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The Orientalist Leanings in Bowles's Translation and Representation of Moroccan Culture [PP: 91-103]

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ABSTRACT

When Paul Bowles settled in the International zone of Tangier after WWII, he took up a project of translating a group of young and poor uneducated oral storytellers from Tangier (Mohammed Mrabet, Larbi Layachi, Ahmed Yacoubi, and Abdesslam Boulaich). In his translation and writings about Morocco, Paul Bowles concentrated on two main features of the culture, mainly the popular and the oral. Accordingly, aim of this paper is to reveal the motivations behind Bowles's reductionist approach in his representation of Morocco through his translations of Moroccan oral tradition. The paper also aims to demonstrate how Orientalism characterizes Bowles's translations in its two main definitions; both as a reductionist form of representation and as a form of knowledge/ Power. The main argument is that in his concentration on only popular culture and the illiterate class of society in his representation of the culture, Bowles transmitted to the West a fragmented and incomplete image about the "other." Therefore, this paper comes to the conclusion that like most orientalist writings, Bowles's translations and writings about Morocco serve in reinforcing biased stereotypes about the East.

Keywords: Paul Bowles, Orientalism, Oral tradition, Reductionist approach, Morocco, Storytelling

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1. Introduction

When Paul Bowles, a self-exiled American Music composer and traveler, settled in the International zone of Tangier in 1947, he wrote about North Africa and Morocco in his fiction and essays. Simultaneously, he took up a project of translating a group of young and poor, uneducated men from Tangier who could tell him infinite stories drawing on their imagination and real life experiences in addition to their repertoire from the oral tradition of storytelling in Morocco. Paul

Bowles transcribed, translated and published these stories in America and London as "Translations from the Moghrebi". Afterwards, the stories were re-translated into many European languages. In his translation and writings about Morocco, Paul Bowles concentrated on two main features of the culture, mainly the popular and the oral. Therefore, the main question that this research tackles is what are the motivations behind the American's reductionist approach? and why did he concentrate in his translations



on the oral tradition and the oral storytellers of Tangier, in particular, while he has deliberately ignored other aspects of Moroccan culture?

This paper starts from the assumption that Bowles's translations of Moroccan oral stories were primarily motivated by a strong desire to reflect and represent his personal attitudes, perception, and convictions regarding the "social world" in general and Moroccan culture in particular. Indeed, Paul Bowles understands the real authentic culture and Moroccan culture as being located in the past as he advocates primitivism, archaism, chaos, popular culture Vs modernism, progress, order and written culture (Elghandor 1993). And in many respects, the oral stories of the illiterate represent what Bowles associates with true and authentic human culture such as "magic", for example. In this regard, Bowles points out:

There is not much magic left in the world, I'm afraid wherever there is any, the organizers, that is society, will do its best to stamp it out. Well, they're trying to stamp out that which is human, that's all, in favor of the intellect which is not very human... In Other words, let's go back to non-existence, that's my idea, to the past (Elghandour 1993:18).

It is in this context, I argue that while translating Moroccan oral storytellers, whom Bowles classifies as a representative of the archaic/natural man, marks Bowles's efforts to preserve the remnants of the past. His interest in their oral stories stems from his conviction that they are part and parcel of the history of Moroccan literature (Jadir 2005: 27). As a result, and in his attempt to preserve what he valued the most in human / Moroccan culture, its originality and authenticity,

Bowles ended up constructing a very confining image about "the other", which happens to reiterate and buttress the same orientalist assumptions that the West has previously constructed about the East as "backward", "inferior", "illogical" and "unchanging".

While the issue of Paul Bowles and Orientalism is not a new one, this paper does not focus on or aim to classify Paul Bowles as an "orientalist" in the rigid sense of the term. Rather, its main objective is to explain why Bowles's translations happen to perpetuate the legacy of orientalism despite the translator himself¹. A main reason is his reductionist approach in his understanding and representation of the culture. And in his concentration on only popular culture and the illiterate class of society, though a majority at the time, Bowles transmitted to the West a fragmented and incomplete image about the "other." Like most orientalist writings, his translations and writings about Morocco serve in reinforcing biased stereotypes about the East.

For Edward Said, the intellectual founder of the postcolonial theory, the main critique of Orientalism concerns the Western inaccurate representations of the Orient, of how the East is perceived and constructed by the Western thought and its misconceptions. Said argues that:

the West's construction of the Orient projects all the things that the West considers negative, all the things that have to be repressed – all the things on the right hand side of the slash in a binary opposition – onto our(Westerner's) construct of the other, the Orient. So, the Orient becomes the place where body (as opposed to mind), evil (as opposed to good), and the feminine (as opposed to the masculine) all reside. By

¹ Bowles refuses to be classified as an orientalist (Elghandor 1993).

placing all of these forms of “otherness” on the Orient, Said says, the Occident can construct itself as all positive” (Mary Klages 2012:155).

The main argument laid by Edward Said concerns the flawed representations of the Orient by Westerners which rely mainly on the construction of binary oppositions. On the basis of these binary oppositions, Said argues, the West manifests itself as everything (positive) the East is not. In the light of this conceptualization, I will show how Paul Bowles has fallen into the same trap as a result of his reductionist approach in his representation of the “other”. Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate how Orientalism characterizes Bowles’s translations in its two main definitions; first as a reductionist form of representation and as a form of knowledge/Power.

Theoretically, this research falls within the scope of postcolonial translation studies. This new framework in the field of Translation Studies was adopted “in the mid to late 1980’s” (Robinson 1997). The issues that emerged within this branch are mostly concerned with how translation from dominated to hegemonic cultures functions as a form of mis/representation as well as a source of power and domination. In this context, literary translations constitute an interesting site for representations or mis-representations, stereotyping, manipulation and construction of identities, “a network in which a culture is fashioned” (Carbonell 1996: 81). In Sherry Simon and Paul St-Pierre’s (2000) *Changing the Terms: Translation in the Postcolonial Era*, various contributions study postcolonial and cultural dynamics of translation and the power relations that govern this activity. In this regard, Simon (2000) emphasizes the point that “translation refers not only to the

transfer of specific texts into European languages, but to all the practices whose aim was to compact and reduce an alien reality into the terms imposed by a triumphant Western culture” (11).

In Colonial and postcolonial contexts, translation functions as an “excellent vehicle for conveying the typically Foucaultian binary essence of the opposition power/knowledge (Alvarez & Vidal 5-6). Translation wields power in transferring knowledge and constructing or enhancing previously constructed images or stereotypes about the “other”. In his essay “The Exotic Space of Cultural Translation”, Oviedo Carbonell (1996) argues that translation as a transfer of knowledge from one given culture to another is “relocated and interpreted according to the conditions in which knowledge is produced (quoted from Faiq 2004:4). Translations in such contexts are “inscribed within the politics, the strategies of power, and the mythology of stereotyping and representation of other cultures” (Alvarez & Vidal 1996: 80). Translation is also approached as “power” when it serves the construction “of colonial subjects” (Simon 2000: 11-12) or imaginary fictitious images and inaccurate representations of the “Other”, what Edward Said (1979) labels “imaginary spaces or geographies”.

2. Paul Bowles: A Critical Introduction to Translated Works

In Tangier, Paul Bowles encountered a group of poor and illiterate young men; namely, Ahmed Yacoubi, Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet and Abdesslam Boulaich, whose storytelling abilities fascinated the American expatriate and intrigued his literary curiosity. Throughout the 1950’s, Bowles’s favorite pastime “was just sitting listening to their marvelous stories. It really entertained [Bowles] – much more than any theatre or



film or any form of public entertainment” (Stewart 1974: 111). In a collection of translated stories titled “Five Eyes”, Paul Bowles writes, in the preface, that one day in 1952, as Ahmed Yacoubi began to speak, it occurred to him to scribble down the English translation of a story that Yacoubi called “The Man Who Dreamed of Fish Eating Fish (Boulaich 1979). It was then that one of Bowles’s main projects began, that of translating a group of oral storytellers from Tangier. As soon as the tape recorder reached Morocco in 1955, Bowles encouraged the young men to record their stories and tales on tape. Then, Bowles transcribed and translated all the oral stories from Moroccan dialect (da-ri-ja)² into English.

Some of the translated texts like “Hiddan Ahram”, “The Ghoula”, “Doctor Safi”, “The Well”, were directly inspired by Moroccan popular tales and legends, traditionally recognized in Morocco as “khrafat”³. In addition to the tales that were published as a compilation of short stories, Bowles’s translations also included autobiographies, novels and short stories. The three Moroccan autobiographies that Paul Bowles translated are *Look and Move On* (1976) by Mohammed Mrabet, *Life Full of Holes* (1964) by Larbi Layachi, and *For Bread Alone* (1973) by Mohammed Choukri. All three texts were based on their authors’ bitter experiences and social hardships as they depicted their life journeys in the international zone of Tangier.

Compared to all the storytellers with whom Bowles translated, we can say that Mohammed Mrabet’s literary contribution was more significant. Bowles collaborated

extensively with Mohammed Mrabet for a considerably longer time and, together, they created thirteen narratives of different literary genres, including the short story and the novel. *Love with a Few Hairs* (1967), *M’hashish* (1969), *The Lemon* (1969) *The Big Mirror* (1977), “The boy who Set The Fire” are examples. Yet, these translations were not heartily welcomed in postcolonial Morocco.

After the later gained its independence in 1956, there has been a surge in postcolonial thinking and criticism among Moroccan fledgling intelligentsia; notably, the authors Abdellah Laroui and Tahar Benjelloun. Equally, Paul Bowles’s translations of Morocco have been at the center of their criticism. In his article “Technique de Viol” published in “Le Monde” newspaper in 1972, Benjelloun denounced Paul Bowles and described his translations of Moroccan storytellers as “bastard literature”. Likewise, Abdellah Laroui critiqued Bowles in his major work *Contemporary Arab Ideology* for making a Moroccan [Mohammed Mrabet] “speak for long hours into a tape recorder and capturing “nothing but his own fantasy. The empty time, the degree zero of existence that he imagines he detects in his subject, are in reality his own” (Coury & Lacey 2009: 138). Benjelloun and Abdellah Laroui were, probably, the first Moroccans who have criticized Bowles’s “negative” representation of Moroccan culture through the voice of the marginalized. They see that through the life and stories of the illiterate, the most unfortunate and marginalized class of society, Paul Bowles has given a representation of the culture that is biased and incomplete. But why would Paul

² Da-ri-ja is the national dialect in Morocco. Like “Amazigh”, it is oral and not a written language

³ Tales or Legends

Bowles focus on the marginalized, the illiterate and the oral and completely overlook other aspects of the culture?

Interestingly, Paul Bowles perceives the world in terms of “a fundamental binary division” (Bourdieu 1993: 20) that conditions his personal attitudes and convictions towards world culture in general, and Moroccan culture in particular, which, most importantly, Bowles transmits and advocates through both his writings and translations. Under the first classification falls everything related to progress, modernization/Westernization/Americanization, technological advancement, rationalism, intellect, and order, all of which, Bowles rejects and regards as being “inhumane” and “unauthentic”, respectively, in opposition to the second category: primitivism, the natural/archaic, intuition, less advanced societies, and chaos. This, the American expatriate considers “humane” and “authentic”. In line with the same argument, Pierre Bourdieu writes that “A vision of the world is a division of the world (1993: 210). In this concern, Bowles proclaims: “My entire view of the world is lopsided. I don’t want that which is good. I don’t want progress; I don’t want order. All those things bother me, yeah personally. It’s that simple” (Elghandour 1993: 20).

Therefore, in his translations and representation of Moroccan culture, Paul Bowles has deliberately ignored “Arab-Islamic institutional, written culture-its poetry, its prose, its philosophy, and its scripturalist theology” and exclusively “concentrated on the oral, the folkloric, the visual, the mystic, the intuitive, and cult orders” (Elghandour 1993: 12). This has created in his “writings a biased, incomplete, sometimes even a lopsided and erroneous view of Arabo-Islamic culture, points out Elghandour in his interview with

Paul Bowles (1993: 12). Interestingly, Bowles’s reply to Elghandour’s statement was “yes, but Morocco is not a part of Arabo-Islamic culture. Morocco is not Arab, is it? It’s Berber. It’s a Berber country invaded by the Arabs (ruined by the Arabs I think)” (1993: 80). It is clear from this statement that Bowles’s translation and representation of the Moroccan culture, which also includes his own fiction writings and essays that he wrote about Morocco, do transmit what Bowles personally considers to be the “real” or “authentic” Morocco. In this concern, Bowles remarks that “it’s of no interest to describe a bus line, an apartment house, or a modern city. I would not mention Casablanca because that’s not Morocco; it’s a false Morocco; it’s French, so that does not mean anything to me, no. My interest wasin ...that which is strictly Moroccan” (Elghandour 1993: 77). In this quote, Bowles sets clear boundaries between “real” and “false” Morocco, a “division” that is conditioned by his general and personal judgments and attitudes towards what is authentic and what is not in the world. “It has really nothing to do with Morocco”, Bowles points out, “when I [Bowles] write about Thailand or Sri Lanka or India, I express the same ideas in regard to the entire world” (Elghandour 1993: 83).

Similarly, Being a strong opponent of Europeanization and modernism, Bowles disapproved of written culture/literature for “not being” Moroccan. “Berber (Moroccan) culture is not a written culture”, he states, “as Berbers have never been encouraged to write anything” (Elghandour 1993: 12). It is for this main reason that Paul Bowles was interested in Moroccan oral tradition and in the illiterate storytellers of Tangier, in particular. On the Other hand, he completely ignored educated intellectuals and written culture. “The written culture is a completely different matter. It’s a terra



incognita for me [Bowles]...I could not write about it; I can only write about what **interests me**, and what interests me is that which does not exist elsewhere” (Elghandour 1993: 20).

“Elsewhere” is a clear reference to America/ the West and its values of materialism, mass culture, order and rationalism which Bowles tried to escape and protest against by embracing and representing what he considers to be the real aspects of the “other” , that he located in “Berber” Morocco. The latter represents for Bowles “the past”, anarchy and chaos manifested through marginal subculture and practices which Bowles searched for and valorized as “natural” and “humane”. In relation to this particular point, Bowles states that “what Berbers had before was anarchy. That’s alright. That seems natural to me” (Elghandour 1993: 12). In these terms, translating Moroccan oral storytellers, whom Paul Bowles classified as a representative of the archaic/natural man- highlights Bowles’s efforts to preserve the remnants of the past. His interest in their oral stories stems from his conviction that they are part and parcel of the history of Moroccan literature (Jadir 2005: 27). It is also because they represent and derive their existence from what he admires and valorizes: popular culture. This is what Bowles classifies as “strictly”-untouched/real/authentic- Moroccan as opposed to written Moroccan literature, what he considers “fake” or “false” Morocco (Elghandour 1993).

However, the problem with Paul Bowles’s perception and, therefore, his representation that he has eventually transmitted to the West through fictional account, translation of Moroccan oral tradition and travel writings, Ralph M. Coury argues, “is the link between Bowles’s understanding (of the

culture)...and the history of Orientalism, and of the way in which Bowles’s confinement to the friendship and culture of the Arab poor and illiterate has reinforced his Orientalist assumptions” (1997: 126). In line with Coury’s argument, Bowles understands authentic “humanity” as being chiefly located in the past before the beginning of the modernizing era. Accordingly, Paul Bowles resorted to Africa/the Maghreb/ Morocco and Tangier in particular in addition to Mexico and Cylon (in opposition with Europe and America) in order to capture the remnants of the past, which he has found in the “primitiveness”, “backwardness”, “irrationalism” among one class of Moroccan society, the illiterate. And in his attempts to preserve what he valued the most, Bowles concentrated on the “popular” and the “illiterate”, and by so doing, he has reduced Moroccan culture and people to the “barbaric” ,“violent”, the “primitive”, “backward”, the “irrational”, and so on, manifested in marginalized forms of social practices and believes such as magic, superstition, excessive use of drugs (*kif*), and unregulated/chaotic modes of living.

Accordingly, Bowles ended up enhancing the same essentialist/reductionist thoughts that the West has previously constructed about the East as “backward”, “inferior”, “illogical” and “unchanging”. It is in this context that Bowles was probably most criticized by Moroccan scholars, mainly as Abdellah Laroui who “places Bowles within the context of a “revived” folklore generated within a world imperial system” (Coury 1997: 130) and Abdelhak Elghandour who considers Bowles’s representation to be very negative and lopsided (1993: 20). Bowles’s exclusive concentration on the illiterate and the popular reveals the American’s deliberate

choice in ignoring educated Moroccans, intellectuals, institutional and written Arab culture. In his answer to Elghandor's question whether he thinks he has given a "fair" "true" and "correct" representation of Morocco, Bowles responds: "No, I think what I have written is generally realistic, yes. I think I have left out a great deal, oh yes, an enormous amount, **but I do that on purpose**; it's not a mistake. I had no intention of giving a fair picture" (1993: 27).

This inability from the part of Paul Bowles or rather his rejection to recognize the diversity of Moroccan culture matches with Edward Said's definition of Orientalism as reductionism/essentialism and blindness to variation and diversity of the East, which results in "inaccurate" representations of the "other"/the Orient as unchanging and "almost everywhere nearly the same" (Said 1979: 38). It is in this context, we can argue that Bowles's project of translating the illiterate natives is not innocent. It is rather a clear attempt by the American fiction writer to justify and enhance his personal understanding of the Moroccan/African Arab and Muslim as he sees and represents them: illiterate, passive, simple-minded, treacherous and almost always disloyal (Mustapha and His Friends 1955), and above all incapable of changing and if they did change, they would simply not be Moroccans anymore (Elghandor 1993). While Bowles's representation holds some truth given the prevailing ignorance and poverty among Moroccans during the time that Bowles decided to move and live in Morocco, the problem with Bowles's view and interpretation of Moroccans and Moroccan Muslim culture is the fact that he does not give room to the other Moroccans, the educated (whom Bowles considers to be fake Moroccans) and the devout Moslems

or to any possible favorable change among the illiterate to take place in the future.

3. Orientalist Leanings in Bowles's translation and Representation of Moroccan Culture: Selected examples

In his essay "Mustapha and His Friends", Paul Bowles gives a very negative representation of the typical North African Muslim who "must be an illiterate city dweller", calls himself a Muslim regardless of whether he practices his religion or not and who "does not believe in the same good or evil as we [the West] do. Such personal concepts as continence and honesty, such social virtues as taste for "the democratic way of life" and a sense of civic responsibility, mean very little to him" (1955: 749). In his description of the typical North African "Mustapha", Paul Bowles goes on making binary oppositions between "we"/ Europe and America and "he"/ Mustapha who unlike "we" does not have the capacity to understand or use logic and reason in his every day life but only "force and ruse" (1955: 479).

Based on this description or image that Paul Bowles constructs for the North African Moslem, we should not find it surprising that Paul Bowles selected the oral storytellers of Tangier in order to translate their tales and life stories. They are the embodiment of Bowles's prototype "Mustapha" par excellence. In many respects, their stories of magic, "*kif*", and superstition, that Paul Bowles translated serve in preserving and enhancing Bowles's biased understanding/ and statements about Moroccans and Moroccan culture. In line with the same idea, Paul Bowles confesses in a conversation with A. Jadir (2005) that the storytellers of Tangier expressed his personal ideas; otherwise he would not have translated their tales and stories. For instance, Mrabet's tales of "Ghoula" and "Hdiddan Ahram" enhance the



representation of the “other” as “cannibal”, “primitive”, “mischievous” and “bloodthirsty” (capable of eating flesh of human beings) which only serve to confirm Bowles’s statement about Moroccans/Muslim Arabs as being “essentially barbarous” and “their mentality is that of purely predatory people” (Breit 1993:4). The idea of the “other” as bloodthirsty is even strongly emphasized in Bowles’s shockingly violent narratives in “The Delicate Prey” and “Distant Episode”. In both stories, the victims have been mutilated in cold blood by the native Muslims. It seems that violence is one of the main traits that Paul Bowles attributes to his Moroccan/North African and Moslem representative.

Unsurprisingly, when we read any of Mohamed Mrabet’s works that Bowles translated, we find that brutality is also a distinctive feature of Mrabet, himself, as well as his characters as if to double support Bowles’s statement about the North African Arabs’ tendency towards violence. In *Look and Move on*, for example, we are introduced to Mrabet as a protagonist, who completely lacks self-control and who is always ready to start a fight, resorting to “force and ruse” (Bowles 1955:) in order to solve all his problems. The same depiction is given to the protagonist in Mrabet’s short story “What Happened in Granada”. Like Mohammed Mrabet, Mokhtar in Mrabet’s story “Chico” is a young man who cannot live without getting into fights. These representations enhance Bowles’s statement about North African Moslems as being essentially “savage”/ “barbarous”.

Mohammed Mrabet in his semi-autobiography is also a Moroccan Muslim who exclusively relies on his intimate relationship with Maria and Reeves for

survival and plays games on them in order to get as much money as possible from them. Here, again, Mrabet embodies Bowles’s Mustapha’s characteristics of mischief, playfulness, and deceit as he preserves Bowles’s statement about the North African as lacking “contineness and honesty” (Bowles 1955: 7..). This representation also enhances biased generalizations and essentialist ideas about the East/“other” as “dependent”, “lethargic”, “inactive”, and “unproductive”, characteristics that Paul Bowles himself attributes to the Moroccan/Muslim in “Friend of The World” through the character of Salam who, like Mrabet in *Look and Move On*, is a Muslim and yet smokes “kif”, drinks alcohol and relies on his relationships with old foreign women for survival. Here, we are also provided with a very negative image/representation of Islam which comes mainly as a result of Bowles’s essentialist/reductionist approach, his exclusive emphasis on “popular Islam” and his choice of “the most simplistic believers as Muslim representatives (Al-Ghalith: 1992).

By way of elaboration, “The Fqih” is one of Bowles’s stories where he associates Islam with ignorance and superstition through the voice of the same class of society, the uneducated. “The Fqih” is the story of a boy who gets bitten by a dog. Consequently, “the Fqih” commends the young brother to lock him where nobody should see or hear him and that it is “Mektoub”⁴. The young boy, who believes in “the Fqih” does as he instructs him and in his turn convinces his mother that it is “Allah’s Will”. Here, we are presented with simple-mindedness, naivety and ignorance that have been associated with Islam. In almost all the stories that Bowles translated

⁴ Written by Allah

and wrote about Morocco, we encounter acts of violence, superstition, sorcery, that the Western reader is made to believe are practiced by “Muslims” in the name of “Allah” / Islam.

The oral tales that Bowles translated served in reinforcing this negative representation of the Moroccan Muslim whom, according to Bowles, also “refuses that action entails result” and for whom “each action is separate, everything having been determined at the beginning of time, when the inexorable design of destiny was laid out. All of life is a desperate gamble, and everyone has the odds against him” (Bowles 2002:753). In Orientalist writing, the often misunderstood concept of “fate” and “predestination” in Islam is usually interpreted by the Western reader as “being without free will” and, therefore, used to explain and attribute characteristics of fatalism, passivity, un-productivity and lethargy to the East (Said 1979:109). In his essay “Africa Minor”, Bowles provides a description of what the West would consider a typically fatalist Moslem, whom Bowles met on a truck in a trip from Kerzaz to get to Adrar. Bowles is mostly attracted to the passivity of the old man when the driver of the truck shuts the door on the old man’s hand. Bowles writes:

Calmly the old man opened the door with his other hand. The tip of his middle finger dangled by a bit of skin. He looked at it an instant, then quietly scooped a handful of that ubiquitous dust, put the two parts of the finger together and poured the dust over it, saying softly, “Thanks be to Allah”. With that, the expression on his face never having changed, he picked up his bundle and stuff and walked away. I stood looking after him, full of wonder, and reflecting upon the difference between his behavior and what mine would have been under the same circumstances. To show no outward sign of pain is unusual enough, but to express no

resentment against the person who has hurt you seems very strange, and to give thanks to God at such moment is the strangest touch of all (716).

A similar of passivity that is associated in the Western’s mind with fatalism and predestination in Islam is embodied by Larbi Layachi’s protagonist In *Life Full of Holes*. Indeed, the unfortunate Ahmed in Layachi’s narrative is a very passive character, who accepts his misery, sufferings and hardships as “Allah’s will” and more importantly, he does nothing to change his situation, for he believes that “there was nothing I could do” (Layachi 1974:59). Throughout his journey, Ahmed is used and abused, firstly, by his step father and then by the people who employ him since his childhood either for very little food/money or for nothing at all. Ahmed who is a fatalist shows no resentment towards his “fate”/bad luck or the people who mistreat him, especially his step father. He, rather, accepts his misery as being “Allah’s will”. All throughout the book, we encounter expressions such as “Whatever Allah has decided, that’s all there is, and nothing more”(102); “ what Allah has given is given”; “It was all planned and written long ago, I told her. Whatever is written beforehand has to be gone through” (173)

In the same line, the recurrent themes of *kif* smoking, superstition and the use of magic in almost all the oral stories that Bowles translated serve in reinforcing the assumptions about East as being “irrational”, “illogical” or incapable of using their minds. Bowles’s “kif” stories in “A Hundred Camels in The Courtyard” and his translation of Mrabet’s *M’hashish* enhance this The problem with such a representation lies in Bowles’s essentialist conviction that the “real” Moroccan is /or rather should be “irrational” “illogical in



order to be “Moroccan” and this is what Bowles affirms in his conversation with Abdelhak Elghandor when the latter asks him what he thinks about Moroccans learning from the West“ its logic, its rational thought, its technology,...”, Bowles answers:

Well, if Moroccans learn all that, if all Moroccans learn all that, they won't be Moroccans anymore, will they? What does it mean to be Moroccan? It means to have been born, or live in this part of North Africa. Yeah, I don't think Moroccans should learn anything about logic or the various things you mentioned here (Elghandour 1993: 22).

In addition to his deliberate neglect of diversity in Moroccan culture and his fixation on “the primitiveness” of the “other”, Paul Bowles objected to Postcolonial Morocco's attempts at modernization. This goes hand in hand with xxx statement that “The Orientalist, it must be added, has an investment in preserving this backwardness” Commenting for example on the Arab scholar H.A.R Gibb, Said claims that “if Islam is flawed from the start by virtue of its permanent disabilities, the Orientalist will find himself opposing any Islamic attempts to reform Islam, because according to his views, reform is betrayal of Islam” (Bevan 2014: 21).

Postcolonial critics find fault with texts/translations from “dominated” societies when they re-enforce “negative” representations of the translated culture by reiterating and enhancing the same stereotypes and statements constructed by Orientalist discourse about the East. The problem with these representations, according to Edward Said (1979), is being either too specific or too general, which in both cases result in biased generalizations and inaccurate depiction of the Orient. In the same line, Bowles's objection to recognize other -the modernizing - aspects

in postcolonial Morocco and his failure to give room to different “realities” other than the “primitive”, the “backward”, the “violent”, the “illiterate”, the “popular” and the “sexually-perverted” can be read as an example of Orientalist reductionism. And by “fixing” the culture (Morocco/Moroccans) in the past as “backward” and “unchanging”, Bowles created what Elghandor (1993) maintains in his charge against him to be “a biased, incomplete, sometimes even a lopsided and erroneous view of Arabo-Islamic culture (12)”. Ralph M. Coury argues, in this regard, that:

a critique of Orientalism does not, of course, deny that differences exist, but it rejects the tendency to draw upon selected fragments of cultures and to transform these into an inhering, constitutive essence apart from the interplay of multiple realities”(2009:119).

And by creating such “unchanging” or “fixed” versions of the subject, Tijiswini Niranjana argues, translation becomes a form of “containment”. It “creates dominant notions of reality and representation, versions (of the Oriental) that then came to acquire the status of “truths” even in the countries in which the “original” works were produced (Niranjana 1992:33). By putting emphasis on a particular aspect(s) of the culture or class of society, in Bowles's case for example, the popular, the oral, the savage and so on, translation, in this particular context, becomes a form of containment to the culture especially as it serves in reinforcing pre-given stereotypes about a culture.

4. Bowles's Translations as Knowledge /Power

Through these “exotic” texts that Paul Bowles wrote and translated, he has transmitted to the West an interesting,

though biased and/or incomplete, amount of knowledge that may or may not have been read objectively by the "Other". Very often such representations, inaccurate or romanticized images of the Orient, Said (1979) points out, have served as an implicit justification for European and the American colonial and imperial ambitions. And here we must remember the significant role that Bowles's works have played in "imagining the relationship of Americans to the foreign in general and Europe's former colonies in particular", having emerged "from a crucial moment before US supremacist attitudes were consolidated" (Edwards 2005:307). Bowles's residence in Tangier which began in 1947 coincides with a period of deep involvement in Moroccan Affairs by the US government during which "Bowles wrote frequently about North African politics and culture" (Edwards 2005:307). In addition to fiction writing and translation, Bowles wrote extensively on Moroccans particularly and North African culture in general in his travel essays. He has, therefore, generated a world-wide interest in the Maghreb both as a writer and as a translator.

It is in this context that translation functions as an "excellent vehicle for conveying the typically Foucaultian binary essence of the opposition power/knowledge" (Alvarez & Vidal: 1996). Being the most prominent US citizen living in Morocco before and after its independence, Bowles was regarded as a "guru", and a main source of transmitting information to the West about, Africa/the Maghreb/Muslims/Arabs, particularly about their mentality, behavior and modes of living. In this context, Bowles's translations (and writings about North

Africa) match with one of Edward Said's main definitions of Orientalism as:

a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics (1979:41-42).

In this regard, we can state that Bowles's fiction, interviews, anthropological essays, letters and translations of Moroccan oral tradition have all served as body of knowledge about North Africa that the self-exiled American transmitted to the West during a moment of critical transition in the history of both Morocco and America, since the end of WWII, which marks eminent worldwide geopolitical changes. For Paul Bowles, being at such a position entails the power of speaking for and representing the "Other". This underlines the significant power that translation "as knowledge" entails, but the question is always what kind of knowledge, and as Edward Said (1981) puts it, knowledge is usually written and transmitted according to one's own interpretation, and Paul Bowles's writings and translations offer, with Bowles's consent, a fragmented image and an incomplete representation of Morocco.

In this context, Bowles's representation/ translation of Moroccan culture and oral tradition of storytelling, as Said (1979) puts it, have provided the West with "representations of the Orient that bear his distinctive imprint"⁵, understanding,

⁵ Paul Bowles associated Morocco and Moroccans with danger and violence that we also tend to find in his writings and translations as well as essays about

Morocco. Therefore, he invited Americans and Europeans most of whom he invited to Tangier/Morocco to be very cautious when dealing



and interpretation of the culture, and “that illustrate his conception of what the Orient can or ought to be” [dangerous, savage, backward, irrational and so on] and “that provide Orientalist discourse with what, at the moment, it seems most in need of (274). More importantly, this knowledge was probably not read objectively; “On the contrary, it may be influenced by the relationships of power that this culture maintains with the target culture”(Alvarez & Vidal 1996: 2), for as Said put it: “there is no such thing as disinterested knowledge: all knowledge even the most seemingly abstruse, serves the interest of those in power” (Bohls 2013:129). And Bowles’s representation/translation of North Africa/Arabs/Muslims/ as “violent”, “savage”, “primitive” helps in perpetuating the same old orientalist clichés about Arabs and Islam and its biased constructions about the East which have served as a pretext behind the West’s imperial and colonial ambitions. It is in such context that knowledge, any kind of knowledge-translation included- is power in the sense that it gives the “Other” the opportunity to know, understand and control.

5. Conclusion

In his attempt to preserve what he valued the most in human / Moroccan culture, its originality and authenticity, and reinforce “an alternative” that he has discovered in the culture of the “Other”, Paul Bowles’s Bowles ended up constructing a very confining image about “the other”, which happens to reiterate and enhance the same Orientalist thoughts and assumptions that the West holds about the

with Moroccans. In this regard, Bowles cites two examples of happenings in Tangier where he associates Moroccans/Morocco with danger: “one incidence involving an elderly Jewish woman who brought coffee to the men who were constructing the mosque and who was robbed and killed by one of

East/Maghreb. The American’s objection to recognize other -the modernizing - aspects in postcolonial Morocco and his failure to give room to different “realities” other than the “primitive”, the “backward”, the “violent”, the “illiterate” and the “popular” can be read as an example of Orientalist reductionism. And by “fixing” the culture (Morocco/Moroccans) in the past as “backward” and “unchanging”, Bowles created what A. Elghandor (1993) maintains in his charge against him to be “a biased, incomplete, sometimes even a lopsided and erroneous view of Arabo-Islamic culture (1993:12)”.

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them; the other involving two elderly America expatriates who lived on Social security and who were attacked by a Moroccan” (Millicent Dillon).

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