck Bowles as a 'dream city' and, significantly, the mirror that Bowles holds up to the city is not the flat reflecting glass. The image of Tangier in the mirror will not be 'a reflection in the precise sense of reproduction or facsimile' (Macherey 1986: 121), rather 'its topography was rich in prototypal dream scenes' (128). The reflected 'small squares ... on sloping terrain' (128) are determined by their place in the complex structure. Their presence is less important than the fact that they are seen from the outside, confronting us with the ubiquity of vision. These miniature squares are inserted obliquely by all the conditions that have generated them so that they 'looked like ballet sets designed in false perspective' (128). This is very important in the sense that the morphing of forms manifest in the miniaturised world of Tangier and its houses magnify the self of the aloof writer and create bewilderment that both places the readers at a distance and draws their interest by surprising and even shocking them.

Bowles' topography of Tangier city is marked by the same meanings that feature in the term 'anamorphosis', from the Greek *ana* meaning 'again' and *morphe* meaning 'form'. The topographic representation of the Interzone is a form of reverse perspective that splays instead of converging. Bowles' mirror of Tangier city is a deformation of 'reality', a turning away from it. It not only catches a fragmented reality, but the very image in the mirror is itself fragmentary. It is an 'anamorphosistic' mirror that rejects the visual as such and reveals the falsity and distortion inherent in the embodied viewpoint. The 'false perspective' (128) in which the squares are designed suggests that the vision seeks

to represent the unrepresentable, an external reality beyond representation, a transcendental signified that is the reliable site of meaning. In 'The Worlds of Tangier', Bowles notes that:

Imagination is essential for the enjoyment of a place like Tangier, where the details that meet the eye are not what they seem, but so many points of reference for a whole secret system of overlapping but wildly divergent worlds in the complex life of the city.

(Bowles 1958b: 70)

Thus the dream city remains a mere representation, a seeming rather than being, a surreal picture of some outside reality. Its topography is essentially an exercise in changing perspectives where the voyeuristic act explicitly takes place in a baroque manner on both sides of the transparent plane (the lens) that divides 'the real' from 'the represented'.

These baroque devices in Bowles' narrative of memory are elements of disturbance which displace our illusions. Changing the topography of Tangier from a real city to a 'dream city' (128), the autobiographer proposes an interpretative examination of the concept of reality within the world of the city. Tangier as a dream city becomes his term for the way unconscious thoughts operate upon reality, reshaping it to the measure of his desires. It suits Bowles' 'overall desire, that of getting as far away as possible from New York' (124). The dream city in particular, and Morocco in general, has an important symbolic

value. It is, in Bowles' words, 'a rest, a lark, a one summer stand' (124), where the autobiographer/traveller wants to move and voyage. This is a baroque feature *par excellence*. The small squares built 'on sloping terrain' of Tangier's medina (128) echo what Bowles writes in his article, 'The Worlds of Tangier': 'For me, a blank wall at the end of a blind alley suggests mystery, just as being in the tiny closet-like rooms of a Moslem house in the Medina evokes the magic of early childhood games' (Bowles 1958b: 70). Thus, Bowles courts the collapse of the distinction between imagination and reality with various scopic devices, but Freud analyses such an effect as the primitive belief in magic. As such, *Without Stopping* traverses the borders between the homely and familiar, the strange and unknown, presence and absence. In doing so, the autobiographical text is pervaded by what Sigmund Freud calls *das unheimlich*, translated into English as *the uncanny*, and which he defines as that which 'evokes fear and dread' in the familiar and old-established.

'The uncanny,' Freud explains, 'is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar' (Freud 2003: 123-124). Freud envisions the uncanny as a space. It is in this space that one finds contrasting and opposing forms of existence, the troubling interconnection of the familiar and unfamiliar. In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer's framing of black, obscure areas in the fantasy world of Tangier city creates a condition where the movements of forms of representation turn the familiar, what is close to home, what is *heimlich*, into what derives from the disturbing, the *unheimlich*. Bowles' labyrinthine city appears as a representation of the uncanny. Its architecture

reveals disquieting uncertainties, a 'slippage between what seems homely and what is definitively unhomely' (Vidler 1992: ix). In technical postmodern terms we could call it the 'zone' which represents and contains what is close to us but not totally known (McHale 1987). The 'small squares built on sloping terrain', 'the blank wall' that 'suggests mystery', 'the tiny closet-like rooms' that evoke 'magic' are all suggestive to the extent that they represent a breakthrough into consciousness that arouses a feeling of nostalgia in Bowles and takes him back to the familiar, to the innocent in us, to early childhood. Bowles thus proposes a blurring of these two worlds in a self-conscious way. The familiar/strange tension is thus understood deconstructively in so far as the familiar is never wholly familiar but always contains something of the uncanny. And nothing ever becomes so strange that it is incomprehensible. In 'The Worlds of Tangier', we read: 'Such reactions, I have been told, are those of a person who refuses to grow up. If that is so, it is all right with me, to whom being child-like implies having retained the full use of the imagination' (Bowles 1958b: 70).

The topography of Tangier's medina gives shape to a world which favours the idea of trespassing and going beyond any preset line, a world which favours the idea of limitlessness through imagination. The maze of 'dark impasses' and inextricable 'alleys', 'tunnels', 'dungeons', and 'cliffs' (128) are all details charged with multiple meanings that characterise the city of Tangier as exotic. They all resonate with a fantasy world Bowles has created which is the 'negative of the transparency and visibility' (Foucault 1980: 153-154). Tangier's 'hidden terraces' (128) presuppose a certain obscurity which takes the form of

confinement. The body has become its own exterior on display. It is open to voyeuristic gaze as its cell structure has become the object of spatial modelling that maps its 'outside' as the space of exile. From the very outset, the autobiographer is a potential prisoner or exile. The 'dark impasses' (128) of the city prevent, as Michel Foucault points out, 'the full visibility of things, men and truths' (Foucault 1980: 153-154). The autobiographer follows the dark streets and alleys into remote and secret depths that conceal a dark and difficult revelation. Anthony Vidler supplies a statement that is relevant in the context of *Without Stopping*, and in the context of Bowles' writing in general. He points out that 'If the baroque represented a breakdown of form, it was easy to associate its characteristics with the new nervous illnesses' (Vidler 2000: 90). Bowles constantly writes about neurotic characters. Talking to Daniel Halpern, he writes this: 'Most of the Occidentals I know are neurotic. But that's to be expected; that's what we are producing now. They're the norm ... Whatever is intolerable must produce violence' (Caponi 1993: 91-92, Hibbard 1993: 151). This goes hand in hand with what Vidler writes: 'the labyrinthine spaces of the modern city have been construed as the sources of modern anxiety, from revolution and epidemic to phobia and alienation' (Vidler 1992: ix). Indeed, unhappiness is the backbone of Bowles' writings. Talking to Harry Breit, he says: 'I am writing about disease' (Hibbard 1993: 181). Bowles believes that there is something approaching a metaphysical malaise in the world today, as if people sense that things are going to be bad (Caponi 1993: 96, Hibbard 1993: 151). For him, 'unhappiness should be studied very carefully; this is certainly no time for anyone to be happy, or to put

his unhappiness away in the dark ... You must watch your universe as it cracks above your head' (Hibbard 1993: 181). In this connection, the dreamworld of Tangier city is equipped with 'ruins', representing a breakdown of form, and 'alleys' connoting wide space, largely a product of imagination, but providing a refuge from neurosis. The equipment deliberately aims at the modern.

The baroque manifests itself in Bowles' autobiographical text as the expression of a crisis that has brought the act of artistic creation to an impasse. The feeling of rebellion and rage haunts Bowles. In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer presents himself as a rebellious child who learned to depend on the usefulness of imagination to escape not only the world of adults, but that of children as well. The little child discovered that 'the world of children was a world of unrelenting warfare. But since I had suspected this all along, it did not come as a shock' (27). The autobiographer also remembers that 'my intuition warned me that everything must be hidden from them; they were potential enemies' (27). He recalls that he suspected everyone and that he learned to deceive as he had been deceived. Bowles also recalls how the child learned to survive by camouflaging his concerns about the self and nature, separating himself from his true feeling and splitting himself from himself:

Very early I understood that I would always be kept from doing what I enjoyed and forced to do that which I did not. The Bowles family took it for granted that pleasure was destructive, whereas engaging in an unappealing activity aided in character formation. (17)

As a consequence, Bowles 'became an expert in the practice of deceit' (17), stage-managing his facial expression to convey the opposite of his true feelings. He depends on the tools of language to protect himself from other people and from social situations. 'I could not make myself lie, inasmuch as for me the word and its literal meaning had supreme importance', in the sense that words become disconnected from their objects, 'but I could feign enthusiasm for what I disliked and, even more essential, hide whatever enjoyment I felt' (17). By the age of thirteen, he could invent a fictive world of imaginary characters through which he sublimated expression and desire. Indeed, Bowles invented imaginary worlds over which he could exercise a considerable degree of control. The autobiographer recalls how the only child entertains himself by mapping out new countries with his own imagination: he constructed place-names, fictional places, even a fictional 'planet with landmasses and seas. The continents were Ferncawland, Lanton, Zaganokworld, and Araplaina. [He] drew maps of each and gave them mountain ranges, rivers, cities, and railways' (27). Such propensity to invent his own fictive space provided relief from dull life and an effective means to resist the figure of the stern oppressive father, who ruled his household with 'unremitting firmness' (23). On many occasions, Bowles frankly relates estrangement from his father with characteristic detachment. He vividly recalls a confrontation with his father while visiting his paternal grandfather's home in Glenora, New York, on Lake Seneca, when Bowles' father came across a piece of paper bearing one of the place names, Notninrivo. The young boy

resented letting his father know about the meaning of the place name. Bowles goes on to tell about the incident: 'He went on shaking me. "Come on, what does it mean?" I shook my head. I wanted to say: "I'll never tell you." Instead, I waited a moment and finally said: "Nothing."' (20-21). The young boy burnt the pieces of papers on which he had written the names of his produced places, vowing that his hostile father must never enter his small interior fantasy world. The young Bowles' urge to discover uncharted territory soon found other outlets, such as family visits to a friends' summer house on Long Island: 'For me there were sandy paths through the wilderness of beach plum and scrub oak. The excitement inherent in exploring an unknown terrain was big enough to keep me fully occupied' (52). It freed him from the restraints that he saw all around him. He withdrew into the intimacy of his own room and imagination to escape his father's inflexible law. These early childhood games that alleviated a sense of loneliness and dullness were beginning to grow within him long before he encountered Morocco, the magic space to which he transfers his motivation.

In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer/traveller recalls how young Bowles found a satisfactory strategy to view rather than participate in his 'own existence' (53), or perhaps, his non-existence:

I found an even more satisfactory way of not existing as myself and thus being able to go on functioning; this was a fantasy in which the entire unrolling of events as I experienced them was the invention of a vast telekinetic sending station. Whatever I saw or heard was

simultaneously being experienced by millions of enthralled viewers. They did not see me or know that I existed, but they saw through my eyes. (53)

Through the ‘vast telekinetic sending station’, the slightly older child fantasises himself as a voyeur who supplants staring eyes, bringing to mind the ‘nine windows’ that used to peer down on the young Bowles playing in the yard ‘like nine eyes’(14). This method enables him to retreat from the real world of experience and to live in himself, hoping only to save whatever roots he has in the soil, only to preserve his self-integrity. This method also enables him to convince himself that his ‘nonexistence was a *sine qua non* for the validity of the invented cosmos’ (52-53).

The reader senses how fear and anger characterise many of Bowles’ childhood memories as various passages within the first few pages of *Without Stopping* account. But his most deeply felt fear is, as Marilyn Moss rightly notes, ‘that he remains the artist-criminal who, if he is to survive as the child learned to survive, must invent for himself a pose and therefore an aesthetic for deception to keep himself permanently safe and separate from others’ (Moss 1986: 331). This is the strategy of concealment in which Bowles’ identity is deeply rooted. Although in Morocco ‘a stranger as blond as [he] was all too evident’, Bowles knew ‘an intelligent way to travel’: it was ‘to see whatever was happening continue exactly as if [he] were not there’ (131). He wanted to be the ‘invisible spectator’ who ‘was so used to hiding [his] intentions from every one that [he]

sometimes hid them from [his] self as well' (132). In Morocco, Bowles could comfortably assume his role of observer, that of a happy voyeur, and still be part of the daily 'huge drama' (127). With 'satisfaction', he said, 'I knew I should never tire of watching Moroccans play their parts' (127). The 'hidden terraces', 'dark impasses' (128), 'blind alleys' (1958: 70), and twisted streets of Tangier's medina all resonate with Bowles' safety of concealment strategies and his childhood memories. They also resonate with Bowles' belief that art is intrinsically anti-social since it provides a means for the artist to escape his society. In *Without Stopping* Bowles writes: 'My own conviction was that the artist, being the enemy of society, for his own good must remain as invisible as possible and certainly should be indistinguishable from the rest of the crowd' (67). Throughout his trajectory, Bowles strives 'for invisibility' (132), seeing to it that he develops and blossoms freely the potentialities crushed and destroyed by standardised society; he sees to it that he has 'an intimate space' that belongs to no one but himself, or rather a fantasy space that might distance the autobiographer from himself. In such a way, Bowles confirms his ability to draw productively on two cultures and be 'at home' in himself in the liminal zone.

In this respect, Bowles' work substantially connects with that of his nineteenth-century predecessor, Edgar Allan Poe, which also embodies richly symbolic writing about the nature of the self. Bowles' long-standing childhood fascination with Poe's stories is revealed in *Without Stopping*, 'I could not read them aloud; I had to undergo them' (Bowles 1985: 33). Poe who 'first put into words the disintegration of personality' (Caponi 1994: 156), demonstrates the

urge to shy away from the American thinking in science and reason in order to delve into the mysteries of the unknown and reconnect Man with Nature. In this, Bowles' work is intimately related to Poe's. In 'New Notes on Edgar Poe', Charles Baudelaire, the great French writer, pinpoints that 'From the midst of a greedy world, hungry for materialist things Poe took flight in dreams' (Baudelaire 1966: 45). Baudelaire's statement is revealing to the extent that it shows Bowles' affinities with Poe. In fact, the topography of Tangier's medina as Bowles depicts it, with its 'hidden terraces', 'dark impasses', 'blind alleys', and 'complex and tunneled streets', is of great significance because it marks Bowles' autobiography as a text of secrecy and confinement governed by distortion and displacement. Like Bowles' work, Poe's is a world of dreams, distortion, the grotesque, and anxiety, just as much as it allows us to see his stories as fantasy. The reader witnesses Poe's flight in dreams in the weird events of such stories as 'Ligeia', 'William Wilson' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher', which are psychological delusions on the part of the narrators, delusions so subtly insinuated that the reader tends to see how imagination and reality, the rational and irrational blur through various scopic devices. The narrators in Poe's stories, much like Bowles' protagonists, enter regions wherein they are not altogether at home. Their shifts in visions, their literal journeys, the dark and gloom setting, the winding passages they walk through – all produce distortion and displacement, a liminal realm wherein the line dividing dream-like experiences from reality, fancy from fantasy seems to be of a gossamer thinness. The scopic devices in *Without Stopping*, the 'false perspective' of the tiny

squares 'on sloping terrain', the allegory of the labyrinth, and the dreamworld of Tangier city, seem to work together to produce an aesthetic textual form to Bowles' life, an aesthetic that effects, like many of Poe's stories, alienation and estrangement, making the reading of *Without Stopping* not unlike travelling through the exotic, in the sense of unfamiliar and alien locations. Still, these same devices show that the autobiographer's 'disguise' and 'secretiveness' are as revealing as any overt action in so far as they are, in Bowles' words, 'points of reference for a whole secret system of overlapping, but widely divergent worlds in the complex life of the city' (Bowles 1958b: 70). This is to say that, like Edgar Allan Poe, Bowles, as T. S. Eliot puts it, 'is everywhere present and everywhere hidden' (quoted in Spengemann 1980: 168).

The allegory that Bowles exploits in *Without Stopping* resembles Walter Benjamin's melancholic baroque of allegory, ruins, and fragments. Indeed, the allegory of the labyrinth assists our understanding of the autobiographic text, yielding to reverie in which is crystallised the idea of inexhaustible division. As such, the labyrinthine vision is a wish that might never come true. It does not convey a state of present happiness, but a feeling of dissatisfaction and restlessness. In Bowles' words, 'this is certainly no time for anyone to pretend to be happy, or to put his unhappiness away in the dark ... You must watch your universe as it cracks above your head' (Hibbard 1993: 181). Bowles' attempt to represent the unrepresentable produces melancholy in the sense that he yearns 'for a presence that can never be fulfilled' (Jay 1988: 18). It inevitably fails because all it generates are 'allegories of obscurity and opacity'

(Jay 1988: 18), challenging the belief that self-realisation is possible. Bowles looks at the city of Tangier obliquely, in the mode of ‘small squares built on sloping terrain so that they looked like ballet sets designed in false perspective’ (128). All that the perspectival gaze leads to is absurdity, the very absurdity it is intended to prevent. In this, the perspectival gaze in a labyrinth that contains its own exit produces what Martin Jay calls that ‘moment of unease’. This moment of unease is perpetuated by the subterranean presence of what Jay calls ‘the baroque ocular regime as the uncanny double’ that challenges the petrification of ‘the dominant scientific or “rationalized ” visual order’ (Jay 1993: 45).

Still, the labyrinthine vision is at the same time an expression of wish or utopian fantasy that aims at the transfiguration of ordinary reality in such a way as to restore the conditions of some lost Eden. With these conditions, the baroque is, to use Eugenio d’Ors’ terms, ‘*secrètement animé*’ (secretely animated) (d’Ores 1935: 31). Bowles is, in part, a utopian thinker for whom utopia, the other place, is never realised, but is an ideal against which the present may be critically measured. Bowles’ use of utopianism is more robust than in those utopian writers who assume that they have arrived, and in which interminable description is rarely disturbed by even the remnants of narrative, the getting there that is so prominent in Bowles’ accounts of voyages across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. If utopia etymologically contains eutopia and outopia, the good place and no place respectively, the city of Tangier as a labyrinthine utopia refers to a neutral place merging in the ‘indefinite’, a space where the traveller /autobiographer is always in between frontiers and limits by way of a horizon

that closes a site and opens up a space. Unlike Romantic poetics, which sets itself against allegorical expression in Coleridge's promotion of the symbol, it is important to note that allegory – the allegory of labyrinth in *Without Stopping* – also seeks a relationship between Bowles' autobiography and a larger history of postcolonialism and modernisation. However, allegory never quite effects the transcendent link between them; rather it stays at an interpretative level. The link can be made, but it must be made by the in-betweens which prevent simple transcendence or immediacy. Even at the point when Bowles is at his best, he is always in transit, 'travelling between two edges that will never join together as an identical line' (Marin 1993: 411). The 'classical dream equipment' (128) plunges the voyeuristic gaze into a utopian limitless place. The border of the city is the infinity of dreams, a boundless space. In its structure, formed by 'covered streets like corridors with doors opening into rooms on each side' as well as 'alleys leading off in several directions' (128), Tangier is a utopia that would constitute a gap between two countries, Morocco and the United States.

The baroque feature manifested in the allegory of labyrinth shows how Bowles' description of Tangier initiates a baroque scopic regime that can subvert the power of a disciplined one-point perspective scopic regime, to rupture the semiotic machinery of instrumental rationality. The observing subject sees beyond his self, in the legitimating certainty that removes social order from human agency and gives it a foundation in transcendent structure. The topography of Tangier's medina, 'rich in prototypal dream scenes' (128), is an index of the scopic devices in the autobiography whereby Bowles invents his

modifications of spaces. Bowles' effort to turn the space of Tangier city into a dreamscape at once turns the space into a kind of reflected anamorphosis. This necessitates a concave mirror, for this, to use Walter Benjamin's term, 'was not possible without distortion' (quoted in Vidler 2000: 96). In effect, the city of Tangier is equipped with 'ruins' which represent a breakdown of form, and with opening 'alleys' connoting wide space which is not much subject to jading and is largely a product of imagination. Tangier's fantasy-world of darkness with its motifs of 'tunnels', 'ramparts', 'dungeons' and 'cliffs', aims at the modern. The dreamworld of the city is a transgression of the limit, a disobedience of the law of the place. The dreamworld of the Interzone, as Michel de Certeau would have it, 'represents a departure, an attack on a state, the ambition of a conquering power, or the flight of an exile' (de Certeau: 1984: 128).

Bowles thus houses the exotic within the rational, aiming to critique the logic of rationalism, even as he appeals to it. The depiction of the dream city is but a pursuit of knowledge tangled up in the imaginary – in reverie, in mystery and in the occult. In order to unravel his meaning, the autobiographer must explore, lead the way into new countries. He is confined to the frontier. He is condemned to find 'alleys leading off in several directions', paths diverging towards horizons. Bowles' autobiographical text is a voyage that transcends the boundaries of the United States of America and Morocco; it is an exploratory voyage into his own country, reclusing to consciousness. The object of desire as object of art is not to be suppressed. It is to be sought at the very infinitude of self, and looks for possibilities of personal and artistic expression. It conveys

violation of laws and rules, a departure from a state, a transcendence of limits, the ‘betrayal of an order’ (the phrase is de Certeau’s); this probably emanates from Bowles’ belief – at least this is what he writes in *Without Stopping* – that art must be a ‘crime’ (68), authorising dangerous and contingent actions.

The labyrinthine vision of Tangier city presents a dimension of baroque – I might call it a neo-baroque – scopic regime that displaces perspectives to displace illusions. The dream city is the mirror within whose frame Bowles’ ‘unhappiness’ is revealed. The tiny ‘squares built on sloping terrain so that they looked like ballet sets designed in false perspective’ (128) function as a *trompe l’oeil* by playing on the being and appearance of the city, which, undoubtedly, has one thousand and one facets in Bowles’ imagination. They emphasise Bowles’ estrangement, alienation and aloofness. They convey how the world is diminished in the eyes of the traveller/autobiographer while he would be self-magnified at the expense of the world. These ‘small squares’ of the city of Tangier resonate with a fantasy world Bowles has created to expropriate from the Real its quality of matter-of-factness, of infinite space of sheer Cartesian expansion in favour of the concept of the dynamic fluidity of forms, of bending or blending.

‘The prototypal dream scenes’ of Tangier (128) with its ‘complex and tunneled streets’, its ‘courtyards’ and ‘stairways’ (274) are indices that point to Bowles’ voyage beyond space, a trip back to the city of the past, to childhood and innocence. As I have proposed, the autobiographical text intimates that Bowles resorts to the ‘magic place’ (125) not by conscious choice, but as one

who was subject to chance and lived without conscious intervention. There is a sense of just happening to end up in Tangier; without any rational trajectory (366). Bowles recalls that ‘daydreaming on the subject of escape was not given the opportunity of growing into an *idée fixe*; the decision was made for me’ (274). The dream that made this decision for Bowles ‘left its essence with [him] in a state of enameled precision’ (274). Its details are charged with multiple meanings. One of these meanings is euphoria, what he describes as ‘a residue of ineffable sweetness and calm’ (274). ‘Being wholly ignorant of what [he] should find there’, the traveller ‘did not care’ (124) about the uncertainties or the danger of the place. The magic in Morocco will, he hopes, alleviate or at least reduce the anxiety and ‘work off’ the tensions aroused within a modern world going downhill. That ‘a blank wall at the end of a blind alley suggests mystery’ for Bowles is quite significant. The void is transformed into plenitude, into mystery, and in Bowles’ words, into ‘the magic of early childhood games’ (Bowles 1958b: 70). Bowles’ travel to the ‘magic place’ (125) is but an attempt to leave the twentieth century behind; it is a deviation from what becomes the norm, a displacement of meaning, a search for a substitute satisfaction that could compensate for his rejection of reality. The traveller’s voyage is his attempt to find the good life in the Interzone, the magic place where, as Malcom Cowley notes, ‘modern manufacturing methods and modern democratic institutions do not present any problems to the artist because they haven’t yet arrived’ (Cowley 1979: 145).

Bowles finds that ‘Tangier is a place where the past and the present exist simultaneously in proportionate degree’ (Bowles 1958b: 68), ‘where a very much alive today is given an added depth of reality by the presence and an equally alive yesterday’ (*ibid.*). Bowles loved the close connection with the past preserved in Tangier and in many Moroccan cities: ‘In Tangier, the past is a physical reality as perceptive as the sunlight’ (*ibid.*). To put it in another way, the autobiographical text is marked by the same kind of opposition that gives a particular resonance to Tangier’s medina for Bowles: on the one hand it registers a simple antagonism against the modern; on the other, it is itself intrinsically divided. And it is the interaction of these different positions that seems to be constitutive. The topography of Tangier in Bowles’ autobiography reveals disquieting uncertainties, a slippage between the present and the past. Bowles’ tendency to ‘re-present the forms of the past’, as Gilles Deleuze would have it, ‘appears more strongly when disorder and decline force a confused, contradictory state of mind, when the only certainty is that everything is uncertain’ (Deleuze 1994: 129-167). For the traveller/autobiographer, a ‘blank wall at the end of a blind alley’ (Bowles 1958b: 70) ‘takes on substance’ to convey ‘mystery’, and fills in the void, building up the space in-between. One might say, the counterpart to Bowles’ disillusion with and alienation from the United States is that space loses meanings. The plenitude of the ‘magical place’ thus substitutes void and emptiness and connotes disconnection from a place. It is this plenitude, along with ‘the prototypal dream scenes’, that characterises the Interzone, the zone in-between. Tangier reopens the zone of space, and connects the past to the present

to produce a sense of continuity. Tangier is a bridge between the old and the new worlds, but a bridge that cannot be re-crossed; in effect, it is an allegory of the relationship between old and new, past and present.

In this way, *Without Stopping* is an autobiography about trespassing across boundaries that produces various 'realities' in time and space. The winding streets and hidden terraces Bowles constantly depicts exist in a space elsewhere and only in Tangier. 'The prototypal dream scenes' (128) resonate with the baroque as a force of 'subversion', that which is repressed, excluded and marginal. The space of the city of Tangier thus offers to the beholder-reader an ambiguous representation, the equivocal image of significations contrary to the concept of limits. It becomes an inner world of feeling, of individual emotional life. If Descartes' rational city provides a space for judgement, Bowles' labyrinthine city presents nothing but apparent confusion. Rather than confirming the viewer's subjective certainty, an anamorphic perspective replays radical doubt without recourse to rational resolution. The field of vision is 'vague', ill-defined and indeterminate in the constitution of subjectivity. Far from separating and confirming the subject/object relation, Bowles' use of a baroque perspective gives the autobiographical text a semantic charge. In effect, the maze of inextricable 'alleys', 'tunnels', 'ramparts', 'ruins', 'dungeons', and 'cliffs', the small squares like ballet sets in false perspective are all details that define Tangier as an imaginary city, the uncertain location of the Cartesian subject. These are scopic devices that enact the tensions, contradictions and reversals of subjectivity. Seen in the flattened space of an anamorphic mirror, the

autobiographical self resists the Cartesian recuperation to self-knowledge and is revealed instead as an unsettled, dispersed subject, bodily projecting itself in the dream cityscape of Tangier's Interzone, picking its way in the 'covered street like corridors with doors opening into rooms on each side', 'dark impasses' and 'alleys leading off in several directions' (128). This subject resembles nothing more than the alienated modern self. The world of Tangier is best analysed through a symbolic approach that can cite as evidence the topography of the city 'rich in prototypal dream scenes' and its uncanny appeal to what Addison calls 'those secret Terrours and Apprehensions to which the Mind of Man is naturally subject' (Roe 2005: 489). In such an important way, the reader sees how Bowles is building a topography of the exotic, giving it a structure and an architectural vocabulary.

In the scopic devices in *Without Stopping*, the reader also senses Edgar Allan Poe's concept of the Gothic, with its lack of symmetry and principle of irregularity and deceptiveness. Bowles' texts display a direct and striking continuation of Edgar Allan Poe's work, where the intricacy of design contains evidence of the uncanny intrusion of the alien into the familiar, a trope of the Gothic *par excellence*. 'Ligeia' is a particularly compelling tale, which, as G. R. Thompson pinpoints, 'seems almost an allegorical explanation of Poe's deceptively psychological Gothicism' (Thompson 1973: 80). In this tale, we read that Lady Ligeia's beauty was 'the radiance of an opium-dream' (Poe 1988: 168 and 174), reminiscent of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' which Coleridge presents as a dream vision induced by opium. In addition, 'the features of Ligeia were not of a

classic regularity', yet the narrator has tried 'in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home [his] own perception of "the strange"' (*ibid.*: 168). 'The brows [are] slightly irregular in outline' (*ibid.*); even her bridal chamber is somehow between the Gothic and Arabesque in the sense of 'emotive and imaginative' (Thompson 1973: 105): 'The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimen of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device' (Poe 1988: 174). Of major importance in Poe is the word 'grotesque' which suggests 'a fantastic realm of imagination and fancy welling up from the subconscious' (Thompson 1973: 106). The depiction of the walls of the bridal chamber reveals the Gothic as characterised by 'a disturbed imagination' (Thompson 1973: 105). The walls are 'gigantic in height – even unproportionably so' (Poe 1988: 174). Such an irregularity in *Ligeia* and her chamber is of supreme importance precisely because it exhibits demonstrable evidence of Poe's influence on Bowles. This irregularity finds an echo in Bowles' depiction of Tangier and its tiny squares, reminding the reader of Bowles' effort to turn the space into 'dream scenes' (128), a kind of reflected anamorphosis. Bowles' texts, then, as will be shown further in the course of the thesis, are a direct continuation of Edgar Allan Poe's technique with regard to the dynamic fluidity of forms, of bending or blending in a perverse, absurd universe.

The topography of Tangier's medina resonates with the prototypical aspects of the dream world. It is a surrealistic city that has its primary intersection with dreams. Indeed, Bowles was quite interested in surrealism. In *Without*

Stopping, Bowles recalls that as a student at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, he was a keen reader of the magazine *transition*, which served as a ‘transition’ between American and European writers. He notes that he preferred the *transition* contributors to writers spoken of by ‘literary-minded students and professors’ (77). In this connection, Bowles writes that ‘I bought Djuna Barnes’ new novel *Ryder*, because she had been among the contributors to *transition*’ (77). In his working notes for *Without Stopping*, he says this: ‘I used my reading hours to effect conscious escape from the meaning of any life I had known until then, into the mysterious, and for me irrational world of Lautréamont, Joyce, Kafka, and Essenin’ (Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 57). In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer recalls how Kay Cowen, an American girl, took him to pay a visit to Tristan Tzara, the surrealist poet, and his wife. He also reports that he went for a second visit after that year (92). In the autobiographical text, too, Bowles remembers that he met Kristians Tonny, a Dutch surrealist painter in Tangier (129). The search for ‘magic’ connects Bowles and the surrealists. A work of art, for the surrealists, must go beyond the limits of the human. For it to be immortal, it must approach the dreams and mentality of childhood. André Breton, the founder of surrealism, bemoans the fact that the imagination, which during childhood admitted no limits, has to relinquish its dominance towards the twentieth year, leaving the person a prey to a lusterless destiny (Breton 1947: 14). Bowles’ quest for ‘magic’, as ‘a secret connection between the world of nature and the consciousness of man’ (125) is an evident affinity with the surrealists who stress the power of the imagination, and its waning in adulthood as it is

slowly crushed and destroyed by a standardised society. Once the connection with the 'magical place' is established, the invisible unconscious becomes palpable, suggesting the possibility of reaching beyond commonplace dualities like inside and outside, homely and familiar, conscious and unconscious, logic and magic, experienced no longer as oppositions but rather as coexistent states.

It is through surrealism, 'this unexpected little gate that [Bowles] crept back into the land of fiction writing' (262). In *The History of Surrealism*, Maurice Nadeau defines surrealism as follows:

Surrealism, n. m. Pure psychic automatism with which one tries to express, either verbally, or in writing, or in any other manner, the real functioning of the mind. Dictation of the mind, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, outside any aesthetic or moral preoccupation.

(Nadeau 1973: 36)

One of Bowles' subjects is how to be a writer. In his autobiography, he states that 'the desire came to me to invent my own myths, adopting the point of view of the primitive mind' (261). He mastered the method to his satisfaction: 'The only way I could devise for simulating that state was the old surrealist method of abandoning conscious control and writing whatever words came from the pen' (261). This is the surrealist doctrine of automatism in art, an overtly anti-rational method that Bowles describes himself practising. It is writing without any

conscious intervention on the writer's part. Bowles uses automatism in many of his works. In the autobiographical text, Bowles writes that he included long sections of 'stream-of-consciousness' (98) in his book of fiction which he entitled *Without Stopping*, the same title he would use forty years later for his autobiography:

Each day as I sat at my desk on the balcony I wrote several pages in longhand of a work which I had titled 'Without Stopping.' The important thing was the constant adding of pages to the pile. I decided to write it as it came to me and prune it later; I was afraid that if I stopped to exercise choice, I would also begin to consider the piece critically, which I knew would stop the flow. And it was the flow above all which preoccupied me, because the writing of 'Without Stopping' was therapeutic. (97)

One of the surviving fragments of this narrative, called 'In the Creuse', is, as Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno points out, indebted in terms of style to Gertrude Stein and in terms of subject to surrealism (Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 85). That is not all. Bowles uses the unconscious for the purposes of literary creation in his early poems, in his sonatas and cantatas. In *Without Stopping*, he recounts how the cantata called *par le Detroit*, 'a hermetic reference to my preoccupation in dreams with the Strait of Gibraltar' (165), would have had as a more apposite title 'the Dream Cantata', 'in as much as several sections of the work were composed in

detail while I slept. On awakening I immediately wrote them out' (165). This is a surrealist method to access 'ecstasy' and open the way to a world that is as distant from reality as the world of dream. Bowles uses this method to invent his first myth, the short story titled 'The Scorpion', and in later works. The method of the surrealist doctrine of automatism in art is most prevalent, as we will see, in his kif collection *A Hundred Camels in the Courtyard*. Thus Bowles expresses his sympathy with the surrealist notion of automatism and exposes the unconscious to daylight.

The topography of Tangier's medina stirs Bowles' imagination and connects him to the dreams and oneiric scenes that are the cornerstones of the surrealist production of texts. As proposed, the maze of dark impasses, small squares, steep streets and inextricable alleys, tunnels, ramparts, ruins, dungeons, and cliffs are all labyrinthine features that refer to the space of the old city of Tangier as well as the dream world, as though surreal. As such the dream city is a world in which many oneiric scenes take on new forms and meanings. It becomes in Bowles' writing an ever-changing city, a space subject to perpetual metamorphosis. Hence, *Without Stopping*, and Bowles' work in general, tend to slide away into the squashy universe of the surrealists. He acquiesces jubilantly to Dada's and the Surrealists' re-shuffling of the world, and consequently of literature and language. Bowles' fiction stresses this. His novels and many of his short stories, as we will see, are manifestations of awful danger that show the flimsy architectural structures. This is a surrealist assumption *par excellence*. Violence, cruelty, horror, brutality are determining features of the world outside.

Realities do not hold. The world can collapse at any moment. Bowles finds life in the States 'boring', joyless, and colorless. 'It's a great shame', Bowles says, 'the future will be infinitely "worse" than the present; and in *that* future, the future will be immeasurably "worse" than the future that we can see' (Hibbard 1993: 164). Life in New York is universally standardised, uncreative, given over to the worship of wealth and machinery. 'Mass society' makes the writer 'ill at ease'; 'The world is closing in'. Bowles doesn't find any proof of life in New York: 'It's all going by, nothing going on' (Hibbard 1993: 158-159). It is time for rupture, for defiance. Like Dada and the surrealists, Bowles reveals his wish to destroy civilisation because 'the universe ... cracks above your head' (Hibbard 1993: 181). He 'want[s] to help society go to pieces' in order to purify it'. This he says to Daniel Halpern in a 1975 interview. In fact, the American writer firmly believes that 'to destroy often means to purify' (Hibbard 1993: 151).

The only way Bowles could satisfy his grudge is 'by writing words, attacking in words' (Hibbard 1993: 151), by breaking through the 'pseudo consciousness' of modern civilised life. Words are linguistic tools for Bowles to sustain the 'Romantic tradition for the past century and a half' (Hibbard 1993: 151, Caponi 1993: 96), inciting people 'to question and ultimately to reject the present structure of any facet of society' (Caponi 1993: 96). Writing is thus a weapon that produced immunity from the abiding worry, a state of mind whose intensity and aggressive force must go to the point of modifying the force of its expression. But why does Bowles' struggle centre upon the unfruitful distinction between form and matter? One possible answer is that it is a way to keep sane in

space. In this way, Bowles acquiesces to the surrealists' attempts to rebel against the yoke of logic and reason in style. The initiative, for once, is given to the words which, as Rimbaud notes, freed from the fear of constantly trying to match the signifier with the signified, 'can say what it says' (Rimbaud 1981: 13). However, 'Nerves still ragged, still had nightmares, still had to walk ten miles as fast as possible every day' (Bowles 1994b: 466), because it is impossible to unite the signifier with the signified. The delay, the gap, cannot be bridged via imagination as Bowles, along with the surrealists, Coleridge, and latter-day Romantics claim. As Paul Jahshan pertinently points out, 'any new "naming" done at a specific time will inevitably have as a future consequence the imposition of such rationalisation which will again be decried' (Jahshan 2001: 62).

Talking to Daniel Halpern, Bowles says, 'I'm merely trying to call people's attention to something they don't seem to be sufficiently aware of' (Hibbard 1993: 146) and to make them question their basic assumptions. The aim is to effect the reader's 'dislocation', as Bowles' states, 'a temporary smearing of the lens of consciousness' (*ibid.*: 152). This is manifest throughout his novels and short stories through the tropes of kif, through magic and spell, and through trance dance. All of these are defamiliarising tools, alienating forces associated with altered states of consciousness, which enable the writer to free his mind from the interference of reason and to journey far away into the 'magic place'. Bowles' *Interzone* marks a vital tension that mirrors the symbol created. It resonates with the surrealist textual production as Breton sees it:

I wish [surrealism] to have only attempted nothing more than to throw a *conducting thread* between the far too dissociated worlds of wakefulness and sleep, of external and internal reality, of reason and madness, of the calmness of knowledge and love.

(Breton 1981: 103-104)

Like surrealism, the Interzone acts as a 'conducting thread', an in-between state primarily conditioned by dreams and chance. It acts as a catalyst to expose the traveller/autobiographer's inner emotions and, in Nadeau's term, 'to bring the unconscious of a city into unison with the unconscious of men' (Nadeau 1973: 107). The Interzone is a liminal space where Bowles, like surrealist writers, denies temporality, moving incessantly between the world of the day and that of the night, blending the logically charged formulas with the force of magic, the homely with the unfamiliar, presence with absence.

It is the 'madness' of the Interzone that attracts post-war American expatriates. They set out on the road, leaving America behind, shedding the father and the fatherland, and live in a zone that is free from 'bureaucratic intervention' in a way to change their life into a pleasure. In his 1951 article, Bowles writes that

The new 'lost generation' which America turned loose on the world after the recent war is so thoroughly lost that the generation which came before seems undeserving of the epithet ... invariably they arrive in Tangier, which I suppose is the perfect place for them. Here they can

get on their various kicks publicly and no one will object in the least ... they are in passionate pursuit of one thing: an absolute detachment from what is ordinarily called reality.

(Bowles 1951: 654)

Bowles left the United States as a member of 'the new lost generation' whose value system was based on the principle of negation. He retreated into the world of the Interzone as both a rejection of the present and a search for magic as truth beyond consciousness. Bowles himself was aware that he 'existed primarily for Gertrude Stein as a sociological exhibit' (Bowles 1985: 119). He was aware that Stein's interest in him lay more in what he represented for her than in himself or his work. He commented further on this notion in the autobiography: "If you were typical, it would be the end of our civilization," she told me. "You're a manufactured savage" (119). Yet Bowles was not the only atypical writer who derived self-satisfaction 'in rejecting all values'. His retreat into the exotic twins him with a class of post-war Americans who 'ran away' from civilisation, a state of being which had no values, a state of absolute savagery. They travel to compare, evaluate and record what they see. These expatriates complain about standardisation, mass production and the machine, which dominate the United States more than others, but affect the others as well. For Bowles, as a member of 'the new lost generation', the International Zone is a topoi of 'madness'. It opens the door to rebelliousness, disorder and promiscuity, to the unfathomed continent of the unconscious, of dreams, of hallucinations and of excess. Bowles' *Let It*

Come Down figures such a representation of the International Zone, as the following chapter demonstrates. In *Advertisements for Myself*, Norman Mailer proclaims this:

Paul Bowles opened the world of Hip. He let in the murder, the drugs, the incest, the death of the Square (Port Moresby), the call of the orgy, the end of civilisation; he invited all of us to these themes a few years ago.

(Mailer 1968: 383)

Bowles is an expatriate who has broken out, like a variety of American writers from Henry Miller to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, 'They overcome a limit, they shatter a wall, the capitalist barrier' (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 133). He sought the Interzone, a space of spells and magic, because as he writes: 'one must forsake logic for magic' (Bowles 1954: 52). In other words, Bowles sought the Interzone not because he thirsts to excel, to exert an influence on the world outside, or to change the course of history, but simply because he finds society a self-perpetuating machine and makes an attempt to distance himself from it. He escapes into older lands which the dragon of American industry had not invaded, and he writes about it, producing works in which, to use Cowley's words, 'all was but order and beauty, ... rising like a clean tower above the tin cans and broken dishes of their days' (Cowley 1979: 102). Although Deleuze and Guattari target late capitalist, rather

than patriarchal oppression, in the figure opposing Oedipus, they also put forward the nomad. Michel Foucault summarises their argument as follows:

The first task of the revolutionary ... is to learn ... how to shake off the Oedipal yoke and the effects of power, in order to initiate a radical politics of desire freed from all beliefs. Such a politics dissolves the mystifications of power through the kindling, on all levels, of anti-Oedipal forces – the schizzes-flows – forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions: orphans (no daddy-mommy-me), atheists (no beliefs), and nomads (no habits, no territories).

(Deleuze and Guattari 1984: xxi)

Like a variety of American writers, Bowles remains an outlaw, an unhappy expatriate to whom nomadism might provide a cure. Talking to Jeffrey Bailey, Bowles noted that:

Moving around a lot is a good way of postponing the day of reckoning ... When you've cut yourself off from the life you've been living and you haven't established another life, you're free. That's a very pleasant sensation, I've always thought. If you don't know where you're going, you're even freer.

(Caponi 1993: 123)

This statement gives us a rich insight into Bowles' alienation and exoticism. It also brings to light to what extent exploration has determined the patterns of Bowles' life and the structure of his fiction: ambulation, moving around, is a major surrealist activity that prompts communication with and exploration of the *terrae incognitae* of the mind. This constitutes the state of mind and the kind of awareness that would be for the Beats and other Bohemian writers of the 1950s a journey far away from the centre of civilisation and cultural and economic domination into worlds that defy it. Bowles' travels lead him to discover 'unknown regions' of the world that open up the possibility of ecstatic experience. The source of his creativity lies in these deepest recesses. Tangier's association with a dream-city reveals how Bowles, like the Symbolists (Rimbaud and Baudelaire to name but two), is convinced that subtle threads exist between the material world and the spiritual one, and that the autobiographer/writer, by means of words, can have access to the realm of the beyond. The bizarre, the unconscious, dream, imagination and chance, all play their part in the complex pattern of *Without Stopping*, and of many of Bowles' works, and are all aspects of surrealist vision and praxis. Michelle Green's remark seems to be relevant. She writes that 'the International Zone was marked by an air of unreality. Newcomers saw Tangier as existentialist Eutopia—a place where everyone could seize a part of the same bizarre dream' (Green 1992: 14).

The topography of Tangier in Bowles' *Without Stopping* reminds us that we live in fiction anyway, that the dividing line between fiction and reality is not

easily delineated, and that the resultant structure of Bowles' narrative might become nightmarish. Aren't books another form of architecture, another space for building? At root, Bowles is engaged in the production of literature, and by extension of books. He is trying to find a way back – or forward – to the word, what Fowler calls 'The Logos which is the act it describes' (Fowler 1987: 210). Following the traces in the topographical regions of this dreamworld, Bowles sets out to make tours in order to cover the distance along the 'covered street'; each tour is a speech act (an act of enunciation) that furnishes a sequence of 'alleys leading off in several directions' by which to go into 'rooms on each side' (128). The 'alleys' are a series of units that have the form of vectors. Bowles will be able to perceive the successive bent in the tunnel-like course as well as the construction of being, where he feels farther from the world in the mazy borders, long spaces of hieroglyphs that form a labyrinth of letters, of the books that he makes. Bowles decides or discovers that impasses are 'dark' to turn away from the lighted areas of life and the seen world.

The narrative he spins has intricate winding threads, impasses that are mysteriously enchaind; it is double bind. Once he reaches 'the end of the line', largely the end of the line of patriarchal relationships, he returns 'to the center' that leads him to 'another line'. The labyrinthine city at once liberates Bowles from the spacious, well-lit streets with which he is acquainted in New York and encloses him. It fulfils his desire of 'getting as far away as possible from New York' and making of 'the trip to Morocco ... a rest, a lark, a one summer stand' (124). The landscape does not change: 'Alleys [lead] off in several directions'

(128). But no exit is possible except by flying out of it, by rendering the words double, ambiguous, or in J. Hillis Miller's words, 'unstable, equivocal, wavering, abysmal' (Miller 1976: 70). In this turning, a repetition is produced only to produce a fissure, a caesura that subverts its own meaning, 'a displacement from one sign to another sign which in its turn draws its meaning from another figurative sign, in a constant *mise en abyme*' (Miller 1976: 72). The allegory of the labyrinth resonates with the labyrinth of narrative in Bowles' text of memory, defined, as Miller puts it, 'as an impossible search for the center of the maze' because of the obscure and dark alleys encountered. The narrative 'disturbs, suspends, or destroys the linearity of the line' (*ibid.*: 70). As Miller puts it, 'No one thread ... can be followed to a central point where it provides a means of overseeing, controlling, and understanding the whole' (*ibid.*: 72). The part/whole, inside/outside division breaks down. The outside turns out to be already inside.

Bowles may fancy himself safely and rationally outside, but he is already entangled in the textual web. The topoi overlap. The space between the signifier and the signified may include slippages, displacements of one tier *vis-à-vis* the other. These gaps and slippages 'astonished' Bowles, but 'also gave [him] a vague feeling of unease' (Bowles 1985: 9). These displacements are what permit the free play of the signifier and texts. As the language of the narrative is always displaced, any single line leads everywhere, like a labyrinth of 'corridors with doors opening into rooms on each side' (128). In such an important way, the reader sees how Bowles is building a topography of the exotic, giving it a structure and an architectural vocabulary. The familiar and

unfamiliar, inside and outside are thus separated by an ambiguous and liminal space, an exotic city, reopening the frontier between logic and magic. This ambiguous and liminal space resonates with Bowles' inter/in-between zone: Tangier.

The theatricality of the encounter between Bowles and the local space is stressed. Morocco functions as a theatre, a stage on which a performance is repeated, as if he can build on it houses of fiction and any other type of metaphorical refuge in which human imagination can be given free and full play. The labyrinth with its various paths also stands for the proliferation of varying realities in time and space. The 'rooms on each side' and 'hidden terraces' add up to the accumulated debris of the past: 'ramparts, ruins'. Being intrigued with the (to him) exotic embodiments of the primitive, Bowles ensures an enduring contact with otherness and expresses his nostalgia for the freshness and difference of a world that is now lost. The representation of Tangier is that presented by a latter-day Romantic young man who found in the space a multifaceted liberation, the most important of which was liberation from a sense of imprisonment and loss that was crushing upon him in his native city. The lost Golden Age, the distant past is to be found in this land at the end of the world, but only if imagination can be trusted. Unlike what Romantic poetics – whether Coleridge's or Emerson's – posits, imagination cannot transcend and bring immediate understanding. That is, imagination is also cultural and not only natural; it is mediated and therefore only different in degree and not different in kind from other forms of discourse.

Flâneur in a Magical City

In Bowles' quest, there is a tension, perhaps a dialectic, between interior and exterior space. What matters to him about space is what it lets happen to him, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his inner being, his ideas and his expectations. In *Without Stopping*, Bowles portrays himself as a subject who has travelled widely. He records his reaction to Morocco as he comes to familiarise himself with its nooks. For Bowles, Morocco opens up space to something different. It offers different places and different cities, too. The sharp sense of difference between Moroccan cities excites Bowles' curiosity. The further he moves towards the heart of the country, the more he feels captivated by its magic, and the greater ecstasy he attains. He thus conceptualises Morocco in terms of a centre, with places that are less central, ex-centric and marginal. In his autobiography, Bowles recalls that he, along with Aaron Copland and the Dutch surrealist painter Kristians Tonny, set off for Fez, which he found even more enchanting than Tangier. They 'arrived in Fez at sunset and took a carriage through the Mellah to Fez Djedid' (Bowles 1985: 130). In his narrative of memory, Bowles states that he 'preferred the medieval formality of Fez, even in its state of decay' and that his 'taste for Fez was a touristic one' (284). The following pages will map out Bowles' memories of his journey to the city of Fez.

Discussing pedestrian displacements in terms of classical rhetoric in his essay entitled 'Walking in the City', de Certeau argues, in agreement with

Benveniste and Lacan, that such tropes embody the ‘symbolic order of the unconscious’. De Certeau’s argument is revealing and can be usefully deployed as an analytical tool to investigate Bowles’ pedestrian displacements in Fez and in other Moroccan cities. Bowles’ walking in the space of the city constitutes a near and a far, a here and there, which in their turn indicate an appropriation of the space by an ‘I’. Fez, with its quarters, ‘Mellah’, ‘Fez Djedid’, ‘Bab Boujeloud’, ‘Sidi Harazem’, ‘Nejjarine’ are words that slowly lose their objective value and serve as ‘imaginary meeting-points on itineraries’, points where Bowles meets with Americans (‘Kristians Tonny’, ‘Anita’, ‘Harry Dunham’ (131)), Moroccans (‘Abdesslam Ktiri’, ‘A. Yacoubi’, ‘Abdallah Drissi’ (281)) and peoples from other nationalities. The names of the streets, squares, and places within the city are, as de Certeau points out, ‘stars directing itineraries’. They serve ‘as emblems by the traveller they direct and simultaneously decorate’ (de Certeau 1984: 104). The charting of Fez as a memory is equated with the reconstruction of the past in a labyrinthine manner, with entrance into a world with magical characteristics.

Interestingly, de Certeau brings pedestrian processes back down ‘in the direction of oneiric figuration’ to discover what ‘in a spatial practice, is inseparable from the dreamed space’ (de Certeau 1984: 103). He goes on as follows:

In these symbolizing kernels three distinct (but connected) functions of the relations between spatial signifying practices are indicated (and perhaps founded): the *believable*, the *memorable*, and the *primitive*.

They designate what “authorizes” (or make possible or credible) spatial appropriations, what is repeated in them (or is recalled in them) from a silent and withdrawn memory, and what is structured in them and continues to be signed by an in-fantile (in-fans) origin.

(De Certeau 1984: 105)

In this perspective, Fez effects both the memorable and the infantile for the autobiographer/traveller. It is an allegorical city in which streets and crossings are indices of Bowles’ own criss-crossed life. In *Without Stopping*, Bowles recalls that he ‘plunges into the medina on foot’ (149), a memory that enacts the metaphor of intrusion and penetration to fulfil the wish to unveil the other and to possess and enjoy their cultural space. But it also connotes the memorable, a function of the ‘symbolic order of the unconscious’ (de Certeau 1984). Bowles’ penetration connotes the memorable in the sense of Freud’s uncanny, that which is recalled in spatial appropriations, the return of that which is drawn from the reservoir of repressed memories or fantasies. Fez stirs Bowles’ imagination even more than the medina in Tangier. In the preface to *The Spider’s House*, Bowles writes that Fez is ‘a medieval city functioning in the twentieth century’ (Bowles 1982b: Preface). The word ‘medieval’ is associated to Fez in *Without Stopping* and in other travelogues; as noted earlier, Bowles ‘preferred the medieval formality of Fez, even in its state of decay’ (284). The recurrence of the word ‘medieval’ can be read as a tracing line of force that leads in certain directions, suggesting that Bowles associates Fez with the symbolic order of the unconscious.

The magnificent world of childhood is found in this ‘medieval city’. In his autobiography, Bowles remarks that ‘Tangier had by no means prepared me for the experience of Fez, where everything was ten times stranger and bigger and brighter’ (130). The adjectives ‘strange, big, and bright’ show how the autobiographer/traveller feels as he enters a magical city where his perspectival gaze is magnified and images are destined to abound and grow. A phenomenology of extension, expansion and ecstasy is hence conveyed. It is, in Bachelard’s words, a phenomenology of the prefix ‘ex’, an expression which aims at the attainment of a sense of marvel. Bowles finds Fez a site of mystery and a locus of radical otherness. The bewilderment created by Bowles’ encounter with the city of Fez draws our interest, creating a sense of marvel and surprise.

Bowles feels great enthusiasm for being in Fez. Like the surrealists, he is the *flâneur* who wanders across city streets, its squares and passageways to locate the *inconnu*. What makes Fez different from Paris is the blank thick walls that are unlike the transparent building in Paris, though Bowles writes in his article, ‘The Worlds of Tangier’ that the medina walls are transparent in their blankness. Through imagination, he penetrates such thick walls: ‘For me, a blank wall at the end of a blind alley suggests mystery, just as being in the tiny closet-like rooms of a Muslim house in the Medina evokes the magic of early childhood games’ (Bowles 1958b: 70). Imagination is necessary for Bowles to enjoy not only Tangier, but also Fez and other cities with old quarters and medinas ‘where the details that meet the eye are not what they seem, but so many points of reference

for a whole secret system of overlapping but wildly divergent worlds in the complex life of the city' (*ibid.*).

The medieval city assumes a structure that makes it the ideal setting for the *flâneur*. The autobiographer/traveller finds that Fez endures, frozen in time notwithstanding the inexorable progress of history: 'it seemed scarcely to have changed since I had last seen it long before the war' (277). The carriage still ruled the streets, and the city, like Tangier, had not yet 'entered the dirty era of automotive traffic' (129). In Bowles' narrative of memory, Fez, like Tangier, is likened to surrealist places of pilgrimage, pure, magical and Romantic. Bowles recalls that he wrote to his wife Jane and evokes nostalgically the golden days of Morocco: 'I wrote Jane and told her that Morocco was still all that it had been and that she must come as soon as possible' (278). The invitation privileges a Romantic ahistorical view not only of Fez, but of Morocco in general. In effect, a close reading reveals a child-like perspective in the autobiographer's depiction of the transportation in Fez. The autobiographer writes: 'Traffic sounds were limited to the jingling of bells on the horses that drew the carriages back and forth between Bab Bou Jeloud and the Mellah' (277). Elements like 'bells on the horses' bring the dream fairytale aspect or childhood games to the foreground. Such disorienting, oneiric, ethereal images of the Fez cityscape, capture in Bowles' autobiography a dream space resonant with the enchanted images that reverberate in the surrealist imagination. They show how Bowles operates with a 'Golden Age' theory of culture, that is a time before the fall. Bowles finds that post-war 'Fez was still in its golden age', and its medieval primitive aspects are

preserved. Watching so pertinaciously the city as a delightful interior, the autobiographer/traveller thinks that he experiences the abundance of the ‘nouveauautés’ as his own enrichment.

The whole process is like a sham battle to save the potentialities of the child against the ravages of modernity, the standardised society and the war that has physically uprooted him, along with many other travellers/exiles. ‘Plunged’ into this fantasy city, the autobiographer/traveller ‘felt that at last [he] had left the world behind’ (130). This is suggestive, especially if we examine carefully the autobiographer’s account of his trip in Fez. Indeed Bowles recalls that he finds the ‘right place’ in the Hotel Ariana. His reference to the ‘three outside rooms upstairs’ in the ‘primitive little establishment’ (130-131) is pertinent. The words ‘outside’, ‘upstairs’ and ‘primitive’ are of supreme significance. Their syntagmatic co-presence can further define the autobiographer/traveller’s distanciation and elevation from the mass that ‘carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators’ (de Certeau 1984: 92). When the traveller goes up to the ‘outside rooms’ that ‘gave directly onto the ramparts of Fez-Djedid’ (130-131), he is lifted out of the city’s grasp, and his body is possessed neither by the rumble of so many differences nor by the nervousness of traffic of modern city. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance not from the crowds down below – simply because the autobiographer/traveller mentions no crowd, all there is down below is a rampart, a garden of passengers (‘the garden of Djenane Sbir’ ‘with its willows overhanging the Oued Fez’ (131)) – but at a distance from the life of New York he left behind. Elevation transforms

the bewildering world into a text that lies before Bowles' eyes. It allows the traveller to read such a universe with his I/eye, looking down at duties and laws and assuming God's attributes. Thus, he becomes a creator. In de Certeau's words, 'the exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more' (1984: 92).

Describing his first trip to Fez in his narrative of memory, Bowles writes that, with Aaron Copland, he would 'step out the windows of [their] respective rooms' onto the top of 'the rampart wall', below which was 'the garden of Djenane Sbir with its willows overhanging the Oued Fez' (131). Bowles uses the 'Djenane Sbir' (garden of passengers), the 'ancient waterwheel that turned slowly, dripping and creaking' (131) as elements that attribute immensity, infinitude to the space outside. The waterwheel 'turned slowly' and recursively, its circular movements suggesting a centre with a centre with a centre ad infinitum. The waterwheel, which 'turned slowly, dripping and creaking' (131), by way of its shape and function, encloses not only the sparks of creation, but the free play of ideas as well. Each turn, each argument is a conflict, an open fight between the 'writer and place' (Bowles 1958a: 360), to escape the nightmare of civilisation, to speak and cast a spell.

Once the autobiographer/traveller 'step[s] out the windows' (131), he recoils in self-effacement; he withdraws from the world in the hope of freeing himself from its constraints and its limits, from the repressed and buried reality of capitalist society (see Jameson 1981: 20). It is this withdrawal, this recoil, this self-effacement, encoded in the autobiographical text through various strategies of

concealment, that permits Bowles' voice to be heard in its fullest. Derrida's statement in his essay 'Edmond Jabes and the Question of the Book', in *Writing and Difference*, is relevant:

Absence of the writer too. For to write is to draw back. Not to retire into one's tent, in order to write, but to draw back from one's writing itself. To be grounded far from one's language, to emancipate it or lose one's hold on it, to let it make its way alone and unarmed. To leave speech. To be a poet is to know how to leave speech. To let it speak alone, which it can do only in its written form. To leave writing is to be there only in order to provide its passageway, to be the diaphanous element of its going forth: everything and nothing.

(1978: 70)

Derrida's unsettling of the logocentric bias, originally portraying writing as a supplement to speech, is interesting in the context of Bowles' autobiography. Indeed, Bowles' stepping 'out the windows' denotes not only spatial detachment, but also textual displacement, whereby the autobiographer's voice is both presence and absence, a presence that, like the waterwheel to the right of the 'rampart wall' (131), struggles to drip words, to reveal a secret, to express itself in writing, and an absence that does not allow the autobiographers' voice to be revealed by the text. Such displacement shows that Bowles' entrance into the exotic was complete, but only disappointment awaited the civilised writer as he

‘ran to examine’ the ‘primitive little establishment’ (130). The *flâneur* who takes pride in leaving his country and exploring a magic city ‘felt that at last [he] had left the world behind’, resulting in ‘excitement’ that ‘was well-nigh unbearable’ (130); he is to fall victim to an illusion that has blinded many other people. But the reader is aware that Bowles is in the space between, as he has plenty of ‘luggage’ that ‘a train of porters’ carry (149), cultural luggage, I would add, based on Western ideology, on logocentricism and ‘on a very peculiar and specialized social and historical phenomenon’ (Jameson 1981: 112) that carries him to the medieval city and leaves him in the metropolis of the uprooted.

Bowles comes back to Fez again and again, trying to understand this totally different world; his return to the imperial city in 1932 accounts in large part for the traveller’s sustained fascination with the exotic. He must explore, lead the way into new space, into an enchanted labyrinth, a magical city sheltered from time. In *Without Stopping*, Bowles writes that he spent two weeks as a guest in the house of the Fassi aristocrat, Abdallah Drissi, a direct descent of Moulay Idriss, the founder of Morocco. Abdallah’s is a homely house, enclosing the autobiographer/traveller within ‘a beautifully tiled courtyard two stories high, with a colonnaded balcony’, which had a ‘succession of huge cedar beams in its ceiling, meticulously carved and painted with geometric and, surprisingly floral designs’ (149). This is significant because it is a memory of glamour and Romanticism, too, where the autobiographe/traveller finds the way back. The refined depiction of Abdallah’s palace re-plays the Romantic obsession with the creative potential of the artistic imagination.

Fez is a magic city that unveils its secrets little by little. Through the prism of memory, the autobiographer/traveller discovers legends and relics of classical antiquity in Fez. With Bowles' alert, penetrating eye and his exacting mind, he glorifies Drissi's way of life, describing his aristocratic lifestyle as 'extraordinary' (132), thus cherishing, like bohemians, aristocratic ideals. The autobiographer/traveller writes that despite 'French presence' that 'ruined financially' 'most of the aristocracy' (132), Abdallah and his brother are *les hommes fétiches* (the phrase is James Clifford's), who preserved their 'inherited vast palace' and 'regularly collected money and large quantities of salable goods from the Zaouias roundabout' (132). Bowles' recollection of Abdallah is another key question in *Without Stopping*. In effect, it defines another feature of pre-colonial Morocco: the way aristocracy is sustained in Fez/Morocco through the spiritual reputation Abdallah has, a reputation he gains through his prophetic descent and through 'the Baraka' he inherently has. Aristocracy continues to exist against the grain of scientism and the machine civilisation without spirit or soul, of which Bowles' generation has no grasp. In *Without Stopping*, too, Bowles recalls that Abdallah has 'slaves' who 'carried out order to the letter' (133). 'When Abdallah wanted something, he clapped his hands, and the slave on duty in his courtyard appeared' (132). These slaves were dispatched ahead of time to prepare one evening excursion to 'Sidi Harazem': 'When we got there, the carriage was waiting, packed with food, braziers, charcoal, lanterns, rugs, and cushions' (133). Further, 'Wherever Abdallah went, men insisted on bowing low to kiss the sleeve of his djellaba' (133). Fez is thus described as a medieval relic

housing medieval people that stubbornly resist the encroachments of Western civilisation. Bowles' memory of Abdallah's domestic life reveals that Bowles' advocacy of aristocratic ideals underlies Romanticism and reflects his disillusionment about modern civilisation and a revolt against certain features of industrial capitalism. The autobiographer/wanderer emulates the process of remembering/forgetting in the generation of Drissi's house as the archetypal space of homeliness. His authority lies in the access he has to what is kept secret in the exotic space and his ability to unveil the secrets of the forbidden. Such secrets are conveyed by the Arabic word 'sakan' or dwelling, which, as Leila Ahmed explains, 'from the root "quiet, tranquil", expresses the Islamic concept of a man's right to a haven of inviolable privacy, forbidden to and guarded from intrusion by other men' (Ahmed 1992: 116-117). Through his memory of Drissi's house, Bowles is subject to orientalist nostalgia for medieval Morocco, but he is also sensitive to the social and cultural differences that complicate democratic dialogue. The memory of Abdallah's lifestyle pits, to use Vidler's words, the homely, the domestic, the nostalgic, against their ever-threatening, always invading, and often subversive 'opposites' (Vidler 1992: 13). Born out of his rightful place and time, Bowles dwells in exoticism by way of a detour through distant places and an attempt to resuscitate a distant culture. The autobiographer/traveller's outward journey in Fez is also a figment of the imagination, an imaginary journey towards the interior of a singularly uncanny city, a haunted Fez that unveils its strangeness, its spells and magic as Bowles wanders in its medina.

Although Bowles romanticises the medieval city of Fez and Drissi's house in his autobiography, his text knows that this is simply another version of the human condition that we can never be the other. Bowles remarks that Abdallah is hospitable, noting that his host said: 'I must stay in the Nejjarine house as long as I liked' (149). In this house, Bowles is plentifully supplied with food and drink and music and poetry from the East and the West. He recalls that the calm, peaceful atmosphere that surrounds Abdallah's house was now and then interrupted by an ancient phonograph 'with two records: Josephine Baker singing "La Petite Tonkinoise", Mohammed Abdel Wahab doing a popular Egyptian ballad from the twenties' (150). With such a memory, the autobiographer/traveller shows how he is 'confronted with a *mélange* of the very old and the most recent' (Bowles 1963: 36). The juxtaposition of this musical mediation is interesting. The proximity of extremes, as Michel Foucault terms it, 'the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other' (Foucault 1970: xvi) exerts a power of enchantment on Bowles.

More important, the combination of a serious visitor and what he encounters may be heterotopic in Foucault's sense of the term. The '*mélange* you confront all over North Africa', the traveller confirms, is 'one of the great charms of the place' (Bowles 1963: 36). In effect, encounters between Western and non-Western peoples recall what Mary Louise Pratt calls the 'contact zone' defined and expanded in Chapter 2 of the thesis. This is certainly a space of multiplicity and dialogism. It is, in Pratt's words, a space 'of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical

relations of power' (Pratt 1992: 7). Bowles brings Moroccan culture and meets it with his situation as an American writer to create a contact zone or a crossroads in which Bowles 'exhibits a particular fascination for the complexities of the interaction in the contact zone' (Pratt 1992: 44) and mystifies his potential readers. Demonstrated 'as the exotic charm of another system of thought', as Foucault puts it, the *mélange* is 'the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*' (Foucault 1970: xv). Morocco, with its cities and houses exemplified by Abdallah's house in Fez, is seen as the locus of juxtaposition, mixture between 'the very old and the most recent' (Bowles 1963: 36). Bowles thus depicts Morocco as a space of dialogue that embraces many views and bridges the irrevocable distance between the old and the new, the antique and the modern. Such mediation, which is the essence of Bowles' dream, wins the upper hand as the autobiographer/traveller allows the reader to see a culture in transition, in which a heteroclitic mixture of ideas, values and objects come together. He finds utopia, a fantastic, untroubled region in which the old and the new are able to unfold. Bowles describes the inner part of Abdallah's Moorish home as a space that neither rejects nor refuses him as the Western other. On the contrary, he 'plunges' into a house that makes him at home and secure. The peaceful interior projected in the architecture of the house is tied in symbiotic connection with an implicit geometry of thought, an interior world that makes the traveller aware of the dichotomy between a domestic interior and public exterior, between being and not being, between familiarity and alienation, between human being and the world surrounding him.

Abdallah's house is very secure, middle class. It arouses a sense of restfulness and security, but the autobiographer/traveller concurs that he is not to be enclosed in this 'ancient Fassi dwelling' (Bowles 1985: 149), where no one was 'allowed to pass through the doorway, either coming in from or going into the street' (149) and where his host goes out and 'stays twelve or eighteen hours at a stretch' (149). In Drissi's house the interior is radically separated from the exterior, a house in which a bourgeois can dwell and dream away from the noise and the threats of the streets, the topoi of the masses and of production. Bowles identifies as 'monastic' the two weeks he spent in 'that twelfth-century fortress' (Bowles 1963: 35), thus bringing together remote locales and memories of the past, an opaque past that might have reminded him of the puritan standards that were not his generation's. Bowles' metaphor of 'fortress' connotes what Walter Benjamin expresses as the 'unconscious retention of a posture of struggle and defense' (Benjamin 1999: I: 2, 3). It also bears analogy to that 'Fortress of Solitude' delineated by Lacan in his essay on the Mirror Stage (Lacan 1966: 94), the fortified enclosure constructed by the self as it protects itself from the division between inner and outer.

The formation of the 'I' is symbolized in dreams by a fortified Camp, that is to say, a stadium – setting up, from the inner arena to its enclosure, its surroundings of rubbish tips and marshes, two opposed fields of struggle where the subject is enmired in the quest for the high

and distant interior castle, the form of which (sometimes juxtaposed in the same scenario) symbolizes the id in a striking way.

(quoted in Vidler 2000: 169)

Through a defensive posture, the Fassi dwelling is an interior that constitutes itself as space cut off from the world and where the autobiographer/traveller feels himself, to use Tom Gunning's words, as 'a private individual divorced from the community. A cocoon of consumption' (Gunning 2003: 106). In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer recalls that he felt imprisoned at Drissi's 'fortress'. In this house screened from the world outside, the autobiographer/traveller was alone, thousands and thousands of miles from his boyhood. He recalls that 'as a reaction to having been so restricted in [his] movements' (Bowles 1985: 150) he moved to 'the Hotel Ariana' (150). Thus he escaped the bounds of home and 'spent every day wandering and exploring the city' (150), restlessly fetching utopia, a medieval country, a home he had lost and to which he could not go back. The movement from Drissi's house to the street, from security to insecurity, produces a semi-dream effect, figuring a return of the repressed, an effect similar to that of the familiar turned strange, in the sense of Freud's uncanny, for, to borrow Tom Gunning's words, 'the interior cannot withstand the exterior; it can only transform the nature of its looming invasion optically' (Gunning 2003: 107). In this vein, de Certeau's statement is insightful:

What this walking exile produces is precisely the body of legends that is currently lacking in one's own vicinity; it is a fiction, which moreover, has the double characteristic, like dreams or pedestrian rhetoric, of being the effect of displacements and condensations.

(De Certeau 1984: 107)

Wandering to explore the old medina of Fez, Bowles' physical travel doubles as, and intensifies, an inner journey. In the autobiography, he recalls that, along with Gordon, his travel companion, he 'walked for miles everyday, in all the quarters of Fez' (Bowles 1985: 277). He is thus a walker, a wanderer, whose body follows, in de Certeau's terms, 'the thicks and thins of an urban "text"' (de Certeau 1984: 93). Bowles preferred to lose his way in the medieval city, stumbling along without the help of the Ariadne's thread provided by the modern guidebook or tourist guide, only to bump into his 'first brotherhoods in action' (Bowles 1985: 150).

Brotherhood Ritual: A Magical Scene at the Fringes of Civilisation

Bowles' dream comes true. The autobiographer, who was once a wanderer in the 'complex and tunneled streets' (Bowles 1985: 274) of a dream city, finds himself a *flâneur* wandering across Fez's medina to explore the magical side of Morocco. The *flâneur* and the wanderer are linked but different: while the wanderer is more interested in the route, creating a condition within which he might arrive, the

flâneur is detached from the process of wandering, interpretive, reflecting experiences and memories. Just as the surrealists experimented with self-induced trances in the 1920s, so Bowles yearns to experience ‘magic’ in Morocco and seeks out its enigmatic power in the hope of directing his fertile imagination to the world outside New York, to the traditional, authentic and marginalised. His memories of Fez seem inseparable from their being embedded in the fabric of tradition, which finds its expression in the magical, the religious and the cult. The Romantic escapism that initially led Bowles to Morocco is enhanced as he travels to the heart of the country. It was in ‘the open street’ (150) of Fez that the autobiographer/traveller first had an opportunity for close observations of spells and rituals of brotherhoods such as Aissaoua and Hmadcha:

I had suspected that someday I would stumble onto a scene which would show me the pulse of the place, if not the exposed, beating heart of its magic, but it was a tremendous surprise to find it first in the open street. (150-151)

The autobiographer/traveller thus constructs autobiography that exposes ‘the pulse of the place’, and makes the ‘beating heart of its magic’ (150) readable. The ‘suppressed cults’, ‘hidden from the sight of non-Moslems’, is, surprisingly, before the autobiographer’s eye.

Stumbling onto the brotherhood ritual in ‘the open street’ is an ‘unbelievable’ chance for the wanderer, a chance that leads him to discover the

terrain of the extraordinary in the midst of the quotidian world. Such encounter is reminiscent of the fundamental concept of chance in surrealism – the encounter with the enigmatic in the everyday. Indeed, the chance encounter evokes, as Mary Ann Caws puts it, ‘the uncontrolled events of chance and the suggestion of reawakened memories, dreams, and nightmares’ (Caws 2004: 22). Bowles’ coming across the brotherhood ritual by chance shows surrealist attentiveness and a constant state of receptivity in him. It also evokes the important surrealist notion of the found object – the *trouvaille* or *objet trouvé*, that which one comes across by chance.

In *Without Stopping* too, Bowles states that for a variety of sources among educated Moroccans, ‘the mere existence of the cults is an abomination’ (Bowles 1985: 150). The nationalists ‘suppressed’ the cults ‘successfully for two decades or more’, and ‘when once again they were sanctioned, care was taken to see that the observances took place hidden from the sight of non-Moslems’ for fear of ‘ridicul[ing] the participants’ or ‘consider[ing] Moroccans a backward people’ (150). ‘Abomination’, ‘suppressed’, ‘hidden’, ‘ridicule’ and ‘backward’ are strings of words in Bowles’ narrative of memory that show how the *flâneur* in search of a ‘magic city’ (274) stumbles onto a magical scene that comes to lie at the fringes of civilisation and not at the centre, a scene imbued with powerlessness, distortion and forgetting. In this light Bowles voyages through, across and within patterned social acts as habits, rites and rituals in Morocco, as well as actual places. Magic is embedded in a more ample human life in which ‘the path of ritual action is seen as an indispensable mode for man anywhere and

everywhere of relating to and participating in the life of the world' (Tambiah 1990: 83) The autobiographer/traveller is exploring 'suppressed' rites in the city and interrogating their 'impure' and 'cognitively threatening' features to powerful but also puzzling effect.

Bowles' coming across the brotherhood cults partakes, as Hal Foster would have it, at once of 'the *imprévu* – that which could not have been expected and undetermined – and the *déjà vu* - that which has already been seen and overdetermined' (Foster 1993: 29). In *Without Stopping*, the autobiographer/traveller recalls that in the open street there were 'several thousand people near Bab Mahrouk, stamping, heaving, shuddering, gyrating, and chanting, all of them aware only of the overpowering need to achieve ecstasy' (Bowles 1985: 151). Such an ecstatic scene connotes the *déjà vu*. To use Breton's words, it 'responds to a question in the inner world that [Bowles] had not consciously asked' (Caws 2004: 22). In this manner, the autobiographer/traveller's chance encounter of the brotherhood cults connotes the memorable, a function of the 'symbolic order of the unconscious' (de Certeau 1984), which I have so far examined in relation to the process of Bowles' pedestrian practice. In this way, the *flâneur* encounters forgotten scenes in which the topography of the city of Fez still has hieroglyphic and magical characteristics; scenes that open up an interior world that might provide temporary sanctuary for the wanderer and the stranger. The uncanny *déjà vu* that overcomes the *flâneur* in the streets of Fez's medina when he comes across the brotherhood cults leads 'into a past that can be all the more profound' because it

is a past, as Benjamin would have it, that comes from ‘a childhood lived before then that speaks to him’ (Benjamin 1999: 880). On the other hand, the expression ‘tremendous surprise’ (Bowles 1985: 150-151) and the sentence ‘I should never have believed an account of the phenomenon had I not been watching it’ (150) clearly convey the sense of the *imprévu*. Bowles’ wandering in the city designates, as de Certeau would have it, what ‘authorizes’ spatial appropriations, what makes them possible or credible (de Certeau 1984: 105).

With the memorable, the *imprévu*, and the surprising, Bowles confronts the reader with aesthetic excitement associated with the spectacular and inexplicable, an optical artefact that recalls Edgar Allan Poe’s great story, ‘William Wilson’, linking the double and the uncanny *déjà vu*, which manifest the return of the repressed. In ‘William Wilson’, the narrator refers to his double as the uncanny *déjà vu*:

I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, in his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy – wild, confused, and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me, than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me, at some epoch very long ago – some point of the past even infinitely remote.

(Poe 1988: 40)

This is a moment of the *déjà vu*, a feeling of the uncanny that shows how Bowles' work links to Edgar Allan Poe's texts, with regard to persistent openness to random effects of chance. Bowles' coming across the brotherhood ritual in 'the open street' of Fez and Poe's stumbling onto the double in 'William Wilson' are moments that confirm the old, discarded belief and produce the spark that will marvel and surprise the reader who is invited to join in the writer's memory of the scene in the open street of the text. The memorable, the *imprévu*, the surprising link to the *déjà vu* and the always already, the retracing (of the labyrinth), and the largely familiar: all of these 'incidents' tie *Without Stopping* to Poe's texts and, importantly, make up the narrative of the memory; that is, the memory of the memory.

Observing the ritual in Fez, Bowles' ethnographic interest is evident. His penetrating gaze is tireless, continuously observing the timeless world of the adepts, meditating their theatricality as if they were 'in a huge drama' (127). He remembers that these are aware only of 'the overpowering need to achieve ecstasy' (151) as 'a life and a happiness that are quite outside human existence' (Macherey 1990: 213). Bowles writes: 'They stayed there all day and night ... When someone lost consciousness entirely and fell, he was dragged inside the wall of onlookers' (150-151). The expressions 'stayed there all day and night', moving 'with such extreme slowness that as one watched no visible progress was made' (151), 'in trance', and 'lost consciousness entirely and fell' enable us to understand how the autobiographer/traveller finds in the ritual memory a state

between dream and awakening, particularly susceptible to exploitation. The blurring of the line between interior and exterior phenomena is like a virtual grain without which Bowles would be unable to enter the realm of imagination and dissolve the barriers between conscious and unconscious, facts and fantasy. Bowles had practised 'the blank state' since childhood and keenly interested in altered states of consciousness. The aim of the brotherhood cults, Bowles states, is to allow the adepts a 'transcendence of normal consciousness' (150). This means that participants have mental experiences that transcend ordinary experiences, and allow them a flight, an escape from the constraints of reality. The trance dance is a leap that allows the adepts to pass from one province of meaning into another province, thus shifting from the reality of everyday life. In this way, the deep trance is to shake off the fetters of the rational in the thinking individual, to substitute the streets and quarters of the city with those of dreams and liminal space. Temporality has thus been collapsed into no time and no space. Temporality emerges as a version of interstitiality, of the in-between, where the travelling self is solitary, away from its social environment, and outside social relationships.

In this memory of the brotherhood cults can be found an insight into the character of Bowles' alienation and exoticism. The traveller, imbued with the surrealists' experiments with dreams and trance-like states, finds in the brotherhood ritual a sedative drug; he rediscovers a 'bromide' (151), a cliché 'that had escaped him until then' (151). Such a memory in the autobiography is, to use de Certeau's words 'the analogue of the facsimile produced, through a projection

that is a way of keeping aloof' by the autobiographer/traveller (de Certeau: 1984: 92-93). The 'bromide' betrays Bowles' participation between cultures through the blurring of national boundaries. Observing the ritual in Fez, Bowles becomes aware that non-individualism is an inherent aspect of religious dances, that faith is practised in a mass, and that it is the sense of community that nurtures it: 'Here for the first time I was made aware that a human being is not an entity and that his interpretation of exterior phenomena is meaningless unless it is shared by the other members of his cultural group' (Bowles 1985: 151). Caught between attraction and repulsion, the autobiographer/traveller is at once running the contested boundary separating a Western traveller who is on his own and a person looking at a scene he wants to be part of in order to achieve 'ecstasy' (125), some ultimate wisdom that can inform his autobiography.

From this point of view, the contents of Bowles' practice of *flâneur* remain revelatory in so far as the wanderer 'realized that it was a procession', and not a 'mob' (151), which underlines the adepts' unity of purpose, and which reconstructs the figure of the American traveller as a lonely one, outside and across the Western world. The brotherhood conveys solidarity, unity and continuity in space and time. Still more revelatory is the motive of unveiling the 'pulse', the unconscious of the place, in an age committed to faith in the explanatory value of science. The autobiographer/traveller's perceptions are closely allied with surrealism and Dada, which was always 'a shared endeavour – an experiment in how to extend the forms of writing, experiencing, deciphering, depicting, and above all, thinking as a collective experience' (Caws 2004: 18), in

an age in which the experience of community has become rare and its endangered status announced, and political rhetoric has become empty, more and more submerged in a flood of symbols. In Morocco – in Fez, as in Tangier – things are unlike anything he had seen in New York or Europe. Such an experience resonates with his strong desire to escape the technological age to which he had been born, with its empirical, objective observation and testable conclusions.

The act of *flâneur* also places Bowles in the tradition of American writers, particularly Poe. In Bowles' act of *flâneur*, there are many echoes of Poe, not least of 'The Man of the Crowd', a walk narrative that takes place in a cityscape, London. In 'The Man of the Crowd', the narrator's obsessive pursuit compels him to follow an 'old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age' (Poe 1988: 214). The narrator physically moves in pursuit of the stranger in a circuitous journey all the way, 'to the verge of the city, amid regions very different from those we had hitherto traversed' (*ibid.*: 216). He winds around the city retracing the old man's steps to pry into the interior of his soul: 'How wild a history,' I said to myself, 'is written within that bosom!' (*ibid.*: 214). But the cityscape deteriorates into a cluttered architecture of chaos and confusion and the mad behaviour of the stranger provides no sign of recognition. The reader is left with the romantic sensation of the mystery of human nature: 'It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds' (*ibid.*: 217). This is because the heart of the stranger 'does not permit itself to be read' (*ibid.*: 211). The unconscious cannot be unveiled. The old man is textually illegible because he disintegrates into the masses to become 'the man of the crowd' (*ibid.*: 217).

As Martin Gutiérrez states,

the narrator loses his identity in fanatically pursuing him through the streets of London, transforming himself in a mask of the pursuer's sinister movements in an uncanny visualization of his own fugitive double. It is a terrifying and compulsive detection of his own shadow.

(Gutiérrez 2000: 168-169)

'The Man of the Crowd' reveals how immersion into the masses dissipates both the old man's and the narrator's identity. They are both socially conditioned, and the social conditioning has dissolved them in the falsity built up around themselves and their society. 'The man of the crowd' is, like the house of Usher, 'a mystery all insoluble' (Poe 1988: 51). The stranger is inexplicable. The story, like the walking man, is a hideous mystery, which 'does not permit itself to be read' (*ibid.*: 211). It generates uncanny feelings associated with the liminal, the threshold between the homely and unhomely, between the ordinary and the weird, between being awake and dreaming. By the end of the story, Poe blocks the inspection of the gaze and installs the law of the letter by a final textual inscription of a German quotation: 'er lasst sich nicht lesen' (*ibid.*: 217), thus setting the law of the letter 'above and in substitution of the letter of the law, the social and moral faces of real criminality' (Gutiérrez 2000: 169). The soul is a cipher for Poe, a secret story sinking back into the fictive, illegible, inexplicable darkness of its cryptographic signs.

It is a question, then, of a literary genealogy that we are drawn into, an uncanny intertextuality, which has to do with Poe's influence on Bowles. Both the autobiographical memory and Poe's story involve a *flâneur*, to illuminate Bowles' and Poe's ambivalent relationship to their surroundings. In both texts, the *flâneur* wanders across the city (whether London or Fez) to unveil the 'unconscious' and connect Man to all that he had lost in the trauma of civilisation. Both *Without Stopping* and 'The Man of the Crowd' involve a rendering foreign of the speaker. But more striking, perhaps, we become conscious of the fact that Bowles' text of memory, along with his fiction and non-fiction, are, as this thesis argues, intimately related to Poe's text, 'The Man of the Crowd', as well as 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'Ligeia' and 'William Wilson', to name only a few. Both Bowles' and Poe's texts are marked by instances of the uncanny, which has to do with experiences of the liminal. The symbiotic relationship between Poe's and Bowles' texts is a key concern that will be brought back into the discussion of Bowles' fiction in Chapter 4. Nonetheless, it is important to note here that both Poe's and Bowles' texts might be said to be in-between, in suspension, trance-like conditions that haunt the texts like a phantom.

The medieval city of Fez, combined with the act of *flâneur*, is at the same time an allegory of the reader wandering on the canvas, the streets of the text, being surprised by fortuitous encounters, like that of the brotherhood in action. Such fortuitous encounters produce a gap between what is encountered and the action it induces in the reader. The transposition in space seeks to represent an external reality beyond representation and implies its magical effect.

Bowles' fortuitous encounter with the enacted brotherhood cults, like transposition in the use of language, has the effect of 'distorted' communication. To use Paul Jahshan's term, such fortuitous encounters 'denude the signifier and leave it floating to amaze by the diversity of [their] signification'; they suggest 'the interstices, the gaps, the alleys, and passageways that run parallel to the lines on the pages of the text' (Jahshan 2001: 195). It is the allegory of chance which accounts for Bowles' works on the streets of the text in order to bind the signifier, dependent on the senses for its expression, and the signified, an intelligible, rational sense. The allegory of chance thus binds the incompatible and holds the fabric together.

And yet, the autobiographical narrative thread is consciously cut, since it is the depository of the unconscious and forgotten. Bowles is aware of the mediations. Like the 'gyrating' (Bowles 1985: 151) movements of the brotherhood adepts, and the slow circular movements of the waterwheel in the garden of the passenger in Fez, the autobiography must revolve around a *structure* which stitches the chance-like memories together. The circular movements of the waterwheel and 'gyrating' movements of the adepts resonate with the peaceful space of the writer who enters the realm of imagination. Each turn, each move, each memory is an open struggle between the 'writer and place' (Bowles 1958a: 360), to escape the trauma of civilisation, to speak and cast a spell. Each word is knowledge, wisdom, magic. Each word rushes onward in the hope of reaching the limit, which is decentred and off centre. As in Bakhtin's heteroglossia, Bowles' narrative of memory, in order not to disintegrate, must revolve around a centre,

centrifugally, partaking of social and historical heteroglossia, while at the same time catering to a centripetal pull, an individualised, monoglossic control of fragments from within (Bakhtin 1981: 271-272)

Put in semiotic terms, the apparent uniformity of the narrative of memory is itself fragmentary, as the complex order of the sign-system camouflages a whole unity of signification, a paradigm of differentiation, in de Certeau's words 'effects of dissimulation and escape, possibilities of moving into other landscapes' (de Certeau 1984: 107). Bowles' concept of Fez, its streets, its ramparts, its garden, and quarters, Abdallah's house, Tangier and its streets, never makes them identical. The authentic loses its immediacy. Its place is taken by semiotic meditations that seem to endlessly defer authenticity. The delay of rational interpretation enters into and divides the moment only to declare the plurality of the real and to emphasise the instability of meaning in an arbitrary way, only to declare the gap, the disconnection between the signifier and the signified. In this sense, Bakhtin's theoretical insight on the dialogic principle is relevant:

No living word relates to its object in a *singular* way: between the word and its object, between the word and the speaking subject, there exists an elastic environment of other alien words about the same object, the same theme, and this is an environment that is often difficult to penetrate ... and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a

trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

(Bakhtin 1981: 276)

In the last pages of *Without Stopping*, Bowles asserts that the collage narrative, 'rather than being an eyewitness account of the event, is instead only a memory of the last time it was recalled' (Bowles 1985: 366-367). The autobiographer/traveller's astute understanding leads not to the market place, as it does for Bakhtin, but to Derrida's concept of *différance*, the textual vortex of endless supplementarity. Bowles' text of memory thus shows that there is a constant (Derrida-like) deferring of memories. 'The memory of that memory' (367) conveys both, putting them off in time, postponing their presence and differing, marking their difference (in space) so that they are captured in textual mediation, 'the memory of that memory' (367) not the memory of the real thing. Both the chance-like memories and 'the memory of that memory' form the condition of this key Bowlesian text and are a prerequisite for his penetration into the world of magic.

At this point, the distinction between fact and fiction, autobiographical recollection and autobiographical invention, begins to blur. Bowles' autobiography offers itself as a circle, something that is closed on itself, a self-sufficient universe in which memories return, are repeated and recreated; they are the beginning and the end at the same time. Bowles' narrative of memory does not seem to reveal reliable self-knowledge, nor reliable knowledge about the

space he depicts, but it demonstrates, as the waterwheel and the ‘gyrating’ movements of the brotherhood adepts connote, the impossibility of closure. When reality is no longer given an absolute, ‘Below (psychologically) and beyond (geographically) ordinary reality there existed another reality’ (Clifford 1988: 121). *Without Stopping* shares this ironic situation with surrealism, as well as with relativist ethnography. Bowles travels to magical cities to connect the world inside to the space outside, the ‘world in the technical sense of the transcendental horizon of our experience [to] an inner-worldly sense’ (Jameson 1981: 112).

The autobiography is articulated by fissures, lacunae, where the different memories and passages structure the linear space of the text, thus producing an anti-text. They also suggest the ever-present risk of running into objects, scenes or mental associations, diverting the readers’ attention from the original goal, leading them to another direction, another meaning, as allegorised by the act of walking randomly in the street. Fez, its streets, its ramparts, its garden, and quarters, Drissi’s house, all serve as allegories of this double process. The inner recesses of the city are quiet and silent and its external streets unveil mysteries, magic that consists of rituals such as that of the brotherhood cults in action. Of course, the cityscape is only a remembered city and this itself is recalled in a dream, the locus of non-rational thinking that Freud describes in terms of ‘condensation and displacement’. Bowles’ act of *flânerie* into the ‘magical place’ enacts his readiness to shift from one context to another. The text of memory does not unfold in a linear manner; the memories, like the language that expresses them, are recursive, combinatory, and ordered hierarchically. In its aesthetic

dimension, Bowles' memory of 'the twelfth century fortress' and 'the medieval city' are representations of that which lurks behind the unstable links between signifier and signified. They are representations of a mental state of projection that elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a slippage between walking in the city as dream and as reality. Bowles' narrative of memory demarcates the medieval space as departures and passages, beginnings and crossings in the narrative they produce and by which they are produced as well. They introduce us to the optics of the unconscious. As de Certeau has superbly shown, they authorise frontiers to be established and displaced, founded and trespassed over (de Certeau 1984: 122).

The Double Face of Travel

Paul Bowles' travel has a double face in *Without Stopping*. Geographic displacement, as the most familiar element in human life, becomes a symbol of interior displacement. The symbolic value of travel depends to a large extent on its use as a metaphor. Indeed, as to borrow Frederik Barth's words, 'Through metaphor something familiar or distinctive is used as a model or analogy for something less familiar or less obvious' (Barth 1975: 199); 'the essence of metaphor' he adds, 'is the use of the familiar to grasp the elusive and unrecognized, rather than the mere ordering the phenomena by homology' (*ibid.*). The metaphor of travel in *Without Stopping* shows Bowles' attempt to construct a fluid, fragmented and decentred self, a self transformed by crossing

borders and boundaries. The traveller in motion seeks to have a name, which is his own

The central concern of Bowles' narrative of memory is the question of identity, of how to construct the individual subject for his reader with whom he has a tacit contract. Bowles' text is an attempt to fill in a void, an empty signifier, to fill in his name, with a referential and existential signified, a trajectory that bridges the gap between the author, narrator, and protagonist of the autobiographical text. Bowles' conception of his self in *Without Stopping* is woven in the garment of the traveller, dweller-in-travel. Such a construction of self, which owes its procedures to ethnography, surrealism and psychoanalysis, presents the traveller in motion, as a remedy, a constructed 'scenario' bringing back the 'disturbing proximity of what has been exiled' (de Certeau 1984: 197). The traveller's body in motion transforms itself into writing, to use de Certeau's words, into 'a blank page on which a scriptural operation can produce indefinitely the advancement of a will-to-do, a progress' (de Certeau 1984: 196). Such a transformation of the traveller's body in motion represents the body of a language, synthesised in the name, in the signature – as if 'the erasure of patriarchal ego allowed a re-appropriation, a re-formulation of the name that becomes matricial' (Pasquali 1996: 88, my translation), not the autobiographer's old name with its previous signifieds, but that of *being* and of potential experiences in the narrative of memory they produce and by which they are produced. The autobiographer thus embarks on a journey that involves a drift back to the primordial moment of existence, to the primordial moment of being.

In a similar vein, such a transformation of the body in motion to the segmented body of language in motion wraps up the memory of *Without Stopping* into its memory, ‘the memory of that memory’, not the memory of the real thing, revealing thus lacunae, gap, and loss. The effect is that, to use Bowles’ words, ‘the report, rather than being an eyewitness account of the event, is instead only a memory of the last time it was recalled’ (Bowles 1985: 367). Bowles’ writing of his narrative of memory repeats this lack, this loss in each of its graphs, as de Certeau would have it, ‘an impossible adequation between presence and the sign’ (de Certeau 1984: 195). Such a deferring, or delay of rational interpretation, has entered into and divided the moment. In such a way, the autobiographer’s writing of memory repeats the relics of the autobiographer’s walk through language in his autobiography transiting memories and recalling them as they journey ad infinitum, memory of memory of memory.

Travel is, therefore, for Bowles a source of reference and a resource of signification, since the most important transitions are written not only into his autobiography as a life journey, but also into his travelogues, his translations and his fiction, unfolding the events of trekking through the cityscape and the landscape as he moves about relentlessly. The autobiographer leaves a spatial marker and arrives at another, accompanying his relentless motion throughout his career by constant experimentation with different narrative forms and genres. This mobility, this instability is projected in Bowles’ novels and short stories, for, like Jack Kerouac’s characters in *On the Road* and *Dharma Bums*, Bowles’ characters – Port Moresby, Nelson Dyar, Malika, the Professor, Duncan Marsh –

all set forth into a series of restless, frantic trips. They all go outside ‘through the most remote regions’ (Bowles 1977: 165) searching for ‘the bright horizon’ (*ibid.*), for an elusive *locus amoenus*.

Bowles concludes his autobiography with the farewell of ‘the dying man’ (Bowles 1985: 367), Paul Valéry’s epigram that he also uses in his first novel, *The Sheltering Sky* (1977): ““Good-bye,” says the dying man to the mirror they hold in front of him. “We won’t be seeing each other any more”” (367), ‘I no longer imagine myself as an onlooker at the scene, but instead as the principal protagonist’ (367). Such a farewell is suggestive in a twofold manner: it projects the estrangement Bowles felt before his own image in the mirror. It also raises the question of whether death is the final oneness, or as Hamlet instinctively describes Death, the ‘undiscovered’ country from which the traveller never returns. Bowles’ written text of memory is the gesture of ‘a dying man’ before one’s own image in the mirror, struggling against aging, against decay. But now the autobiographer’s reflected image has become separable, transportable. And where is it transported? The narrative of memory hands itself to the other – the reader – who moves it from retrospection and forgetfulness to the present. While facing the mirror, Bowles knows that, ultimately, his autobiography hands itself to the reader, to the examiner of his labour. He knows that his life journey, his experiences are beyond his reach.

In this vein, Bowles’ autobiography resists decay because, to use Clifford’s words, ‘it travels through space and time’ (Clifford 1988: 109), seeking meaning outside itself, in a different place, that of the reader (de Certeau

1984: 195). The autobiographer lives on whenever the reader, whose attention the narrative of memory seeks to alter, remembers him but not as the name with its previous signifieds that Bowles attempts to conceal by inventing for himself the pose of the incessant traveller and by constantly referring to his writings in his narrative of memory. In such a way the autobiography symbolically connects life and death, replacing the retrospective memories with the avowal of a name, which is always already deferred (from the subject), and proposing a promise of life, against the grain of amnesia, only to anticipate that which escapes the autobiographical text. In this vein, *Without Stopping* spells out a lack, an absence in its precondition and its goal that has always already been altered by its mobility, in which each detail is elusive, fluid and unstable since each recall alters them, since each (re)call is 'the memory of that memory' (367).

Chapter 4: Selected Fiction: The Myth of the Fall into Modernity

Paul Bowles' escape from what he presents as the Poe-like nightmare of restriction and control in the United States became the motivation for his itinerant life and for his writings, which reflect his experience of being 'in the middle of a truly exotic culture, and perhaps one of the strangest of all time' (Bowles 1985: 341). His short stories and novels may be seen as a voyage from the States, where 'civilization had turned and begun to devour its own body' (*ibid.*). Most of Bowles' stories travel into alien places, into what Mary Louise Pratt calls a 'contact zone' with cultures and traditions that blend into each other, producing conditions that stand outside the rationality and order of the American world.

The function of this chapter is to provide the reader with a basic framework in which Paul Bowles' fiction can be viewed, in the light of the preceding paragraph. Although I shall be drawing upon a range of Bowles' short and long fiction in this chapter, the key short texts are 'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode'. The chapter will conclude with a close discussion of Bowles' novel *Let It Come Down*. This chapter, like the thesis as a whole, is not organised chronologically, so the texts are not dealt with in sequence, but, rather, to reflect the range of Bowles' themes. In this chapter, the focus is on the travelling and the telling. As mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, there are to be sure, important and influential stories outside this central core, but to discuss Bowles' novels and short stories in full would have left little space for the neglected 'translations' and autobiographical texts. I will, nevertheless, refer to a range of

Bowles' fiction in passing, drawing out similarities and differences. Into the discussion of the two short stories and the novel, a few digressions will be woven on Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* and *The Spider's House*, and such stories as 'The Delicate Prey', 'The Echo', 'The Little House', 'New York 1965', and 'The Eye', where characters travel to the unknown, and encounter disastrous consequences.

'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode': The Edge of Anger

Bowles showed a sustained commitment to the form of the short story. During a period of less than fifty years, he published around sixty stories, and there are noticeable connections between literary form and the profoundly troublesome questions of identity that are broached elsewhere in this thesis. In the short fiction, these questions are addressed obliquely, sometimes even unconsciously, in terms of authority and order, purpose and direction; importantly, these concerns are often mapped onto the physical landscape. Particularly pressing in this chapter is a careful reading of the narrative form, and here I have been influenced by Geoffrey Hartman's proposal that to go 'beyond formalism' (Hartman 1970: 42) and address social and historical concerns, the critic must, first, be a close reader of literary form.

Bowles' short stories and novels are remarkable for the way they appeal to an alien landscape to spin a narrative that has intricate winding threads. By a play of events, Bowles 'constructs situations', moments of life for his characters, and then explores their possibilities. The more bizarre, the more complex and the

more shocking a situation, the better for Bowles' purposes, even though there is also an infrastructure of ordinary life. Bowles' imaginative strategy is to set up the characters' journeys as self-discovery, but to integrate into the narrative alternative perspectives upon those journeys. Before concentrating upon 'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode' as particularly compelling examples, it is worth digressing to observe that, to take just one example from each of Bowles' collections, 'The Delicate Prey', 'The Echo', 'A Friend of the World', 'Midnight Mass' and 'New York 1965', all conform to this structure. In Bowles' collection of stories, *Unwelcome Words*, a number of characters have fled to Tangier because their eccentricities and perversions make it impossible for them to live under the controls of Western culture. The story 'New York 1965' is about Kathleen Andrews. Like many of Bowles' works, the story is preoccupied with the contest between rational and non-rational mental forces. Kathleen's conformity to the mandates of family and society rapidly erodes under the pressure of her inner voice, which insists and insists. Kathleen is determined not to conform to the destructive life she sees around her in New York. She believes that 'my life is my own to do with as I please' (Bowles 1988: 17). Kathleen's impulses lead her and her son Alaric on a journey to Morocco. Like many others of her generation – hippies, beats and outcasts – Kathleen goes to Morocco in search of greater freedom.

When Bowles looks at the world, he sees the seemingly solid land is constantly being deformed and the surface on which we now stand is sliding. Here is an excerpt from his conversation with Jeffrey Bailey:

If I'm persuaded that our life is predicated upon violence, that the entire structure of what we call civilization, the scaffolding that we've built up over the millennia, can collapse at any moment, then whatever I write is going to be affected by that assumption.

(Caponi 1993: 122)

This somewhat apocalyptic assumption plays out in his writings. Following Joseph Conrad, Bowles' writings call human assurance into question and create a new context in which domestication and alienation may be explored. Many of Bowles' texts set up situations for a protagonist who feels able to cope with his own culture but once he encounters another culture, he loses disastrously. Richard F. Patteson has emphasised the architectural metaphors Bowles uses in his fictional representations of 'outsidedness and rootlessness'. For Patteson, much of Bowles' fiction is about coping with a world that is 'unremittingly outside' (Patteson 1987: x).

Bowles' vision in his fiction reaches an apocalyptic view of man's failure to learn in the case of certain characters. Port Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky*, Nelson Dyar in *Let It Come Down*, the Professor in 'A Distant Episode', as well as Duncan March in 'The Eye' and Malika in 'Here to Learn', all meet the disastrous consequences of plunging beyond the 'normal' limits of the self. Their different fates are the result of cultures failing to learn from each other. In such a way Bowles' works are a manifestation of awful danger that shows the flimsy

edifice that is the disconnected self, projected onto the landscape. The tortured body of the Professor of 'A Distant Episode', the poisoned body and cuts on the feet of Duncan Marsh in 'The Eye', as well as changes in Malika's costume, are all carved into the landscape.

The novella 'Here to Learn' is the odyssey of a young Moroccan girl, Malika, moving out from her traditional home to foreign destinations – Madrid, Paris, Switzerland, and finally Los Angeles – and then back to Tangier and Tetuan. Both Moroccan and Euro-American cultures are brought together through Malika's desire to cross the boundaries of her own tradition. Just as Port Moresby, Nelson Dyar and Kathleen Andrews seek to shed American values, Malika embraces them. She learns Spanish at the local nunnery up to the age of five. She meets Tim who drives her away in his 'long yellow car' (Bowles 1981: 47-48). She learns to be elegant. And, like Hadija, who meets Dyar in *Let It Come Down*, the young girl meets Tony who 'dress[ed] her the way he wanted her to look when they went out together' (60). Malika also gets married to Tex, studies English and, like Cinderella or, perhaps more appropriately, like Horatio Alger, she moves from rags to riches. In 'Here to Learn', Malika is modernised: she learns to ski, and becomes familiar with foreign cuisine, shifting thus between worlds. Like the Moresbys, but in the opposite direction, Malika's awareness of being away from home is suddenly intense. On the airplane bound to Los Angeles,

the journey went on for such a long time that she grew worried She shut her eyes and sat quietly, feeling that she had gone much too far away – so far that now she was nowhere. Outside the world, she whispered to herself in Arabic, and shivered. (76)

The cost of learning for Malika has reversed Moresby's journey and the journey of the Professor in 'A Distant Episode', as well as that of Kathleen Andrews' in the story of 'New York 1965'. In 'A Distant Episode', the Professor wants to be in both places at the same time. He wants to operate between 'here' and 'there', between home and the desert and to shift positions in 'significant ways'. But, as the *qaouaji* asserts, 'You can't be there and here' (1979 a: 41). The Professor wanders too far into the desert. All these journeys can be read as journeys of Western angst, yielding to reverie. In *The Sheltering Sky*, Kit tries to keep from wandering off mentally, making 'a great effort to be present, to take part in the little life going on inside the creaking wooden walls of the car' (Bowles 1977: 78-79). When Port becomes ill, he says to Kit, 'I don't know whether I'll come back' (210). Later, he adds: 'I've been trying to get back. Here' (215). In the end, he feels awful, torn between a safe 'here' and an uncomfortable 'there' and says: 'Sometimes I'm not here, and I don't like that. Because then I'm far away and all alone. No one could ever get there. It's too far. And there I'm alone' (216). Malika's, the Linguistics Professor's, Kit's and Port's, as well as Kathleen's deracination is complete.

In 'Here to Learn', Malika eventually decides to return home after the death of her wealthy husband. She finds the foreign Western landscape 'meaningless' (Bowles 1981: 96). Yet, returning from her long journey in the civilised world, she finds out that the *arroyos* have been flattened: 'Mina Glagga's and all the houses bordering on the gully had disappeared', and that 'Bulldozers had made a new landscape of emptiness' (95). Barracks and borders are thus being destroyed. The more primitive land is being directly altered. The Americanised girl returns to her old home in 'a new landscape of emptiness, only to discover that 'it is too far for the possibility of return' (84). Such emptiness recalls another story in *Midnight Mass*. In 'The Little House', where 'the town had crept up on all sides' (Bowles 1981: 21), the old woman, Lalla Aicha, is not dead; her history has not been eradicated. Unlike Malika, Lalla Aicha returns to the country. Sadek, her son, decides 'to take his mother back to the country to live with the rest of her family' (30). 'It's not my fault if you're still living in this little house', Lalla Aicha told her son, to justify the poison she had put in the meal.

In these stories, Malika's search is parallel to, but in the opposite direction to Bowles' other characters, Port and Kit, Nelson Dyar, Stenham and the Professor. In all these stories, the structure of civilisation, 'the scaffolding that we've built up over the millenia' (Caponi 1993: 122) designates human institutions in metaphors of emptiness. In 'Here to Learn', we also read that 'It was fortunate that [Malika's mother] did not see them destroy her house in order to build the new road', for she is dead (Bowles 1981: 96). Malika thus finds that people and land have increasingly changed and that she is out of place. The story

highlights how modernity has ruined Malika's sense of an essential identity rooted in a place of origin. Malika's relation to Mother Earth, to the old way of life, to Nature, is severed. Tetuan, like many other Moroccan towns, is suffering the assault of modernity. All around, societies are desintegrating; the world is 'closing in' and the past, pristine world is now lost for Malika, as it is for Port and Kit, Nelson Dyar, Stenham and the Professor. From the edge of the landfill, Malika sees that the surface of the hillside is 'uniform' and has 'no pattern' (96).

This feeling of modernity ruining a faith in essence and origins is dominant in Bowles' writing and closely connects his works to Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques* (1955). Indeed, Claude Lévi-Strauss' leitmotif of ethnographic mourning, emblematised in the title *Tristes Tropiques*, is obliquely applicable to 'Here to Learn' – and to 'A Distant Episode', too. *Tristes Tropiques* is a commentary on Lévi-Strauss' fieldwork, and has quite a personal, even autobiographical, dimension to it. In some senses, it stands in a similar relationship to Lévi-Strauss as a professional anthropologist as does a story or novel to the author who draws closely upon his own experiences. Travelling in the opposite direction from Lévi-Strauss, 'Here to Learn' expresses feelings of grief, as nature, land, raw materials and also people are transformed: Malika 'felt like weeping' 'not for her mother' who is dead, but 'it was for herself' (Bowles 1981: 96), for her changing self and for her lost past and her inner death. Malika 'felt her throat tighten painfully as she told herself that it no longer existed' (95-96). Indeed, Bowles' configuration that 'mass society' will only reduce the world to a 'cultural vacuum', a 'malaise' that will sink the world further into boredom

(Hibbard 1993: 158), comes very close to that of Lévi-Strauss as he travels up the Amazon into the heart of Brazil, collecting myths and artefacts, and lamenting the worn, debased world that emerged from the war. He writes:

Mankind has opted for a monoculture; it is in the process of creating a mass civilization, as beetroot is grown in the mass Our society feels an increasing need as it is conscious of sinking further into boredom.

(Lévi-Strauss 1992: 38)

Like Lévi-Strauss, the narrator of 'Here to Learn', suspects that the world is 'a dim expanse' (Bowles 1981: 96), a vast emptiness superimposed upon emptiness. What is most urgently being mourned is the loss of a human landscape in which the source of feeling is that it is natural because it is native. Where for Bowles, for Malika and Lévi-Strauss, change means disorder, the argument, as it goes, unfolds that the oppositions I am going to discuss are not fixed, but rather unstable.

Melancholy and regret connect the *tristesse* of Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, even if the geographical direction is reversed, with 'Here to Learn'. Bowles' reflections may be understood by invoking what Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* calls a 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1977: 128-135), in which what modernity is 'most visibly destroying is "Nature": that complex of the land as it was in the past and in childhood, which both ageing and alteration destroy' (Williams 1973: 138). Bowles' stories handle the anger, guilty feelings in which 'not only innocence and security but peace and plenty have been imprinted'

(Williams 1973: 139). Such a feeling figures in 'Here to Learn', in *Let It Come Down*, in 'A Distant Episode', and also in *Without Stopping* as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, and in *The Sheltering Sky*, where Port investigated 'a small ruined building' (Bowles 1977: 131). He found it occupied by an old man, and 'around the trunk he had built a shelter' (Bowles 1977: 131). In all these narratives, existence among fragments is depicted as a process of ruin and cultural decay. The reader also senses this feeling of existence among fragments in *Their Heads are Green and their Hands are Blue*, where Bowles, like Lévi-Strauss, sees the 'by-products of our civilization' as a disease that ravages 'alien cultures' (Bowles 1963: viii). Raymond Williams in *The Country and the City* finds this feeling a repetitive, pastoral 'structure of feeling' (Williams 1973).

As Williams informs us, idealisation of the past, like idolisation of the primitive peoples who have supposedly escaped the ills of modernity, too often serves as a mask for the oppressions of the present. Bowles' melancholic reflections on the past are a response to a disturbing history and an altering landscape. This applies to his idealisation of Morocco and Moroccans. For Bowles, the roots of tradition are cut and, to borrow Clifford's phrase, 'pure products go crazy' (Clifford 1988: 4). In Los Angeles, Malika could find 'no pattern' to the life in the streets (Bowles 1981: 79). It is 'slightly dead'. 'She felt herself to be far, far away from everything she had ever known' (79); 'she saw herself as someone shipwrecked on an unknown shore peopled by creatures whose intentions were unfathomable. And no one could come to rescue her' (84-85). 'The freeways inspired her with dread, for she could not rid herself of the

idea that some unnameable catastrophe had occurred' (79). This does not mean that Los Angeles and New York are cities with no pattern. Rather, it is a different pattern. In a voice we recognise as Bowles' we read:

In Morocco, in Europe, there had been people who were busy doing things, and there had been others watching. Always, no matter where one was or what one was doing, there were watchers. She had the impression that in America everyone was going somewhere and no one sat watching. This disturbed her.

(Bowles 1981: 79)

That 'it's all going by, nothing going on', disturbs Bowles himself. The writer thinks that a society with everyone 'busy doing things' is bleak; others are needed to sit and 'watch', to serve as a consoling intellect that converts the sufferer into a spectator. Bowles has this to say to Oliver Evans in a 1971 interview:

It's wonderful that here there are those little ... rocks in the brook that just stay there while everything else rushes by them in the water, people who just stand or sit all day while time goes by and people go by. That's the proof that life goes on, somehow, whereas in New York there isn't any proof. It's all going by, nothing going on.

(Hibbard 1993: 159)

This is just sentimentalism. One cannot stop the flow, the coming and going of things. 'Nature', as Raymond Williams explains, can be seen 'to be both complicated and changing, as other ideas and experiences change' (Williams 2005: 67).

In 'Here to Learn', we read that once back in Morocco, Malika has forgotten the name of her mother's friend who 'eyed Malika's blue jeans with distaste and did not ask her inside' (Bowles 1981: 96). The transformed body of the Moroccan girl, 'dress[ed]' the way Tony 'wanted her to look when they went out together' (60), is a proof of the loss, but also a form of production and counter-production that distinguishes her from the fixed. Similarly, 'The town's new aspect', which 'confused her' (95), the 'Bulldozers' that 'had made a new landscape of emptiness, a great embankment of earth, ashes and refuse that stretched downward to the bottom of the ravine' (95), all show how, in a curious way, Bowles idealises the traditional life and in a way vilifies it. According to Bowles, the past, and never the future, is the only source of values. But as Raymond Williams explains, 'It is primarily to emergent formations, (though often in the form of modification or disturbance in older forms) that the structure of feeling, as solution, relates' (Williams 1977: 134). What Malika, Lévi-Strauss, and Bowles see as a threatening mobility, are, to use Williams' words, 'the ... sum of so many lives, jostling, colliding, disrupting, adjusting, recognizing, settling, moving again to new spaces ... this transforming social experience' (Williams 1973: 164). In 'Here to Learn', Malika expects the town to remain static, an unmoving backdrop, and yet the transformed body of Malika makes her

fluid at the shifting boundary of the village. Paul Bowles is as blind as Malika and as Lévi-Strauss. There is always a pattern in Morocco and in the States. Both West and East are part of a historical process, as Williams has shown. Significantly, Bowles' short story 'A Distant Episode' seems to be more perceptive as a close reading will reveal.

Bowles' extensive travels throughout South America and Northern Africa – especially Morocco – provided the thematic and situational basis for nearly all of his writings, including 'A Distant Episode'. Set in Morocco 'A Distant Episode' has all the attributes of a complex story, notably because the landscape transposes its features to the character of the Professor and marks him as peripheral and eccentric. The Professor's journey seems to bring together a number of the issues which arise in connection with the other characters in Bowles' short stories and novels (as well as in his autobiography and translations) and to push certain possibilities and paradoxes to their extreme conclusions. To Oliver Evan's query if Port Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky* is a reincarnation of the Professor of 'A Distant Episode', Bowles states that 'they're all the professor ... what I wanted to tell was the story of what the desert can do to us. The desert is the protagonist' (Caponi 1993: 54).

Indeed, 'A Distant Episode' holds the seeds for several themes Bowles will explore in other stories and novels, notably *The Sheltering Sky*. In this connection, Bowles' works are dominated by journeys out, away from the domestic, towards the alien, from a secure inside to an unknown outside, far into the interior regions of human experience. Characters set out 'through the most

remote regions', 'toward the bright horizon' (Bowles 1977: 165). Port Moresby of *The Sheltering Sky*, Nelson Dyar of *Let It Come Down*, Duncan March of 'The Eye', Malika in 'Here to Learn', Kathleen in 'New York 1965', the old woman in 'The Scorpion' and the Linguistics Professor, all go outside, and risk their safety to penetrate the other's culture. Yet, as the closing remarks of the previous section suggest, we might be advised to put these conceptual oppositions into quotation marks to signal that they are part of a changing historical process. The desert in 'A Distant Episode' can be considered a symbol, and brings to mind T. S. Eliot's use of it in *The Waste Land*. Later in this chapter, I will examine how the Professor's journey into the desert helps us to focus clearly on the cross-cultural encounters between cultures and civilisations that have become an even more urgent preoccupation in the years since Bowles' work appeared.

In 'A Distant Episode', the Professor undertakes a trip to Ain Tadouirt, an imaginary setting somewhere in the south of Morocco, to study 'variations on Moghrebi' (Bowles 1979a: 39), collect camel-udder bags, and visit a friend he made during his last visit ten years earlier. In its concern for Moroccan local dialects, the story reveals from the very first page an ethnographic dimension. The Professor is an expert in languages. He says, introducing himself to the chauffeur of the bus which takes him on his trip to visit a town and a man he has not seen for ten years: 'A geologist? Ah, no! I'm a linguist' (39). Being a linguist who studies the languages of an alien country, the Professor resembles an academic orientalist. The Professor is also a polyglot: he speaks English, French and Moghrebi (Arabic dialects) 'he had taken four years to learn' (40), crossing thus

the borders of speech community and nation (see Anderson 1991). That the exact nationality of the Professor is not revealed and his name is unknown is relevant. For all his apparent professional and class status, and his ample Western purse, the Professor's identity is at stake in the story. He is not a distinct self, but a formless being, soft and vulnerable. He is a 'Linguistics Professor'. His name, then, is wrapped up in specialised knowledge and academic training. Such expertise in language may give the impression that the Professor is distanced from reality. But this is a Professor who is something of an anthropologist, and therefore a traveller, rather than a frequenter of libraries. In this sense 'A Distant Episode', like 'Here to Learn', operates in the shadow of Lévi-Strauss' seminal autobiography-cum-travel-book-cum-ethnography, *Tristes Tropiques*.

What is intriguing about *Tristes Tropiques* is that it conveys the drama and self-doubt that must attend any self-aware anthropologist as he or she ventures into the sphere of the other or, at least, the unknown, in order to rescue it or, at least, to acknowledge it, but comes to realise that he puts that which he values at risk through his actions. There may well be a science of anthropology or something approaching a set of methods and protocols. However, the science is always already attended by the anthropologist's knowledge that he or she is a participant in the drama of engagement with another culture, and, to some extent, that he or she is an agent of its potential destruction. It is in this enacting of a relationship that *Tristes Tropiques* approaches the status of a literary text, one definition of which is that it is aware of its own status. It would be too much to claim that any one text of Paul Bowles captures that drama, but, over the course

of the thesis, I hope to show that along with much blindness can be discerned key insights. As Paul de Man has remarked, when coining this opposition:

The eye remains trained on the darkness knowing it to hold a secret that the flash will disclose. The flash is not the secret but the occasion of the moment when all is in the light; the reward of peering into the dark.

(De Man 1983: xx)

‘A Distant Episode’ opens our eyes onto a world of senses – rather than a world of the intellect – that Bowles has created. The story starts on the bus when the Professor ‘closed his eyes happily’ and loses his self in reverie, to live alone with nature. The story thus opens up a journey into ‘a purely olfactory world’ (Bowles 1979a: 39), many elements of which permeate Bowles’ works and tie ‘A Distant Episode’ to the world of *The Sheltering Sky*, ‘A Friend of the World’ (295), and ‘The Echo’. In ‘A Distant Episode’, the colour, sounds, and particularly smells are very strongly accentuated in the Professor’s world: ‘orange blossoms, pepper, sun baked excrement, burning olive oil, rotten fruit’ (39), all fill the Professor’s air as well as the reader’s imagination. The Professor links this world of sensations to a visit he made ten years ago to the same village. His remembering, ‘visualizing’ and ‘imagining’ the past, as the narrative opens, is suggestive, so much that it reveals the Professor as a poetic soul who shakes off the temporal, rational world, to live, even if only ‘for an instant’ (39) in a realm of vision. Invoking the past, merely a reminiscence of an evanescent occurrence,

announces that the story that follows will trade on repetition, the repetition of happy sensations of the past or rather the Professor's desire and attempt to recapture that instant, that moment of euphoria and preserve it from amnesia and forgetfulness. The temporal succession of the narrative gives way to the atemporality of memory structures, and of symbolic systems.

What emerges from the memory of the Professor connects with a general argument in this thesis, namely that the West sees the other as living in a spontaneous, atemporal world, somehow outside history. Such a cut-and-dried binary view rests upon philosophical essentialism. The charge behind it is that it assumes a fixed and ahistorical essence or identity for the other. The Professor expects the North African desert to offer a chance – perhaps the last chance – to recapture the moments of the encounter he had 'ten years ago' (39). Once the Professor is in the back room of what used to be Hassan Ramani's café, things change. The element of transformation is crucial. The Professor faces a reality that puzzles him, and shatters the world of paradise where he 'lived' 'happily'. He 'sat still' and felt 'lonely' (40) because his old acquaintance, Hassan Ramani, with whom he established, ironically, 'a fairly firm relation' in only 'three days', is dead. The Professor's solitude in Ain Tadouirt may be a marker of the disappearance of sustaining friendships across cultures. It may signal still deeper loss, or more simply, separation and loneliness. The Professor, along with Malika in 'Here to Learn', assumes that the village will be the same but Hassan Ramani is dead and practices have changed. Upon learning that the Professor is a linguist,

the driver of the bus scornfully tells the traveller to ‘keep on going south ... You’ll find some languages you never heard of before’ (39).

The story spends some time working out transformations. The Professor’s journey starts by bus, but soon gives way to walking. As soon as the vehicle comes to a ‘standstill’, the Professor ‘jumped out’ and ‘walked quickly into the Grand Hotel Saharien’ (39), which like so many hotels, is a mid-way location in the Professor’s journey. ‘After dinner, the Professor walked slowly through the streets to Hassan Ramani’s café’ (40), and his journey by foot takes on new meanings. Travelling close to the ground signals the Professor’s desire to reach what he considers ‘the outer edges of time and space’. The Professor, as a Western researcher, assumes that the village will not have changed, that it is timeless, out of (Western) time: ‘Does this café still belong to Hassan Ramani?’ and ““Tell me,” he said, as the other started away. “Can one still get those little boxes made from camel udders?”” (40). The recurrence of the adverb ‘still’ in the Professor’s questions, as well as his interest in ‘the camel-udder box’, relics of the past that he wants to collect as little ‘exotic’ trinkets, are all quite revealing. They set up the village in a changeless state that endures, frozen in time, notwithstanding the inexorable progress of history. It echoes what Port says in *The Sheltering Sky*: ‘Time doesn’t exist for them’ (Bowles 1977: 177). Such a fixed and ahistorical essence or identity of the other is pervasive in ethnographic writing. It is, in Raymond Williams’ phrase, a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1977). It is a view that denies the fact that ways of life can ‘die’ and ‘vanish’, that even the most rural part of the world is connected to the modern, and that

traditions are constantly changing. This attitude is reminiscent of that of Malika in 'Here to Learn': 'the idea that the town might have changed during her absence had not occurred to her' (Bowles 1981: 94). But reality is different. Like the back room of Hassan Ramani's café that 'hung hazardously out above the river' (Bowles 1979a: 40), the linguist/traveller is dangerously detached from reality.

Actually, things have changed in Morocco as well as in the Professor's and Malika's own world. As Raymond Williams has shown, the organic community never really existed. In 'A Distant Episode', the Reguibat's life is based on the economic circuit. They are engaged in economic transactions and the Professor is seen as 'a valuable possession' (46). They travel, and they trade the Professor, the authority in language, as a commodity, into a slave who could be sold to the Touareg (46). The Reguibat's systems of social stratification and exchange present a far more complicated picture of the cultural other, one that inverts the dynamic between coloniser and colonised, West and East. But, for the Professor, the nomads do not speak, and even when they speak they are incomprehensible. The Reguibat are still, of course, using language, even if the linguist does not understand it; even if, for him, they only make 'noise' and their voices are 'guttural' (45). This is a useful rejoinder to the opposition between the Moghreb and the West. 'The filth' and 'garbage' that the expansive West throws in the face of the world forms not 'a cultural vacuum' (Bowles 1963: ix), but different orders and patterns.

The story of 'A Distant Episode' gradually works out more transformations as the Professor comes face to face with the alien other. A more

immediate and situated reality is recovered through a visceral mobility. The Professor, lonely and thwarted, cannot communicate, despite being an authority on local dialects. He is unable to achieve understanding of the other whose languages he is intent on studying. In this connection, irony allows for the discontinuities in structure arising from the differences in the viewpoints of the author and the Professor. The traveller wants 'to speak' with 'the other' and 'cut the silence between them' (41), but he retreats into loneliness and realises that the dialogue is devoid of content. The essential theme seems to be the conflict between the voice's drive to speak with the other and the silence and loneliness that the Professor confronts. All the Professor's remarks and questions are displaced, and there is no meaningful verbal exchange between the linguist and his guide. Like a child, the Professor notes that everybody greets his guide rather than him, a realisation that increases his own feelings of being isolated in a strange exotic world. 'I wish every one knew me,' he says to the guide, 'before he realized how infantile such a remark must sound' (41). But the *qaouaji*'s gruff response that 'No one knows you' shows how isolated and potentially endangered the Professor is as he penetrates a profoundly silent landscape.

The Professor's worst mistake involves imposing his own cultural assumptions upon the enigmatic social system of the desert inhabitants. He believes that he can communicate with the alien peoples merely by knowing some words from their language. The linguist's assumption that the *qaouaji* will work tomorrow reveals his adherence to broadly Protestant values, producing thus a further discrepancy between the Professor's conception of the Moghrebi other and

reality. The *qaouaji*'s response 'that is impossible to say' (41) deepens the gap between the self and the other and gestures towards an alternative landscape of cultural differences. Tomorrow is another day; it cannot be planned so easily. The result is extreme moments of horror confronted by the Professor.

The Professor's desire to live right up to the edge of, if not outside, modernity is countered by his own civilised self. Such a fissure in the Professor's character traverses the narrative to severely distance him from the real world as he walks into it, emphasising thus the Professor's fragility and folly. The Professor is immersed in the empirically knowable physical reality around him without being a part of it. It is that opposition, that superimposition of one world on another that is significant. Such a radical juxtaposition of two incongruous opposites, what John Huntington calls a 'two-world system' (Huntington 1979: 35), is central to Bowles' imaginative structure in 'A Distant Episode', in 'Here to Learn', and also in 'The Delicate Prey', 'The Echo', 'The Eye', 'A Friend of the World' to cite but a few of his short stories. The superimposition reflects an attitude of cultural ambivalence, for at the same time 'the Professor turns his back on home, he recalls his native sympathies' (Hibbard 1988: 75). This ambivalence is gradually uncovered by the growing discontinuity in the Professor's empirical and intellectual selves, dramatising and even caricaturing his condition of blindness.

The importance of 'A Distant Episode' might equally be seen in its topographic framing. The Sahara landscape is so insistent a presence in the story as to function as a major character, as does the sky in *The Sheltering Sky*, the gorge in 'The Echo', Cold Point in 'Pages from Cold Point', and the cave in 'The

Scorpion'. Bowles wants to tell 'the story of what the desert can do to us'. 'The desert', Bowles says, talking to Oliver Evans, 'is the protagonist' (Caponi 1993: 54). In 'A Distant Episode', the reader follows the linguist as he travels through the opening of 'the white endlessness', 'to a place where the ground dropped abruptly away in front of them'. He stands 'there at the edge of the abyss', and 'looked over the edge of the precipice'. The bottom seems quite distant, 'miles away' (Bowles 1979a: 41, 42, 43). Although Michel de Certeau has a city in mind in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, his concept of 'walking' is relevant. As he argues, walking is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on a language) (de Certeau 1984: 97-98). The Linguistics Professor's act of walking, of penetrating deeper and deeper into the desert is, a spatial acting out of the desert, much as a speech act is an acoustic acting out of language. The Professor ventures hazardingly into the heart of 'endlessness', an inward venture into 'opening' that connotes wide, limitless suspended eternity. The 'opening', the 'endlessness' and the 'winding road' map a journey to the Linguistics Professor's 'most remote regions' (Bowles 1979a: 165) 'toward the bright horizon' (165), 'the bright desert' that 'lay ahead' (41-42). It is an interesting parallel with, but inversion of, Conrad's journey and metaphors in *Heart of Darkness*, in which characters penetrate their own deeper selves as they move further inland along the river. The desert, though, is a 'bright', sparkling space, an inundation of white light, rather than darkness, where the Linguistics Professor opts to walk 'across the earth strewn with sharp stone' and past 'the little ruin' (42), moving away from modern

urban environment in order to write, to create a self that travels and tells. But the challenge is that the space of whiteness is deserted, a feature of wild nature, unappropriated land, where nobody ventures.

The Professor sees no human soul. He is insecure. There is no material surround to shelter him: 'not a tree, not a house, not a person', 'nothing to give it scale' (43). The lack of a familiar measure of geographical and linguistic scale disorients him, even as it emotionally and professionally attracts him. Ignoring the warning from the driver of the bus that 'there are no languages here' (39), the Professor walks into a space he considers far distant from overcrowded metropolitan centres. As a result, the traveller is 'still', frozen because of the disconnection. He sees that no system exists in the abyssal desert to measure his experience, whereas what he is encountering is a different system. He cannot get outside the structure. 'He stopped, furious with himself for the sinister overtones the name [of the deceased H. Ramani] now suggested to him' (43). Saying the name of 'Hassan Ramani' over and over, the Professor is part of what Roland Barthes describes as the reader's 'struggle to name' (Barthes 1974). Repeating a name, or a noun, over and over reveals its arbitrariness, and detaches it from its meaning.

In 'A Distant Episode', the landscape reveals the misapprehensions of the Professor's empirical self and achieves narrative detachment. The 'precipice', 'the cliff', 'the bottom' and the 'abyss' at the edge of which the Professor stands are all topographic signs. They show how the Professor descends the cliff to plunge into an unknown landscape, a fathomless space. The Professor's descent

recalls the old woman in 'The Scorpion' who retreats to the 'pink color from the clay' (Bowles 1979a: 27) of her cave in a seclusion of the self from all contact with the outside. His descent also recalls 'By the Water' in which the 'young Amar' descends into the public bath 'Hammam'. In 'By the Water', 'the street appeared to descend sharply and lose itself in darkness'; Amar 'passed over into the unlighted district ... he went in the direction of the dark corner' (Bowles 1979a: 31-32). As for Amar, the danger signals multiply for the linguist and the danger quickly becomes all too real as the Professor penetrates deeper and deeper into the desert in an irrational search for mysterious 'little boxes made from camel udders', a symbolic object that is not so much recovered as lost again and again (40). It conveys violation of laws and rules, a departure of a state, transcendence of limits, 'the "betrayal" of an order' (the phrase is de Certeau's).

This said, 'A Distant Episode' operates within a version of the myth of the 'Fall', that is the fall from grace of Adam and Eve when they sinned and were ejected from the Garden of Eden. The fall as it appears in modern literature is usually from a natural environment into the modern city. In contrast, the Professor's search for dialects and peoples that have escaped the ills of modernity takes him into the desert. Indeed, the 'edge' and 'abyss' are topographic signs that alert us to, but also sustain, the myth of the fall and reflect the Professor's movement from the familiar, verifiable and predictable into a subterranean abyss, an alien ill-defined universe peopled with confused sensations and cacophonous 'guttural voices that he could not understand' (45). The choice of metaphor also suggests how writing and travel feed each other, how Bowles relates what he

knows to what he does not know, and how practical consciousness relates to new consciousness through new relationships. A further dimension is expressed as creativity and social self-creation. Williams is, again, useful in the story's context: 'it is still from grasping the known that the unknown – the next step, the next work is conceived' (Williams 1977: 212).

The Professor's journey becomes a venture into consciousness that is both 'white' and is an expression of 'endlessness', like the white pages, calm at last. As Michel de Certeau would have it, the Professor's journey represents 'a departure, an attack on a state, the ambition of a conquering power, or the flight of an exile' (de Certeau 1984: 128). Discussing pedestrian displacements in terms of classical rhetoric in his essay titled 'Walking in the City', de Certeau argues, in agreement with Benveniste and Lacan, that such tropes embody the 'symbolic order of the unconscious'. As in Bowles' novels, *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down*, and in his short stories 'The Echo', 'Here to Learn', 'A Distant Episode', traversing into the desert turns the travel of the protagonist into an interior journey, making landscapes do the work of symbol and myth. Walking into the desert, the Linguistics Professor undertakes an interior voyage to the abyss of the soul. The desert becomes a dominant element in the story, displacing the modern metropolis in the Professor's mind. But before we get to the desert – if indeed, we ever do – the Professor's past and his place in the world are systematically replaced, in the text, by a rhetoric of walking, of traversing the distance between a familiar 'here' and a distant, alien 'there'. As noted in passing, the Professor's venture into the desert links 'A Distant Episode' to Bowles' novel

The Sheltering Sky and his short story 'The Echo'. In the ragged terrain, the Professor, along with Port and Kit in *The Sheltering Sky* and Eileen in 'The Echo', maps a journey to his own psyche, and initiates a dialogue between the inner and the outer, between emotional necessity and the reality of the external world. Not long after he initiates the process, however, he loses his own sense of agency. The horrors of the Professor increasingly resemble those encountered by Marlow and, before him, Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, manifestations of division in himself, as much as in the jungle of the Congo.

What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, as Lévi-Strauss argues, 'an exploration of the deserts of my mind rather than of those surrounding me?' (Lévi-Strauss 1992: 378). The walking of the Professor offers a series of turns and detours that can be compared to 'turns of phrases' or 'stylistic figures' (de Certeau 1984: 100) that lead not to what preexists but to that which never existed, for the desert means nothing. It only takes on meaning when it is walked, traversed. 'Its significance is silent' (Barnes and Duncan 1992: 83), 'the trace left behind is substituted for practice' (de Certeau 1984: 97). Just as the grammar of a language, the structure of walking is cultural. The desert encountered by the Professor is a different place from the desert experienced by its inhabitants.

In a curious way, Bowles shows how the linguistic reality remains beyond the Professor's grasp. As such, the Professor has an empirical self, immersed in the world, and a self that becomes like a sign in its attempt at differentiation and self-definition. The Linguistics Professor idealises the traditional life and in a way denigrates it. He takes the past, and never the future,

as the only source of values. There turns out to be little point to the Professor's reading of the other's construction of the desert, a reading that closes itself off from the other's experience. His construction of the desert is not enough. The Professor must compare his construct with the other's and see the common ground. The linguist's construct is not against the other's construction of the desert and therefore fails. In 'A Distant Episode', the Linguistics Professor is brutalised into a speechless clown, and stripped of his title. His purpose is thwarted as his tongue is cut off. The Professor's aspiration to survey the Moghrebi dialects and to preserve it in text is brought to nought. Giving himself the opportunity 'of testing the accuracy of such statements' (44) the Professor puts his very being on trial, which leads him to odd contexts of captivity as the Reguibat dress him up with rags and tin-cans and teach him how to dance obscenely for their enjoyment, inducing metaphorically a great silence:

The men took him out, still in a state which permitted no thought, and over the dusty rags that remained of his clothing they fastened a series of curious belts made of the bottoms of tin cans strung together. One after another of these bright girdles was wired about his torso, his arms and legs, even across his face, until he was entirely within a suit of armor that covered him with its circular metal scales. (45)

'Clothing' and armour thus separate the Linguistics Professor from the inhabitants of the desert. The Professor, like Bowles and Lévi-Strauss, is in the space between

as he has cultural luggage, based ‘on a very peculiar and specialized social and historical phenomenon’ (Jameson 1981: 112). The most sustained description of the Professor is when he ‘watched nervously, like a dog watching a fly in front of its nose’ (48). The Professor, who seeks to salvage meaning from exotic lives, accelerates his doom. His travel into the desert – his anthropological experience and empiricism – is a total alienation. It is not only a stripping away of professional or civilised status, but also a stripping away of thought as the fragments ‘still in a state which permitted no thought’ show.

This is the drama of self-aware anthropologists. It connects ‘A Distant Episode’ to Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques*. In *Tristes Tropiques*, as mentioned, Lévi-Strauss knows that his self is implicated in the process of viewing the other culture. He asserts that knowledge destroys the subject of its study. It cannot be scientifically detached. To know the object is to transform it for oneself:

Every effort to understand destroys the object studied in favour of another object of a different nature; this second object requires from us a new effort which destroys it in favour of a third, and so on and so forth until we reach the one lasting presence, the point at which the distinction between meaning and absence of meaning disappears: the same point from which we began.

(Lévi-Strauss 1992: 411)

Thought, for Lévi-Strauss as for the writer of ‘A Distant Episode’, separates person from object. Thought continually intervenes to split them. The Professor’s old identity ceases to exist, like Kit Moresby’s in *The Sheltering Sky*. He becomes a mindless functioning clown with no control of his consciousness of life, with no traces of humanness. According to Bowles, the Professor must strip the layers of his armour in order to regain his being. The Professor’s state of being brings to mind Lévi-Strauss’ assertion: ‘we can discover the truth in the form of a mutual exclusiveness of being and knowledge’ (Lévi-Strauss 1992: 411). Like Lévi-Strauss, Bowles comes to realise that he puts the other culture he values at risk through his mobility and his actions, mixing in, but often in partial, specific manners. Such a realisation projects a division in the writer’s self as much as the natural world he traverses and idealises.

Wandering into the desert is for the Professor – and Bowles in his less insightful moments – a flight from human society in the attempt to flee the human condition. Such escape figures in *Tristes Tropiques*, too. Lévi-Strauss writes:

Human culture has finally sunk into the void created by our frenzy; ... the only privilege of which [man] can make himself worthy; that of arresting the process, of controlling the impulse which forces him to block up the cracks in the wall of necessity one by one and to complete his work at the same time as he shuts himself up within his prison.

(Lévi-Strauss 1992: 414)

Levi- Strauss' resolution of the tension and his response to what he perceives as soul-destroying knowledge in *Tristes Tropiques* are in tune with Bowles' in 'A Distant Episode'. In the final scene of 'A Distant Episode', we track the Professor as he 'finally broke', bellowing, galloping and widely gesticulating 'in an access of terror' (Bowles 1979a: 48). He runs out of the house where he was being kept, climbing through the opening he has made, and destroying everything in his way. This suggests retreat in solitude to lose the self by removing it from the escalating process in order to restore one's lost humanity. The Professor's solitary, helpless being is thus emphasised. He drives himself into an impossible situation. To use Raymond Williams' words, 'an essential isolation and silence and loneliness have become the only carriers of nature and community against the rigours, the cold abstinence, the selfish ease of ordinary society' (Williams 1973: 131). The final scene of 'A Distant Episode' also suggests that Bowles cannot fully distance himself from some of his less enlightened characters because he is caught up in the precarious relationship. Retreat in solitude is the path of a continuing alienation that transfers from society to an aloof writer, eventually Paul Bowles. It is a flight in the attempt to substitute for the human conditions a pure, infinite and possible space.

And yet Bowles, like Lévi-Strauss, is riddled with paradox. The authenticity and spontaneity that they think allow them to escape the omnipotence of Western society is of no historical significance, because they refer to an absent centre, or origin. The linguist's atemporal view of the Moghrebi other approaches them in terms of the disappearing past. But searching a bygone past, he locates the

set of possibilities on one axis only, neglecting thus a host of other possibilities. As such, the Professor retreats into the precipice, reminding us of the tragic in life. Like Kit Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky*, he becomes what he is – a wanderer, ‘a holy maniac’ (48). Sometimes, the balance is lost as it is in *Tristes Tropiques*. But, as Derrida has convincingly explained in his essay ‘Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences’, ‘the structurality of the structure’ is to be considered (Derrida 1978: 280). ‘Here to Learn’, ‘A Distant Episode’, along with *The Sheltering Sky* and *Let It Come Down*, are turned towards a past that no longer exists. The mourning, regret and nostalgia in these stories are in tune with Claude Lévi-Strauss’ leitmotif of ethnographic mourning. They show how both Bowles’ and Lévi-Strauss’ works are turned towards an origin that is absent, but whose other side is ‘affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming’ (Derrida 1978: 292). As the close reading demonstrates, things have changed in Morocco as well as in the Professor’s and Malika’s own world. In ‘Here to Learn’, we have seen, ‘it was for herself’ (Bowles 1981: 96), for her changing self and for her lost past and her inner death that Malika ‘felt like weeping’; she ‘felt her throat tighten painfully as she told herself that it no longer existed’ (95-96). Malika’s body is transformed, the *arroyos* have been flattened: ‘Mina Glagga’s and all the houses bordering on the gully had disappeared’, and ‘Bulldozers had made a new landscape’ (95). Similarly, in ‘A Distant Episode’ the Professor’s friend, Hassan Ramani is ‘deceased’ (Bowles 1979a: 40), and there is nothing outside of the economic circuit for Reguibat. All these are textual proofs of transformation, mobility and change, which alter the relationship

between Bowles' characters – and Bowles himself – and the world. The absent origin attests to incessant change and denatured nature, which affirm, to borrow Derrida's words, 'a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation' (Derrida 1978: 292). The centre does not hold, because there is no absolute centre from which one can properly analyse or reform one's social construct. In 'Here to Learn' and 'A Distant Episode', the characters construct the other from a fixed vantage point, but there is no fixed vantage point that is not implicated in the structure.

The Professor's stable view of the other culture derives from the timeless simplicity of logical constructions like binary oppositions. They determine the notion of structure with which Claude Lévi-Strauss hopes to reconcile nature and culture. The cost of losing this dialogue haunts 'A Distant Episode', 'Here to Learn', *The Sheltering Sky*, *Let It Come Down*, *The Spider's House*, 'New York 1965', 'The Eye', 'The Scorpion', to mention but a few stories. The oppositional structures in 'A Distant Episode' are like the arbitrary signs of language: they at once assume meaning and undergo change. In this sense, problems specific to structural interpretation appear in the story. These problems become acute when the Linguistics Professor's structuralist 'logic' becomes both rigid and arbitrary, when the logic of opposition begins to impinge on the flexibility of the other as a significant element. Being caught up in nostalgia for an absent origin, the Professor of 'A Distant Episode' reveals a blindness like that of Malika. There is always a pattern in Morocco, and in the

United States. Culture will always be inhabited by nature and nature will always be inhabited by culture. They are always already interrelated.

Towards a General Economy of the International Zone: Mediations, Madness and Monstrosity in *Let it Come Down*

Let It Come Down, Paul Bowles' second novel, is perhaps the best-known of his texts to explore his great theme, the trans-cultural encounter with the Maghreb. (One thinks of *The Sheltering Sky*, *The Spider's House*, *Unwelcome Words*, 'A Distant Episode', and 'The Eye'.) *Let It Come Down* helps to reveal complexities that other critics have not noticed. It is of particular interest for my argument about mediations – or what I call 'in-betweens' – because the novel explicitly unfolds in transit. This is a phase that reveals how for Bowles, as for D. H. Lawrence, it is better to travel than to arrive; the destination being a place when and where, as Bowles explains to Allen Hibbard in a 1988 interview, 'you remember that which is important for the atmosphere and that which isn't is forgotten' (Hibbard 1993: 183). Indeed, this is a phase that bears the marks of what has been and what is to come, but also what exists in the present.

The many voyages in Bowles' writing and life function to draw aside the veils laid across the senses by the routine but also the horrors of ordinary life – for Bowles, this tends to be associated with life in the United States – in order to re-discover ways of perceiving that, he seems to argue, have been lost in the development of complicated social forms. Louis Marin, in a study of utopianism,

has a phrase that gets us close to how Bowles envisages the International Zone in *Let It Come Down* in terms of an in transit zone. Marin writes of a space ‘between two edges that will never join together’ (Marin 1993: 411). This intersecting space is a space between Morocco and the Poe-like nightmare of restriction in the United States. In *Let It Come Down*, the novelist draws on various resources to locate, temporally and spatially, the in-between. Plot, character, description and background are intertwined and historically located ‘just before the war’ (Bowles 1980: 14). The International Zone may also be conceived as – to anticipate an argument that will be pursued shortly – a ‘general economy’ that escapes what Jacques Derrida calls restricted economies.

Voyage also characterises novels like *The Sheltering Sky* and *The Spider’s House* and short stories like ‘Here to Learn’ and ‘A Distant Episode’, as I have shown above, and numerous other of his fictions involving characters who travel to the unknown, move about in it for a while, then set out in another direction. They all constitute the voyage between two civilisations. However, where these texts use the concept of a voyage as an attempt to find an escape from the civilisation in which they lived, and to journey into their deepest selves, in *Let It Come Down*, Bowles uses the voyage to depict the Interzone as an in-between, a way to withstand the destruction to which the protagonist’s face is turned, and to implicate meta-fictional speculations in the materials of the texts. As we have seen in the autobiography *Without Stopping*, Bowles does not tell us directly how he understands the various in-betweens, and their role in individual and social

crises. His work unravels the effects of crises as not directly redeemable but as mediated and over-determined in complex and subtle forms.

Let It Come Down does not take place in the Sahara desert, as does his other particularly well-known novel, *The Sheltering Sky*. It is set in Tangier, the northernmost city of Africa, a port city located near the Straits of Gibraltar, at the cross-roads of Europe and Africa, of the Atlantic and Mediterranean. In his 1980 'Introduction' to *Let It Come Down*, Bowles also makes a point of chronologically locating his novel with specific reference to the International Zone (the title of Book One). *Let It Come Down* was published just months before Tangier lost its International Zone Status in 1952. In the 'Introduction', Bowles states that: 'Tangier was never the same after the 30th of March 1952' (Bowles 1980: 7).

Bowles' statement suggests that the pre-1952 International Zone is a curious, even an inverted, 'golden age', and the novel does contain a store of information on the social and political life of a Tangier that no longer exists. Bowles' statement, it may also be suggested, carries with it the remnants of the familiar poetic desire for access to the unmediated truth of the world. Such a pre/post-structure in Bowles' novel could almost be called, in Raymond Williams' socio-cultural term from *Marxism and Literature*, 'a structure of feeling' (Williams 1977: 128-135). This pre/post structure has many manifestations in Bowles' work. In *Let It Come Down*, we can discern it in references to drugs, the primitive, the exotic, the non-Western, as well as in the many resonant locations, notably the International Zone. Insofar as the story

hinges on this pre/post structure, it invites comparison to Bowles' novel *The Spider's House*, to 'A Distant Episode', 'Here to Learn', and others of Bowles' stories.

That Bowles was away from 'the international city' when he wrote about it is revealing. As Lawrence Stewart confirms, 'Like a latter-day Romantic he recreated a scene only when away from the immediacy of its stimulus' (Stewart 1974: 20-21); and, 'Bowles has always preferred to write in an environment that "is not a continuation of anything"' (Stewart 1982: 67). In the 'Introduction' to *Let It Come Down*, Bowles gives us a link to his life, his autobiography, and travel writing, by associating the book's beginning – though not its opening scene – with one of those in-between times, onboard 'the Polish freighter in Antwerp, bound for Colombo' (Bowles 1980: 7). Similarly, Bowles got the idea of *The Sheltering Sky* riding on a Fifth Avenue bus one day going uptown from Tenth Street in New York City. *Let It Come Down* began to take shape in the author's imagination, as an in-between sphere. 'Being in motion always excites me apparently,' Bowles says, 'and I begin scribbling. ... A train or a ship gets me started' (Stewart 1982: 67). This tells us that time, place and writing are linked by the notion of being in transit, and specifically by the mediation that intervenes between the priority of the author's imagination and consciousness and a reconstruction of events at a distance, that is, *éloignement* rather than immediacy.

The straits and 'the freighters' are figures that, besides their association with American Nelson Dyar's apparent freedom from the past (Bowles 1980: 147), remain liminal spaces, an important motif throughout the novel. They are

markers of movement and mediation that intervene in the hybrid fluid cultures populating the Interzone. Bowles, as I mentioned before, finds that ‘Tangier is a place where the past and the present exist simultaneously in proportionate degree, where a very much alive today is given an added depth of reality by the presence and an equally alive yesterday’ (Bowles 1958b: 68). This is an important point that links Bowles’ International Zone to Paul Gilroy’s (1993) conception of diaspora. The idea of the Interzone, like Gilroy’s potent images of diasporic cultural innovation, in what he calls ‘the black Atlantic network’, might be understood as ‘a utopian eruption of space into the linear temporal order’ (Gilroy 1993: 199). In diaspora experience, as Clifford succinctly points out ‘linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning’, ‘the recurring break where time stops and restarts is the Middle Passage’ (Clifford 1997: 264). The straits and ‘the freighters’ in *Let It Come Down*, like Gilroy’s ship of transcultural passage, ‘immediately focus attention on the middle passage, ... on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts’ (Gilroy 1993: 4). Figures such as the straits and ‘the freighters’ in *Let It Come Down* signal not only Bowles’ transit from America to the International Zone, but also his poetic crossing to the ‘Interzone’, where ‘cultures hybridize through translations and stories’ (Campbell 2000: 177). They are, in Gilroy’s words, ‘crossroads in order better to appreciate intercultural details’ (Gilroy 1993: 199), enacting a culture in motion and showing that experiences of displacement, the making of homes away from home, as James Clifford (1997) forcefully maintains,

are transcultural predicaments. In this chapter, then, I engage with the notion of the in-between in what I have to say about the character of Dyar, as he inhabits the interstitial space and negotiates the Interzone in terms of economic exchange.

Let It Come Down begins on the dockside in the International Zone. It follows Nelson Dyar as he arrives in the International city to begin a new job and experience a new life. The novel's near-obsession with in-betweens comes across in a main character who bears some resemblance to Bowles but most definitely is not him. Bowles' comment that he uses Dyar as 'the only totally invented character' (Bowles 1980: 9) is significant to the extent that, unlike translations and the autobiography, as we have seen, fiction allows Bowles more scope to invent characters that may be less subject to the constraints of empirical knowledge and of realism. The other characters and how they interact with each other through the narrative coincidences and twists and turns of the emerging plot, and how the characters intersect with 'Morocco' and the exotic, are part of the relationship between Bowles and Dyar and us, as readers.

Dyar, like Port Moresby, the Linguistics Professor and John Stenham, has a 'before', a history that is 'America', in part at least. Dyar decides to put an end to his 'before': 'There is nothing wrong with me that a change won't cure. Nobody's meant to be confined in a cage like that year after year. I'm just fed up, that's all' (20). A teller in the Transit Department – interestingly, like the place where Melville's *Bartleby* works, the Dead Letter Office – during the Depression years, Dyar has been 'flatly rejected' for 'wartime work' because of a heart

murmur. After this rejection, Dyar realised that he would go on standing in his 'cage' indefinitely. He has, consequently

fallen prey to a demoralizing sensation of motionlessness. His own life was a dead weight, so heavy that he would never be able to move it from where it lay. He had grown accustomed to the feeling of intense hopelessness and depression which had settled upon him. (20)

Seeking the unforeseen, he throws up his job, takes ship to Tangier and waits for things to happen to him – any things, as long as they are solid enough to give him the feeling of being in touch with reality, the feeling that he really exists.

Nelson Dyar's dream of emerging from a passive and indeterminate condition carries him to a foreign city in a foreign country. His decision to make a voyage to Tangier does not mean he has had an insight: he 'missed out on a good many things' (117), for instance he is neither a reader nor a movie-goer (21). But he does seek to leave his past behind and goes to the International Zone in Morocco to work in a travel agency for an American friend and a childhood acquaintance, Jack Wilcox. His parents are literally absent. Dyar uproots himself from his family, his country, cutting all ties with the past, but not entirely with the language of his past. There are a few interactions with his parents: a 'gossipy' letter he receives from home (141), and a letter he writes to his mother. This letter is 'to be continued' (86). It is significant that Dyar does not cut loose entirely by

throwing the letter away. A confluence of relays is thereby posited: transit department, travel company and letters.

Let It Come Down traces a shift from a system of exchange tethered to networks of family interaction to one in which possession (and dispossession) is the dominant discursive principle. Jack Wilcox is an unscrupulous American black-marketeer, who turns Dyar into an accomplice in his currency deals. Daisy de Valverde warns him against the vacuum in which he finds himself, and also introduces him to hashish. Thami is a Moroccan rebel and a flimsy bridge between the Muslim and European worlds. Like Dyar, Thami cuts himself off from his family ties, seeking shelter in an alien culture. And there is Hadija, a Moroccan prostitute, who gives Dyar the illusion that he is capable of falling in love. Later, we will argue that such a network severed from family exchanges is akin to possession of a universe without a father.

Dyar's heart complaint and a career that is going nowhere tie him to a new 'lost generation' that moves from the United States because it feels itself to be out of the mainstream. Dyar's voyage to the Interzone is an attempt to find an exit from a crisis conceived as an encounter with boredom and ennui, with nothingness and emptiness. Dyar feels estranged in his domestic environment, and experiences something, at least, of what Freud describes as the uncanny (Freud 2003). The narrative, with its focus on Dyar, traverses the borders between the homely and familiar, the strange and unknown. *Let It Come Down* reveals disquieting uncertainties, a 'slippage between what seems homely and what is

definitively unhomely' (Vidler 1992: ix), generating a protagonist that bears some resemblance to the Bowles of *Without Stopping*.

Unlike Port Moresby and the Professor, Dyar starts his journey with a clearer vision of his life and seems to be aware of freedom and conscience. One might even say that he starts with some faith in and hope for a more fulfilling future: 'The infinitesimal promise of a possible change stirred him to physical movement' (Bowles 1980: 130). Dyar thinks that he will become 'another person, full of life, delivered from the sense of despair that had weighed on him for so long ... and be completely free' (22). Tangier is a catalyst for his hoped-for change 'from a victim into a winner' (169), from living in a vacuum to living a life that could be full of faith and purpose. As the narrator notes, 'In his mind, the break with the past had been that complete and definite' (140). Dyar has a sense of valuing personal freedom that liberates him from enclosure and destroys it. Before departure, he had not quite formulated it so clearly, but he had a sense that his choice of action could occasion a radical change in culture, life rhythm, goals and values. Such uncompromising affirmation of freedom offers, to use de Certeau's words, 'the possibility of a bewildering exteriority, [as] it allows or causes the re-emergence beyond the frontiers of the alien element that was controlled in the interior' (de Certeau 1984: 128). Once in his self-exile, Dyar 'was vaguely aware of having arrived at the edge of a new period in his existence, an unexplored territory of himself through which he was going to have to pass' (Bowles 1980: 116), thereby giving halting expression to the alterity that was buried inside him. This is for Dyar – as it is for Kit who lives out the climax of

her existence in a Saharan culture – an experience of limits, of the uncanny that informs Bowles' early work as well as Edgar Allan Poe's stories.

Exploring an unexplored territory, Bowles' work exhibits a cardinal affinity with Edgar Allan Poe's. Both writers explore the unknown, an arena of liminality, which serves the purpose of blurring the edges and unsettling the boundaries of what is assumed to be known. Bowles' characters, like Poe's, are thrust into incomprehensible states of being, challenging boundaries of all sorts, to break the Puritan shackles and be wholly free, manifesting their escape through violence, drugs and dreams. This is typical of many of Poe's stories. 'The Man of the Crowd', 'William Wilson' 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Black Cat', 'The Premature Burial' all provide testimony of this experience: an experience that questions a sense of the unknown and turns away from the realm of the rational and unified self into the psychological unknown, the deepest recesses of the Interzone with its mazes, its 'dim visions of ... earliest infancy' (Poe 1988: 40), and gruesome instances of the uncanny.

Reading Dyar's hand, Daisy De Valverde sees a life with "no sign of work. No sign of anything, ... an empty hand" which reflects "an empty life", "No pattern. And nothing in you to give you any purpose" (Bowles 1980: 34). Dyar's association with nothingness involves immobility and complete disinterestedness. It may also suggest 'emancipation from structural and economic bondage' (Turner 1997: 146). An awareness of this void recalls his 'heart murmur', but it is also, metaphysically, Dyar's space, the void in which he exists,

the absence which envelops his experience and his illness. Daisy De Valverde's premonition is meaningful. She says:

'Most people can't help following some kind of design. They do it automatically because it's in their nature. It's that that saves them, pulls them up short. They can't help themselves. But you're safe from being saved.'

(Bowles 1980: 34)

It is through the stripping 'naked' of the protagonist that the novel takes a decisive step, similar in outline to that which befalls the Professor in 'A Distant Episode', but more implicated in social protocols. Such a premonition renders Dyar 'empty', 'unclothed' (35), and lacking in what we might call content or meaning. Dyar is not at home in the world because his home is a haunted space. It is haunted by something which is actually nothing. Conscious of 'the emptiness he felt', Dyar decides to take 'the great step' (22), fully convinced 'all the way across on the ship to Gibraltar', that he is doing 'the healthy thing' (22). Dyar's perpetual travel, his escape from the rationalised world of restrictions in the States is, as Julia Kristeva puts it: 'a way of surviving in the face of the *dead father*, of gambling with death, which is the meaning of life, of stubbornly refusing to give into the law of death' (Kristeva 1986: 298). But how to break out of the void in a context where 'a seemingly static ship pointed eastward or westward' (Bowles 1980: 93), and the 'freighters' are not going anywhere? Or to put it in a way that

links Dyar's challenge with that of Bowles, how can the void be given a narrative? And, to acknowledge the degree to which, as Anthony Vidler (1992) demonstrates, the uncanny has a spatial dimension, how to transform emptiness into plenitude, the in-between into an established place?

Interestingly, it seems that Dyar can only escape from his past by being passive: 'he decided to let the driver determine for him where he would stay' (Bowles 1980: 18) given that 'he had not come here on a vacation' (19). This is equally true of Kit and Port in *The Sheltering Sky*, of the Professor of Linguistics brutalised into the role of a speechless clown in 'A Distant Episode', and Duncan Marsh in 'The Eye', and even the predatory Moungary in 'The Delicate Prey'. Dyar breaks through the smugness and complacency by passing beyond crisis, assuring himself that he is on a new, promising course that bears him into new adventures. He seeks something resembling freedom, what the surrealists called an 'authentic existence'. However, Dyar's dream of freedom is devoid of any preconceived conception of reality. The hotel room is 'like a concrete resonating chamber' (18). In the Interzone, Dyar is still in a kind of void. He still 'felt as though he did not exist'; 'each empty, overwhelming minute as it arrived' pushed him 'further back from life' (20-21). He lives a liminal phase of his life, between an event and non-event, a phase where he is neither alive nor dead, or rather just surviving. For Dyar 'the place was counterfeit' (143) – an expression that I shall return to.

Bowles' alienation presents itself in *Let It Come Down* in the form of the alienation of Dyar from the States, instanciated metaphorically in a physical

being, a traveller. Through voyage, Dyar achieves an escape from the civilisation in which he lived in New York, only to find it intertwined with that which it represses. Dyar alters the present not simply by substituting a future, but by locating the present in transit, neither the past, nor yet the future. Dyar is in 'a waiting room between connections' (143), as the 'inter' in the name 'Interzone' suggests. Both the voyage and the Interzone are in-between spaces. Dyar feels disconnected from himself: he is 'no one' and 'he was standing here in the middle of no country' (143). Dyar's in-betweenness seems to be connected to a process of becoming. This in-between quality, this process of becoming, is difficult to place. It is 'impalpable', 'unlocatable' like the Interzone itself (153). 'The feeling of unreality' (153) overwhelms Dyar, 'definite as the smell of ammonia, yet impalpable, unlocatable' (153). Dyar's escape stimulates the artistic creation of an 'elsewhere', manifest throughout Bowles' novels, short stories and translations through the tropes of kif, through magic and spell, and through trance dance. All of these are defamiliarising tools, alienating forces associated with altered states of consciousness, which enable Bowles' protagonists to free their minds from the interference of reason and to journey far away into the Interzone. In Eric Mottram's terms, 'Bowles keeps us busy by hanging events in suspense' (Mottram 1976: 9). 'All this was too unlikely', the narrator of *Let It Come Down* says, 'it was weighted down with the senseless, indefinable weight of things in a dream' (Bowles 1980: 153). The Interzone reality includes another, an unreality (a dream or a memory). Such a feeling was 'much more a part of this senseless place he was in' (192). Dyar's Interzone marks a vital tension that mirrors the

symbol created. In this space seems to be a framing of certain crucial interactions: the locatable and 'unlocatable', reality and dream, meaning and non-meaning. In the Interzone, to put it in Rainwater's terms, 'the borders between reality and dream remain obscured forever' (Rainwater 1982: 208), shielding the protagonist's fragmentary, discontinuous and subversive self. It is a sparking space where Dyar denies temporality, moving incessantly between 'the hegemonic order of a dominant culture' (Jameson 1981: 285), and the freedom he aspires to in the Interzone, thus defying the unidimensional logic and blending the homely with the unfamiliar, presence with absence.

Dyar's association with nothingness finds its most poignant expression and equally troubling solution in the uncanny, 'that mingling of mental projection and spatial characteristics' (Vidler 1992: 11). Dyar, without contact with the past, is – like Port and Stenham – detached from a fatherland he sees nowhere, from a dwelling he cannot regard as his own hearth, because it is haunted by the 'void'. We can already see a link between Dyar's association with nothingness and the notion of Nothing in the work of Edgar Allan Poe. As G. R. Thompson maintains, 'the vision of void – or rather its possibility – is at the bottom of all of Poe's fiction' (1973: 189). In fact, Poe is an earlier alienated figure, whose poems and tales influenced Bowles, as Bowles' dedication of *The Delicate Prey and Other Stories* confirms: 'For my mother who first read me the stories of Poe' (Bowles 1950). Of particular interest in the present context is Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' where, in Thompson's words, 'the primary structure of the tale merges with its central image' (Thompson 1973: 80). Both *Let It Come Down* and 'The

Fall of the House of Usher' are located in the 'shadowy' zone between white and black, dark and light. In the International Zone, we read that everything is veiled in mist or clouds: 'IT WAS NIGHT by the time the little ferry drew up alongside the dock' (Bowles 1980: 17, emphasis in original); 'The shadows shot up along the walls'; 'he had been standing fingering the curtains, looking out into the blackness' (19); 'All this was too unlikely, it was weighted down with the senseless, indefinable weight of things in a dream' (153), and 'the small boat passed more certainly into a region of shadowed safety, farther from lights and the possibility of discovery' (229). Such images of 'shadow' and 'dream' that inform *Let It Come Down* (like the opening chapter of *The Sheltering Sky*) pervade 'The Fall of the House of Usher', too, only to reflect the realm of language, which is always 'the realm of the unfulfilled' (Riddel 1979: 122).

As with *Let It Come Down*, the reader will find that Usher's house is an 'unhomely home'. At nightfall, 'during the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day', 'the melancholy House of Usher' (Poe 1988: 51) comes into view; 'bleak walls' and 'vacant eye-like windows' evoke 'shadowy fancies' (51). The house, 'a mystery all insoluble' (51), has an atmosphere that 'had reeked up from the decayed trees, the gray wall, and the silent tarn', and 'the discoloration of ages' seemed to be the product of a 'dream' (53). Stepping through the 'Gothic' archway of the house into the dark, 'black oaken floor', lit by 'feeble gleams of encrimsoned light' (53), the narrator, in Thompson's terms, 'stepped into the confused subjective world of Gothic terror and horror' (Thompson 1973: 90). That the house of Usher has a deficiency, 'undeviating transmission' (Poe 1988:

52), is particularly worth noting; its fabric is reminiscent of ‘old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air’ (53). As Anthony Vidler points out, the house is haunted by ‘an uncanny power’ (Vidler 1992: 18). In the House of Usher, ‘the effect was one of the disturbing unfamiliarity of the evidently familiar’ (*ibid.*): ‘while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this’, the narrator says, ‘I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up’ (Poe 1988: 53). These uncanny fancies in the House of Usher come again and again in Poe’s other Gothic tales like ‘William Wilson’ and ‘Ligeia’. The recurrent images of dream mist, and the irregularities of the walls are reflected extensively in Bowles’ fiction, too, forcibly suggesting Bowles’ intellectual affinity with Poe’s Gothic as texts of fear and excess of boundaries. This said, both Poe’s and Bowles’ texts are marked by instances of the uncanny, which has to do with experiences of the liminal, a strangeness of framing and borders, and in Edgar Allan Poe’s words, ‘the boundaries which divide Life from Death ... at best shadowy and vague’ (Poe 1988: 354).

Poe’s influence on Bowles constitutes the unsettling power, the sharp edge of Bowles’ writing. The Interzone in *Let It Come Down*, like the House of Usher, accounts for the derangement of Dyar and the dissipation of his individuality. Both the Interzone and Usher’s House recall a crypt, the *déjà vu* which, in Royle’s words, ‘entails a fundamental unsettling of the “first time” of an experience’ (Royle 2003: 180). The Interzone – the zone in between – might be said to have, like Usher’s house, a fissure that runs in ‘a zigzag direction’ (Poe

1988: 53). The crack, that the 'inter' in the name 'Interzone' reveals, symbolically stands for an irreconcilable fracture in the individual, lost in the space of the in-between, between amnesia and forgetfulness, between word and world, in the world of words itself, bringing to mind the fissure in the character of the Linguistics Professor's in 'A Distant Episode', lost in the atemporality of symbolic systems. Upon reaching the end of *Let It Come Down*, we read that Dyar 'knew that a certain day, at a certain moment, the house would crumble and nothing would be left but dust and rubble ... It would be absolutely silent, the falling of the house' (Bowles 1980: 279). This said, the fissure subverts its own meaning as it submits the house to a displacement, a primordial fall into nothingness, mirroring its own tomb, breaking down the division between inside and outside.

In this turning, the mirror images reflecting the theme of nothingness in Bowles' novel produce, similar to Poe's tale, 'an overall structure of collapse mirroring the pattern of the universe itself' (Thompson 1973: 90). This structure links *Let It Come Down* with *The Spider's House* as it is clearly expressed through a dream image of Amar, an illiterate boy of fifteen, with limitless power inside him. In *The Spider's House*, we read that 'It was one of those dreams where all things ... are doomed at the outset to be merged in one gigantic vortex of destruction. ... it is a maelstrom which begins to move only after a long while' (Bowles 1982b: 391). The emptiness in the young Arab's dream image is significant. It suggests how individuals are dissolved in the falsity built up around their society and how their sense of themselves is distorted as it enters a 'twilight'

phase. Nothingness features in 'the nightside' of the mind and nature, only to stress the emptiness of the signifier and its arbitrary nature. Amar's dream image signals the collapse in the order of things and language, 'In the end, very likely, everything would begin going around, one thing becoming another, and they would all be sucked down into emptiness' (Bowles 1982b: 391).

This said, nothingness connects many of Bowles' texts, clearly showing the presence of Poe in Bowles. It suggests an absent presence in the labyrinth of the Interzone, in Dyar's empty hand, as much as in the fall of the House of Usher into the void. Importantly, nothingness also suggests the end of meaningful existence as it is trapped in the frailty of the 'spider's house'. In Bowles' third novel, we read that 'Amar had ceased being himself by having been cut off from his home' (Bowles 1982b: 374) – as did Malika of 'Here to Learn' when the 'Bulldozers' that 'had made a new landscape of emptiness, a great embankment of earth, ashes and refuse that stretched downward to the bottom of the ravine' (Bowles 1981: 95). Like Dyar, Amar 'was no one, lying on a mattress nowhere' (Bowles 1982b: 374). 'It was like floating on a gentle ocean, following the will of the waves' (374). In the penultimate chapter of the novel, Amar recalls traditional teaching, inherited from his father: 'They were no longer Moslems ... The government and the laws they might make would be nothing but a spiderweb, built to last one night' (397-398). Curiously, Amar, on his way to knowledge, left 'the house [which] belonged completely to what had been and never would be again' (400). Thought for Bowles continually intervenes to split person and self. Knowledge destroys nature and its enchanting qualities, 'blocking the view of distant, beautiful countrysides which

had been there until now' by replacing them with 'a black wall of certainty' (399). For Bowles, Amar's old identity ceases to exist, like Kit Moresby of *The Sheltering Sky*. Throughout his texts, Bowles appears to be struggling with a 'sense of irrevocable loss ... deploy[ing] exilic melancholy to establish a world of vanishing substance and lost directions' (Kaplan 1996: 71). Nothingness suggests how, according to Bowles, meaning has departed from existence in Fez, linking Stenham's travel not only to Dyar's, Port's and Malika's, but also to the disoriented Saharan journey of the Linguistics Professor.

The Interzone acts as a conducting thread, an in-between state primarily conditioned by travel. This connects *Let It Come Down* to *The Sheltering Sky* and *The Spider's House*, as well as to 'A Distant Episode', 'Here to Learn', 'New York 1965', and numerous other works. In *The Spider's House*, for example, Bowles gives an epigraph to Book 1 to describe the world as 'a vast emptiness built upon emptiness'. Stenham, an American novelist and ex-Communist Party member, after so many years of residence, considers Fez's old medina almost as his town. He finds himself in the medieval city of Fez within a palimpsest: Islamic culture, the 1954 politics of French colonialism, the Independence 'Istiqlal', and the incipient revolution from the Muslim world. Stenham escapes from the United States to take the medieval city for a place of timelessness and tranquility. For him, 'the Great medieval city' is an 'enchanted labyrinth sheltered from time, where as he wandered mindlessly, what his eyes saw told him that he had at last found the way back' (Bowles 1982b: 167). This echoes *Let It Come Down*, where Dyar thought that 'the break with the past had been that complete

and definite' (Bowles 1980: 140). It also reflects Bowles' autobiography where the *flâneur* 'felt that at last [he] had left the world behind' (Bowles 1985: 130). Stenham, like Dyar, Port, the Professor, and Bowles himself, in his less insightful moments, as I argue in the course of the thesis, is to fall victim to an illusion that has blinded many others. But the reader is aware that they are in the space between as they cannot strip themselves from their culture, based on the logocentricism that carries them to Morocco and leaves them in the metropolis of the in-between.

Like Dyar, Stenham is a stranger who seeks freedom from an 'absurd and unreal' existence from which all meaning has departed: 'It was all these strange and lonely spots outside the walls ... that he loved' (Bowles 1982b: 166). Then, the narrator notes: 'It was the knowledge that the swarming city lay below, shut in by its high ramparts, which made wandering over the hills and along the edges of the cliffs so delectable. They are there, of it, he would think, and I am here, of nothing, free' (166). Stenham belongs nowhere, and to nothing at all. His desire to live in a city that is outside modernity, reminiscent of the Professor's and Dyar's desire to live right up to the edge of modernity, is countered by his own civilised self because there is no vacation of modernity when the travellers are modern. We meet the American novelist 'having arrived at this point, [where] he had found no direction in which to go save that of further withdrawal into a subjectivity which refused existence to any reality or law but its own' (195). For Stenham, 'Nothing had importance save the exquisitely isolated cosmos of his own consciousness' and 'little by little ... the meaning of everything, was dying'

(195). Then ‘all existence, including his own hermetic structure from which he had observed existence, had become absurd and unreal’ (195-196). Lee Burroughs, an American lady friend of Stenham, expresses it accurately in a remark about the city of Fez, ‘It would be like being constantly under the influence of some drug, to live here. I should think going out of it could be terribly painful, when you’ve been here a long time’ (186).

Stenham’s and Dyar’s sense of freedom dramatises their condition of blindness. We are told Morocco fascinated Stenham because ‘its charm was a direct result of the people’s lack of mental development’ (210) and ‘they [Moroccans] embodied the mystery of man at peace with himself, ... and trusting implicitly in the ultimate and absolute inevitability of all things, including the behavior of men’ (217). However, the mystery remains impenetrable: ‘this satisfaction they felt in life was to him the mystery, the dark, precious and unforgivable stain which blotted out comprehension of them, ... making their simplest action as fascinating as a serpent’s eye’ (217-218). The freedom to which Stenham – and Dyar – aspires is, to borrow Neil Campbell’s words, ‘as impossible as the notion of a coherent, single self’ (Campbell 2000: 176). Both Stenham and Dyar forget that they are experiencing displacement in a culture in motion. Like Malika, Port and the Linguistics Professor, Dyar and Stenham are turned towards a centre that no longer exists, an origin that is absent. However, the characters’ mourning, their nostalgia, laments the always already vanishing order, but whose other side, as Derrida has explained, is ‘affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming’ (Derrida 1978: 292). Things

change and the element of transformation is crucial. The Professor's and Malika's world as well as Dyar's Interzone and Stenham's Fez are revolving around change and exchange.

Like the Professor's stable view of the other culture, John Stenham approaches the Moroccan traditional way of life in terms of the disappearing past. As a Western writer, Stenham assumes, as does the Linguistics Professor, that the city will not change, that it is timeless, out of (Western) time. Bowles' texts struggle with intense anxieties about changing or mixing categories. All the forces that deconstruct the particular binaries that maintain divisions between past and present are suspect. Change in Morocco cannot be accounted for in texts that stress the ironies to destabilise the unstinting globalisation of liberal capitalism. In *The Spider's House*, we witness the old order breaking in Fez as a result of the political upheavals that stirred Morocco in the 1950s. Like the transformed body of Malika in 'Here to Learn', the deceased friend of the Professor, Hassan Ramani, and the economic circuit for Reguibat in 'A Distant Episode', the 'great medieval city' has changed, too. 'When I first came here it was a pure country', says Stenham to Lee Burroughs, 'there was music and dancing and magic everyday in the streets. Now it's finished, everything' (Bowles 1982b: 187-188). In this way, Bowles reverses Western perspectives, seeing the world not from the position of security and comfort, but insecurity and distress. For Stenham, Morocco is threatened by both the presence of the French and the countermovement of the Nationalists: 'he did not want the French to keep Morocco, nor did he want to see the Nationalists take it' (342). He, therefore, will

not choose between the antagonistic forces. For him, both sides have robbed him of the joy of being and confronted him with nothingness. We read in the novel that Stenham ‘could not choose sides because the part of his consciousness which dealt with the choosing of sides had long ago been paralysed by having chosen that which was designed to suspend all possibility of choice’ (342). Stenham’s inability to accept and participate in change in Fez, which was ‘synonymous with Morocco to him and his friends’ (52), produces a liminal figure ‘neither here nor there’ (Turner 1997: 95). He is between the positions traversing the border spaces between languages and cultures, and as Kaplan points out, ‘a subject embedded in a state of limbo – a state that generates more efforts to disengage, to deterritorialize in an ever purer and more unobtainable manner’ (Kaplan 1996: 73).

In his travel essay *Their Heads are Green and Their Hands Are Blue*, Bowles’ reference to change in North Africa is revealing:

Writing about any part of Africa is a little like trying to draw a picture of a roller coaster in motion. You can say: it *was* thus and so, or, it *is becoming* this or that, but you risk making a misstatement if you say categorically that anything *is*, because likely as not you will open tomorrow’s newspaper to discover that it has changed.

(Bowles 1963: 26, emphasis in original)

Bowles' statement offers the reader an insight into certain blindnesses in Stenham, Dyar and the Linguistics Professor. Fez, Tangier and New York are inevitably changing. They become their own 'broken' reflections, like the 'fissure' of the House of Usher, which 'disorients even the illusion of a stable if submerged origin/ground' (Riddel 1979: 120). The blindnesses are a fissure which traverses the narrative to stress the characters' fragility, in their strain against boundaries as they struggle between consciousness and unconsciousness, reason and atavism. Such a statement echoes what Bowles' says in an interview with Daniel Halpern: 'I'm merely trying to call people's attention to something they don't seem to be sufficiently aware of' (Hibbard 1993: 146). The aim is to effect Dyar's – and Stenham's and the Professor's as well as the reader's – 'dislocation', as Bowles says, 'a temporary smearing of the lens of consciousness' (Hibbard 1993: 152). The old order dissolves in its own image, to become the image of a life that has become 'an anarchic, helter-skelter business' (Bowles 1982b: 70-71). 'Slowly life was assuming a monstrous texture. Nothing was necessarily what it seemed' (49); 'everything was going wrong in the town' (50). All that Amar can see ahead is his world coming to an end, beyond which is darkness and nothingness. Nevertheless, there is no accessible world of 'complacency', no 'pure country' as Stenham believes (187), no country unaffected by the culture, but only a secondary and heterogeneous world, complex and unnatural, as depicted in Bowles' main works.

In *Let It Come Down*, we track the counterfeit space as it makes 'the stationariness of existence more acute' (Bowles 1980: 21): no before, no after;

instead, emptiness. This occasions ‘a progressive paralysis’ (21) that has crept up upon the protagonist. Dyar’s passive character – he is ‘so lazy about making the call’; he finishes ‘his cigarette slowly, making it last’ (22) – may be understood as a stationary quality. Stationariness also characterises the party in Beidaoui’s house: ‘one could have said that the party was in full swing, save that there was a peculiar deadness about the gathering which made it difficult to believe that the party was actually in progress’ (124); in this sense the party operates as a living death, death in the centre of living. In the novel, we read that while the Beidaoui’s party was going on, ‘while it still had not finished’, it was somehow unreal, fake, ‘it was somehow not true’ (124). In this sense, stationariness of existence is a defining feature of the Interzone: it is ‘a waiting room between connections’ (143), between the United States and North Africa, between the East and the West, where Dyar aspires to transformative certainties ‘and something is going to happen’ (130, 153). The body in movement freely walking is what indefinitely organises a ‘here’ in relation to an abroad. But despite being ‘here’, Dyar ‘liked the idea of being able to see Europe across the way while knowing he was in Africa’ (96). The Interzone in *Let It Come Down* connects to the hotel as an in-between in ‘A Distant Episode’, but it is a different in-between. The Professor does not inhabit the hotel as Dyar inhabits the Interzone. The linguist, as I have shown, walks far away, too far from both home and the hotel. Nevertheless, like the Professor in ‘A Distant Episode’, who desires to operate between home and the Saharan desert, Dyar is disoriented, and diverted from a clear direction.

‘There had to be a break, some air had to come in But things don’t happen. It was not in him to make things happen; it never had been’ (153). Dyar travels from his past (America) towards further loss, amnesia (208) and loneliness in the Interzone. These feelings echo Kit’s and Port’s estrangement and alienation, that of the native in ‘Under the Sky’ and of Malika in ‘Here to Learn’, the mother’s and daughter’s in ‘The Echo’, and that of the couple in ‘Call at Corazon’. All these characters are in a situation in which meaninglessness compels them to entrench themselves in interiority. Sheltered by an ‘impalpable’, ‘unlocatable’ universe, Dyar feels disconnected from life, from his experience, and even worse, from the freedom to which he has been aspiring. With each turn of the rhetorical screw, Dyar’s trajectory is, paradoxically, static. In a striking manner, Bowles portrays Dyar’s immobility as carrying him forward, but towards nothingness.

A state in which ‘the old thing was gone beyond recall’ but ‘the new thing had not yet begun’ (19) is treated interestingly in *Let It Come Down*. Dyar is in an in-between space, a space which like Bowles’, is a deconstruction of being as presence. Bowles notes that he is writing ‘not about what happens today, but about today itself’ (Hibbard 1993: 181). Bowles’ depiction of Nelson Dyar’s in-betweenness, his space between absence and presence, can be usefully described in terms made current by Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of presence/absence, and his unsettling of traditional metaphysics’ view of absolute presence and absolute absence. ‘The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West’, Derrida writes, ‘is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this

word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence' (Derrida 1978: 279). In *Let It Come Down*, Dyar thinks he can be sharply isolated from his parents and his past. Dyar's past, though, leaves 'traces' of its presence. His presence in the Interzone is 'vacuums' (223); 'each empty, overwhelming minute as it arrived', pushed him 'further back from life' (20-21). Dyar, like Port and Stenham, travels far away from the centre of civilisation and cultural and economic domination as a way to escape his before, his past, but the past still shapes the contour of his presence. His present and future contain the faint marks of the past. Dyar's space is not really there yet but its potential already shows itself. Its ontology is complex, but comes back to the notion of *différance*. Dyar's state of being in-between suggests how the unknown is inherent to becoming, for becoming is located between absence and presence. 'Here I am' (116, 130), Dyar obsessively reiterates to himself, in the process disconnecting word from object, demonstrating their arbitrariness, as de Saussure famously explains (de Saussure 1986). By the same token, lingering in his journey in the Interzone, the space between the United States and Morocco, at the articulation of the absent and the present, Dyar tends to dislocate the word. The civilised body needs to be healed through subverting rationalising modernity. Voyage holds out this possibility, finding a way to withstand the pull of the future destruction to which Dyar's face is turned.

Let It Come Down is about pre-1952 Tangier, when it was still an International Zone, and we have highlighted Bowles' declaration in the 1980

‘Introduction’ to the novel: ‘Tangier was never the same after the 30th of March 1952’ (Bowles 1980: 7). The implication is that there was a time when Moroccan culture was somehow unified, that there was once a pristine Morocco that has been damaged by modernisation, generating a fall from cultural unity. In ‘International Zone’, Book One of *Let It Come Down*, Tangier is introduced as a mediating zone between the United States and Europe on the one hand, and Morocco on the other. Although there are many spheres of interaction, the economy, together with its correlates money, value, price, and exchange acquires such weight and power in the novel that it calls for a critical investigation.

Jacques Derrida’s theory of a restricted economy and a general economy provides the methodological framework for my discussion of the economy of the Interzone in *Let It Come Down*. Derrida’s notion of a ‘restricted economy’ corresponds broadly to the dominant economy, one that systematically rules out all other economies. Derrida’s ‘general economy’ is more difficult to discern because it is that which goes beyond any restricted economy. Although a local economy could, in some circumstances, be restrictive, in the context of this reading of *Let It Come Down*, the local may be said to inhabit the dominant economy, thereby giving us glimpses of the general economy. A local economy might be a counter to the dominant restricted economy in some respects and so points to the possibilities of a less restricted and more general economy, using more forms of exchange and gifts: emotions not just money. To borrow Lyotard’s insights, a restricted economy has embraced a metaphysical meta-narrative and has formulated laws in order to suppress Otherness (Lyotard 1984). But what has

been excluded can, nonetheless, become so intertwined with that which represses it that it breaks open the overall enclosure. I shall explore how a local economy in *Let It Come Down* creates uncertainties in the dominant economy, thereby drawing attention to the inherent instability of the dominant economy and challenging the certainty of its economic dogma by offering an alternative perspective.

If I may reiterate but expand upon a point made first in the introductory chapter to this thesis, namely the perhaps surprising ‘fit’ between Paul Bowles’ apparently un-theorised writing and the insights of Jacques Derrida: *Let It Come Down* calls attention to Derrida’s skewed use of everyday words. Here is Derrida’s proposal:

I have tried ... to indicate what might be the establishment of a rigorous, and in a new sense ‘scientific’, relating of a ‘restricted economy’ – one having nothing to do with an unreserved expenditure, with death, with being exposed to nonsense, etc. – to a ‘general economy’ or system that, so to speak, *takes account* of what is unreserved.

(Derrida 1973: 151)

Etymologically, economy refers to the conventions of exchange and distribution, according to an external standard. In *Let It Come Down*, there is a fascinating section that shows how the narrator negotiates the International Zone, defining it by price and commodities: ‘It was one of the charms of the International Zone that

you could get anything you wanted if you paid for it. Do anything, too, for that matter; – there were no incorruptibles. It was only a question of price’ (Bowles 1980: 26). In light of this working definition, the economics of the International Zone are worth pausing over, noting, of course, the many economic metaphors that take a specific concern into a more general speculation. Currency takes on an excessive importance in the Interzone, the sphere of transactions: ‘Sterling’ and ‘American Express checks’ are exchanged. This is quite interesting to Bowles, so interesting that we want to know what has become of the signified, what lies behind the different currencies that circulate in the International Zone: ‘pesetas’, ‘American Express checks’, ‘a book of fifties and one of twenties’ (79). In the economy of the Interzone, value is an exchange value, where the ordinary, the sensuous is transfigured, ‘assum[ing] a figure’ (Derrida 1994: 150), and producing a certain doubling. Within this structure of sameness and difference, it is impossible to distinguish absolutely between the economic sphere of the Interzone and its more general non-economic sense because the economy of the Interzone spills over to include the linguistic.

Useful parallels can be drawn between economic and linguistic theories, revealing that money and language are structurally homologous equivalents. As Marc Shell insightfully demonstrates, money is ‘an internal participant’ in the semiological organisation of language (Shell 1982: 3). Money and language are similar media of social exchange. If language consists of economies, so also economics is a language. Nicole Bracker is helpful: ‘The structural homology between money and language is not a mere juxtaposition, but is made possible

and operative by processes at work simultaneously in both economies' (Bracker and Herbrechter 2005: 8). Metaphors contain within themselves a transfer or exchange. For Shell, "exchange" not only expresses the relation between the terms of each metaphor, but also names the metaphORIZATION itself', that is 'its own exchanges of meanings' (Shell 1978: 52). Metaphors of economy are widely employed to describe the way language functions. Ferdinand de Saussure's identification of linguistic significance with monetary value is a famous example. Language, de Saussure informs us in *Course in General Linguistics*, is a system of differential values, in which signs are arbitrary and conventional. This means that the value of the signifier (or sound-image) corresponds neither to its material basis nor to its character, but it is rather the product of a preexisting agreement. According to de Saussure, signs – 'money', 'currency', 'pesetas', 'sterling', 'dollars' – are arbitrary, in the sense that the relation between the signifier and the signified is determined by convention; that is a tacit contract within society that can, in some circumstances, be systematised. Besides arbitrariness and conventionality, both money and words are means of exchange. Dyar has Wilcox change 'a fifty-dollar check' for 'hundred peseta notes' (Bowles 1980: 80). The value/meaning of a dollar bill is a culturally agreed upon value at which one paper dollar becomes equal to two pesetas – in the novel at least. This culturally agreed upon value is what Marx would call 'exchange value'. With Marx, we encounter an economy of 'usage' and 'surplus value': while use value is tied to an item's natural state, exchange value is the result of its cultural state. In this sense, currency value is analogous to the free play of the signifier. 'It comes out of

circulation, enters into it again, preserves and multiplies itself within its circuit, comes back out of it with expanded bulk, and begins the same round ever afresh' (Marx 1971:154-155). It is an economy – following Marx – of a 'self expanding, self-multiplying value' in which the production of signs is considered as a value-producing process (*ibid.*: 155).

Metaphorical transfers between different cultures, different cultural registers, and, as noted, more specifically between linguistic and economic systems are in play in the novel. The Interzone culture, as depicted by Bowles, is dominated by currency smuggling, banking and brokerage: 'the bill was for thirty-three pesetas' (Bowles 1980: 79); Dyar had 'fifty centimos left' (79); he 'took out his two little folders of American Express checks' (79); 'get some money'; 'bank'. Trivial though these examples are, the impression is conveyed that cheques, notes and so on are signs standing in for something else (see Woodmansee and Osteen 1999: 61). In the process, and specifically in the official and unofficial locations of exchange, money takes on various facets in the novel. As the literal economy of the Interzone spills over, or insinuates itself, into seemingly non-economic spheres, so money becomes an agent for multiplicity and change that undermines normal, assumed limits.

The economic metaphors in *Let It Come Down* show that the Interzone's commodities are not simple – as they at first appear – but, instead, complicated; they are blurred, and perhaps undecidable. On a single page, expressions like 'amazing business', 'two rows of money changers', 'yes! Come on! Yes! Change money', 'Gib's one of the most important leakage points', 'Sterling leakage'.

‘twenty thousand pounds slipping out every day’ (82), are textual figures that confirm an economy of currency smuggling, brokerage which is both illegal and threatening to the dominant economy, because it redirects the flow of capital from licit to illicit avenues. If the figure of circulation is essential to economics, currency smuggling bears a relation of foreignness to the circle. In a well-regulated economy, strict conditions govern the production and circulation of commodities, and in the analogous linguistic economy, the production of meanings. Smuggling destabilises trade and affects the internal structure of society by creating new agents, with unpredictable motives.

One of the interesting areas a focus on the Interzone economy opens up is a rethinking of the relations between that which is internal and that which is external. The image of the Interzone as a corrupted world emerges in *Let It Come Down*. It is depicted as a fallen world where the secrecy lent to commodities denotes a circulation of ‘counterfeit[s]’ (143). When Dyar first arrives in the Interzone, he enters a space, a city. It is quite different when the Interzone becomes a marketplace for business opportunities, licit and illicit, which could not always be found under the tighter controls of Western countries. In this sense, the Interzone itself becomes a commodity. Dyar is implicated in the economic system through currency smuggling. Without his knowledge, he is first put in charge of exchanging smuggled foreign currency, thereby acting as a go-between. He connects Young Ramlal, ‘a bandit’ from India who ‘will give him the packet’ of ‘nine thousand pound in cash’ (75), with Mr. Benzekri in the ‘Credit Foncier’ (84). Jack Wilcox, Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers, Young Ramlal, and Mr. Benzekri are

already unruly characters who live in the garden of the ‘counterfeit’ (143) as Dyar describes it. Indeed Jack Wilcox finds that ‘Dyar was the ideal one to use in this connection: he was quite unknown in the town, his innocence of the nature of the transaction was a great advantage,’ and ‘he could be given the errand as a casual part of his daily work and thus would not have to be paid any commission at all’ (76). The secrecy lent to commodities reveals Dyar’s fall from a state of innocence to a state of corruption, the corruption which comes about through deception, through counterfeit.

In such manner, Dyar is implicated in the economic system through currency smuggling, but also through his job in Jack Wilcox’s travel agency. Many other expatriates are vying for his illegal services or loyalty in economic transactions, with each warning him against the other’s soliciting, and with each compensating or exacting punishment on him, either offering him money, sex or spurious attention, or setting one trap or another for him. Madame Jouvenon, the Soviet agent, for example, hands Dyar a fat cheque for ‘small bits of information’. This is the world of the Interzone. It no longer bears the birthmarks of its origin for Dyar – and for Bowles. About currency smuggling, Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers says: ‘It’s a chance one must take’ (82).

My focus is on the ways in which risk haunts the economy in *Let It Come Down*. A hyperbolic free market of currency smuggling and brokerage drives the economy of the Interzone. Derrida’s theory of ‘hauntology’ provides a helpful theoretical basis for this perspective. In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Derrida critiques anti-Marxist attitudes and problematises the ‘new world order’ of

capitalism. He argues that Marxism continues to have a haunting influence on contemporary economic structures, despite assertions by neo-liberals, in particular Francis Fukuyama. In his book *The End of History and the Last Man*, Fukuyama, rejects the common notion of an oppositional discourse to liberal democracy, hails the triumph of capitalism and attempts to exorcise the spirit of Marxism, in particular. For Derrida, 'Ghosts haunt places that exist without them; they return to where they have been excluded from' (Derrida 2000: 152). Following Derrida, I develop my understanding of ghosts (spectrality) and the notion of haunting (hauntology) in *Let It Come Down* by asking: 'what is the *being-there* of a specter? What is the mode of presence of a specter?' (1994: 38; emphasis in original). For Derrida, the ghost rattles the very foundations of existence and problematises an ontology based on presence. Ontology establishes existence or a theory of being, in terms of 'tangible certainty and solidity' (Jameson 1995: 7). Ontology is either 'to be' or 'not to be', whereas, like the ghost in Hamlet, Derrida wants the ghost to return as that which is both and neither. Derrida opposes ontology with the notion of hauntology, that which rejects the certain foundations of ontological existence. Derrida's notion of hauntology is based on his presence/present double gesture. The Ghost confuses our understanding of existence as presence. The ghost *is* but it does not exist. As it is neither present nor absent, it places 'being' as presence in doubt; 'we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us' (Jameson 1995: 7). For Derrida, the spectre is 'the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal or carnal form of the spirit' (Derrida 1994: 6). 'The specter is not

only the carnal apparition of the spirit, its phenomenal body The ghost would be the deferred spirit, the promise or calculation of an expiation' (*ibid.*: 136).

Derrida is playing for high philosophical stakes. Nevertheless, his notion of hauntology is relevant to Bowles' *Let It Come Down*. In terms of the free market economy in the International Zone, the seemingly rock-hard logic on which it is built is challenged by smuggling, and, as a result, its 'sedimented meanings' start to crumble and collapse. Currency smuggling threatens the (trade) law and disregards the boundaries that the concept of an International Zone seeks to protect by its strategy of opening up Morocco to the West. The disturbance set in motion by the act of smuggling or unofficial currency exchange is in every sense economic: the disruption and re-direction 'of distribution and partition' (Derrida 1992: 6), 'of exchange, of circulation, of return' (*ibid.*: 6). But 'the devil' (Bowles 1980: 82) of currency smuggling is that 'the authorities are on to it' (82). 'And they're catching up with some of the chaps' (82). The Interzone of *Let It Come Down* is a space of fluidity and of dissemination that disregards boundaries. Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers is aware that 'It's only a question of time before they'll be able to put a stop to it altogether' (82). Time is constraining for the smugglers. For Niall Lucy, 'all that metaphysics allows or constrains us to regard as certain (concerning time, identity, presence and so forth) is opened to the risk of becoming uncertain, of coming undone or being disjoined' (Lucy 2004: 112). Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers is aware that the maintenance of borders or boundary lines is essential to the economy's very identity. Economic law defines corruption, vice as outside, as other, in order to place it, to fit it into an order, to assign it a meaning.

But the circulation of vice is not so easily placed. For corruption is not only exterior, foreign, it transgresses borders. This said, the Interzone of *Let It Come Down* is a space of fluidity and of dissemination that disregards boundaries.

Currency smugglers in *Let It Come Down* think that they must take ‘risk’ in order to make ‘capital’. Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers says: ‘I like Morocco and my wife likes it. We’re building a little villa here and we must have some capital, risk or no risk’ (82). What needs to be explored is how smugglers, like Ashcombe-Danvers, agree to ignore most of the potential dangers that surround them. According to Anthony Giddens, ‘Risk presumes a society that actively tries to break away from its past – the prime characteristic indeed of modern industrial civilisation’. ‘Risk refers to hazards that are actively assessed in relation to future possibilities. It only comes into wide usage in a society that is future-oriented’ (Giddens 1999). Risk is economically exploited in the International Zone. ‘It makes a man a bit nervous’ (Bowles 1980: 82) because he is smuggling currency, confronting hazards and dangers. His crimes involve trafficking – currency smuggling – and this trafficking is international. It respects no borders. It creeps into the jurisdiction of the law in disguise, a counterfeit that masquerades as something lawful and which takes on and therefore threatens the identity of the law. Still, the promise of future possibilities is looming: old Ramlal’s ‘commission’s enormous’ (82) and the Danvers are building ‘a little villa’ in the International Zone and they are making ‘capital’ (82). Smuggling haunts the free market economy in the Interzone, suggesting ‘the irreducibility of the political understood as that moment where the sedimented meanings of the socioeconomic

are contested' (Critchley 1995: 7). As such, the International Zone is essential in a paradoxical way: it is both integral and marginal. The possible existence of 'chaos' could be exploitable and even invaluable to the extent that it links *Let It Come down* to the in-between.

There is risk involved, by which the reader enters the circuit. When Jack Wilcox says that 'Dyar was the ideal one to use in this connection: he was quite unknown in the town, his innocence of the nature of the transaction was a great advantage' (Bowles 1980: 76), the reader makes something of Wilcox's statement. Similarly, the nature of transactions in the Interzone are visible to us, but not to Dyar. This 'over-seeing' allows us to capitalise on the misdirection of signs. As Jonathan Joseph maintains, 'Derrida teaches us that specters can work for us all and that we can invoke them in order to question any discourse' (Joseph 2001: 96). Authority, in the form of the economic law, depends on borders. Yet the vision of a shifting insecure world is opened up by the smugglers: Wilcox, Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers, the Ramlals and Mr. Benzekri. In this light, one wonders what the Interzone is good for in *Let It Come Down* and what this unsettled world is worth.

The International Zone mediates the United States/Europe and Morocco in a way that affects both sides. It is an in-between that can also be considered a margin of the United States/Europe and Morocco. The International Zone is a margin but still a necessary part for both capitalism and traditional economies. The International Zone of *Let It Come Down* is a world of circulation which is no longer grounded in some underlying meaning or value. It is the locus of

excessive, destabilising capitalism plunked down in a traditional Moroccan society, but also a transition that keeps moving Morocco to a modern country. In this sense, the Interzone may be said to inhabit the restricted economy, given substantial form in both the dominant Western capitalism and the dominated Moroccan economy, thereby giving us glimpses of the general economy. In the world of the Interzone, where all elements of the United States and elements of Morocco become apparent, Mr. Richard Holland explains to Dyar that 'The life revolves wholly about the making of money. Practically everyone is dishonest ... each man is waiting to suck the blood of the next' (Bowles 1980: 121). Explicit statements by the characters confirm their awareness of the fact that the Interzone is a garden of 'counterfeit'. Dyar comes to discover that the place is inhabited by 'plenty of untrustworthy people' (122), and Mr. Holland states: 'The place is a model of corruption!' (122), emphasising the trap in which Dyar is snared. The characters' statements are significant. They suggest that the characters are aware that the Interzone is always already clothed in the terms of deceit, vice and corruption.

In such a manner, Dyar, inhabiting the International Zone, 'had renounced all security' (20). He becomes linked with the economics of insecurity and risk. For Dyar, this is a moment 'in the constitution of meaning' (Derrida 1978: 254). He is linked to 'an expenditure and a negativity without reserve' (*ibid.*: 259), a general economy in which the appearance of universals is lost. But this is 'a change' and 'therefore welcome' (Bowles 1980: 20). Looking for a 'change', Dyar hopes to 'vary' daily routine, breaking away from sameness,

duplication, or exact repetition. By change, the protagonist hopes for ‘a change of terrain’ (Derrida 1982: 135), a place of exchange. What Dyar looks for, indeed, is an opportunity to develop a new perspective and renew a stream of ideas. His dream of liberation helps him rethink the nature of power and the conditions of existence in the pre-independent International Zone. In effect, Dyar’s travel is a desire to escape sameness, the *oikos*, ‘that which remains within the “home” of the same’ (Mortley 1991: 99). In *Let It Come Down*, the world of the Interzone that Dyar inhabits is, at the very least, an unsettled world, verging upon being weird and even mad. It is a space that privileges madness over reason, and immorality over ethics. The Marquesa Daisy De Valverde, ‘a fatuous woman’, who claims that ‘she absolutely worships’ the picturesqueness of Morocco, describes the Interzone as ‘a madhouse, of course. A complete, utter madhouse. I only hope to God it remains one’ (Bowles 1980: 24). In the Interzone, that which is amoral and unethical seeks the opportune breach in which to inhabit its obverse, while that which is fluid and unsettled leaches on to the stable economy gradually to disaggregate its solidity, and to reveal some of its contradictions and instabilities. In so doing it suggests that uncertainty is the only possible certainty.

The space of the novel, then, is the night, the sleep of reason. It advances into the unknown, the unseen. The uncertain emptiness of Dyar, and many of Bowles’ scene-setting descriptions stem from this understanding of space. In this unsettled world, everything is clothed in clouds, including truth itself. ‘a sudden gust of wind threw warm raindrops in his face’ (17). It is night and cold: ‘the candle provided the only light’ (18). By the end of the novel, Dyar ‘look[s] behind

him as he sat up, to see if the lights of Tangier had yet been hidden by Cape Malabata'. 'They were still there' (229), he notices, 'but the black ragged rocks were cutting across them slowly, covering them with the darkness of the deserted coast' (229). Dyar 'kept his eyes shut', 'with his eyes closed' (228), to dream of, to fantasise about, or to enter 'a region of his memory which, now that he saw it again, he thought had been lost forever' (228). The imaginary is thus constituted, taken 'as the small boat passed more certainly into a region of shadowed safety, farther from lights and the possibility of discovery' (229), as 'the door was open and it was dark inside' (279). As Derrida argues, the 'function of representation, imagination is ... the temporalizing function, the excess of the present and the economy of what exceeds presence. There is no unique and full present, except in the imagination's sleep' (Derrida 1976: 311). Dyar's trip exists in that borderland of imagination, a borderland characterised by stationary existence, emptiness and despair, a vacuum that becomes madness and leads him to uncalled-for violence.

In speaking of the Interzone as the 'complete, utter madhouse', Bowles makes a whole area of human experience speak, finding thus a way of representing Dyar's, along with the other characters' experience of madness, understood as an extreme form of excess: they are victimisers as well as victimised, victims of their culture, but also active bearers of its problems which they exacerbate. Madness and monstrosity are the focus of this concluding section. In *Let It Come Down*, Daisy tells Dyar that the age of the International Zone is the 'Age of Monsters':

‘We’re all monsters,’ said Daisy with enthusiasm. ‘It’s the *Age* of Monsters. Why is the story of the woman and the wolves so terrible? You know the story, where she has a sled full of children, crossing the tundra, and the wolves are following her, and she tosses out one child after another to placate the beasts. Everyone thought it ghastly a hundred years ago. But today it’s much more terrible. Much. Because then it was remote and unlikely, and now it’s entered into the realm of the possible. It’s a terrible story not because the woman is a monster. Not at all. But because what she did to save herself is exactly what we’d all do. It’s terrible because it’s so desperately true. I’d do it, you’d do it, everyone we know would do it’. (222)

Daisy’s pronouncement establishes a relation between ‘man’ and monstrosity, and can be linked interestingly to Derrida’s account in ‘*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger’s Hand’ (1987). For Derrida, *Geschlecht* is an idiom of the idiom, a meta-idiom I would say, a more or less untranslatable term that nevertheless can be translated by ‘sex, race, species, genus, gender, stock, family, generation or genealogy, community’ (Derrida 1987: 162). For Derrida, Heidegger’s texts prompt a closely woven set of questions having to do with nationhood, the *Geschlecht* of the human, and the monstrosity of ‘man’ in the hand that signs a document, carries objects and is extended to another. These questions are suggestive for an interpretation of the Interzone in *Let It Come Down*.

Reading Dyar's hand Daisy De Valverde sees a life with 'no sign of work. No sign of anything, ... an empty hand' which reflects 'an empty life'. 'No pattern. And nothing in you to give you any purpose' (Bowles 1980: 34). This is monstrous, in Derrida's understanding of the word. The reference to no work and purpose is relevant to the question of a restricted /general economy. Indeed, these references are central aspects of (Western) Protestant ethic that Max Weber links to capitalism in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Dyar's departure from home, the world of capitalism, is a highly significant escape. Dyar's decision to leave the United States for the Interzone is a decision to leave the home of the Protestant ethic. As Eric Mottram points out, 'the monstrous swells from the structure of an age which lacks a strong social ethic and which forces us back on a morally weak instinct for self-preservation' (Mottram 1976: 14). This said, Interzone life undermines life in New York's sense of hard work and the importance of time. The bodily metaphor of an empty hand finds an echo in Dyar's statement, 'I don't take much stock in that sort of stuff' (Bowles 1980: 223). 'Stock' is one of the spheres in which Derrida's discussion of *Geschlecht* operates. Such a homonym means both 'supply of goods kept by a merchant', and 'original from which others derive'. Both meanings demonstrate how Bowles' playfulness enables him to construct passages through the labyrinth that reveal the shared foundations of the linguistic and financial economies: the word 'stock' calls up expressions such as 'language stock' and 'stock of [colloquial] phrases'. Indeed, Dyar's statement, 'I don't take much stock in that sort of stuff' (223) similarly suggests that exchanges operate in both the economy of language and

the economy of the Interzone, thus recalling what William Burroughs terms ‘pathetic fantasies of smuggling, of trafficking in diamonds, drugs, guns, of starting nightclubs, bowling alleys, travel agencies’ (Burroughs 1989: 50). This is the place of ‘treachery’, as Burroughs and Bowles term it, reminding us of the smuggled currency and the counterfeit.

Dyar’s hand may be not just ‘empty’ but also ‘monstrous’. It is surely monstrous as a sign, whether the ‘We’ in Daisy’s evocation ‘We’re all monsters’ indicates ‘man’, humanity, or some other sense of *Geschlecht* (Derrida 1987). The hand’s being belongs in its linguistic function to a monster that signs and designs. It is ‘a sign that shows and warns’ (Derrida 1987: 167). The hand seems to be the monstrous sign that ‘reaches and extends’ (*ibid.*: 168) the free market Interzone. In his quest to meet needs that can never be met, Dyar cannot experience but only devour. His is an excessive hand, a monster of need. Dyar’s hand is a metaphor of that which dictates modernisation, an excessive market of utility and profit that in various ways underpins all activity governed by the unstinting globalisation of liberal capitalism. The hand pointing out and gesturing is an empty sign: it has no pattern, no work, no purpose. Dyar’s hand is void of ‘stock’, of meaning, and ‘vacuums have a tendency to fill up’ (Bowles 1980: 223). Dyar’s hand is empty, of no particular performative effect.

Hence Daisy’s warning, ‘be careful what goes into your life’ (139), can be linked to Derrida’s account in ‘*Geschlecht* II: Heidegger’s Hand’:

showing, signifying, designating, this sign is void of sense It says itself void of sense ... we are sign – showing, informing, warning, pointing as sign toward, but in truth toward nothing, a sign out of the way ... in a gapped relation to the sign ... display [montre] that deviates from the display or monstration, a monster that shows [montre] nothing. This gap of the sign to itself and to its so-called normal function, isn't it already a monstrosity of monstrosity [monstrosité], a monstrosity of monstration?

(Derrida 1987:167)

Dyar's empty hand points to excessive capitalism as an economy of death, revealing how 'breakdown of trust is central to [Bowles'] work' (Mottram 1976: 16). Dyar's quest for freedom in the Interzone is pure illusion since Bowles' Tangier is a metaphor of a counterfeit place, of Man's propensity to lie, 'Can't anyone in this town tell the truth' (Bowles 1980: 91). Bowles sums up this state of affairs in the Interzone: 'It's an atmosphere of treachery. Everyone's working behind everyone else's back and you never know when the blow is coming' (Stewart 1974: 94). Dyar's empty hand has nothing inscribed upon it, but zero-ing, an infinite nothingness. The vacuum in Dyar's hand brings to mind the form of coins smuggled in a city in the middle of the world. The coins in the Interzone seem to be 'not merely an economic token with exchange value but also an aesthetic symbol to be infinitely interpreted' (Shell 1978: 83), as though a certain significance, a certain value 'lurks in all things, else all things have little value',

including the round world itself' (Shell 1978: 84). Such emptiness, the zero value of Dyar's hand, ushers in an economy of death in so far as it designates a number of spectres that haunt the Interzone's free market economy. In this manner, nothingness mediates a scene of vacant nature in the International Zone. It operates against the perennial desire to believe the word as fact, retaining the function of provoking moments of unease. The power of words, as Riddel points out, rests 'in their original displacement and dispersal, a fall marked by a fissure in the image' (Riddel 1979: 122), by an end as trustless as that of Nelson Dyar or Port Moresby.

Daisy knows that Dyar is in the same condition: that he is not a living person but a simulacrum of a living person: 'You're not really alive, in some strange way. You're dead' (Bowles 1980: 221). That excessive capitalism is an economy of death is inscribed in the 'a' of Derrida's famous neographism 'différance' (Derrida 1982: 3). *Différance*, misspelled with an 'a' and pronounced (in French) precisely like 'difference', is a portentous concept for the free economy in the Interzone. Derrida writes:

This discreet graphic intervention ... this graphic difference (a instead of e), this marked difference between two apparently vocal notations, between two vowels, remains purely graphic: it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard. It cannot be apprehended in Speech It is offered by a mute mark, by a tacit monument ... this stone – provided that one knows how to decipher its inscription is not far from announcing the death of the tyrant.

The excess the text locates inside (but at the margins) of the free market economy of the Interzone is multifold. It spells out the death of the Interzone economy, a death that is foretold in the etymology of the word ‘economy’, derived from *oikos* (household), which is akin to *oikesis* (tomb) (Derrida 1982: 8 n. 8). All of this is inscribed on the tomb that the *a* of *différance* represents. It is inscribed in ‘Tangier’, a Moroccan city modernised bit-by-bit after 1952. It is inscribed on a tomb memorialised in smuggled currency and in the stigmas associated with Moroccan characters in *Let It Come Down*.

Such excess in the structure of the Interzone economy is given substantial form in Hadija, the product of abject poverty in the slums of the international city of Tangier. She becomes an object of exchange in the Interzone. In such a free market, the sixteen-year-old Arab girl takes up prostitution in the Bar Lucifer by day and at night offers the same services to the lesbian Eunice Goode ‘with something akin to apathy’ (Bowles 1980: 60). She is depicted as a piece of property, an object of circulation. In the free International Zone anarchy, a distorting mirror of the age, Hadija becomes a commodity whose exchange-value is marked by being used by Eunice Goode and being used another time by Dyar. Eunice’s association with Hadija ‘had started her off in a certain direction, which was a complete ownership of the girl’ (154). For Dyar, too, Hadija ‘was not a real person’ (93). Rather, like currency, she circulates, serving as a commodity, ‘a toy’, and ‘it could not matter what a toy did’ (93).

‘Like most girls with her training, basically Hadija thought only in terms of goods delivered and payment received’ (138). Hadija is invisible, and yet conscious of her invisibility as a human being, using it to her own advantage. Hadija literally prostitutes herself, ready to exchange soul and body for each trivial gadget, translating herself into monetary value: ‘Quick! Give money!’ (71) ‘More. Give’ (72); ‘little radio’ (100); ‘wan Coca-Cola’ (69, 132); ‘a little room’ (99); and such expressions locate her in the economy of the Interzone. Her role as a commodity points to a self marked by slippages and displacements. She is a piece of meat sold to circulate between Eunice Goode and Dyar. Yet Hadija has a certain detached and disinterested attitude towards the three people she deals with: Thami, Eunice and Dyar. Duplicity forges her very identity, as it forges the identity of the commodity, of the smuggled currency. The split between her circulation as a commodity and the ‘apathy’ and ‘cold feeling’ disrupts the seamless homogenisation of exchange. In that split a temporal dimension intrudes that extends a space in which Hadija protects herself by her detachment. The huge discrepancy between Hadija and Eunice shows that any real friendship is impossible: age, social status, culture, interests and sexual orientation all intervene. Hadija’s pragmatic attitude and potential for freedom enables her to realise the possibility of breaking out of the cage of servility to men whenever she feels like it. In this sense Hadija’s resistance creates, even temporally, an alternative economy to that where power determines one’s position in the pyramid and where everyone uses the person below. ‘Her days of enforced civility to strange men, and above all Moslem men, had come to a triumphant close’ (131).

It is a common assumption that a free-market economy brings global prosperity, improves well-being and reduces inequalities and resulting violence. Below and around freer capitalism in the Interzone, discontented and displaced poverty stirs and surges. With free market economics in the International Zone arise conditions which are 'critical, fragile, threatened, even in certain regards catastrophic, and in some bereaved' (Derrida 1994). The tyranny, the monstrosity in the Interzone free market is also inscribed on the inarticulate voice of most of the Moroccans in the novel, on the back of the aliens whose strangeness horrifies, shocks and destroys Westerners. It is a tyranny memorialised on the tomb of Thami, the spokesman of the community, who makes his Muslim compatriots 'conscious of their shame and suffering' (Bowles 1980: 42). Thami 'could not think of the mass of Moroccans without contempt. He had no patience with their ignorance and backwardness'; if Thami 'damned the Europeans with one breath, he was bound to damn the Moroccans with the next' (44). Thami, that 'vast imponderable weight that nothing could lighten,' (283) is horribly killed by Dyar by a nail driven into his head: 'The nail was as firmly embedded as if it had been driven into a coconut' (283). Such is the 'Age of Monsters', full of contradiction and anguish. The 'Age of Monsters' where Western cultural power shapes the monoculture and decline of social relationships. It is an age, as Richard Holland tells Dyar, when 'each man's waiting to suck the blood of the next' (121) and when impossibilities are possible. But the death of such an age is foretold by alternative networks. Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers tells Dyar that 'Natives [are] engaged in noisy commerce. A note of satisfaction in his voice' (81); his

exclamations on how ‘shrewd people, these mountain Berbers’ are (82), on how ‘chaos’ (81) is interesting, are noteworthy. This is the drama of progress, of modernisation that reaches Tangier, and more generally Morocco. Massive, self-satisfied, but ‘above all inevitable’, is Eric Hobsbawm’s verdict (Hobsbawm 1975: 16). Mr. Ashcombe-Danvers’ exclamations suggest that the distribution of power is continually slipping, evolving like the smuggled currency.

Such monsters as Daisy describes are the monsters of man or of man’s hand; their monstrosity embodies ‘otherwise’ and thoroughly deforms the various projects of *Geschlecht*, that underpin the free market of the International Zone. In so doing the monsters of man or man’s hand contaminate Bowles’ economic treatise. ‘Monstration’, to put it in Wortham’s words, is ‘therefore monstrous in the “gapped relation” of the sign to itself and to its “so-called normal function,” which of course has to do with presence and reference’ (Wortham 2001). These man-made monsters might be taken and affirmed as mutations of the Interzone-market where commodity – objects and human-beings turned into commodities – sells as the exotic, a polysemic gamut of commodity, ‘smuggled currency’, ‘pornography’, ‘prostitution’, ‘majoun’, ‘trance dance’, as well as many locations: the spatial labyrinth that is Tangier (as we have also noted in discussing Bowles’ description of streets in *Without Stopping*), bars, the beach, mountains, the hotel, all carry meanings, an infinite procession of spectres that haunt Dyar, obliquely reflecting the social bond, ‘the blood that is sucked’, ‘the definite social relation between men themselves’ (Derrida 1994: 196).

It is sometimes explicitly claimed and often tacitly assumed that there was once a time when language and meaning were at one, but that rationalising modernity sundered that unity. From then on, so the proposal runs, only poets and children had access to that unified speech, typified by the privileged trope of the symbol. This is a myth used by Romantic poets and thinkers, notably Coleridge, Wordsworth and, in the United States, Emerson. Bowles sees Morocco in similar terms, that is, as a ‘before’ and an ‘after’. Bowles’ version of the myth of the fall into modernity, it may be argued, underpins *Let It Come Down*, along with his novels and short stories ‘Here to Learn’ and ‘A Distant Episode’. Nelson Dyar leaves New York for the Interzone, with the hope of finding in its supposedly pristine culture an escape from what he sees as the deadly machinery, rationalism and entropy of Western civilisation. Dyar moves away to encounter the traditional and to restore nature to some Edenic state – untrammelled by human use, uncorrupted even by man’s presence. This is quixotic, because the traditional has moved away. In the Interzone, Dyar finds a free market that lacks the order of the work ethic and that abuts a different economy, that of Morocco, an economy which registers the impact of Western capitalism, while focusing on its own priorities. In such a way, Bowles demystifies the latent structure of the conservative myth of the fall, veiled under the linguistic sign, exercising an interpretive revolution. Indeed, a sense of outrage permeates *Let It Come Down*. Through the free economy in the Interzone, Bowles attacks the certitude that informs the Western tradition of rational thought. He attacks it through Dyar’s striving for selfhood defined by free will in a world where freedom is impossible

and change is inevitable. Doing so, Bowles is ‘the bicultural smuggler’ who ‘crosses over to another side where capital has not yet reduced the object to a commodity – to a place where a psychic healing can occur’ (Hicks 1991: xxxi).

Dyar’s survival depends on the degree to which he accepts responsibility for himself and the world. Dyar’s mother tells him: ‘Once you accept the fact that life isn’t *fun*, you’ll be much happier’ (Bowles 1980: 21). Through Dyar’s perspective, Bowles directs our attention to ways of seeing Dyar’s generation, a generation which risks appearing ‘irresponsible to those for whom “being responsible” amounts to following a predetermined course or programme of socially acceptable things to say and do’ (Lucy 2004: 107). Bowles names the new responses and interests of this generation:

I think the whole generation’s unhealthy. It’s either one thing or the other. Overdrinking and passing out on the sidewalk, or else mooning around about life not being worth living. What’s the hell’s the matter with all of you?

(Bowles 1980: 21)

Dyar’s father critiques his son’s generation as ‘unhealthy’, because ‘It’s either one thing or the other’. Exploiting Dyar’s experience in the Interzone, Bowles insightfully introduces the reader into the in-between. This is helpful in unravelling the complex structure of feeling of the pre-1952 International Zone in *Let It Come Down*. Bowles exploits the various mediations that I have commented

on in order to understand social change in the living substance of relationships. He puts the doubling operation to superb use, depicting it as generation-specific, a fluid experimental category. The operation by which ‘the double splits’, determined by de Saussure as catastrophe or monstrosity, refers to the ‘Age of Monsters’, as Bowles titles Book 3 of *Let it Come Down*. And yet, as I have shown, Dyar’s in-betweenness, his Interzone, ‘a waiting room between connections’ (143), precedes binary oppositions like outside/inside, unfamiliar/familiar, centre/margin. In each entity, ‘two contradictory predicates are united: it is a matter of language uncontaminated by supplementarity’ (Derrida 1976: 247). Dyar’s mediation is a relentless temporal movement of postponement without ever arriving at the ideal location, the ideal signified I might add. ‘In order to feel alive’, the narrator notes, ‘a man must first cease to think of himself as being *on his way*’ (Bowles 1980: 183, emphasis in original). Dyar’s in-betweenness, ‘no before, no after’, marks a spatial-temporal interval that is both a deferral and difference at the same time. In the Interzone, the protagonist ‘was standing here in the middle of no country’ (143) creating spatio-temporal coherence.

The theory of life as anarchy occurs to Dyar as he lies on the beach:

Life is not a movement toward or away from anything; not even from the past to the future, or from youth to old age, or from birth to death. The whole of life does not equal the sum of its parts. It equals any one of the parts; there is no sum. (183)

However, Dyar's contact, like Moresby's and Stenham's, shows that life is not simply linear and made of concatenated 'parts' that add up to a 'sum'. The 'linear' is rather broken, and life is, to borrow Neil Campbell's words, 'a multiple, contradictory, and fragmented identity constantly adjusted and transformed by the contacts it has with the world in which it exists and through which it moves' (Campbell 2000: 176). In this manner, the novel itself serves as a means of transportation, an in-between. Unlike the failed letters between Dyar and his mother, *Let It Come Down* is a letter dispatched to render an all-consuming and endlessly expanding account of the excess, 'to be continued' (Bowles 1980: 86). Bowles is so fascinated by the economy of the Interzone that it remains with him twenty-eight years after he publishes his novel, and writes the sentence that has sparked my own interest: 'Tangier was never the same after the 30th of March 1952' (7).

Mediation has a supplementary character. In any mediation, one might conclude – be it the 1980 introductory essay, or its title, the protagonist's mediation, or more importantly Bowles' mediation – that there is something missing. There is always something not present in every present(ation). Something is forgotten, suppressed, or excluded. In the context of my thesis, this could be the 'other'. In this sense, meta-fictional speculations help to show that, despite Paul Bowles' insights into Morocco, there are certain blindnesses in his texts, to revert to Paul de Man's formulation (de Man 1983). The initial blindness is Bowles' assumption of a pre/post structure, an assumption that is common in

his work. The post structure of the International Zone cannot be disregarded because, even if properly different, outside, it is not, in fact, simply outside, but has always already existed as unseen or ignored, uncertain or misread. Postmodernised Tangier lies, rather, in the oversights and slips-ups that structure *Let It Come Down*.

In place of the rigorous distinction between the original, unified Moroccan culture and the emerging falseness of a fallen, modernised, independent Morocco, there is a mingling of image with the original. Hence the mechanism:

There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split in itself and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles. The origin of the speculation becomes a difference. What can look at itself is not one; and the law of the addition of the origin to its representation, of the thing to its image, is that one plus one makes at least three. The historical usurpation and theoretical bizarreness that install the image within the rights of reality are determined as the forgetting of a simple origin.

(Derrida 1976: 36-37)

This, we might say, is an inevitable confusion, one that Bowles, as well as his characters – even the extremes of Malika of ‘Here to Learn’ and the Linguistics Professor of ‘A Distant Episode’ – and the self-reflective Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques*, and Stenham of *The Spider’s House* – must encounter and work

through. Bowles is as blind as he is insightful. Perhaps he must become blind to be insightful, an achievement denied by the Professor, for sure. Tradition and nature are conceived of as originary, while 'modernity' and culture are condemned to be secondary, following on from a fall. But, to borrow Lucy's terms, 'no succession is ever simply linear; it is always also hierarchical' (Lucy 2004: 102). Here, I may reiterate but expand upon a point made when discussing some of Bowles' short fiction. There is always a pattern in Morocco, but also in the United States, and in Lévi-Strauss' Brazil. Although Bowles' characters search for deliverance from modernity, Tangier, just as much as Fez or New York, 'can never be read in a vacuum' (Kaplan 1996: 70). Culture will always be inhabited by nature and nature will always be inhabited by culture. They are always already interrelated. There is no vacation from modernity when the travellers are modern.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Morocco: Paul Bowles' Peripheral Centre

I did not choose to live in Tangier permanently; it happened. My visit was meant to be of short duration; after that I would move on, and keep moving onward indefinitely. I grew lazy and put off departure.

(Bowles 1985: 366)

How Paul Bowles inhabits the exotic is a complex question. The relationship he has with Morocco is as a translator, an autobiographer, a short story-writer, a novelist and above all, as a travelling writer crossing postcolonial spaces. Bowles' work moves between several locations: between 'first' and 'third world', 'central' and 'marginal'. Although he must write from some 'where', that 'where' is a mix of places in one of his many itineraries and roles in his career: from first-world writer to expatriate writer, though even that description does not quite capture his state. He is changed by his travel but marked by his place of origin, and by allegiances and alienations on the way.

In his writing, Bowles is susceptible to the exotic, to the extent that he is ensnared, trapped in its labyrinthine architecture, which haunts his translations, his autobiography, his short stories and novels. Inhabiting Morocco for Bowles is like inhabiting a labyrinth wherein there is no obvious issue, and yet no blatant imprisonment. Deconstruction, as a way of negotiating 'architexture', helps us to settle for an unsettled state in reading Bowles, giving us insights into how Bowles

inhabits Morocco. He lived in Morocco for a very long time, and yet was not content with expatriation, as many American writers had been from the 1920s onwards. Bowles inhabits Morocco by embracing the state of mediation, overdetermining it in complex and even deadly forms for some of his characters, while, himself, traversing different communicative levels across various genres.

On occasions, I have noted the relevance to Bowles of the *flâneur*'s walk into exotic cities. The *flâneur*'s walk reduces distance and yet maintains it by bringing into the walk a reflection upon the journey. While the romantic Bowles aspires to the pure and original, his texts – when put into the above context – reveal that he has encountered *différance*, as a deferring and differing experience. And while nineteenth-century writers – Poe, Dickens and Melville, all of them, in their way, *flâneurs* – approach the cityscape as mysterious, Bowles approaches the old in a modern way. Exteriority and interiority are thus tied together, revealing something approaching a postmodern twist in Bowles' work.

We pass into a multiplicity of passages, or media that identify Bowles not in terms of simple binary oppositions, this being a tendency in most Bowles criticism, but rather in terms of a mixture. Admittedly, Bowles' work is not untainted. It yields to a promiscuity that can condemn him in the eyes of over-vigorous postcolonial critics. It remains a mixture of the traditional and modern, the real and the imaginary, nature and culture, equality and power. Although his translation project may be easily criticised, it is yet fitting that he should seek to straddle the oral and the written, evincing a certain narrative ambivalence, a cultural relativism that arises when oppositions become mixed.

Although Bowles deals with dramatic issues of power and exploitation that call out for resolution, it seems more fitting to conclude that mediation is continuous for Bowles. His texts represent in-betweens that cannot be dismissed. To think that Morocco – or any other place in the universe – could ever be fixed, congealed, is a romantic dream of plenitude that Bowles shares with other visitors, literary or not. But Morocco is in mediation. It does not have one single pattern fixed in its pastness. It is neither static nor stagnant. Moroccan culture is not a pure essence subjected to the unfortunate myth of the fall into modernity. Morocco's long history evidences its motion. Its mobility is not in itself exciting or threatening, but in Williams' words, 'a transforming social experience' (Williams 1973: 17). To borrow James Clifford's words, 'the world is extremely connected, though not unified, economically and culturally' (Clifford 1988: 17). This means that culture and nature are always already interrelated, and, as Derrida explains as well as anyone, just as there is no pure principle without supplementation, standing at the end of a pathway, no access to pure and unmediated reality is possible. This attests to the fact that imagination is not only natural as Bowles comes close to assuming in some of his explicit statements, but also cultural, in the manner his texts evidence. Paul de Man's coupling of blindness and insight seems right, not least for this Moroccan woman reading Paul Bowles' writings on her country (De Man 1983). Imagination is mediated and therefore only different in degree and not a different kind from other forms of discourse.

Writing mediates between Bowles and the exotic as it mediates between the author and his Truth. Bowles' identity is much more complex than other critics have assumed. Where they think he is close to the 'I' of the text, close reading initiates alternative perspectives, allowing a disjunctive state in which rupture and associations between Bowles and his texts are in continual interchange. In effect, close reading cannot but focus attention on mediations and in-betweens.

Bowles' writing about Morocco is a way to de-centre the centre; it is a way to unsettle schematised patterns of Western hegemonic texts, increasing play, opening up the exploration of meaning. As Derrida has shown, there is no real absolute centre that is not implicated in a structure. Morocco is never itself: wherever there is language, there is modernisation. The centre inhabits the periphery and the best way to describe Bowles' Morocco is as a peripheral centre with a multiplicity of centres, each of them a potential site of creativity and loss. In Bowles' writing, Morocco emerges as both presence and absence. The presence of Morocco and its absence in Bowles' texts is, paradoxically, in its effacement. As such the text, Bowles' text, has always already been altered by its mobility, when it hands itself to the reader, who, bound by his or her own perspective, takes over and transmutes it, beyond Bowles' reach, from an experience to be read to a text to be experienced and re-written.

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