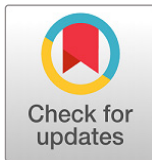


Translating Invisible Lives: Paul Bowles' Rewritings of his Moroccan Storytellers



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Abstract

This article aims to examine Paul Bowles' translations as a space where *major* and *minor* cultures clash or come together. These translations are the result of his long and well-known stay in Tangier. They are based on the narrations of his Moroccan male friends. These translations are not at all orthodox translations. This article intends to answer a series of questions to prove this point: What is the source text? Who is the author? What literature does the manuscript written in Maghrebi belong to? Bowles' rewritings of the stories told by his Moroccan friends have as many supporters as critics. They reveal Bowles' identity on multiple fronts including sexuality and nationality. But they are also political since they reveal that translations can be at the centre of asymmetrical encounters of peoples and cultures.

Keywords: identity, Paul Bowles, postcolonialism, power; queer, Tangier, translation

Traduciendo vidas invisibles: Paul Bowles reescribe a sus narradores marroquíes

Resumen

Este artículo se propone analizar las traducciones de Paul Bowles como un espacio de choque o de encuentro de culturas *mayores* y *menores*. Esas traducciones son el resultado de su prolongada y bien conocida estadía en Tánger. Se basan en los relatos de sus amigos marroquíes. Estas no son en absoluto traducciones ortodoxas. El presente artículo busca responder una serie de preguntas para demostrarlo: ¿Cuál es el texto fuente? ¿Quién es el autor? ¿A qué literatura corresponde el manuscrito redactado en magrebí? La reescritura que hace Bowles de los relatos contados por sus amigos marroquíes tiene tantos defensores como detractores. Revelan la identidad de Bowles en múltiples frentes, incluidas la sexualidad y la nacionalidad. Pero a la vez son políticos en cuanto revelan que las traducciones pueden estar en el centro de encuentros asimétricos entre personas y culturas.

Palabras claves: identidad, Paul Bowles, poscolonialismo, poder, queer, Tánger, traducción



Traduire des vies invisibles : Paul Bowles réécrit ses conteurs marocains

Résumé

Cet article vise à analyser les traductions par Paul Bowles comme un espace de dispute ou de rencontre de cultures *majeures* et *mineures*. Ces traductions sont le résultat de sa prolongée et bien connue séjour à Tanger. Ils se sont basés dans les rapports de ses amis marocains, mais il ne s'agit en aucun cas de traductions orthodoxes. Cet article tente de répondre à une série de questions pour le démontrer : Quel est le texte source ? Qui en est l'auteur ? À quelle littérature appartient le texte maghrébin rédigé en arabe ? Les réécritures par Bowles des histoires racontées par ses amis marocains comptent autant d'adeptes que de détracteurs. Elles révèlent ainsi de multiples facettes de l'identité de Bowles, telles que sa sexualité et sa nationalité. Mais elles sont également politiques dans la mesure où elles révèlent que les traductions peuvent être au cœur de rencontres asymétriques entre des personnes et des cultures.

Mots-clé : identité, Paul Bowles, post-colonialisme, pouvoir, queer, Tanger, traduction

Introduction

Paul Bowles is known above all as the author of *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) and other literary works and also because of his relationship with the Beat Generation and his representations of sexual identity (Mullins, 2002). Considered nowadays to be one of the most representative 20th-century expatriate American writers, he was “a sort of queer among queers who defied definition on multiple fronts, including sexuality, nationality, and artistic specialisation” (Hubbs, 2004, p. 102). In this context, although many aspects could be addressed, there is one feature of his work that stands out from all the others: the “coming together” in his translations of “major” and “minor” cultures which is the result of his long and well-known stay in Tangier (1947–1999).

The coming together or “clash” between world-views has been examined from postcolonial theories, but not from the viewpoint of translation studies. As we will see, Bowles is accused of being a colonialist but also of bringing to light, through his translations of the *minoritised*, the oral histories of those who, until then, had never had a voice.

This article aims to examine that facet of Bowles as a translator, which has not been widely studied by critics. Attention has been paid to analysing his stories but not the autobiographies (e.g., Maier, 1996; Hibbard, 2018; Sabil, 2012; Patteson, 1992; Rountree, 1986). I find this subject fascinating because he produced many translations that were methodologically avant garde, as they dealt with questions that are crucial to contemporary translation studies, for instance, those related to representation, the original/translation, or the author/translator dichotomy. Besides, these translations are a clear example that “translation has been at the centre of the encounters of peoples and cultures whether for trade, negotiations, diplomacy, conflict resolution or ‘clashes of civilisations’” (Bandia, 2018, p. 243).

Bowles translated from Arabic into English the oral narrations of Moroccan male friends. He told stories, which are based on orality, without referring to “official” or “reliable” sources. The rewritings Bowles made are interesting and revealing because they reflect the coming together of two completely different world-views. His translations, perhaps more than his novels, were journeys that allowed him to be in two places at once, mixing spaces and languages. By translating, he became emotionally and intellectually involved, showing, as he wrote in *A Distant Episode* (Bowles, 1947), that he can be *there* and *here*, which is something reflected in his use of language considering that his translations included many words in Spanish, French, and Maghrebi¹. This is also portrayed in hybrid, strange expressions for native English speakers like those found in his translation of Mrabet’s (1976) novella *Look & Move On*, for instance, “that daughter of a whore” (p. 15), “That’s for between my toes” (p. 37), “You’re very sympathetic” (p. 39). This way of using language in his translations has meant that “Bowles has come as close as possible to the ontologically impossible point of being both American and Moroccan, both ‘here’ and ‘there’, and his translations mark the ultimate stage in his imaginative assimilation and interpretation of Moroccan culture” (Patteson, 1992, p. 181).

Bowles’ translations are located in that “in-between” space defended by contemporary postcolonial translation scholars like Homi Bhabha (1994) or Gayatri Spivak (1990; 1995). This is precisely the main idea of one of the most interesting recent books on Bowles (Benlemlih, 2018, pp. 26–28). It focuses on Bowles’ liminality and deconstruction of binaries and understands his translations as contact zones

1 This mixture of French, Spanish and Maghrebi words in the English translations reflects the linguistic complexity of Tangier. For an analysis of why Bowles retains the use of *maricón* [faggot] in Spanish “as a category of difference against which masculinity is defined”, see Mullins (2002, p. 131).

in Mary Louise Pratt's sense (Benlemlih, 2018, p. 33) or as territories traversing border spaces between languages and cultures. In this article, after analysing different opinions generated by his translations, I will try to show, based on concepts like Deleuze or Guattari's *minor literature* or Jacques Derrida's *hospitality*, that Bowles inhabits a dialogic space between, a threshold between two cultures.

Bowles opted for the kind of translations in the "in-between" defended by Bhabha (1994) or Spivak (1990), whose starting point is the fact that, like language, identities are not pure and that this is enriching for all human beings. Bowles stated in an interview that the translator "transports" meanings, and that translators never leave texts intact (Caponi, 1993, p. 199), which is similar to how many contemporary scholars describe translation.

Translation is today a discipline that raises questions of representation and asymmetrical power between cultures and translations are no longer expected to be the neutral reproduction of the original. That is why I believe that Bowles translated ahead of his time, unaware of poststructuralist translation theories like the one claiming that: "there are, in one linguistic system, perhaps several languages or tongues [...] There is impurity in every language" (Derrida, 1982/1985, p. 100). As a result, translation

is no longer simply a linguistic operation that consists in transporting meaning from one language to another [...] it is an operation of thought through which we must translate ourselves into the thought of the other language, the forgotten thinking of the other language. We must translate ourselves into it and not make it come into our language. It is necessary to go toward the unthought thinking of the other language. (Derrida, 1982/1985, p. 115)

As mentioned above, Bowles' translations have attracted as much criticism as praise because he translated with a very heterodoxical methodology that highlights the fact that

Translation by its very nature is asymmetrical and oppositional. In a way, the quality of dualism, binarism, dichotomy or asymmetry inherent to translation makes the practise a fertile ground for investigating issues related to conflict and various forms of confrontation. There is always an implied "us" versus "them", a tendency to penetrate or violate other cultural spaces. Add to this a nagging feeling of (and practice of) injustice and power inequality in the context of globalisation where some languages and cultures are more equal than others; translation is often (correctly or incorrectly) assumed to play a role of mediation and bridge-building in contexts rife with mistrust, political and socioeconomic anxieties and thus a fertile ground for conflict. In this context translation loses any platonic sense of innocence characterised by the naive view of translation as neutral, transparent and located at an equidistant in-between position between mediated language cultures. Indeed, the notion of conflict is ever-present in translation, whether linguistic, cultural or ideological, which raises the question why it took so long for this symbiotic relation (between translation and conflict) to emerge as an important field of inquiry in translation studies. (Bandia, 2018, pp. 244-245)

Taking all this as our starting point, the following section deals with Bowles' translations of Moroccan oral stories. It shows how he rewrote Yacoubi, Choukri, Layachi, and Mrabet. Section 3 will address some problems with Bowles' translations stemming from the fact that these translations cannot be verified since the tapes containing the stories were destroyed by Bowles himself. Section 4 discloses some opinions against Bowles' rewritings. Lastly, these translations are presented as in-between spaces which give voice to the subaltern.

1. Paul Bowles' Translations

Bowles' first translation was published in 1952. He translated a story by his lover and protégé Ahmed Yacoubi. His next translation was the novel *A Life Full of Holes* by Layachi Larbi (1964), and he also rewrote other oral stories

by Abdesslam Boulaich or Mohammed Mrabet, with whom he had a long, close friendship. From 1964 to 1992 Bowles translated “no fewer than fifteen volumes of fictional work by local Moroccan storytellers [...] All, except for Choukri, were illiterate and worked solely in the oral tradition; thus, his mode of translation (usually from tape) was unconventional” (Hibbard, 2018, p. 20).

The translation of Moroccan oral stories was a Bowles’ attempt to preserve “those voices that would take on new accents in postcolonial Morocco” (Edwards, 2005a, p. 231). Moroccan orality needed to be kept

from Euro-American thinking based on science and reason [...] The more than twenty volumes that make up Bowles’s Moroccan translation are the translator’s attempt to understand Moroccan culture from within. They reveal Moroccan social relations, their image of the other [...] Bowles’s translations of Moroccan oral stories are important in the ways that they reveal Bowles’s effort to let the illiterate Moroccan voice speak. (Benlemlih, 2018, pp. 26, 27)

In fact, as Bowles pointed out himself, Yacoubi’s stories had held interest for him ever since they met in 1947 when Yacoubi was a waiter at Palais Jamai Hotel in Fez. But it was not until 1952 that Bowles realised “that [he] might be instrumental in preserving at least a few of them [...] One day, as Yacoubi began to speak, [Bowles] seized a notebook and rapidly scribbled the English translation of a story across its pages” (Bowles, 1979, p. 7).

Yacoubi’s oral stories increased Bowles’s *psychic mobility* [...] because they placed him close to a culture other than his own. Yacoubi taught Bowles Moroccan Arabic. Bowles noted that Yacoubi did not speak “any French, any Spanish, and [...] no English [...] He spoke a very strange Darija [a Moroccan dialect]” [...] In this context, Yacoubi’s narratives coming from the margins of the Arab-Muslim world proved to be particularly trying for Bowles since they led his yearning to preserve

Moroccan voices in danger of disappearing. Bowles recounted that he came upon the young Moroccan in Fez in the late 1940s, “took him under his wing and encouraged him to paint. Later Bowles took him on trips to Sri Lanka [then Ceylon] and Istanbul. It is generally assumed that the two were, at one point at least, lovers”. (Hibbard, 2018, p. 22)

In all cases except for Choukri, Bowles chose to translate nonliterate storytellers. Apart from Yacoubi, another example is the previously mentioned Larbi Layachi. He was a poor fisherman working as the guard of a café at Merkala Beach in Tangier when Bowles met him in 1962. Another collaborator was Mrabet, a bartender and fisherman. Illiteracy was a “prerequisite” for Bowles, “infused with a childlike innocence associated with the premodern, a relation to life and story unmediated by writing” (Hibbard, 2018, p. 22). Bowles’ preference for oral performance “is an indicator of much that has changed in the Western view of the non-Western world” (Maier, 1996, p. 214). He was convinced of the value of these oral tales “as a repository of cultural memories” (Benlemlih, 2018, p. 37). In “Notes on the Work of the Translator,” published as a preface to “Five Eyes” (Bowles, 1979), Bowles showed his admiration for oral storytelling such as that he heard in the cafes of Tangier. In fact, all the spoken texts included in that book were non-stop performed in a single sitting.

Bowles was disgusted by cultural imperialism and by the longing on the part of the educated minorities from non-Western societies to become Westerners. That is why he wanted to let “the other speak” (Maier, 1996, p. 215) in the stories he translated, not from written sources but from his recordings of oral performances. Archives housed in the University of Texas Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center and the University of Delaware Special Collections show how Bowles worked on drafts of works by his illiterate friends, “editing with careful attention to language and storyline. Translation, thus, can be seen as an important supplement to or extension of his own writing” (Hibbard, 2018, p. 25).

After the complicated improvisation/transcription of the stories related to him by Yacoubi, Bowles started to work with the tape recordings of oral narrations of his illiterate collaborators (tape recording machines arrived in Morocco in 1956). The collaboration between Bowles and Mohammed Mrabet, for example, was extremely intense and the longest of all (from 1967 to 1993). Together, they published 12 works, Mrabet's autobiography, and a series of stories and tales: "Love with a Few Hairs" (1967), "The Lemon" (1969), "M'Hashish" (1969), "The Boy Who Set the Fire" (1974), "Hadidan Aharam" (1975), "Look and Move On" (1976), "Harmless Poisons, Blameless Sins" (1976), "The Big Mirror" (1977), "The Beach Café and the Voice" (1980), "The Chest" (1983), "Marriage with Papers" (1986), "Chocolate Dreams and Dollars" (1993), and Mrabet's contribution to the collection "Five Eyes" (1980).²

Mrabet was attracted by Layachi's collaborations with Bowles. He wondered how Layachi could have published a book since he was illiterate like himself. He asked Bowles whether he had got money for narrating his stories and Bowles answered: "Of course [...] He made enough to get married". Bowles met Mrabet

after watching the young man, strong and athletic, doing acrobatics on Merkala Beach in Tangier. As the story goes, Mrabet heard about Layachi's book, and proposed a similar project to Bowles, saying he had many stories to tell. The relationship between the two lasted from the 1960s into the 1990s, when apparently tensions rose, during the last years of Bowles's life. In *Look and Move On*, Mrabet describes the translations: "Some were tales I have heard in the cafés, some were dreams, some were inventions I made as I was recording, and some were about things that had actually happened to me". (Hibbard, 2018, p. 22)

Mrabet competed with Layachi. He would make tapes for money "and concoct stories

that would surpass the tales Larbi had devised. Thus, Bowles offered a market for storytelling in Tangier and opened an inter-individual competition among storytellers" (Benlemlih, 2018, p. 43).

On the other hand, Bowles' collaboration with Mohamed Choukri was completely different. Choukri, who had also been illiterate, eventually became a Professor of Arabic Literature at the Ibn Batuta College in Tangiers. Choukri had published his *For Bread Alone* (1996) before meeting Bowles. He worked with Bowles on the final version of his texts, written initially in classical Arabic, a language Bowles neither read nor wrote (Walonen, 2011); that is why he made Choukri translate "his text" to Moroccan Arabic punctuated with French and Spanish (Sabil, 2012). Indeed, Bowles felt constrained by Choukri since he checked the final translations. It is interesting to point out that Choukri (1996) claimed in *Paul Bowles wa 'uzla Tanya (Paul Bowles and the Solitude of Tangier)* that Spanish was the language he mostly used in his work with Bowles. But in *For Bread Alone* (1996) by Choukri, Bowles contended that he had worked with Choukri mostly in Moroccan Arabic. In the introduction to this work Bowles wrote:

Because I have translated several books from the Arabic I want to make a clear differentiation between the earlier volumes and the present work. The other books were spoken onto tape and the words were in the colloquial Arabic called Maghrebi. *For Bread Alone* is a manuscript, written in classical Arabic, a language I do not know. The author had to reduce it first to Moroccan Arabic for me. Then we used Spanish and French for ascertaining shades of meaning. Although exact, the translation is far from literal. (Choukri, 1993/2010, p. 5)

Choukri had decided that Bowles should translate his work into English because of the reputation he had gained thanks to his translations of Layachi's and Mrabet's stories. The foregoing work and two books published with Bowles after that awarded him international fame but

2 See Mrabet (2004).

also local ones because his works were written in Arabic. (Charhady and Mrabet's intellectual success was, on the other hand, quite different; see Sabil, 2012). However, in *Paul Bowles and the Solitude of Tangier*, Choukri (1996) criticised Bowles heavily for showing a colonialist and disdainful attitude towards the Moroccans and stealing their royalties. He also attacked Bowles

for exploitation of Moroccan men, claiming to know Arabic better than he did, and loving Morocco while hating Moroccans. A distinctly sexual component is woven into the fabric of this dynamic, firmly lodged within an Orientalist erotics as well as an economy and politics of post-colonialism. (Hibbard, 2018, p. 28)

Bowles never made any reference to these attacks (Elghandor, 1994a, p. 17).

2. Problems in Bowles' Translations

Criticism of Bowles' translations stems from the very important fact that there is no possibility of comparing and verifying them because the tapes containing the stories were destroyed by Bowles as soon as he rewrote them (Sabil, 2012, p. 92). Another controversial topic is that of the authorship of these works, Bowles' real role, and the role of those who narrated the stories:

Bowles did not read written Arabic and these authors (with the exception of Choukri) did not write Arabic; they could only author fictions orally in Moroccan Arabic, which is a spoken, not a written, language. Yacoubi, Layachi and Mrabet each "told" their stories, novels, and memoirs to Bowles, using a combination of Moroccan Arabic and Spanish, and Bowles then translated the tales into English. There are no originals to compare to the translations; the books appeared first in English. They are best understood as collaborations, since Bowles's presence was necessary not only as translator but also as instigator and editor and audience [...] From 1967 to 1993, Mrabet and Bowles published a

dozen books together. Compelling narratives marked by Mrabet's distinct voice. Or is it Bowles's narrative voice portraying Mrabet's voice? Impossible to say, since we read Mrabet's tales in Bowles's rendering. (Edwards, 2005b, p. 21)

Concerning the difficulty of defining Bowles' real role in the translations, it is interesting to note that the first British edition of *Love with a Few Hairs* (1967) mentioned the following: "Taped and translated from the Moghrebi by Paul Bowles" (n.p.) On the other hand, the first American edition of the same work published in 1968 changed slightly: "Translated from the tape in Maghrebi by Paul Bowles" (n. p.). This change is important for the question of authorship:

Note that the second formulation places the taping in a third space, an action whose authorship is left ambiguous. According to both Mrabet's and Bowles's accounts, the second formulation would seem more accurate. But not because Bowles didn't do the taping; indeed it was Bowles's tape recorder employed at Bowles's home. The second formulation leaves ambiguous an element that some may consider crucial: whether Bowles did or could move directly from Moroccan *darija* to English. According to Mrabet, whom I interviewed over several days in June 1999 on the subject of his work with Bowles, Paul had little a command of Moroccan Arabic to complete this translation without Mrabet using a fair amount of Spanish (a language both were comfortable speaking) in order to translate his taped narrative. Such a situation would seem to be covered by the Braziller formulation, even if that formulation is a bit vague or misleading. Mrabet's own role in creating *Love with a Few Hairs* would seem to be more than what is stated (authorship) and include a partial role as translator. Indeed, when *The Lemon* was published a couple of years later, in 1969, by Peter Owen, the formula was altered to: "Translated from the Maghrebi and edited by Paul Bowles in collaboration with Mohammed Mrabet". Mrabet was named twice: as author of the narrative and as collaborator in its translation and editing. If this

description is accurate, though cumbersome, it was nonetheless dropped from their later books. (Edwards, 2005a, p. 237)

Bowles noted that his translations “[were] not exactly collaborations. [He] only [got] the authors to talk” (Caponi, 1993, p. 53). He insisted that the stories were their own. His function was only “to translate, edit, and to cut” (Caponi, 1993, p. 53). Yet, there was an exception to this. Bowles was interested in authenticity. He wanted to preserve Moroccan culture and at the same time make foreign texts available to Westerners. Although he repeated in the introduction to *A Life Full of Holes* (1964) that the translation was a literal one, he described how Layachi wanted to delete a section of one chapter but he disagreed because it was a story that illustrated

the persistence of a pre-Islamic belief that has been grafted onto Islam. Bowles found this phenomenon interesting and wanted to relate it to the reader. The disagreement between Layachi and Bowles points to the different desires each of them brought to their collaboration: Layachi wanted to tell his life story, but Bowles wanted to have something told about Morocco and Moroccan lives in general [...] In overruling Layachi and including the tomb episode in the published autobiography, Bowles acted the part of the anthropologist/translator who places his own fascinations with and interpretations of Moroccan culture above those of his informant. (Mullins, 2002, p. 118)

Despite Bowles' insistence that “I only get the authors to talk, you see” (Caponi, 1993, p. 53), we should also ask ourselves whether Mrabet's collaboration in translating some or all of the text into Spanish for Bowles modified the relationship of the “translator” with the “original” text. In a similar fashion, we ought to question whether, as a result, these texts are “properly considered translations at all, or are they literary collaborations that occurred in a variety of tongues with a single product?” (Edwards, 2005a, p. 238).

We should also bear in mind that the authors of these stories told oral stories in a very different dialect to the regional ones of Arabic used by Bowles' illiterate storytellers like Yacoubi or Layachi. The aftermath of this is that the stories translated by Bowles were only accessible through the English translations, which became the “originals” and the only texts accessible by any readership, especially given the fact that the taped oral narrations had disappeared. Consequently, and paradoxically, the “originals”, the oral stories narrated in the Maghrebi dialect, were inaccessible to their “authors”, who did not speak English.

Therefore, Bowles' translations of the history of Morocco based on the narrations of his Moroccan friends were not at all orthodox and lead us to ask a series of questions: What is the source text? Who is the author? What literature does the original written in Maghrebi belong to? Not to Moroccan literature, written in Modern Standard Arabic; and not to American literature, because in theory the author making it accessible to a Western readership is in reality the translator:

Listening to nonliterate Moroccan storytellers, recording their voices, translating their culture into a form of printed text, into a tradition that developed a certain kind of “realistic fiction”, Paul Bowles has formed a curious kind of hybrid text. Authorship [...] is not the simple process—an individual drawing on individual experience to produce a work—that the West has considered somehow fundamental to the very notion of literature [...] Larbi Layachi and Ahmed Yaboubi are, ironically, more likely to be considered “authors” in the English-speaking world than in the Arab-Muslim world, since they have not mastered Modern Standard Arabic. (Maier, 1996, pp. 227–228)

3. Against Bowles' Translations

Bowles' fairly unorthodox translations can be seen as an attempt at recovering a history of the Other which is not considered to be a part

of the official history of the country (Patteson, 1992, p. 181; Edwards, 2005a, pp. 228–230; Walonen, 2011, p. 60). His translations can also be seen as a manipulation so great on the part of Bowles that the narrators end up saying what he wanted them to see, so that Moroccan culture adapts to Western expectations, with all the stereotyped charge of the West opposite the Other. Bowles was attracted to the exotic and primitive, thereby, his friends tended to craft their stories according to his tastes:

They knew what I liked from the beginning. When they began to record things for me, they saw my reactions, they saw that I liked certain things, such as violence, and bloodshed and hatred, and so on. So they specialised in that, in general. I don't think Choukri did that, no. His long novel I translated, *For Bread Alone*, had enough of violence and unpleasantness to please me. (Elghandor, 1994b, p. 340)

Thus, the narrations consolidated the exotic or coloristic image of the original text culture and encapsulated the different features of Bowles' identity and his own biased vision of the country. For example, when *A Life Full of Holes* was published in 1964, the British and American press published many reviews, but many Moroccan intellectuals like Abdallah Laroui criticised the novel, refusing to accept that Bowles had captured the essence of the authentic Arab way of life (Edwards, 2005a, p. 234). Similarly, in 1972 when the French translation of *Love with a Few Hairs* (1967) came out, Tahar Ben Jelloun called the novel "pseudo-literature" and "bastard literature", adding that, in his opinion, Bowles had manipulated Moroccan reality (Jelloun, 1999). He even claimed in the review published in *Le Monde* that the author did not exist because it was a mere invention of Bowles. He also asserted that when a friend of Mrabet asked him to withdraw that statement, he said, "even if Bowles doesn't write all this crap [...] clearly he is simply [giving] Americans—above all in English—an idea of Morocco which is completely uncivilised" (Edwards, 2011, pp. 202–203). In a similar critical vein,

one of the academics who criticises Bowles' translations is Abdelkader Sabil, Professor at the Chouaib Doukkali University in Morocco. Sabil contends that Bowles chose poor illiterates because it made it easy for him to exercise power and reconstruct a narrative that the Other cannot control:

The question that poses itself here is: Why does he choose to translate illiterate Moroccans and not any other Moroccan writers? For Bowles, to translate the latter would be "just a waste of time" because "he who writes in French is perforce going to produce French literature, and in truth I was not prepared to translate French literature". What Bowles fails to express here is that his illiterate informants/storytellers, unlike those who write in French, cannot contest him as he is the master and also they are easy to manipulate since he perfectly knows their motives. Of course, the motives are purely material. They are all of very poor background and make do with whatever amount of money Bowles gives him. In short, he has been exploiting ignorance using them, to borrow from Edward Said, as "a province of learning". (Sabil, 2012, p. 94)

From this perspective, Sabil argues that Bowles' translations constructed a history of Tangier based on his Western ideology and his own experience of Moroccan reality, and did not reflect what his collaborators/narrators actually said: they were merely subordinates Bowles gave voice to according to his own stereotyped expectations:

Bowles, then, has managed to manipulate his literary informants to tell him what he needs to know about Morocco and Moroccans. He has a priori expectations or desires that can be spoken only through illiterate and marginalised people. He, in a sense, has used and abused their being marginalised and illiterate to voice his own grievances. Coming from the periphery, Choukri, Mrabet and Charhady give justification to Bowles' quest for the "authentic" or "primitive" that is lost to Morocco. The "Authentic" or the "primitive" are only retrievable through Bowles' translation/

rewriting. Such retrieval/salvage is possible only through Bowles' capacity to write an oral culture on the verge of vanishing. (Sabil, 2012, p. 6)

Furthermore, Bowles' translations, but also his photographs of Yacoubi and Mrabet, pointed to "a fantasy of desirable otherness" (Boone, 2014, p. 392). His storytellers had in many instances "high, unrealistic expectations of monetary return, and blamed Bowles for cheating them when those expectations for compensation were not met" (Hibbard, 2018, p. 28).

As well known, Tangier was, during the 1950s, promiscuous and licentious. It was an international zone where multiple languages and nationalities coexisted (Hibbard & Tharaud, 2010). Tangier was a city linked to free currency, lack of productivity, and male homosexual sex: "a city that became a mecca for European and American bohemians and homosexuals in the 1950s" (Aldrich, 2014, p. 165). Its tolerance to unorthodox ways of living was portrayed by many American journalists and writers in the 1950s. Tangier was for many Westerners "a Promised Land flowing with junk and boys" as described by William Burroughs to Jack Kerouac in his *Letters* (Burroughs, 2009, p. 261). Westerners' privileged position made them sometimes stop sympathising with the local population "that suffered at the hands of the expatriate community's licentiousness" (Hemmer, 2009, p. 68). Tangier was a space of tensions between aesthetics and ethics. Many questions arise around the kind of interactions some American writers had with Moroccans and how aware they were of their position of privilege. Much has been debated on this, for instance, Burrough's relationship with Moroccan boys and Bowles' exploitative relationships with his storytellers (Hibbard & Tharaud, 2010).

As Mullins (2002) posits in his chapter "Translating Homosexuality", the way Layachi, Mrabet, and Choukri narrated their experiences of colonial sexuality was quite different

from the pervasive melancholia and nostalgia in Bowles' representations of colonial desire. Rather, they told

realistic stories that [emphasised] the economic dimensions of sexuality in Tangier [...] their texts [represented] sexual relations with foreign men in the context of poverty, prostitution, homosocial bonds among Moroccan men, male adolescence, and marriage as a rite of passage into adulthood. (Mullins, 2002, pp. 111–112)

Bowles' translations were the result of literary encounters between Moroccans and a foreigner and this can lead us to understand them as "the exploitation of one nation or one race by another" (Mullins, 2002, p. 113). Understood in this way, Bowles' translations were far from hybridity and that third space defended by Homi Bhabha, far from the free will of the translator to descend to a territory that is strange to him and far from the in-between:

For a willingness to descend into that alien territory [...] may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an *international* culture, based not on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the "inter" –the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the "people". And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves. (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 38–39)

However, Mullins (2002) also underlines the importance of approaching the matter carefully, "for the exercise of power in the interzone is not as transparent or simplistic as it might seem" and goes on to analyse Bowles' translations beyond binary oppositions:

A simplistic analysis of Tangier's sexual economy could construe all sexual relations between Moroccan and foreign men as acts

either of betrayal on the part of Moroccans or exploitation on the part of the foreigners. But literary representations of male homosexuality in Tangier challenge such binary, rigid modes of interpretation. (p. 112)

Whatever our interpretation of Bowles' translations may be, what is most certainly true is that being in command of a dominant language gives power: "the mastery of language guarantees and isolates a new power [...] that of making history" (De Certeau, 1988/1984, p. 138). So as informers do not speak English, they are not likely to know if the representation made of their history is correct. A history they need to make known so that, in the case of Charhady in *A Life Full of Holes* (1964) or Choukri in *For Bread Alone* (1971), people are made aware of the extremely difficult experiences they have had to endure, which are the same experiences of violence and deprivation suffered by many children in cosmopolitan cities of the so-called Third World. Charhady and Choukri's novels talk about children who were raised on the streets of Tangiers living in extreme conditions of poverty and violence. These children reached adulthood too early through homosexual commercial transactions with Western tourists or marriages that had nothing to do with love but with business. Much has been written about Western sex tourism in Tangiers and about the excesses and permissiveness there when it was an International Zone (Sabil, 2012, pp. 186–193).

4. In Defence of Paul Bowles

Paul Bowles' rewritings of the history of Morocco based on the oral narrations of his collaborators are, without question, *representations* in the most philosophical sense of the word. Through language, Bowles enters the Other's space, the other space, and this also involves a certain amount of violence: "Yes, because it is perhaps the first violence which the foreigner undergoes: to have to claim his rights in a language he does not speak" (Derrida, 2005, p. 7). In my opinion, Bowles translated to understand the Other but also to understand himself and his

own voluntary exile. That is why I believe that Chambers' (1994) excellent definition in his now classic work is particularly appropriate here:

to refer to translation or memory is always to speak of the incomplete. The never fully decipherable. It is to betray any hope of transparency. For to translate is always to transform. It always involves a necessary travesty of any metaphysics of authenticity or origins. We find ourselves employing a language that is always shadowed by loss, an elsewhere, a ghost: the unconscious, an "other" text, an "other" voice, an "other" world; a language that is powerfully affected by the foreign tongue.

For the nomadic experience of language, wandering without a fixed home, dwelling at the crossroads of the world, bearing our sense of being and difference, is no longer the expression of a unique tradition of history, even if it pretends to carry a single name. Thought wanders. It migrates and requires translation. (p. 4)

Some studies on Paul Bowles, for instance, those by Hibbard (2018) and Benlemlih (2018), see his translations as working in two ways, reciprocally, and not as a one-way transaction:

an equation of mutual benefit, or mutual exploitation in which power does not reside simply in one or the other participant. Still, without question, these interactions are fraught with all kinds of issues attendant to the postcolonial scene in which they play out. Like Benlemlih I see Bowles's translation work as part of his attempt to negotiate the "in-between" liminal space of exile, trafficking between native and adoptive homes (US and Morocco), between one cultural scene and another, between one language and another. In addition to Bakhtin, Benlemlih draws on Mary Louis Pratt's notion of the "contact zone", both concepts being relevant to our considerations here as we think about translation and exile. (Hibbard, 2018, p. 29)

Mrabet, Yacoubi, and others, as well as their stories, are known today thanks to Bowles' translations. Their stories reached us. They

have not been silenced (Benlemlih, 2018, p. 55). As Caponi (1994) argues, in giving voice to the subalterns Bowles created “what Edward Said has longingly described as a cultural counterpoint, in which several voices weave through and around each other, no one voice more privileged than any other” (p. 215). Bowles gave voice to the subalterns but also listened to them in Spivak’s sense (Spivak, 1999, pp. 373, 386).

On the other hand, Bowles’ translations “kept his name in circulation and brought modest monetary rewards” (Spivak, 1999, p. 386) and also influenced his later literary work, which is more “Moroccan” since it

displays of violence and revenge, transformative capacities of kif (a cannabis derivative), negotiations of sexuality and power, tensions between tradition and modernity, the presence of djinn, superstition, magic potions, and spells. Bowles’s translation work and his fiction, thus, bleed into one another. (Hibbard, 2018, pp. 29–30)

This nomadic way of understanding language, writing, and translation leads to (or is a consequence of) a way of life, a way of being-in-the-world:

This inevitably implies another sense of “home”, of being in the world. It means to conceive of dwelling as a mobile habitat, as a mode of inhabiting time and space not as though they were fixed and closed structures, but as providing the critical provocation of an opening whose questioning presence reverberates in the movement of the languages that constitute our sense of identity, place and belonging. So, *I* finally come to experience the violence of alterity, of other worlds, languages and identities, and there finally discover my dwelling to be sustained across encounters, dialogues and clashes with other histories, other places, other people [...] Migrancy [...] involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation.

Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming—completing the story, domesticating the detour—becomes an impossibility. (Chambers, 1994, pp. 4–5)

Bowles re-presents history, presents history again, a history which is firstly that of the narrator. He does so by complying with the norms of what we now call intercultural theory which understands that translating and also constructing history is making a representation of reality that is never neutral. He is presenting again, from a specific point of view, the original text. This is because Bowles’ translations never destroy the Other. He did not eliminate from the oral histories what the Other said against the West. He never silenced in their stories their references to poor backgrounds, economic hardships, and imbalanced relationships with Western expatriates. The desperate poverty in which Layachi, Mrabet, and Choukri were raised is narrated in Layachi’s *A Life Full of Holes* (1964), Mrabet’s *The Lemon* (2004), and Choukri’s *For Bread Alone* (1993/2010), and among others. In *Love with a Few Hairs* (1967), for example, Mohammed

negotiates a relationship with a young Moroccan woman and with Mr. David, an expatriate with whom he sleeps. In scenes such as these, binaries between homosexuality and heterosexuality are deconstructed at the same time disparities between native Moroccans and Western outsiders are heightened. (Hibbard, 2018, p. 31)

It is interesting to mention here Mrabet’s reply (in Bowles’ translation) when he met Maria in a café and she offered, in a very paternalistic way, to take him to America (where he ended up going later):

We want to treat you as though you were our son, she said.

I laughed. Maria, I can drink a bottle of whiskey without even getting dizzy. So don’t tell me you think of me as your son. That’s not what you mean. You mean you both like to have me with you in bed, that’s all. And I like

to play games in bed. But it's not very important to me. I like to drink and smoke kif, but I don't think much about love. Love ruins you faster than anything else. Half the Europeans who live here in Tangier like to live with young Moroccans. When the old English ladies go back to London they leave their boy-friends behind, and you see the boys wandering around the streets looking like ghosts. They have money in their pockets but their health is gone. And it doesn't come back. (Mrabet, 1976, p. 22)

On the other hand, later in the novel, it is relevant to see how Bowles described Mrabet's resistance to Western customs when he was with Maria and Reeves in the United States. This is especially notorious when Reeves took him to Iowa to meet his family, whose way of life not only Mrabet could not adapt to, and he tried to impose his own way of life on them.

In general, this question of resistance and self-assertion is a major motif in many of Mrabet's narratives translated by Bowles that deal, directly or indirectly, with cultural encounters between Moroccans and Westerners. For example, in the story titled "What Happened in Granada", translated by Bowles, Mrabet (2004) recounted his clashes with Westerners during a short visit to Spain (exactly like what had happened in the novel when he went to Iowa), a clash that some authors have interpreted as a direct answer to the traditional ethnocentric attitude of the West: "Instead of feeling embarrassed or being at least calmly polite as a guest or foreigner there in Granada, he rather adopts a self-assertive and potentially counter-hegemonic attitude vis-à-vis all the people he meets there" (Elkouche, 2008, p. 4). Examples of clashes between the two cultures can be found in his narrative again and again, but at one point, when the Spaniards warned him about his dangerous driving, he said:

I yelled at them: I shit on your ancestors and your whole race! I kept walking along, pushing through them. Barking dogs don't bite, I told them. A very fat woman came by. She called me a moro, and I called her a Christian pig. (Mrabet, 2004, p. 14)

Later, Mrabet used Arabic to insult the Spaniards (Mrabet, 2004): "Inaal din d'babakum" (p. 21). This use of Arabic, and precisely the fact that it was not translated, is interesting here: Mrabet did this in many other stories and novels, in titles like "M'hashish," "Hdidan Ahram," and "The Ghoula," etc. Some of them are names, but they have cultural significance or symbolic implications that Mrabet considered to be untranslatable and, that he thought Western readers would be unable to grasp. Bowles always respected this:

and though some of them have synonyms in [English], Bowles seemed to be reluctant to use translated English words lest Mrabet's tales could lose their sense of authenticity and local colour. One can even assert that Bowles was often so overpowered by the compelling and mesmerising effect of Mrabet's tales that he simply transcribed such words instead of attempting to translate them. (Elkouche, 2008, p. 4)

Another element we have to take into account with regard to Bowles is the language he used and talked about in some of his own translated novels. For example, he himself and Jane appeared at the end of *Look & Move On* (1976) and the translation process in some pages became part of Mrabet's narration (1976, pp. 90–91). Bowles rewrote the histories of the subordinates, of those who have no voice because they have no material or intellectual means, in the strongest of the strong languages.

At this point, I think one way of defending this vision in favour of Bowles the translator I am presenting here is by looking at the distinction Deleuze and Guattari (1986/1975, p. 19) make between major and minor languages in relation to what they call "minor literature":

How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and now poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is the problem of immigrants, and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature,

but also a problem for all of us: how to tear a minor literature away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path? How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one's own language? (p. 19)

It is neither a question of bilingualism or multilingualism nor two languages blending in a balanced homogeneous system. Bowles did not mix two languages, not even a major and a minor language, but he showed a minor use of the major language. That, according to Deleuze, is what great writers do (and great translators too) who are always strangers in their own language.

“Minor” literature, in the sense of Deleuze and Guattari, evokes the history of a previous denomination and deals with problems of ethnicity, gender, and deterritorialisation. More importantly, minor literature does not refer to specific literatures but to the revolutionary conditions of every literature within the so-called literary canon. Minor literature is deterritorialised and political literature; it fosters collective rather than individual utterances: a minor language use evokes the history of domination. It is probably the literature of many Moroccan writers after decolonisation because they believed that they had to tell their history themselves. Bowles told subordinates' stories in English, thus contributing to making the history widely known, even if, at the same time, it is true that there was a clear asymmetry in this clash or coming together of cultures:

Must a distinction then be made between two kinds of languages, “high” and “low,” major and minor? The first would be defined precisely by the power (*pouvoir*) of constants, the second by the power (*puissance*) of variation. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986[1975], p. 101)

The aim is neither the major nor the minor, but making the major minor:

minor languages are not simply sublanguages [...] but potential agents of the major

language's entering into a becoming-minoritarian of all of its dimensions and elements. We should distinguish between minor languages, the major language, and the becoming-minor of the major language. Minorities, of course, are objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorialisations of the mean or majority. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986[1975], p. 106)

The language of the other and his histories, such as Moroccan dialect used by Mrabet and others, require very careful treatment. And that “of” in the expression “language of the other” means “not so much property as provenance: language is for the other, coming from the other, *the coming of the other*” (Derrida, 1998, p. 68). Thus, in a seminal text, *Milles plateaux (capitalisme et schizophrénie)* (in English, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1980), Deleuze and Guattari consider again the relation between major and minor languages and aim to deterritorialise “major” languages as understood by the West:

The unity of language is fundamentally political. There is no mother tongue, only a power takeover by a dominant language that at times advances along a broad front, and at times swoops down on diverse centres simultaneously (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987[1980], p. 101).

The authors warn us that “major” and “minor” do not qualify two different languages but rather two usages or functions of languages:

Minor languages are characterised not by overload and poverty in relation to a standard or major language, but by a sobriety and variation that are like a minor treatment of the standard language, a becoming minor of the major language. The problem is not the distinction between major and minor language; it is one of a becoming. It is a question not of reterritorialising oneself on a dialect or a patois but of deterritorialising the major language [...]. Minor languages do not exist

in themselves: they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of making it minor. One must find the minor language [...] on the basis of which one can make one's own major language minor [...]. Conquer the major language in order to delineate in it as yet unknown minor languages. Use the minor language to *send the major language racing*. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p 105)

An ethical translation is that one whose aim is neither the major nor the minor, but the becoming-minor of the minor.

As we have seen, those who attack Bowles' translations ask themselves whose voice they are really listening to, whether it is Choukri's, Mrabet's, or Charhady's or whether they

enter the translations/writings as subordinate and unvoiced. Although they speak, they do so only as subaltern subjects and agencies. It is Bowles' voice which is heard and not theirs. Their narrative style is that of Bowles to the point that what is presented is the "I" of Bowles not that of the storytellers. (Sabil, 2012, pp. 40–41)

However, if we understand Bowles' translations as an example of the theories of Deleuze and Guattari on the minor and the major, we can reach the opposite conclusion:

Bowles saw in the Moroccan minor tales a literary instrument to unsettle the grand nationalist categorisation at home and experiment with eccentric linguistic structures and images. Bouchra Benlemlih (2009, p. 64) noted in her dissertation that Bowles "translates realities that have been rejected, repressed and devalorised by the hegemonic centripetal forces". The resultant deterritorialised language was hoped to reterritorialise American English language and literature and hence innovate the national literature. The exile experience in Morocco sustained Bowles to redefine the American self by contrasting it with the other and eventually questioned the civilisational superiority claimed by the West. (Elboubekri, 2016, p. 422)

Besides, it is also true that it was thanks to Bowles that certain histories were told. In this regard, we must consider the difficult balance between *hospitality* (Ricœur, 2005) and *hostipitality* indicated by Derrida (2000/1997).

There is a certain paradox to be found in the idea of hospitality: "a law of hospitality which violently imposes a contradiction on the very concept of hospitality in fixing a limit to it [...] the one who receives, lodges or gives asylum remains the *patron*" (Derrida, 2000, p. 4). That is why Derrida refers to *hostipitality* because it brings together *hostis* and *hospes*, the contradiction we want to cover up and hide:

he who receives, who is master in his house, in his household, in his state, in his nation, in his city, in his town, who remains master in his house—who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be no unconditional welcome. (Derrida, 2000, p. 4)

Hostipitality, therefore, is a better term to describe the situation than the contradictory concept of hospitality. And perhaps translating the Other, rewriting them in the strong language, is the greatest of these contradictions. That is why translation is *the* experience of hospitality, "an enigmatic phenomenon or experience of hospitality, if not the condition of all hospitality in general" (Derrida 2000, p. 6). Translation is *khôra*, that place which Plato interpreted in *Timaeus* as the space for possibility and hospitality but also for contradiction because hospitality, the possibility of telling the Other's history, begins with the imposition of a language, of the language of those who have power:

Hospitality gives and takes more than once in its own home. It gives, offers, holds out, is the greeting which comprehends or let's come into one's home, folding the foreign other into the internal law of the host [...] which tends to begin by dictating the law of its language and its own acceptance of the sense of words. (Derrida, 2000, p. 7)

5. Concluding Remarks

Bowles' translations remind us that rewriting can be the way to open our space to "something different" (De Certeau, 1988/1984, p. 19), to allow us to be touched by the stories of others, but also to change us into an accumulation of solitudes, some alongside others, even pushing together, and paradoxically isolated. These rewritings bring together the two symbols that, according to Soja (2001, p. 60), characterised the city in Egyptian writing systems: the cross, representing the crossing of paths and opposites, and the circle, representing the protection city walls offer citizens. In short, the opposition between *roots* and *routes* (Clifford, 1997). That is why I believe Bowles never revealed a colonialist attitude when he translated as we have seen in the examples mentioned above. On the contrary, he was that "translating agent" described by Cronin (2000):

The translating agent like the traveler straddles the borderline between the cultures. A nomadic theory of translation proposes the translator-nomad as an emblematic figure of (post)modernity by demonstrating what translation can tell us about nomadism and what nomadism can tell us about translation and how both impinge on contemporary concerns with identity (p. 2)

When we read Bowles' translations of the narrations of Mrabet, Choukri, and others, we realise that he was very aware that space is never a mere static frame but a living being that is always in progress and is never neutral (De Certeau, 1988/1984; Lefebvre, 1991/1974), a space inhabited by nomadic identities (Braidotti, 1994) which create, in frontier spaces and rhizomatic translations. Bowles rewrites in that contact zone that was Tangiers, but he was not at the service of imperialism. His texts, rather, come from the Other's space and lead to texts which interact with things local, with "local forms of narrative and is a revigorating and positive global influence [...] a continuous life-giving and creative process" (Simon & St-Pierre, 2000, p. 10). In his translations, we find

a rewriter who inhabits hybrid spaces and reveals the concept of *convenientia*, a concept that helps us to understand the affinities between those who live in contact zones (Pratt, 1992). His translations constantly remind us that we live in juxtaposition, touch each other, and mix with each other. And that all this involves contiguity between spaces, movement between the inside and the outside, and the deconstruction of the lines dividing it (Foucault, 1970, p. 20).

Perhaps this is why Bowles is beginning to be made available to contemporary Moroccan audiences in a variety of forms. This is a demonstration of his subversive potential in circulating

these writers, at first marginalised in their own countries then given enhanced credibility through the act of translation and publication in the West [...] The contemporary Tanjaoui playwright, Zubeir ben Bouchta, for instance, has made a play, *Nahr al hamra*, (*The Red Fire*) based on the Bowles translation of the Yacoubi story "The Before Thinking," one of the stories in *Five Eyes*. And in 2004, the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center in Fez brought out (in English) a new edition of Mrabet's *Love With a Few Hairs* (1967), with an introduction by Brian Edwards. Now Moroccan colleagues tell me that Abdel Aziz Jadir is working on an Arabic translation of that novel. We can reasonably expect this activity of translation and publication in Morocco to continue in the coming years. And with this, fresh analyses and perspectives of these works will no doubt emerge, ones that might possibly critique the conditions of their production (Hibbard, 2018, p. 31).

In his translations, the terms colonial and post-colonial appear one as the *différance* of the other, as the other different and deferred in the economy of the same, for here responses flow from both sides (Spivak, 1995, p. 25). Bowles is ahead of poststructuralist theories, making translations that oblige us to "re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, destined to trouble the here/there binaries forever" (Hall, 1996, p. 247).

His translations are in-between dialogic, and liminal, territories that deconstruct crucial notions to contemporary translation studies, such as representation, the dichotomy original/translation or author/translator.

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How to cite this article: Vidal-Claramonte, M. C. A. (2023). Translating invisible lives: Paul Bowles' rewritings of his Moroccan storytellers. *Mutatis Mutandis, Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción*, 16(1), 18–35. <https://doi.org/10.17533/udea.mut.v16n1a02>