On and Off the Page

On and Off the Page:
Mapping Place in Text and Culture

Edited by

M. B. Hackler

with the assistance of Ari J. Adipurwawidjana

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I am deeply indebted to a great number of people who made possible the seventh annual Louisiana Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture and this collection, which has come out of that event. There is not enough space here to acknowledge them all, but there are several individuals who I cannot go without thanking. I am grateful for the direction provided by Dr. Mary Ann Wilson as well as the creativity and dedication of Wendi Wilkerson and Michael Berntsen in staging the conference. Leslie Donahue Schilling has provided essential expertise for both the conference and the pre-press production of this collection. And I would be particularly remiss if I did not thank Dr. Christine DeVine for her tireless support of all of my efforts. None of this would have been possible without her. For this and so much more, thank you.

INTRODUCTION

M.B. HACKLER

This collection of essays grew out of the Louisiana Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture, an event which annually brings together graduate students and new academic professionals from across the Humanities and Social Sciences for an interdisciplinary dialogue on some of the most significant issues resounding throughout the academy. Each year, conference organizers select one of these as the conference theme and invite an international cohort of presenters to Lafayette, Louisiana to explore the issue together. For the seventh annual conference, held in February 2008 on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, we sought to interrogate the idea of place through the conference theme "On and Off the Page: Mapping Place in Text and Culture." This collection, which takes its name from the conference theme, is the product of that weekend of debate and exchange. Comprised of chapters born out of research first presented at the conference, it seeks to extend the conversation begun there so that those ideas might join a larger conversation on what is without a doubt one of the most charged and complex topics at work within contemporary culture.

In drafting the conference theme and title of this collection of essays, we intended to mark a transition in thinking about the operation of place within culture from a single element of literature and other cultural artifacts to a force which operates beyond the individual text and in many ways structures how individuals, cultures, and even nations conceptualize themselves, their relationships, their histories, and their ideologies. Traditional approaches to the study of place, within Literary Studies at least, have tended to imagine it a source of inflection. The settings of novels, for example, have often been viewed as interpretative frames, and the concept of place has long been regarded as a defining characteristic of regional literatures. Geographically based "schools" of literature provide a popular means through which to construct literary history, with the biting ironies and emotional distance of tales born out of hardscrabble New England landscapes contrasting nicely with the cosmopolitan wit of those

identified with New York and the fantastic dreamscapes coming out of Latin America.

Situated within a university in southwest Louisiana, it would be particularly difficult for us not to consider the force of place on the cultural production of the American South. As readers of Southern literature, we cannot but recognize a dominant thread of belief, preoccupation, and worldview connecting writers like Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Eudora Welty, all giants of Southern literature, with their geographical successors, writers such as Bobbie Ann Mason, Rick Bragg, and Dorothy Allison. And this recognition persists regardless of the cultural distance we may have traveled from the dirt roads and decaying manses of our real and imagined pasts. As students of culture, however, we are bound to recognize a similar process at work within and on all cultural forms which arise from and represent places outside of a few designated "mainstream" locales. To be a writer of a place continues to mean to be bound in some ways by the popular conception of that place, a notion which has real implications for a writer's ability to reach an audience. Writers, like other artists, naturally resist the easy categorization of their work. Yet for many the identification with a particular place, unlike some of the ethnic, gender, and national labels placed upon them, is a cherished association. Novelist and critic Elizabeth Nunez reminded us of the inevitability of the influence of place on the writer in her keynote address which opened the conference. A native of Trinidad who has lived for years in New York, Nunez explained that:

> Place is central in all of my novels. I believe that to a great extent geography is destiny. I believe that my psyche and emotional response to life were shaped by the place where I grew up. I believe that there is something about an island, about being surrounded by water, about living in the tropics where the seasons are two—the dry and the wet—that affects the way you look at life and that shapes your personality. I often wonder to myself how different I would have been had I grown up in the place where I now live, where the seasons change and where once a year most plant life dies and once a year it springs back to life. A place where the landscape seems to extend to infinity, passing through time zones and latitudes, where on one coast avocados grow and on another, at the same time, in the same month, the ground is frozen.[1]

A poignant description of the power of place on the individual artist, Nunez's remarks point to literature as a receptacle of this power. By

[1] Elizabeth Nunez, Keynote Address, Seventh Annual Louisiana Conference on Literature, Language, and Culture, 21 February 2008, Lafayette, Louisiana.

shaping the experience of the writer, Nunez argues, place is indelibly imprinted onto the pages of the novels she pens. Geography is not only destiny; it may be also, to a certain extent, psychology.

As Nunez's remarks demonstrate, traditional approaches to the study of place remain relevant and have much yet to add to Humanistic scholarship. The first four essays in this collection represent promising efforts to do just that. Although each chapter is rooted in the interplay between text and geography, however, these researchers move beyond the easy explanation of geographical effects to explore the political and cultural implications of an author's use of place. Michael K. Walonen's "Sense of Place in the North African Writings of Paul Bowles," for example, examines the evolution of an iconic American writer's thinking about a post-colonial landscape and its impact on his representations of it and its inhabitants in his work. Eugenia P. Bryan takes on another iconic writer, Eudora Welty, in her chapter and explores the connection she discovers between the culturally induced silence of Southern women and the architecture in which they reside. And in so doing Bryan challenges characterizations of Southern literature as a chronicle of solely repressive social institutions. Brian McAllister's "I am Becoming an Island Dweller," however, provides a critical shift in focus to a less conventional approach to the study of place in literature. Through the application of Bakhtin's idea of the "chronotope" to one of J.M. Coetzee's best known novels, McAllister suggests a method of examining narrative space as a geographical entity of its own. Majero Bouman's research into the operation of the political and psychological in one of Bessie Head's novels rounds out this section. Bouman situates her analysis in two equally resonant "places," in a novel's physical setting and in the emotional world of its protagonist, to demonstrate the essential connection between material conditions, artists, and their works.

As these four chapters demonstrate, a traditional approach to scholarship need not confine the researcher to only the most readily apparent conclusions. Regardless of this, however, for some researchers—and included in this group are a number of emerging scholars such as those featured in this collection—traditional methods, no matter how artfully employed, cannot account for the increasing complexity of the idea of place within contemporary culture. In the face of a globalized world, the significance of academic inquiry into place becomes amplified, as the idea itself becomes more and more problematic. These researchers seek to respond to a growing awareness that the idea of place, in even its most ostensibly benign manifestations, carries a powerful political charge. As even the most cursory survey of the events of the past two decades

reveals, the idea of place remains an influential force in world events. As the Berlin Wall and the various checkpoints which once marked the Iron Curtain separating Eastern and Western Europe are dismantled and trade barriers are lifted, new borders are drawn based on ethnic sentiments and dynastic nostalgia, and a wall is erected on the U.S.-Mexico border. In Kosovo, Jerusalem, Papua, Kashmir, and in indigenous communities throughout the world, ancestral ties to place continue to shape worldviews and challenge power structures, sometimes with deadly consequences. At the same time, public discourse on the effects of globalization, immigration, climate change, and the "wars" on drugs and terror emphasizes the central role that space and place play in our imaginations. To begin to address the force of place in these and other guises requires moving beyond the text in ways which are uncomfortable for many in the Humanities. And yet for some literature appears to provide a natural point of entry into even the most fraught cultural context.

Literature has always bridged gaps, real and imagined, and an evolving set of genres and narrative conventions has helped writers to make this happen. One of the most potent ways in which this has been accomplished has been through the literature of travel. We have titled the collection's second section "Crossing Borders" in recognition of the enduring relationship between texts and voyages. Implicit within each exploration of place is an acknowledgment of the power of "other" places: points of origin, of fantasy, and of idealization. This section begins with a chapter whose title's "roots" and "routes" affirms the deep connection between ideas of home and diaspora. In it, Paul A. Griffith draws on a broad selection of the works of celebrated poets Kamau Brathwaite and Derek Walcott to examine the resilience of Caribbean culture, its roots in Africa, and its tenaciousness in the face of European attempts to silence it. In May Caroline Chan's chapter which follows, she explores two of Rudyard Kipling's travel narratives in the light of recent post-colonial scholarship. Chan argues for a "disaggregation" of the unitary figure of the "Oriental" which she sees as stemming from Edward Said's work by identifying very different conceptions of Asians at work in nineteenth century literature. Amy Clary's chapter which concludes the section takes boundary crossing as its focus as well, although the boundary which most interests Clary is that between the text and the material world. Using Jon Karakauer's best selling book *Into the Wild* as a point of entry, Clary traces the impact of American nature writing on how Americans see (and don't see) their country's wild places. At the same time, however, Clary argues that a different form of writing has worked to safeguard the very real places

threatened by the haze of romanticism which has historically separated the actual experience of them from the popular idea of them.

The permeability of the boundaries of the text is central to the chapter which opens the collection's third section. Kevin Cooney uses two contemporary novels set in Los Angeles to explore the interconnection of real and imagined places, of actual geography with what he calls "metafictional geographies," both of which contribute to the understanding of artistic process and the lived experience of place. The authors whose work he examines, Karen Tei Yamashita and Salvador Plascencia, create spaces for their characters and for their readers between and therefore outside of our conventional notions of space. These and other "Alternative Places" structure the book's third section, a section designed to suggest how researchers of place might move beyond the traditional text without losing sight of the textuality of place. Iskandar Zulkarnain moves outside of the literary altogether in his exploration of the phenomenon of "hacktivism." In his research, Zulkarnain locates the critical concept of place within cyberspace and demonstrates how the sharing of texts is being harnessed to insert dissenting voices into global politics. Paola Bohórquez, on the other hand, identifies language itself as a powerful place in the lives of those who have lost their homes and homelands and are forced to start over again in new, unfamiliar places. She utilizes theoretical discourse in psychoanalysis as well as texts created by the displaced themselves to interrogate the fundamental relationship between place and language.

The collection's final section is its most ambitious, including research which attempts to synthesize some of the ideas being generated in scholarship on place in ways that help us understand something more about the concept and how it operates. We have chosen to title this section "Theorizing Place." Michelle Niemann's chapter which opens the section responds to two texts which, despite a gap of centuries, reveal a gender-based understanding of geography operating within American culture from its earliest days to the twentieth century. Kathryn Travis' examination of the mapping of urban space reveals a similar process at work in the history of cartography and in the human experience of the city. She suggests what she calls "city writing" as a way of writing against social and institutional forces which would silence so many. Patrick Crerand's chapter which rounds out the collection resonates with Travis' call for a creative approach to place. His "Just Because You Don't Want to Believe It Doesn't Change the Truth" provides a narrative of two distinct places at two crucial moments in American history and employs the idea of a

natural disaster to explore the jumble of contesting opinions and emotions which connect the two.

The chapters which comprise this collection are informed by a host of thinkers, research, and intellectual movements which crosses disciplinary as well as generational boundaries, and no catalogue of significant influences could be complete. The debt owed to the discipline of Geography alone would be more than we could ever adequately acknowledge. This collection is the product of a small group of emerging scholars in the Humanities. The essays it contains represent approaches to the study of place in text and culture coming out of graduate departments throughout the United States and Canada, and just as emerging scholars in time become senior faculty, we hope that they will work to inform future research on a ever timely, complex, and fascinating topic.

SECTION I:

PLACE IN LITERATURE

CHAPTER ONE

SENSE OF PLACE IN THE NORTH AFRICAN WRITINGS OF PAUL BOWLES

MICHAEL K. WALONEN

Among the few major American writers who have attempted to negotiate the alterity of Morocco and the region surrounding it through representation in works of fiction, Paul Bowles made the most concerted effort, living and working there from 1947 until his death in 1999. Best known for his existentially toned *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), Bowles depicted Morocco during the twilight of the French colonial era and the beginning of its time as an independent nation in such works as the novels *Let it Come Down* (1952) and *The Spider's House* (1955) as well as a number of essays first published chiefly in *Holiday* magazine, most of which have been collected in the volume *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (1963). The representations of the spatial dynamics of decolonizing North Africa Bowles employs in these works manifest a deeply seated tension between two countervailing impulses: a movement towards greater engagement with Morocco under its own cultural terms and a flirtation with the standard tropes of conventional Orientalist discourse mixed with a nostalgic longing for the old colonial order and the privileges it afforded the Western expatriate. The locales where Bowles's earliest North African writings are set are represented in a manner that chiefly evokes dread, alienation, and the unfathomably alien. Over time his work began to manifest a more nuanced appreciation of these locales, presenting them in a fashion that mixed traditional Western modes of narration with elements of the indigenous culture—idiom, practices, and worldview—that Bowles absorbed in his work as an amateur folklorist. At the same time, Bowles's North African writings approach and struggle against the alluring facileness of stock Western representations of "the East" as a place inscrutably violent, mysterious, esoteric, and fatalistic, that is, of the representational mode that Edward Said has famously termed "Orientalism."

The colonial order that Bowles encountered in the late nineteen-forties on first moving to the Maghreb—the land of northwest Africa whose name means "the land of sunset" in Arabic—had its roots in efforts to control the area dating back to the Renaissance. Bordered to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, to the West by the Atlantic Ocean, and to the south by the Sahara, consisting of the land comprising the modern-day nations of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, the Maghreb first saw European encroachment following the fall of Granada, which marked the culmination of the Spanish *Reconquista*. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the powers of Western Europe made numerous attempts to colonize parts of the Maghreb. Tangier, for example, was occupied by the Portuguese, the Spanish, and the English during this time, but it was not until the age of empire of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that large scale modern European colonization of the Maghreb occurred.[1] In 1479 the Spanish and Portuguese agreed to divide the Maghreb into two zones of influence; in 1494 the two powers mutually agreed to shift the boundary line between these zones to the west, reducing the size of the Portuguese zone, and each set about setting up armed forts at semi-regular intervals along the coast of their allotted portion of territory.[2] Local Maghrebine rulers still controlled the inland areas of the region, however, and as the sixteenth century progressed corsairs first backed by and then increasingly loyal to Ottoman Turkey began to gain control of such key ports as Algiers (in 1525) and Bougie (in 1552).[3] Turkish influence and control over the eastern Maghreb expanded, and the area was divided into three regencies which correspond to the three modern nations of Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.[4] Morocco remained independent, first under the Sa'di dynasty and then, beginning during the 1660s, under the Alawi (or Alaouite) dynasty, which set up the line of succession leading up to the present day sultan of Morocco.[5] From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries privateers based throughout the Maghreb, or "Barbary pirates," as they were popularly known in Europe and North America, preyed upon the vessels of Christian nations with whom they had not negotiated

[1] Lawdom Vaidon, *Tangier: A Different Way* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow P, 1977), 13-29.
[2] Jamil Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib* (London: Cambridge UP, 1975), 160-2.
[3] Ibid., 160-72.
[4] Neville Barbour, ed., *A Survey of North West Africa* (London: Oxford UP, 1962), 32-3.
[5] C.R. Pennell, *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 78-114.

treaties.[6] The oldest unbroken treaty signed by the United States was a friendship pact signed with Morocco in order to obtain protection from these privateers, and the first overseas military engagement in American history was the First Barbary War (or Tripolitan War) of 1801-1805, another effort to stop this piracy against American ships.[7]

By the turn of the nineteenth century, as the major powers of Europe began to aggressively colonize as much of the developing world as they could control, France looked south to the Maghreb. French invasion and settlement of Algeria, stemming from a dispute dating back to the Napoleonic Wars, began in 1830.[8] In an effort to preempt Italy's colonizing of Tunisia, France pressured the bey of Tunisia to accept a protectorate in 1881 and a more broadly encompassing protectorate in 1883; England agreed to this in exchange for recognition of its occupation of Cyprus, and Germany encouraged it as a form of compensating France for its loss of the Alsace-Lorraine territory during the Franco-Prussian War.[9] At the 1906 Algeciras Conference the European powers decided that the French and the Spanish would assume administrative control of Morocco; in 1912 the French pressured the sultan to sign the Treaty of Fez, which established a protectorate, placing all executive power in the country outside of the Spanish zones to the north and southwest[10] in the hands of the French.[11] Since the nineteenth century an international administration had been in place in Tangier, initially to manage public works; "[i]n 1924 the Statute of Tangier gave virtually every European state, and the USA, a role in administering the city."[12] This set up the International Zone of Tangier, a legal space with neither taxation nor financial regulation of any kind, where criminal acts were adjudicated by courts of the accused's nationality, given the absence of any zone-wide legal authority. A longtime center for diplomatic relations between Morocco and the nations of Europe, Tangier had for some time been home

[6] Barbour, *Survey of North West Africa*, 28-32.
[7] Donald Barr Chidsey, *The Wars in Barbary* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1971), 24, 70-141.
[8] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 236-9.
[9] Ibid., 276-9.
[10] Spain had held possession of a number of small coastal settlements, most notably Ceuta and Melilla, since the earlier age of colonization during which the Maghreb had been divided into Spanish and Portuguese zones of control and gained a claim to the Ifni territory, on the Atlantic coast across from the Canary Islands, following a brief war with Morocco in 1860.
[11] Pennell, *From Empire to Independence*, 131-6.
[12] Ibid., 154.

to an eclectic international population; a port city and a border town on the frontier of a more wealthy region to the north, Tangier had also for some time had its fair share of sex work and trade in contraband goods. As the era of the International Zone progressed, the zone's status as an economic free zone attracted a large number of financial speculators and the idle rich, but intertwined with this, the zone's climate of moral permissiveness and the access it afforded to commercial sex, particularly of the homosexual variety, attracted an expatriate population looking to free itself from the moral restrictions of its native lands.

The period stretching from the end of the Second World War until the beginnings of Moroccan independence was marked by dramatic political and social change. Following the war and the American invasion of Vichy-controlled Morocco, Morocco resumed its status as a protectorate of France under its newly instituted Fourth Republic. Capital flowed into internationally administered Tangier during the immediate postwar boom, bringing with it a host of bankers, entrepreneurs, speculators, and black-marketeers. A sizeable refugee population—former Nazis, former Spanish Republicans, Jews fleeing the Holocaust—also arrived in Tangier during the war and its immediate aftermath. Overall, the international population of Tangier doubled and the overall population almost doubled during this period, rising from 100,000 in 1946 to 185,000 in 1956, as a result of the laissez-faire moral and economic climate that prevailed under the international administration of the city.[13] This climate resulted in an early Cold War American perception of Tangier as sensationally lurid and exotic, a perception that Bowles's work of the time, particularly *Let it Come Down*, fed into and fueled. As Brian Edwards argues:

> To most Americans in the 1950s, the city of Tangier conjured up images of excess. From about 1946, when Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton outbid Generalissimo Franco to purchase a complex of twenty-eight neighboring houses in the Kasbah (where she lived occasionally, alternatively throwing extravagant parties and distributing munificent amounts of charity), until late 1959, when the former International Zone was finally fully absorbed into Morocco three years after the nation's independence (and what foreign capital remained left overnight, along with many of the expats), Tangier had a special place in the American imagination.[14]

But the seeds of the dissolution of this raucous, libertarian International Zone had been sown before the boom years of the late forties and early fifties even began. The Atlantic Charter, which in 1941promised all

[13] Pennell, *From Empire to Independence*.
[14] Ibid., 121-2.

peoples the right to self-determination, had fueled dreams of an independent Morocco, as did the private meeting between Franklin Roosevelt, Churchill, and the sultan of Morocco at the 1943 Casablanca Conference, during which the latter was led to believe that the United States would eventually support Morocco's claims for independence in exchange for support of the U.S. war effort.[15] As early as 1944 the anticolonialist, nationalist *Istiqlal* (Arabic for "independence") movement issued a manifesto demanding independence.[16] In August 1953 France deposed the Sultan Mohammed V, who had been agitating for an end to French colonial rule, shipping him off in exile to Madagascar and replacing him with the more pro-French Moulay Ben Arafa.[17] This served to lend credence to the Istiqlal, and violent riots and protests broke out again and again throughout the country, as dramatized in Bowles's *The Spider's House*. This civil unrest continued to mount, with the result that in 1955 the French returned Mohammed V to Morocco and reinstated him on the throne.[18] Negotiations between France and Morocco continued, and on March 2, 1956 France officially recognized Moroccan independence.[19]

Paul Bowles's writings from this late colonial and early postcolonial period are rich in their representations of space and place. Space and place are socially produced entities. This is to say that space is not an emptiness or potentiality filled with objects, nor is it simply a context for events and actions occurring in time, nor is it, as in Kantian philosophy, a mental filter through which external reality becomes intelligible. In the words of Henri Lefebvre, who more than any other theorist has opened up the way for critical analyses of space: "space is constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and . . . is irreducible to a 'form' imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality."[20] Rather, any given space is the totality of the uses to which it is put and the affective responses that it engenders—or, put another way, it is the sum total of the

[15] Harold D. Nelson, *Morocco: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: American UP, 1986), 56-7.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Pennell, *From Empire to Independence*, 160.
[18] Nelson, *Morocco*, 61.
[19] Abun-Nasr, *History of the Maghrib*, 377.
[20] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 27.

human "energies" put into it.[21] This is a matter of projection—human beings in concert with one another altering and developing a dynamic apprehension of given landscape features that comes to define how these features can and will be experienced by posterity—and the fact that culture both creates the possibility of the experience of spatiality and fills this space.

"Place" is a specific social space, social space in its instantiation; therefore, one can speak, for example, of the social space of the market in either general terms or as it exists within a given culture and in its particular manifestation in, say, the place of the French Market in New Orleans or the Grand Socco of Bowles's Tangier. To take this distinction further, space is experiential; as Michel de Certeau puts it, "space is a practiced place."[22] That is, while place is a matter of what elements are "proper" to a "distinct location, a location it defines," and is thus to a large degree conceptual, space is the experience of situatedness as it is negotiated or "actuated."[23] Place is space that is defined, that is differentiated and claimed, through the act of naming; it takes on a greater degree of social concreteness through this act, through this exercise of power and attempted control.[24]

The organization of space is both a social product and something that shapes social relations; spatiality is both the medium of social production and the outcome of this production; that is, social production both forms space and is contingent upon the preexistent space that it confronts at any moment in time.[25] Space and place, as socially produced entities, consist of sets of prohibitions and allowances inscribed on them; of zones of differential access along lines of class, race, and gender; of aesthetic codes and the ambiances they create; and of the residue of the spatial formulations of successive past social orders, among other things. Space

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[21] This is why, for example, uninhabited wilderness spaces have such a strong capacity to produce a sense of the uncanny: their absence of customary human function produces an unsettling sense of unfamiliarity, "the willies."

[22] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984), 117.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Accordingly, place names can constitute a site of contestation between different cultures laying claim to a given place and/or map historical changes in the control of a place, as, for instance, in the cases of Aachen/Aix-la-Chapelle, Mumbai/Bombay, and Istanbul/Constantinople.

[25] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 57, 127-9.

and place are both actual and a set of potentialities—both what is and what can be done there, what is and what can be brought into being there.[26]

Space and place are governed by what Lefebvre refers to as "spatial codes," which should be understood not simply as ways to interpret space, but also as codes that dictate how space is lived in, understood, and produced.[27] Each society produces its own space and the outsider who is not of this space must, in the act of trying to make this space intelligible, negotiate these spatial codes. If said outsider chooses to re-present this place, she must draw upon her knowledge and competency vis-à-vis these spatial codes and translate them through the modes of representation available in her literary and cultural tradition. This act often, even generally, involves translating the inscrutably alien into the familiar, with the loss of original significance attendant on any act of translation. An instance of this "translation," can be seen, for instance, in Robert Louis Stevenson's travel narrative *The Amateur Emigrant*. When Stevenson describes his arrival in New York City, he understands the weather in terms of Liverpool, the behavior of American money-changers in terms of that of the French commissary, and the nation's perceived potential and freshness in terms of a trope dating back to the earliest days of English colonization of the New World: America as Eden.[28]

French literary critic Jean-Marc Moura considers this situation of representing the foreign/alien, translating it into intelligibly familiar terms, at length in his *L'Europe litteraire et l'ailleurs* (*Literary Europe and the Elsewhere*), arguing that the experience of foreignness is elemental to literature and that the term "Elsewhere" ("*ailleurs*") can be used to designate the imagined sense of alterity of place—the "spatial Other," if you will. For Moura, an author such as Bowles creates this Elsewhere in the face of the dominant images existing in the social imaginary, which are

[26] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 191. Attention to the importance of space and place in critical theory was pioneered by the likes of Lefebvre and Guy Debord and the Situationist International, who during the 1960s came to the conclusion that questioning the conditions and environments of everyday lived experience was of a much more revolutionary and potentially socially transformational nature than the more traditional Marxist concerns of distribution of resources and alienation of labor.

[27] Ibid., 47.

[28] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Amateur Immigrant* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2002), 100-4.

to some measure acceded to and in some measure contested.[29] Moura notes that:

> *Elsewhere* can in effect designate two things: a domain of experience, actual or imaginary, already inhabited by others and into which a person can penetrate; a phenomenon of horizon, a transcendental appearance according to which the consciousness that proves limited is fated to project into this space the recovery of this absence of limits that it feels in itself. The second sense upholds the Gnostic attitude that although it is in the world, believes that it isn't of the world and that it doesn't belong to it because it comes from elsewhere.[30]

So as Moura conceptualizes it, the Elsewhere is either a radically different form of spatialized being, "actual or imaginary," inhabited by the Other yet accessible or a kind of ideal (in the Platonic sense) alternative place. Moura further posits, following Paul Ricoeur, that an author formulates a sense of the Elsewhere according to a dialectic between the qualities a group attributes to itself ("the idealized interpretation across which the group represents its existence and by which it reinforces its identity") and that which questions social reality along the lines of what else is understood as possible.[31] This latter, which Ricoeur and Moura term "the utopian," is a sense of a desirable alternative social order, be it constituted of ideal qualities (such as absolute social equality), traits drawn from other past or present societies, notions of pure difference (such as the exotic), or some mixture of these. In other words, a sense of the Elsewhere emerges out of the dialectic between perceived points of commonality between the foreign and the native and an imagined sense of what other social possibilities exist.[32]

A few prominent traits stand out in the Elsewhere Bowles constructs in representing the Maghreb. One of these is the representation of anticolonialist revolt—in its inception, duration, and aftermath—and the impact of this revolt upon the social space of the Maghreb. Another prevalent aspect of Bowles's representations of the Maghreb is the evidence of the Cold War that they manifest: the hints of behind-the-scenes U.S. involvement in the Maghreb, of espionage and covert

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[29] Jean-Marc Moura, *L'Europe litteraire et l'ailleurs* (Paris: P Universitaires de France, 1998), 1, 44-5.

[30] Ibid., 1. All translations from the French are mine, except in cases where reference to the English translation is provided.

[31] Ibid., 49-50, 54.

[32] As Moura points out, this latter poses a fundamental challenge to the status quo conceptualization of native place.

manipulations of the political scene. With Tangier serving at the time as one of Radio America's main broadcast centers and given the strong leftist leanings of the 1930s intellectual milieu of his youth (Bowles had even been briefly a member of the American Communist Party), the preoccupation of Bowles with local manifestations of Cold War geopolitics is readily understandable. Against and because of this backdrop of tension and struggle between the capitalist West and the communist East, the representation of the market, the spatial manifestation of capitalist exchange, is also especially pronounced in his work. The Maghreb, particularly Tangier, is represented as a space of hyperactive commercial exchange, as being inveterately laissez-faire in its economic climate, but also as a space where the encounter between sex and economics is particularly manifest. The writings of Bowles reflect largely unflinchingly on the status of the region—and, again, Tangiers in particular—at the time as a Mecca of sexual tourism, especially for homosexual men. As Marie-Haude Caraes and Jean Fernandez argue in their *Tanger ou La Dérive Littéraire: Essai sur la colonization littéraire d'un lieu* (*Tangier or the Literary Drift: An Essay on the Literary Colonization of a Place*),[33] Tangier was so saturated with this practice that the place itself became sexualized, animated by a "rapport of domination, of instrumentalization."[34] This attention to the sexual possibilities of the Maghreb is closely related to another prominent feature of Bowles's representations of the region, his proffering of it as a kind of frontier space open to new kinds of possibility and new orders of being, an alternative to the drab realities of mid-century America with its paranoia and its antipathy to all deviations from conventional behavior. But perhaps above all else, the North African writings of Bowles manifest anxieties regarding and a distaste for the changing space of the Maghreb. Being ill at ease with spatial transmutations is nothing new; it dates at least as far back as the Industrial Revolution and William Blake's "dark satanic mills." Bowles felt a deep attachment to colonial Morocco, particularly the expatriate enclave of Tangier in the days of the International Zone, for reasons including his fetishizing it as a non- or anti-Western space and his eager embracing of the liberties afforded the privileged Westerner under the colonial regime. He could not find any real good in the changing spatial

[33] "Dérive" has no ready equivalent in English. It is the noun form of the verb "dériver," which can mean to drift (go astray or move along aimlessly), to divert, or to derive.

[34] Marie-Haude Caraes and Jean Fernandez, *Tanger ou La Dérive Littéraire: Essai sur la colonization littéraire d'un lieu: Barthes, Bowles, Burroughs, Capote, Genet, Monad . . .*(Paris: Editions Publisud, 2002), 17.

features of a Morocco adjusting to meet the needs of an expanding and urbanizing population and to assert its own identity as a newly liberated nation.

Bowles's representations of space and place mark an ever increasingly intimate interfacing with the Maghreb. His earliest works set in North Africa use the landscape to provide an alien backdrop against which his American protagonists undergo crises of identity, desire, and comprehension. In them place functions largely as location for the staging of what Timothy Weiss refers to as "counter-Western discourse" and "end-of-modernity fiction": through their evocations of alien places Bowles's "stories upset and overturn, questioning our beliefs in reason and the utility of action to resolve problems," by way of the presentation of "sinister atmospheres that bespeak a malevolence, landscapes that dwarf human presence and pretensions."[35] Place is constituted by the history, politics, mores, traditions, and practices of the people that inhabit it, and insofar as these works present no more than the surface elements of the places where they are set, they might almost as well, with minor alterations, be set in a similarly exotic locale, say Tajikistan. "Tea on the Mountain" (1939), Bowles's first short story, treats the imperfectly sublimated desire of an American writer for a Moroccan youth and the latter's spurning of the restrictions of his cultural heritage. "A Distant Episode" (1945) takes as its subject human being shorn of the trappings of civilization, particularly language. In neither is there a non-transferable specificity of space or place.

Bowles's most widely read and celebrated work, his first novel, *The Sheltering Sky*, has perhaps achieved its renown and popularity due to being from this period, before his extended interaction and engagement with Morocco made for a hybrid set of writerly concerns and a hybrid aesthetic in his work. Unlike later works such as *The Spider's House*, *The Sheltering Sky* can be appreciated without much understanding of the Maghreb, and its existential themes and Poe-esque sense of horror make for an easier placement within the Western literary canon.[36] For Port and Kit, the protagonist couple of *The Sheltering Sky*, the Algerian Sahara represents a frontier which they pursue as a means of escaping the angst and malaise of postwar America. The novel narrates the journey of these two further and further south, away from Oran, their port of entry into the

[35] Timothy Weiss, "Paul Bowles as Orientalist: Toward a Nomadic Discourse," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 7 (1998): 40.

[36] *The Sheltering Sky* was numbered among the one hundred greatest English-language novels of the twentieth century by both the Modern Library and *Time* magazine, the only work of Bowles to be included on either list.

Maghreb, which is represented as a pallid and flawed imitation of Europe ("where each invocation of Europe was merely one more squalid touch"), towards the Sahara, the envisioned openness of which is seen in terms of an immense liberatory potential.[37] This movement makes Port feel in line with the American project of charting new territories, as if "he was pioneering—he felt more closely identified with his great-grandparents, when he was rolling along out here in the desert than he did sitting at home looking out over the reservoir in Central Park."[38] But this vastness and radical alterity of the Sahara, which Bowles has remarked is the real protagonist of the novel, overwhelms both Port and Kit.[39] She loses her sense of self, wandering off into the desert and seeking instinctual refuge in a mute and infantile state of orientation towards immediate sensual gratification with the caravan leader who stumbles upon her. Port succumbs to typhoid, which is also represented as a dissolution of selfhood, rendered as a union of the previously mutually exclusive elements of blood and excrement played out against the landscape:

> His cry went on through the final image: the spots of raw bright blood on the earth. Blood on excrement. The supreme moment, high above the desert, when the two elements, blood and excrement, long kept apart, merge. A black star appears, a point of darkness in the night sky's clarity. Point of darkness and gateway to repose. Reach out, pierce the fine fabric of the sheltering sky, take repose.[40]

This evocation of excrement points to another crucial aspect of place in *The Sheltering Sky*: its relation to the abject. The abject, as Julia Kristeva defines it in her *Powers of Horror*, is that which is cast down, degraded, humiliated, and/or debased, that which hasn't been integrated into a sense of the proper and permissible during the formation of the ego; it is anathema to the superego, and due to the charge of revulsion that it carries, it threatens, by its presence, to upset at least temporarily the subject's sense of self. According to Kristeva the abject is neither subject nor object, neither "internal" not "external." She writes that:

> The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to *I*. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me

[37] Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky, Let it Come Down, The Spider's House* (New York: The Library of America, 2002), 41.
[38] Ibid., 81-2.
[39] Gena Dagel Caponi, *Paul Bowles* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 21.
[40] Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky*, 185.

> ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. A certain "ego" that merged with its master, a superego, has flatly driven it away. It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.[41]

In other words, the abject is cast away psychologically, but it continues to threaten the superego because it cannot be slotted neatly and comfortably into the conceptual schemata or basic sense of the order of things upon which the superego is based. The loathing and revulsion produced by the abject is a defense mechanism against the abject's propensity to upset, against its simultaneous highly charged familiarity and alienness.

The space that Port and Kit negotiate in *The Sheltering Sky* is pregnant with triggers of the abject, and thus it is defined largely by its capacity to produce horror and loathing in them and to upset their senses of self. Arriving at their hotel in Ain Krorfa they find a fountain filled with rotting garbage, sore-infested infants crawling about unattended, and "hairless dogs ravaged by flies and the sun."[42] Earlier, on the train to Boussif, Kit accidentally gets trapped in the fourth-class compartment and is confronted by a man holding a blood-dripping sheep's head and a leper missing his nose.[43] This experience so horrifies her and demolishes her sense of self that she succumbs passively and almost inertly to the seduction attempts of Tunner, her vapid traveling companion, despite her pronounced distaste for him. On other occasions Kit and Port encounter an Arab man shaving his pubic hair, an incestuous British mother and son couple, and a cockroach that has been impaled by a hotel cook.[44] So the landscape of *The Sheltering Sky* is not just a stage for the existential encounter with nothingness, but also a space defined for the American outsider by the presence of the abject. As the abject is so uncanny and loathsome because it is familiar yet non-assimilably alien, rendering place in terms of abjection demonstrates a vast cultural distance between the observer and locale, a sense of menace to the Western self inherent in the foreign, and, therefore, a fundamental sort of disengagement.

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[41] Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 1-2.
[42] Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky*, 86.
[43] Ibid., 63-4.
[44] Ibid., 74, 103, 111.

Kristeva remarks that "[g]reat modern literature unfolds over [the] terrain" where "'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again—inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject."[45] She mentions the likes of Dostoyevsky, Lautréamont, Artaud, Kafka, and Borges in this context, but might just as well have listed Bowles, who is invariably classed as a late modernist by literary critics. In *The Sheltering Sky* Bowles explores the boundaries and fault lines of the subject as it relates to its environment, but in doing so his narrative does not offer a sense of the nature of the social space of the Maghreb as experienced by its inhabitants, colonizer or colonized. Thus the richer texture of this social space is lost in this particular representation. As Bowles continued to live in Tangier and travel throughout the Maghreb over the course of five decades, however, his writings would come to manifest a more nuanced impression and understanding of the dynamics of Maghrebine social space.

The longer that Bowles lived and worked in Morocco, the more intimately he engaged with its people and its social topography. In *Let it Come Down* there is still a focus on existential concerns such as the blankness and purposelessness of the existence of Dyar, the novel's protagonist, and the horrible freedom involved in Dyar's killing of his friend Thami, an act which few critics have failed to relate to Lafcadio's *acte gratuit* in Andre Gide's *Les Caves du Vatican*. But as *Let it Come Down* progresses—narrating the story of Dyar's arrival in Tangier in an attempt to escape the blandness of his life in New York, his falling in love with the young prostitute Hadija, his entanglement with smugglers, and his eventual absconding with a substantial amount of money in a marijuana-induced haze—it offers more intimate, involved representations of Maghrebine spaces than those found in *The Sheltering Sky*, providing, for example, extended scenes set in Maghrebine domestic spaces. *The Spider's House* takes this trend even further; almost half the novel is narrated from the perspective of Amar, an adolescent *Chorfa*,[46] providing an extended look at the spaces inhabited by a lower class Moroccan living in Fez. Bowles's final novel set in the Maghreb, *The Spider's House* examines the turmoil and violence-filled twilight days of French rule in Morocco through the story of Amar's encounter, bonding with, and eventual abandonment by the American writer Stenham.

In its close attention to historical detail, its multiple-perspective take on decolonialist independence movements in the Maghreb, and its incisive

[45] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 18.
[46] A descendent of the prophet Muhammed.

and multifaceted representations of North African Arab characters and events, *The Spider's House*, like such later short stories as "The Time of Friendship" (1962), evinces Bowles expanding rapport with the land of his expatriation. From the late sixties through the mid-nineties Bowles took this rapprochement with the Maghreb even further, collaborating with illiterate Moroccan storytellers in translating their stories. Brian Edwards sees these collaborations as disrupting the boundaries of national identification and creating a liminal literature that is neither American nor Maghrebine.[47] Thus across Bowles's career there is a progression from a cultural outsider preoccupied with the experience of alienness to an insider opening up new possibilities of creation and comprehension through an increasing situatedness within another culture.

This relationship of insiders versus outsiders relating to place is dramatized throughout Bowles's oeuvre. As his comments in the introduction to his collected travel writings *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* make clear, Bowles recognized how the people who inhabit a place give it its distinctive character through their presence and practices: "North Africa without its tribes, inhabited by, let us say, the Swiss, would be merely a rather more barren California."[48] Moreover, in Bowles's fiction characters proceed ineluctably from the fabric of their native environment, which they have a kind of proprietary relation to, and consequently experience incomprehension and at times bewilderment when they find themselves elsewhere. Speaking of his writing process in an interview, Bowles has said, "Much of the fiction starts out with landscape in my head. First, there's the scene: where is it laid? And then if I know the place, I know what can happen there, who can be in it, and what the influence of the place is on the protagonists."[49] Along very similar lines, in *Let it Come Down* Dyar reflects on his friend Thami's relationship to his environment:

> Thami was part of the place and therefore had everything in the place behind him, so to speak. Thami in New York—he almost laughed at the image the idea evoked—he was the sort no one would even take the trouble to look at in the street when he asked for a dime. Here it was another matter. He was a spokesman for the place; like Antaeus, whatever

[47] Brian Edwards, *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 86-7.
[48] Paul Bowles, *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), xxi.
[49] *Let it Come Down*, DVD, directed by Jennifer Baichwal (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 1999).