

# Sheltering Screens: Paul Bowles and Foreign Relations

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## 1. Interrupting the American Archive

When Paul Bowles died in Tangier on 18 November 1999, the story was covered widely in the US press. US obituaries portrayed Bowles, with remarkable consistency, as an American expatriate connected, in spite of self-imposed exile in North Africa, to many of the most intriguing writers and artists of Euro-American Modernism. The omissions in the portrait—especially the importance of Bowles's Maghrebi context—are endemic to a narrow conceptualization of the author's career and indicate the resistance to thinking about US literary and cultural production in its global context. After 1941, provoked by a more immediate and massive engagement in global affairs, Americans reorganized their thinking about the foreign. From the late 1940s through the 1970s, Bowles played a significant part in imagining the relationship of Americans to the foreign in general and to Europe's former colonies in particular. Bowles's career challenged the circumscribed sense of what counts as American literature as well as the perceived chasm separating cultural production from international politics. His residence in Tangier, beginning in 1947, corresponds with a deep involvement in Moroccan affairs by the US government during which Bowles wrote frequently about North African politics and culture. After Morocco attained independence in 1956, Bowles was the most prominent US citizen living in Morocco, someone whose statements were widely circulated and frequently disparaged by Moroccans. His work was not free of its own limitations, nor were his politics liberating. But his writing emerged from a crucial moment before US supremacist attitudes were consolidated. Most US accounts of Bowles have perpetuated the Cold War tendency to translate the foreign within the logic of exceptionalism. Yet Bowles himself had long since taken a path diverging from such a nationalist or even nation-based logic.

Since 9/11, Bowles's name has reemerged in the US media as a prescient and missed American writer.<sup>1</sup> With the posthumous

publication of a major collection in late 2001 and a two-volume Library of America edition of his works in 2002, Bowles's place in the American canon seems yet more assured because of an implicit connection of recent history with his alleged "prediction" of a world gone terribly wrong in the encounter of Americans and Arabs.<sup>2</sup> Despite a shelf of biographies and studies, however, the scholarly record reflects little more than a smattering of information on his longtime Moroccan artistic collaborators, friends, and lovers.<sup>3</sup> The absence of such material may encourage critics merely to spin the established version of Bowles's career—a writer separated by a Modernist scrim from engagement with his geopolitical context—and discourage others from seeing Bowles as deeply involved in the complex interplay of cultural and geopolitical concerns that animated the US presence in the region.<sup>4</sup>

If there is to be a twenty-first century rediscovery of Bowles, the pedagogical and critical danger is that readers will continue to view him through the Cold War lenses that focused his earlier reception. Namely, having long repressed the question of empire that lies at the foundation of American studies approaches to reading literature, when readers reread Bowles in the context of US empire, it will be difficult to evade what Paul Giles has derided as "the magic circle between text and context" (263). Critical readings of Bowles that simply extrapolate his texts as Orientalist are caught within a similar circle. This essay is interested in interrupting those frames by offering a Moroccan archive on Bowles's Moroccan context and by attending to the various forms of disruption that Bowles's work includes and produces. One strand emerging from the Moroccan archive seems to affirm—and extend—what has been called a "postnational" approach, namely one that sees the nation form and the related question of national literature as elaborate and influential but also historically delimited constructions. In the US, those constructions reemerge with new ferocity in the early Cold War, during which Bowles was writing narratives of Americans who depart from the various "cages" that have held them in the US. As Bowles's case demonstrates, there are American authors of the 1940s through the 1970s whose work sits uneasily within the hypernational framework of the period.<sup>5</sup> Not only does this work require a comparative, multi-sited approach to be read properly, but also its departure from the national episteme helps rethink the relationship between cultural production and foreign relations. Bowles's relationship to Tangier is to a place with a historically fraught relationship to the nation form, a space at once extranational and international, and a place of diasporic convergences. Bowles's early work refuses the neocolonialist/anti-imperialist polarity that has emerged as the choice critics must make about his writing and exhibits a potentiality for an alternative

engagement across national boundaries, literatures, and subjectivities. This potentiality, emerging from his early work and developed later, offers an important counterpoint to the forms of containment being consolidated on the home front while he wrote.

In what follows, I first examine US and Moroccan portrayals of Bowles in media and scholarship. Reading through Moroccan critical responses, I derive a manner of reading Bowles through an inter- or extranational formation I call Tangerian literature. Then I use this category to reread Bowles's best-known novel, *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), to pursue the novel's relation to its geopolitical context and the potentiality Bowles explores and figures within the novel for identifications that exceed national identification. By doing so, and by contrasting diplomatic representations by the US State Department apparatus, I reconsider the space between literary representations of the foreign and foreign relations. Bowles's attitude toward that space is complex and forces Americanists to reconsider easy invocations of the international or the political in discussions of post-1941 American literature.

Thirty-six years old when he set sail for Casablanca in 1947 with a contract for an as-yet-unwritten novel he called *The Sheltering Sky* (he had lived in Morocco in the early 1930s and in Mexico for a year during World War II), Bowles made a departure that was a definitive rupture and that at times bothered reviewers of his novels and has constrained the parameters for interpretations of his work ever since. Nearly all of his writing was set either in North Africa or Central America and took as its recurring subject the encounter of Anglo-Americans with these places and the people, both "foreign" and "native," who live there. During the 1940s and 1950s, when Bowles first made a name for himself as a writer—having achieved a degree of fame earlier as a composer—his dedication to representing life outside of the US alternatively worried Cold Warriors and titillated the counterculture. In 1950, for example, Charles Jackson reviewed Bowles's second book negatively in the *New York Times Book Review* and suggested that Bowles would do better to return to "his native scene" and take up "everyday" American concerns (6).

Upon Bowles's death, journalists could not help but express judgment on his decision to have stayed "away" until the end. In Mel Gussow's account in *The New York Times*, Bowles's choice to spend his life abroad demonstrated something approaching a moral failing. "In many ways his career was one of avoidance," Gussow put it. "[He] retreated to Tangier...and moved farther away from the worlds of publishing and society toward an unknown destination" (C20). The tone of Adam Bernstein's obituary for the *Washington Post* recalls Jackson's comments half a century earlier: "Since the late 1940s, he had all but *renounced* the US, embracing *what he*

considered the sexually, socially and culturally liberating environment of Morocco" (B7, emphasis added). Writers from the major papers efface Bowles's oft-repeated critique of the decadence of US consumer and political culture. The invention of an attitude that Bowles did not express about Morocco (that it was liberating) emerges from the journalists' fabrication of his renunciation of the US. The decision to remain outside leads to extreme and polarized responses from those whose careers have relied on remaining within.

Despite the interpretive weight of Bowles's choice of residence on the meaning of his life, however, not one of the US obituaries and tributes considered his half-century in Tangier in the context of the major political and social transformations in the city, in Morocco, or in the greater Maghreb, which moved from colonialism to independence through various intense struggles in the postcolonial period. In his full-page obituary, Gussow writes off all of Moroccan history in a sentence: "Eventually his dream city of Tangier was invaded by tourists and became something of a nightmare" (C20).<sup>6</sup> The excuse for the omission would seem to be the US media's firm distinction between realms of cultural production and political history. Yet Bowles's career challenges that binarism throughout: he published a novel about the Moroccan independence movement; wrote articles about politics in Kenya, India, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Morocco and Portugal for the *Nation* and other publications during the 1950s; feared returning to the US because of prior membership in the Communist Party; composed the score for a Belgian documentary about the Congo on the verge of decolonization; and saw his own extensive recording of Moroccan music in the postcolonial period as a response to the cultural program of Moroccan nationalists.

Critics must reexamine the relationship of post-1941 US literature and foreign relations. By *foreign relations*, I mean both US international politics *and* the ways in which, through cultural production, Americans are taught to imagine the foreign; the interplay between these two meanings of the term must not be collapsed, as has become routine. In Bowles criticism published in the US, for example, Bowles's relations with foreigners are either a point of prurient interest (what sorts of "relations" did he have with Moroccans?) or ignored. Bowles's intriguing life was made familiar via many interviews, profiles, and accounts of visits to the errant author himself in situ. In themselves, these accounts of Bowles among the Arabs (to paraphrase a recent one), along with the obituaries, constitute an archive, stock with frequent repetitions, stereotypes, and regurgitations of colonial banalities about the Maghreb. Its predictability, however, does not diminish the power of this archive to frame readings of Bowles's work and American understandings of

the Maghreb. The unchecked interpretation of Morocco that emerges implies and constructs a contrasting setting from which readers read the articles. They repeatedly construct the binarism, then, that Edward Said has argued marks Orientalism, and challenge the recent argument that American representations of the Arab world since World War II move us beyond Said's formulation.<sup>7</sup> Bowles is distanced from what is imagined as "normal" in the US: he is suspect insofar as his relationship to Morocco is seen not as an engagement with the foreign but as a prolonged lost weekend, as Jackson implied, an irresponsible bender. As a result, he became not only the conduit to the purportedly "liberating environment," its translator, but also a tourist site himself. By the 1990s, Bowles had entered the travel guidebooks as something like required reading and as a part of the scenery.<sup>8</sup>

If American obituaries told one story about Bowles's life in Morocco, a different story was being told in Morocco. In both French- and Arabic-language newspapers, Bowles's death was front-page news. A couple of papers ran multiple articles about it on the same day. There is more proximity in the Moroccan accounts and a greater sense that the death of Bowles *matters* somehow, immediately. If American accounts had Bowles fleeing to a curious and marginal place, Moroccan accounts invariably ask about the effects of his writing on the postcolonial nation. There is a greater diversity of opinion regarding Bowles in the Moroccan media than one finds in US criticism. Such a disparity reminds us that Arab interruptions to American accounts of the world extend to the realm of literary criticism.<sup>9</sup> Yet the Moroccan archive is silenced in criticism at large: Nexis search engines will not locate, Internet searches will not reach, MLA bibliographies do not list, and US libraries do not collect the Moroccan sources that discuss and debate the significance of Bowles's passing. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has taught in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, the hegemonic archive regularly silences the past.

It is safe to say that the Bowles who lived in Tangier and Fez in 1931 and 1932 and who found himself dreaming of return after World War II did not imagine that Moroccans would eventually be reading his books (Bowles, Personal Interview, 10 July 1994). But on his return in 1947, and especially after autumn of that year, when he met Ahmed Yacoubi in Fez, the earlier Bowles quickly ceded to a Bowles who became involved (artistically, intellectually, professionally, socially, and sometimes romantically and/or sexually) with Maghrebi nationalists, intellectuals, artists, and, later, academics and students. He did not always approve of their positions (most notably on what he thought was the tendency of Arab nationalism to squelch Berber culture and to embrace the West's worst aspects),

but he could not and did not ignore the changing tide in the Maghreb. The public discussion of Bowles's work by Moroccans did not register for a couple of decades—Abdallah Laroui critiqued him in 1967 and Tahar Ben Jelloun denounced him in *Le Monde* five years later—but as early as the 1950s, it was clear that Bowles's work had a Moroccan audience. The nationalist hero 'Allal al-Fassi reportedly appreciated Bowles's 1955 novel about the anticolonial uprising in Fez, *The Spider's House*.<sup>10</sup> With the rise of postcolonial theory in Morocco, extended in Morocco by the work of Abdelkebir Khatibi and popularized by Moroccans returning home from the US with literature Ph.D.s, Bowles's work gained an academic audience. His earlier writings made their way onto Moroccan syllabi in the early 1990s as Moroccan academics looked for ways to respond to the Gulf War, which had been controversial because of Moroccan participation in the US-led alliance. Moroccan students wrote theses on Bowles's work and occasionally confronted him directly in interviews.

A couple of years before Bowles's death, Mohamed Choukri started a firestorm with the publication of a book—*Paul Bowles wa 'uzla Tanja* (1996)—that criticized Bowles harshly as a homosexual, as someone whose Arabic was not as good as he claimed, as someone who, in Choukri's construction, loved Morocco but hated Moroccans. For Choukri, who had collaborated with Bowles in the 1960s and 1970s, such retrograde attitudes demonstrated that Bowles had worn out his welcome. A Tangier weekly gave Bowles the opportunity to respond; Bowles accused Choukri of insanity and referred obliquely to Choukri's well-known and much-frowned-upon alcoholism while asserting his own right to stay "as long as the government permits me" ("Bowles et Choukri" 6). In 1997, Muhammad Abu Talib suggested in a Rabat-based cultural journal that Moroccans stop giving an "unnecessary, excessive interest" in Bowles or his work, which he claimed denigrated the nationalist movement (6). Though Abu Talib admitted some respect for Bowles's literary abilities, he ultimately viewed Bowles as yet another foreign writer afflicted with what the Moroccan poet and scholar archly called "Moroccanitis" (English in original). Abu Talib implicitly criticized Choukri for his involvement with Bowles and noted a "disturbing influence by English" on Choukri's Arabic prose (6). Softer versions of this opinion appeared on Bowles's death in the Moroccan daily *Libération*, which called the writer's passing the completion of a circle of Tangier's colonialist ghosts; in these accounts, Bowles's death—which came shortly after the death of King Hassan II, who had ruled Morocco for almost four decades (1961–99)—was further confirmation of the arrival of a new more hopeful period.<sup>11</sup>

A different tack was taken by Tariq as-Saidi, who remapped Bowles's career in terms of its relationship to Moroccan culture:

“the center of the world for him shifted from Paris to Tangier” (12). Writing for the daily *al-Ahdath al-Maghribiya*, as-Saidi makes a compelling case for Bowles’s embrace of the Moroccan imaginary as an escape from a more limited and limiting American understanding of daily life (one of the subheadings of the article translates as “Ordinary Moroccans Saved Bowles from American Stupidity”). The official obituary, which ran on the Maghreb Arabe Presse wire service (MAP), similarly emphasized Bowles’s embrace of Moroccan culture. MAP foregrounded Bowles’s translations of works by Moroccans and his recordings of an “inventory” of popular Moroccan music of the Atlas and Rif to the exclusion of most other facets of his career (“Décès”). The account by the national news agency thus offered a major interruption to US treatment of Bowles’s career, on the other pole of where, say, the Library of America’s Bowles edition stands. This is the Moroccan Bowles; Bowles, the archivist of Moroccan national culture; Bowles, the Anglophone African author.

The accounts I have mentioned thus far interject aspects of Bowles’s life that are omitted from most US accounts. But in their projection of Moroccan desires and cultural concerns, they do not fully reorganize a reading of Bowles’s literary career. Such a possibility, however, does emerge from writing by Zubir Bin Bushta, who published two articles in the days following Bowles’s death: one in the influential *al-Ittihad al-Ishtiraki* and the other in *al-Mithaq al-Watani*. Bin Bushta knew Bowles personally and writes movingly of conversations about him with the Moroccan concierge at Bowles’s building and with a Moroccan nurse at the hospital (“Nihaya ustura”). Well aware of Bowles’s international reputation, Bin Bushta points to his influence on Moroccan letters and calls him the leader or scout (*ra’id*) of *al-adab at-Tanji*, a phrase I translate as “Tangerian literature.” (“Tanji” is an unusual Arabic form; “Tanjawi” is the usual term that designates Arab residents of the city. “Tangerino” denotes expatriates.) Bin Bushta emphasizes that he is departing from national categories: “Paul Bowles is a writer categorized in the column of foreign literature in America. And he is esteemed as a foreign writer in Morocco. I firmly believe that he created a new literary movement/trend [*tayyar*] that can be called *al-adab at-Tanji*” (“Rahil ra’id”). The phrase *al-adab at-Tanji* is also used by Abdarrahim Huzal, who calls Bowles “one of its founders and one of its major representatives” (6). Writing in *al-‘Alam ath-Thaqafi*, Huzal responds to what he calls “naïve” accusations about Bowles’s feelings for Morocco (he names Choukri) by arguing that writers have imaginary relations to nations and, therefore, may have multiple, apparently contradictory relationships to a nation. Bin Bushta’s and Huzal’s articles move beyond the nationalist framework of Abu Talib or MAP and organize their referent around extranational affiliations.

That both connect their understanding of Bowles's relationship to the nation form to his residence in Tangier is important. A city with a long history of international coexistence, Tangier is understood within and without Morocco as exceptional. Legally an International Zone from 1925 to 1956, and multilingual and "multicultural" throughout the twentieth century, Tangier challenges the primacy of national identifications and resists any experience of monolingualism or unidirectional affiliation. An understanding of Bowles's writing as "Tanji" (as opposed to Tanjawi or Tangerino) emphasizes this aspect of the city and disrupts the national framework organizing most understandings of his work. As I suggest in the conclusion of this essay, the categorization helps us to rethink Bowles's important translations of the narratives of illiterate Moroccans and allows us to see them not in terms of bringing fame to otherwise underappreciated "writers" (MAP's term) but rather as extranational collaborations with those marginalized by the Moroccan nation.

## 2. Rereading *The Sheltering Sky*

These analyses by Moroccan critics are a wedge with which we can pry open Bowles's early writing. While his work matures and changes in response to his life in Morocco—never a home, always a tentative stop—and while the later work has been neglected, I want here to go back to Bowles's earliest major representation of the Maghreb: *The Sheltering Sky*. A rereading of this novel is called for not only because it stands as the pillar in Bowles's writing career, determining everything else that follows for readers, the first (and often only) book that Americans read by Bowles, but also for another reason: written in 1947–48, published in late 1949, and a bestseller in early 1950, the novel is intricately a part of that moment when the US was coming to terms with itself as a global power, a reckoning that was being played out in popular media as well as in classified State Department documents. As I have argued elsewhere, the Cold War must not be seen separately from the postcolonial period, the shifting of geopolitical and racial relations on a global scale ("Preposterous Encounters"). *The Sheltering Sky* is a novel that imagines—and stages—an American relationship to the foreign. As such, it engages deeply, by which I mean creatively and not programmatically, the problems and limits of the new world order that was emerging simultaneous to Bowles's travels in Morocco and Algeria, as he wrote his novel. The novel's ability to imagine and figure interruptions to its own narrative of "pioneering" opposes it to American narratives of a complete and transparent translation of the globe that were increasingly common. Bowles was writing in the

wake of one of the most influential American narratives about the foreign, Henry Luce's 1941 essay *The American Century*, in which what we might call an easy translation of the world was seen to be a prerogative of US global supremacy: the power to recreate the world environment "by imagination" (35). Luce's conservative vision of a circular or tautological American understanding of the world—where US global positioning is imagined as supreme within an "imaginative" American recreation of global power relations—is something from which Bowles clearly excepted himself. We must thus be careful not to apply reading practices that unwittingly follow from Luce's logic to our understanding of Bowles. To say that we must learn to reread *The Sheltering Sky* outside an American Century framework means also that we must learn to reread Bowles outside an Americanist framework.

Set just after World War II in Algeria, *The Sheltering Sky* depicts three Americans in their thirties—Port and Kit Moresby and their friend Tunner. In this love triangle in the desert, the secondary triangles are especially compelling: Port, Kit, and the Sahara; errant Americans, stir-crazy French colonials, colonized Algerians. Port and Kit are fleeing the decadence of the West, attempting to escape the incursion of what the novel calls "the mechanistic age" (6). They are also attempting to bridge a gap in their marriage. To do both, they travel further and further "in" to the Sahara, ditching Tunner. (With his "Paramount" good looks [7], Tunner stands in for the America they have left behind; he also has seduced Kit.) Before Port and Kit reconcile or come to a decision about their feelings about life in Algeria, Port becomes ill and dies of typhoid in a remote French outpost, leaving Kit alone. Kit, plagued through the first half of the novel by omens and fears, hitches a ride with a passing caravan, leaving Tunner to bury Port. She becomes attached to a Touareg trader named Belqassim, who brings her across the desert to his home, has sex with her and stands by while his older companion does the same, disguises her as a boy, smuggles her past his three wives, then confines her. Kit doesn't object; rather, she craves his sexual visits. When she decides to escape, she does so rather easily. Kit makes it back to the US consulate in Oran, but the novel suggests that she has strayed too far. Though she is located, she "CAN-NOT GET BACK" (320) to some place familiar to the Americans and is lost in full view.

Despite its explicit rejection of what it calls American "civilization" (6), the novel quickly became popular in the US. Later a cult novel, it has been continuously in print. Yet the novel is continually read within a framework it rejects: namely, that Americans have an innocent relationship to "the world."<sup>12</sup> Bowles is complicit with this misreading, not only because he places American concerns at the

center but also because he structures this misreading, as he is apparently ambivalent within the novel about the individual's relationship to the nation. The characters set out to reorganize not only their relationship to each other but to their national culture itself through comparison: "another important difference between tourist and traveler is that the former accepts his own civilization without question; not so the traveler, who compares it with the others, and rejects those elements he finds not to his liking. And the war was one facet of the mechanized age [Port] wanted to forget" (6). By proposing that an individual might "forget" aspects of his or her "civilization" and select others from contrasting formations in their place, Bowles initially demonstrates an understanding of national identity as one of selective memory, as some had theorized the concept of the "nation" in the nineteenth century. Yet the terms with which the project is expressed are decidedly American. The novel will later compare Port and Kit's travel to the familiar American act of pioneering: Port thinks of his great-grandparents' encounter with the American landscape (108); the Sahara is called a "wilderness" (166). Through such metaphors, Bowles imagines the translatability of the American frontier—the place where, according to Turner's 1893 thesis, the American national character had been formed—to a new location and places his novel in the company of other postwar accounts of Americanness that engaged the frontier thesis.<sup>13</sup> During an "age of doubt," with domestic morale low after the September 1949 news that the USSR had exploded its first atomic bomb and the fall of China to the communists in October, a climate that fed the imminent crisis of McCarthyism, the attractions to the American book-reading public of fleeing to a new frontier were tangible.

As it proceeds, however, *The Sheltering Sky* exhibits a sense of the discontinuities of the world, the awkwardness of translating the foreign in American terms, and the inability of Algerians to experiment with national identity. The last highlights the contingency of national identity, which throws the American characters' project into crisis. Bowles recognizes that the project of reordering one's identity is authorized by a US passport, which, when Port loses his, removes more shelter than the novel's existentialist framework might have led readers to expect. "'It's strange,'" Port reports to a French colonial administrator, "'how, ever since I discovered that my passport was gone, I've felt only half alive. But it's a very depressing thing in a place like this to have no proof of who you are'" (164). Port's experience of the Algerian landscape previously viewed from dominating vistas is now made "senseless." After falsely accusing an Algerian hotelier of the theft—a racialized assumption that the novel deconstructs in Poe-like fashion in a scene that elaborates and distinguishes French attitudes toward Algerians from

American ones—Port loses the anchor that drove the first portion of the novel. He thereby discovers that the American project in the desert can only work while the travelers block out the Algerian population. Doing so would mean also to block out the visibility of the French colonials and the relationship of American projects (whether political or epistemological) to French ones. This becomes impossible. Port's experiment in cultural comparison must now end in failure; his death is represented as a breakdown of meaning and language. It is in the shards of that shattered relationship to US national identity that the potentiality of the novel emerges.

Before looking more carefully at how the novel figures this breakdown, I want to recover the geopolitical context of Bowles's writing to show how his departure from a "national" framework matters. Despite the later implication that he was eccentric in his travel, Bowles was in fact one of many Americans who returned to the Maghreb after the war. A few months before *The Sheltering Sky* was published, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran an article by Demaree Bess entitled "We're Invading North Africa Again." The reference was to US businessmen who, urged by Truman's Point Four program (the so-called Marshall Plan for the Third World), were returning to the places that GIs had been during the war and doing their bit to stave off the spread of Soviet influence.<sup>14</sup> That there could be a second invasion emphasizes the cultural importance of the first one, the North African Campaign of November 1942–May 1943, the first major deployment of US ground forces during World War II, accompanied by a groundswell of attention by US journalists and Hollywood. If the North African campaign was successful in military terms—the "end of the beginning" as Churchill called it—it had different ramifications within the Maghreb itself. From the point of view of most postwar "invaders," World War II represented the introduction of Americans and their products to the Maghrebi market and of the Maghrebi market to Americans. "Our GIs...demonstrat[ed] a new way of life to the local people," wrote Edward Toledano in 1948 (111). The title of his *Harper's* essay, "Young Man, Go to Casablanca," made reference to Horace Greeley's injunction to "go west" in the previous century; it thus echoed Bowles's association of the post-World War II Maghreb with the nineteenth-century American frontier. Toledano, however, embraced the metaphor: "By their relish for the small-big things of culture Camel cigarettes, Hershey bars, Coca Cola—[the GIs] were unconscious but very effective salesmen for American products. Morocco didn't realize it, but the Fuller brush man had been taken to the bosom of its family. Eventually it was bound to cherish and buy his line" (111).

Morocco was "bound," indeed. Toledano's understanding of the richness of the Maghreb is built on the erasure of the incomprehensible

aspects, especially Arabic language, occluded as “noise” or gibberish.<sup>15</sup> The only illustration in Toledano’s article is a line of magnified Arabic, the visual presence of which starkly interrupts the column of text: “The hieroglyphics stare at you,” Toledano writes forebodingly, “from buses, stores, and even from the walls of Le Roi de la Bière [a café-bar]” (112). But no sooner is this threatening mark of difference quoted than it is translated, à la Luce, into a *market* of difference: “It means Coca Cola in Arabic. An American who had formerly been in the diplomatic service obtained this franchise for Morocco” (112). The interruption of Arabic for Toledano, then, and of Arab difference for US corporations is no interruption at all but the decorative space of another market. This contrasts sharply with what Bowles will do with untranslated Arabic. For Bowles, the mark of difference opens the potentiality for a different relationship to the Maghreb—and, thereby, to Americanness itself.

Moroccans *did* note the arrival of American consumer culture, and some commented on it. The Moroccan folksinger Houcine Slaoui (1918–51) sang mordantly, “*zin u l’ain az-zarqa jana bkul khir*” (“the beautiful blue-eyed ones brought us all good things”). Slaoui’s song “Al Mirikan” (“The Americans”), written and first performed shortly after the 1942 landings, is an anthem of the era. With its references to “shwing” (i.e. chewing gum) and cosmetics polluting Morocco, the song stands as a rejoinder to Toledano’s account of the seamlessness of the entry of American products. In incorporating American language into its lyrics—“OK, OK, come on, bye-bye” is the refrain—Slaoui highlights the interruption of American words within the Moroccan cultural landscape. But he also remakes those American words into Moroccan ones by his pronunciation and by having them repeated by a high-pitched chorus of Berber women, familiar within music of the Middle Atlas. Despite his fame in the Maghreb, Slaoui and his challenging voice remain silent within most American accounts of the US presence in 1940s Maghreb.<sup>16</sup>

Bowles includes the lyrics to Slaoui’s song in *Points in Time*, his 1982 lyrical history of Morocco. Though he offers no comment, his suggestion is that US arrival marks a rupture in Moroccan history. Bowles’s invocation of Slaoui’s song suggests a refusal to follow a seamless American translation of the Maghreb.<sup>17</sup> A related suggestion emerges within *The Sheltering Sky*: that the encounter of Americans with the Maghreb is disruptive to US thinking about North Africa, an interruption to the reapplication of the frontier myth. This will be signaled by two Bowlesian tactics: his incorporation of untranslated Arabic to figure that disruption and produce it within the text; and the narrative turn toward Kit’s relationship with Belqassim, a nomadic Touareg. Because global and domestic politics

were deeply intertwined in the early Cold War, the latter turn is complicated. Kit's relationship with Belqassim might for the novel's first readers evoke the threat of sexual congress between white women and African-Americans. Her embrace of Belqassim also permits the novel to explore the escape from national identification: the Touareg are antagonists of the nation form; they are identified with no nation-state and are in retreat from Moroccan and Algerian national culture. These possibilities suggest both a part of the reason for the novel's success in the marketplace—its ability to be recast as lurid exoticism—and Bowles's disruption of dominant Cold War understandings of North Africa and the North African. Understanding this disruption helps explain more than Bowles's novel: it helps approach how literary and diplomatic representations of the foreign setting confront, build their cases off of, and, in Bowles's case, evade or rewrite the same set of categories.

The period during which Paul Bowles was writing *The Sheltering Sky* and the immediate context of its publication (1947–50) was a key transitional moment in US relations with France. France, the largest recipient of Marshall Plan aid, was vital to US interests; and to Cold Warriors, it seemed fragile. There were domestic referents for this fragility—the continual fall of governments under the French constitution of 1946, which established the Fourth Republic—and international ones, particularly France's increasingly tense relations with its colonies in Indochina and North Africa. In *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945–1954*, Irwin Wall argues that, in the early Cold War, the US was “drawn into a network of western institutions and alliances of the postwar era rather than, as is more commonly depicted, [establishing] its role as creator or innovator” (5). If we are to examine US Orientalism, whether in literary and cultural production or in political history, it follows then that we must do so comparatively and extend Wall's thesis: that US thinking about North Africa was framed by French thinking about the Maghreb. This will not mean that domestic American concerns—particularly regarding race—would not play a powerful role in US foreign relations. But, as I argue in *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*, when American writers, journalists, filmmakers, anthropologists, and diplomats looked at the Maghreb, they attended to European colonials as much as they did to putatively exotic Maghrebis; their attitudes about one group were impossible to separate fully from their observations about the other.<sup>18</sup> For the US State Department in the late 1940s, that dual attention was of strategic importance.

The same war that the characters of *The Sheltering Sky* are attempting to escape was being replayed by US business interests (the second “invasion”) and the State Department, haunted by strategic

decisions made during World War II. Most important of those war-time decisions was the US decision to leave French colonial structures in place in the Maghreb—what historian William Langer justified in 1947 as “Our Vichy Gamble”—despite US propaganda circulated in Morocco and Algeria at the time of the November 1942 Operation Torch landings publicizing the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter (which declared US “respect [for] the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they live”). In the context of that propaganda, conversations between Franklin Roosevelt and the Sultan of Morocco, Sidi Mohammed, in January 1943 were interpreted to promise US support for Moroccan independence.<sup>19</sup> Yet the US declined Sidi Mohammed’s offer to declare war on Germany and Italy, not willing to imply a commitment to the Sultan over Charles de Gaulle, with the announcement that European colonies would only be independent when their leaders could govern themselves properly, a formula familiar within late-colonial rhetoric and one that lurked at the heart of postwar US thinking.<sup>20</sup>

It was also a formulation familiar within domestic conversations about race, namely the invocation of what Michael Hanchard calls “racial time.” The cultural importance of the North African campaign during World War II, as it was relayed to the US home front via mainstream journalism and war films such as *Casablanca*, was, as I have argued elsewhere, to distract America attention away from an alliance of African-Americans and North Africans, both being colonized peoples (“Preposterous Encounters”). The US deferral of Maghrebi independence is thus a powerful example of racial time, which Hanchard argues has operated as a “structural effect upon the politics of racial difference” and is one of the ways that racial difference, the materiality of which is elusive, neither reified and static nor mere social construct, has material effects on individual and group interaction (253).<sup>21</sup> The connection between the US deferral of Maghrebi independence and racist thinking in the domestic US is more than metaphor. Penny Von Eschen and Thomas Borstelmann have shown the deep interplay of foreign relations and domestic racial politics after World War II, which Borstelmann calls “central to the American experience of the early Cold War” (48). Borstelmann sees the escalation of such connections after the war as part of a global reconfiguration: “The swelling tide of racial tension and violence that rolled through the American South in 1946 and 1947 was part of a global phenomenon of race relations being reconfigured in the aftermath of the defeat of history’s most murderous racists, the Nazis” (53). In official American thinking about the Maghreb, then, there was an interplay of racialized thinking (the domestic referent in response to the global reconfiguration) with the tendency to see the region as the French framed it. Bowles’s writing,

starting with *The Sheltering Sky*, reflected this interplay. It also refigured it.

From his arrival at Casablanca in Summer 1947, Bowles was writing his novel in a climate in which Maghrebi nationalist claims against the French were unmistakable; his letters make this clear. It was a tense period in the Maghreb, as several years of drought exacerbated complaints against French treatment.<sup>22</sup> The French had responded to an uprising at Setif, Algeria, in May 1945 by slaughtering thousands of Algerians, just as they had killed thousands of Tunisians who rose up to protest the deposing of Moncef Bey two years earlier. In April 1947, the French killed hundreds at Casablanca.<sup>23</sup> In February 1947, at the Conference of the Arab Maghreb in Cairo, Maghrebi participants—representatives of the Moroccan Istiqlal (Independence) movement, the Tunisian Destour party, and the Parti Populaire Algérienne—declared the protectorate treaties over Morocco and Tunisia terminated and stated their “non-recognition of the rights of France over Algeria,” demanding the evacuation from their territories of “foreign forces” (US Department of State, *FRUS 1947* 5:676). The conference was noted by the US. Though the US had given aid to Moroccans during the famine, it maintained a delicate line: urging French reforms but worrying about the allegiance of nationalists and French communists and a continued belief in political “evolution” of Maghrebi leaders and a gradual “time table” for independence. If there was a theoretical inclination toward an anticolonial position, US interests in France kept it in check. As journalist Demaree Bess wrote in 1949, “In theory, many Americans may still disapprove of the European colonial system. In practice, the US is reinforcing it” (23).

After Sidi Mohammed made an influential visit to Tangier in April 1947, a turning point in popularizing the independence movement, US Secretary of State George Marshall became anxious about France’s “short range conception” in its dealings with North Africa and expressed a sense of urgency regarding the implementation of reforms (US Department of State, *FRUS 1947* 5:687). But by mid-1949, despite no improvement and a harsher, more conservative French administration in Morocco, the State Department relaxed. As the Cold War deepened, the US listened increasingly to French proposals for dealing with the colonies’ demands for independence. The Marshall Plan aid to France had begun with food and raw materials in 1948; in 1949 and 1950, military assistance took center stage (the larger shift toward military buildup was codified in March 1950 with NSC-68; by 1953–54, the US would be bankrolling nearly the entire French war in Indochina [Wall, *France, the US, and the Algerian War*, 9]). The 1950 US policy statement on North Africa bears close reading:

Our policy has been to encourage the French on all appropriate occasions to put forward a program of political, economic and social reforms which would lessen the resentment of the natives toward France and would assure their gradual evolution toward self-government. We believe, however...that France is the country best suited to have international responsibility for Morocco. We have therefore avoided putting pressure on France by giving aid and comfort to the natives directly, although we maintain open contact with them, and consider their friendship and good will very important. (US Department of State, *FRUS 1950* 5:1737)

That dual tone—diplomatic civility and economic patronage for the French versus paternalism regarding the “gradual evolution” of the “natives” with whom “open contact” is maintained—crystallizes the contradictions of the US attitude toward French colonies. The tension inherent in such a position manifests itself in the last sentence, where “open contact” with the “natives” is kept in check by the refusal of direct “comfort,” a formula of desire and disgust.

Given this context, how do we reread *The Sheltering Sky*? Before pursuing Bowles’s dual disruption—his representation of Moroccan language and the narrative embrace of the Touareg—I offer a methodological warning. While literature representing the foreign and foreign relations may emerge out of the same historical context, the disparity between the institutional locations from which the novel and foreign relations operate maintains a gulf between them in terms of material effect. We are mistaken if we read literary production as somehow engaging political history on equal grounds—grounds made equal by the space of criticism—as has been a common temptation within American studies in the wake of Said’s work. Such a temptation, however well-intended, is based on a misreading of Said and a failure to attend to his emphasis on questions of institutions rather than on “discourse.”<sup>24</sup> Such arguments ultimately rely on the transparency of literature and its continuity within a land of “discourse” rather than on recognizing its divergence from political discourse. As Giles puts it trenchantly, such work “hold[s] in suspension those conditions whereby the progressivist formulas of American studies would—naturally, as it were—underwrite a rhetoric of emancipation” (263). Though invocations of the international are now common, my sense is that much Americanist work that references the international holds in suspension the disjuncture between cultural production and foreign relations, as it does that between US cultural production (as diverse as it is) and that emerging from other national, diasporic, and linguistic traditions. Institutional disincentives to multisited, multilingual work contribute to the

methodological bind. My insistence on comparative work and the interruption of a Moroccan archive is meant to challenge those formulas.

As an alternative imagination of the relationship of literature to political history, Gayatri Spivak's distinction between philosophy and literature is helpful: "the first concatenates arguments and the second figures the impossible" (112).<sup>25</sup> Such a distinction attends to the institutional locations within which the critic works and provokes her assertion of the unavoidability of the role of the native informant. Spivak's statement provides the critical space to attend to Bowles's departure from the national episteme as a figuration that matters to foreign relations. His interruption of the American national subject—one with whom he can barely identify and will drop—within a novel allegedly concerned with the pioneering of a new American identity is thus seen not as an irredeemable contradiction but rather as an impossible figuration. That such an interruption is provoked by Bowles's acknowledgment of the "native informant" is crucial, as it is precisely that figure that allows Bowles's disruption, his movement outside the logic of the American Century's impulse to translate out or "foreclose" the native informant. "These people are not primitives," Bowles's protagonist realizes too late in the 1946 story "A Distant Episode" (297). How does this matter to foreign relations? If the novel departs from a national epistemology, it is the same on which the State Department necessarily rests, and the same that would be trumpeted hysterically in the months following its publication during the domestic Red Scare. That scare would not only reframe meanings of the foreign, both at home and abroad, but it would also anchor its hysteria on the idea of the reliable testimony of the (native) informant: that naming names could contain the spread of communism. The 1950 review quoted earlier—which suggested that Bowles return to the US to provide "native... reflections or refractions of everyday living" (Jackson 6)—demonstrates the interplay between literary representation of the foreign and the domestic crisis of McCarthyism, and its immediate relevance to Bowles's case. Bowles's emerging focus on the Maghrebi informant—concomitant with his exploration of various Americans' departures—moves beyond the limiting frames of national identification.

Bowles's discovery of this departure in a novel that is about the simultaneity of physical and philosophical travel—"CANNOT GET BACK" is Kit's telegram to the world—does not, however, provide readers with a tangible politics to follow. The second impossible figuration in *The Sheltering Sky* is the dissociation or distancing of American reading subjects from the developing political relationship to the Arab world that deeply informed Bowles's novel and was thickly woven into the political and economic fortunes of

the US. This distancing emerges from the novel's existentialist frame, within which the novel (influenced by Poe's Dupin stories and Camus) suggests that what might be called the "truth of surfaces" offers a lesson about the proper relationship of individuals to existence (sheltered by a two-dimensional sky) and between individuals (who are granted recognition as masks). For Bowles, the "truth of surfaces" extends to the superficiality of language itself—the mannerisms of speech, the difference of foreign language as screen, as printed type—and will provide a figure for disrupting the national episteme. But the *political* effect of erecting this existentialist screen is in fact the inscription of distance between the (literary) representation of the foreign and foreign relations, and this unwittingly benefits the imperial state. Stepping back, then, Bowles may echo something like the process Giorgio Agamben has described by which the "state of exception" captures "bare life" within the political order while simultaneously excluding it (*Homo Sacer* 9). Indeed, most readers who followed Bowles to North Africa ended up following the "wrong" message. As early as 1951, Bowles lamented the arrival of young Americans who had come to Morocco to "explore" and for the hashish ("No More Djinns"); even those hippies who later evaded the US draft by traveling to Morocco more often took a kif-fueled "Marrakech express" than engaged the local population or political climate (Bowles, Personal Interview, 9 July 1994). Bowles himself had already moved decisively toward engagement with those Moroccans at the margins of national(ist) identification.<sup>26</sup> By attending to the geopolitical context of Bowles's departure, I intend to make visible (and thereby bridge) the accompanying distance between realms of cultural production and foreign relations that is so beneficial to the state. That Bowles's writing unwittingly helps to forge that distance is its limitation, but it still offers a potent figure for disrupting the processes that would discipline it.

*The Sheltering Sky* is especially open to what Agamben has identified as the work of art's potentiality to be something other than what it is, "the prologue... of a work never penned" (*Infancy and History* 1). The novel's emphasis on movement at once connects it to a postwar sense of American mobility *and* permits an opening to the idea that American mobility has a limit. Though Agamben suggests that one is always not writing the work implied by the potentiality of the present work, stepping back from *The Sheltering Sky* permits us a sense that Bowles discovers, albeit ambivalently and in the margins, an interruption to the American project of reordering American national identity in the empty space of frontier. That interruption is figured in the text as the interruption of untranslated Arabic; as the impossible dialogue with the Maghrebi subject; and, in the future of Bowles's work, as a collaboration with the Maghrebi.

Bowles frequently inserts untranslated Maghrebi Arabic in the novel, an inclusion that is, at first, disorienting. Since language is considered by Port and Kit to be a kind of two-dimensional screen, the inclusion of Arabic phrases and sentences might at first seem mere decoration. Within French texts set in North Africa, such phrases might adorn or provide local color and familiar foreignness, with a glossary to help.<sup>27</sup> But in *The Sheltering Sky*, there is no glossary, no French proximity; Arabic does not conform to the Americans' screen. Port and Kit speak French, but when Algerian characters speak Arabic, the Americans are uncomfortable: "the language barrier annoyed him, and he was even more irritated by the fact that [they] could converse together in his presence" (29). When Algerian characters address the Americans in Arabic, the phrases are for the most part straightforward: "'Ya sidi, la bess âlik? Eglès, baraka 'laou'fik'" (29), a prostitute says to Port ("'Sir, are you well? Please sit down.'"). Because Bowles leaves the phrases untranslated, they become textual interruptions for the American reader. And since the phrases that Bowles includes are not necessary to advance the plot, they stand out all the more strongly as marks. The words he gives to Algerians stand for disruption.

This textual interruption challenges the reader—as the sound of it challenges Port—to acknowledge the limits in Henry Luce's proposition of an American Century. The difference of Arabic is not erased or translated; rather, it is emphasized. This disruption is repeated in the startling narrative rupture of Port's death, which leads to the important shift of focus to Kit and her sexual relationship with Belqassim. As he dies, Port's project of pioneering a new relationship to national identity breaks down. The failure of language to protect Port from the nothingness behind language is imagined in spatial terms. If Port's journey leads to a place of "exile from the world" (232), it is because words lose their stability for him. Thus, the name of the town where Port dies (Sbâ) becomes a kind of joke when language fails to function; without that anchor, "Sbâ" becomes an arbitrary word marking an equally arbitrary place. With Port's death, Kit too loses her ability to designate her own relationship to the world and enters a long silence. Words cease to make sense to her: "Once she almost laughed, it seemed so ridiculously unlikely. 'Sbâ,' she said, prolonging the vowel so that it sounded like the bleat of a sheep" (218). If Kit greets the contingency of language with laughter, the "joy of being" (259) she vows to hold on to once abandoning language's shelter leads to her deterioration. When the "earth's sharp edge" (149) turns back to reveal a terrifying nothingness, which is what the sky apparently shelters us from, it is a warning that language will do the same. Language, like Port's American passport, is a sheltering screen, protective because disciplined. The

ridiculousness of words, of place names, of markers opens up a potentiality within the work, that which it might have been. Kit's embrace of Belqassim, and the narrative's embrace of their relationship, in the context of the intertwined domestic and global referents of the Cold War, is an important turn. It allows Bowles to restage radically the American global encounter in terms that more fully disrupt Luce's model than other contemporary novels. That sexual relationship could of course be read in 1949 or 1950 in a domestic context, within which it disturbed a racist culture and also titillated it. But the novel refuses simply to offer American miscegenation as its meaning and insists on an extranational referent. The potentiality embedded in these dual disruptions is Bowles's greatest contribution to thinking about the 1946–50 moment, a potentiality rapidly left behind by the Cold War and its modes of thinking—but one that we may now recover.

### 3. Letters from Morocco: The Refusal

[O]ne is what one is . . . that is, until one changes.

Bowles, *In Touch* (188)

The difference of untranslated Arabic that in 1949 might challenge the transparency of Luce's American Century could in later political and economic contexts signify the difference that American-based global capital seeks to incorporate. And the potentiality that emerges from these disruptive moments will eventually lead Bowles to a refusal to continue in the mode of his first novel. Such will lead to intense collaboration with the Maghrebi.

Bowles's subsequent two novels, *Let It Come Down* (1952) and *The Spider's House*, open themselves up further to Maghrebi voices and subjectivities, against which is juxtaposed the various restrictions of American national identity. Bowles's journalism too makes a decisive turn toward listening to Maghrebi voices, both in his travel pieces and his political essays. If some of the latter resemble more literate versions of reports by foreign service officers in the field—in a 1951 article for the *American Mercury*, Bowles discusses the inhospitality of the idea of communism to Muslims and suggests the vulnerability of educated Moroccan elite to propaganda—their turn toward conversations with the Maghrebi coincides with a refusal to maintain the positive frame that underlies such analysis. "I'm heading south," Bowles ends his *American Mercury* article ("No More Djinns" 258). The essay suggests not only that "Morocco" is impossible to judge because of the inherent unreliability of

testimony but that Cold War binarisms themselves are impossible to maintain once one moves from the abstraction of the general to an engagement with the particular.

Increased conversation with the Maghrebi leads Bowles, in the postcolonial period, to a new textual politics and to projects that most firmly challenge the categories of national literature. Bowles's extended project of gathering and translating the tales of illiterate Moroccan authors is still underappreciated. This project, as Allen Hibbard has argued in *Paul Bowles: A Study of the Short Fiction*, affected Bowles's late prose style, itself an important interruption to Eurocentric ideas about literary influence. Further, the very project disfigures the disciplinary frames by which the US academy has taught us to apprehend "American literature." With one Moroccan in particular, Mohammed Mrabet, Bowles engaged in an extended project. The analphabetic Mrabet dictated to Bowles, in colloquial Moroccan Arabic, stories, novels, and an autobiography; together, they published 12 books, with both names on the title page, and published first in English. There is no "original" Arabic edition available or even possible without a further translation of the unwritten Moroccan dialect into standard Arabic. This collaboration has been controversial in Morocco, where it challenged the nationalists' ideas about standard Arabic, as well as those Francophone Maghrebi writers who critiqued the nationalists—the Francophone author Tahar Ben Jelloun called it "a bastard literature" (21). But it has barely registered in the US, where it has seemed a marginal project that does not conform to our categories of American, African, or Arab literatures.<sup>28</sup> Yet if we listen to those Moroccan critics who propose Bowles as the leader of *al-adab at-Tanji*, many of the categories within which Bowles is generally considered are best left behind.

After 9/11, the definitive end of the American Century, there is a critical necessity to reflect back on the potentialities suppressed by Cold War reading practices. Because *The Sheltering Sky* represents the encounter of Americans with the foreign during a transitional moment in cultural and political history, the novel is especially open to misreadings that mistake its representation of the Maghreb as mere exoticism, as a translation of the foreign for the domestic market. That exoticism is surely present. But as I have argued, the novel sits uneasily in such a frame and discovers a challenging relationship to the borderless North African Berber, figured as linguistic disruption. In summoning up misreadings of Bowles's work, I am attempting to read through them and the conditions that produce them. If a less rigid sense of the nation and of national literature results, it is surely not my suggestion that such formulations should be abandoned or that they have no meaning. Neither is it my contention

*Because The Sheltering Sky represents the encounter of Americans with the foreign during a transitional moment in cultural and political history, the novel is especially open to misreadings that mistake its representation of the Maghreb as mere exoticism, as a translation of the foreign for the domestic market.*

that Cold War binarisms have not left a strong residue in post-9/11 US foreign relations; the fact that they so obviously have means that the work to locate other paradigms for imagining the place of America(ns) in the world is urgent. At the same time as *The Sheltering Sky* quietly challenged the logic of the American Century, however, it also figured the engagement of individuals across national borders in a way that underlined—even exacerbated—the disjuncture between the space of cultural production and the realm of foreign relations, a separation familiar and frustrating to us today. My modest hope for this reading, then, is that it may help recuperate and trace the routes of influence of global politics on American and other literatures, as well as the routes of influence of American cultural production on global politics. My more ambitious hope is that we may make progress on the bridge from cultural production—including critique—to that otherwise untouchable space of foreign relations.

### Notes

1. See John Sutherland, “Distant Episodes” and Francine Prose, “The Coldest Eye.”
2. More accurately, in the 1950s, Bowles lamented the encounter of Arab nationalism with Western modernity and consumer culture.
3. A brilliant exception is Millicent Dillon’s *You Are Not I: A Portrait of Paul Bowles*.
4. Mullins’s recent study of gay male writers in Tangier is strong on questions of desire and marginality in Bowles’s literary work. But it also exemplifies how the tendency to see Bowles’s career as dissociated from geopolitical concerns is reinforced by the lack of a broader archive of Moroccan materials that would allow critics without the language training or opportunity to research in the Maghreb to challenge it. Mullins argues: “American expatriate writers inhabit the legacy of American and Moroccan political history” (14). But for Mullins, the assertion that Bowles was “firmly grounded within modernism” (25) means that his work was detached from the world and geography (a position about Modernism that Mullins curiously attributes to Edward Said). This conclusion authorizes Mullins to make only loose references to political history. Francine Prose’s introduction to the 2003 Ecco edition of *The Spider’s House* calls the novel a “textbook” of anti-American attitudes. The metaphor not only signals her fundamental misreading of the novel but also suggests the pedagogical failure of previous Bowles scholarship to offer an alternative to her view.
5. This period is the intersection of the early Cold War and the postcolonial. After 1973, there is an epistemic shift—caused in large part by the increased globalization of the economy; the acceleration of global movement of peoples, finances, and technology; and the Vietnam War—that alters the conditions for American repre-

sentations of the “foreign.” See chapter six of my *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express*.

6. During Bowles’s time in Tangier, the population of the city grew from 50,000 to nearly one million. The primary source of this population explosion was the migration of rural Moroccans to the cities, not tourism.

7. Melani McAlister has argued that US discourse relating to the Middle East since 1945 is marked by “post-Orientalism,” wherein “American power worked very hard to fracture the old European logic and to install new frameworks” (*Epic Encounters* 11). There is much to recommend in McAlister’s book. However, she defines Said’s concept of Orientalism rather starkly as “binary, feminizing, and citational” (*Epic Encounters* 12). She thereby misses the crucial element of Said’s definition that would challenge her own claim, namely the “corporate” aspect of Orientalism and its relationship to “institutions” (such as the media central to her project).

8. In the *Rough Guide to Morocco* (4th ed., 1993), by Mark Ellingham et al., Bowles is included both in the “Contexts” section for his writing and translations and in the Tangier chapter as a living site.

9. The emergence of Arab television station al-Jazeera as a counter to CNN offers a potent example. See Mohammed el-Nawawy and Adel Iskander, *Al-Jazeera: How the Free Arab News Network Scooped the World and Changed the Middle East*.

10. In his preface to a 1982 reprint of the novel, Bowles commented on al-Fassi’s response. Moroccan obituaries also refer to al-Fassi’s appreciation; Muhammad Abu Talib disputes it.

11. See Salah Sbye, “L’Amant de Tanger” and Mohamed El Gahs, “Pain Nu.”

12. Bernardo Bertolucci’s 1990 film adaptation, while receiving mixed reviews and modest box-office success, occasioned enough attention to bring yet another generation of readers to the novel. Bertolucci’s misreading of the novel has itself been influential. His failure to render the novel’s deep concern with French colonialism, his decision to film the novel as an epic, and the nostalgic tone of the film for imperialism are significant errors of interpretation.

13. Simultaneously, Henry Nash Smith was writing *Virgin Land* (1950), which critiqued Turner’s thesis but maintained its basic premise: that American national identity was formed in relation to (myths of) open spaces. Smith’s analysis of the expansion of the US empire in the nineteenth century emerges in the context of post-World War II US global expansion, but it does not address that coincidence. We should extend Alan Trachtenberg’s well-known critique of this foundational text of American studies: not only did Smith separate myth and symbol too starkly from industrialization; he also failed to account for how his account and its institutional location were coincident with and indebted to post-World War II global expansion. The stakes of this failure are woven into the Americanist enterprise of the postwar period.

14. For a contemporary Arab critique of Point Four, see George Hakim, “Point Four and the Middle East: A Middle East View.” In a later essay, Mustafa El Azzou investigates efforts by US businessmen to influence policy toward Morocco before

independence. See El Azzou, “Les hommes d’affaires américains au Maroc avant 1956.”

15. In chapter one of *Morocco Bound*, I discuss US journalists, such as Ernie Pyle and A. J. Liebling, who covered the 1942–43 North African campaign. Pyle described Arabic as “noise” or “garble.”

16. Mernissi mentions the song in her account of the US occupation of Morocco during World War II in *Dreams of Trespass*. Jamila Bargach has recently offered an extended critical reading of the song and includes a transliteration of the lyrics and a literal translation. Recordings of Slaoui’s song are easy to find in Morocco.

17. Bowles uses his own translation of the lyrics. He does not attribute the song to Slaoui but calls it “a popular song in Moghrebi Arabic of the 1950s” (*Points in Time* 92).

18. See my essay “The Well-Built Wall of Culture: Old New York and Its Har-ems,” on Edith Wharton’s intertwined thinking about France, Morocco and the US.

19. See Hassan II, *La mémoire d’un roi: Entretiens avec Eric Laurent* (18); US Office of Strategic Services, *Morocco*; and William Hoisington, Jr., *The Casablanca Connection: French Colonial Policy, 1936–1943* (284fn73). In 1948, the State Department noted the legacy of FDR’s comments in North Africa; see US State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1948* (3:684).

20. See US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943* (4:741) and Pennell (263–64).

21. See my discussion of time lag in US representations of Morocco during World War II in “Preposterous Encounters.”

22. Algeria had drought and dismal crops in 1945 and 1947; in Morocco, 1945 was known as “the year of hunger” (Pennell 268); Tunisia was threatened by famine in 1947. See Vernon McKay, “France’s Future in North Africa” (299).

23. See Vernon McKay, “France’s Future in North Africa” (300); Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (11); US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947* (5:682fn).

24. McAlister emphasizes the “knitted-together power of a discourse” (*Epic* 276) and the “continuous relationship” between the cultural field and “other fields in the larger social system” (7): “Foreign policy is one of the ways in which nations speak for themselves” (6). In “putting Orientalism in its place” (12), McAlister’s “post-Orientalist” approach (11) mistakenly collapses the institutional space between cultural production and foreign policy. Elsewhere, she dispenses with Said’s own account of US Orientalism, which attends to this space, as “the least nuanced and interesting of [*Orientalism*]” (“Edward Said” 553). For her, this is because it is “focused primarily on policymakers’ statements or the work of area studies scholars” and is “essentially an ideological critique of US foreign policy” (553). Unlike McAlister, Douglas Little accepts the Saidian framework in his political history: “something very like Said’s *Orientalism* seems subconsciously to have shaped US popular attitudes and foreign policies toward the Middle East” (10). Yet there is no discussion of the way “culture” works to shape attitudes; for Little, the process

remains "subconscious" or via "subliminal messages." For an account of misreadings of Said and an argument about Said's greater interest in institutions over discourse, see Timothy Brennan, "The Illusion of a Future: *Orientalism* as Traveling Theory."

25. Spivak admits that this is "an old-fashioned binary opposition" (112).
26. See Bowles, "Fez," "Sad for U.S., Sad for Algeria," and "No More Djinns."
27. See Emily Apter, "'Untranslatable' Algeria."
28. Criticism on the collaboration includes Mary Martin Rountree, "Paul Bowles: Translations from the Moghrebi"; Ibrahim Dawood, "Mohammed Mrabet's Fiction of Alienation" and "Mohammed Mrabet and the Significance of His Work"; Richard F. Patteson, "Paul Bowles/Mohammed Mrabet: Translation, Transformation, and Transcultural Discourse"; John Maier, *Desert Songs: Western Images of Morocco and Moroccan Images of the West*; and Greg Mullins, *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs, and Chester Write Tangier*. See also chapter five of my *Morocco Bound*.

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