



DOI: 10.1515/rjes-2017-0006

CULTURAL TRANSLATION AS REPRESENTATION IN PAUL BOWLES' *THEIR HEADS ARE GREEN AND THEIR HANDS ARE BLUE* (1957)

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Abstract: *This paper is premised upon the American writer, Paul Bowles, and his journey into Morocco as a liminal topography. In his *Their Heads are Green and their Hands are Blue* the traveller-writer crosses borders, moving from the metropolis to the colony as a far-flung territory, a process which is faced with a sense of unrepresentability of the Other and its culture, leading to a sense of dislocation on the part of the traveller. The latter lives on the edge of two starkly different cultures, civilizations, religions and societies. His peregrination produces weird feelings which are associated with the liminal and the threshold, and which oscillate between the homely and unhomely, the ordinary and the mysterious.*

Keywords: cultural translation, identity, Otherness, Paul Bowles, representation, travel writing,

1. Introduction

Translation studies came to birth in the 1980s with the publication of Susan Bassnett's book, *Translation Studies* in 1980, an era wherein postcolonial studies got momentum as an area of study. Before the emergence of cultural studies and postcolonial studies, translation was subsumed within two different disciplines: Linguistics and Comparative Literature. Hence, translation came to mean the transaction and negotiation between two languages, but the proliferation of postcolonial studies and cultural studies, translation has adopted a new phase; translation as a complex negotiation between two different cultures. Cultural translation as a catchphrase came into existence only in the nineties of the last century, and it is concomitant with postcolonial and postmodernist discourse. In this vein, cultural translation is a new trope and it is used metaphorically to mean the process of movement from one culture to another and the different significations that emerge from it. This movement involves the crossing of borders; indeed, mobility is an intrinsic hallmark of cultural translation. This mobility happens both at the level of signification and space. The traveller/ the anthropologist moves from the metropolis to the colony or the periphery, a process which is faced with a sense of incomprehensibility or unrepresentability of the Other and its culture, leading to a sense of dislocation on the part of the traveller. The latter, hence, settles and lives in the borderline, so to speak. He/ she is a mediator between two cultures. In the main, cultural translation involves Bhabha's trope of in-betweeness, liminality or the third space.

Within the context of post-colonialism, translation can be deemed as a discourse and a site wherein problems of power and representation hold sway. Indeed, translation becomes the ground where there is confrontation of different identities, personal and cultural. Crossing the borders, the translator tries all the harder to impose his identity on the translated subject. So,

translating/representing the Other's culture is conditioned by historical and cultural differences and cannot be discussed outside that framework.

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it brings into sharper focus the concept of representation and how it is used in the field of travel literature as a discourse. Second, it casts light on cultural translation as representation in the light of the American expatriate, Paul Bowles' assembled essays *Their Heads are Green and Their Hands are Blue*. The final part will be devoted to dealing with the process of exoticization as a kind of cultural translation and representation deployed by Bowles as a belated traveller.

2. Representation

Representation of other peoples, their cultures and places is one of the main features of travel narrative. The concept of representation, to rephrase the cultural theorist, Raymond Williams' well-known definition of the concept of culture, is one of the most complex words in the human sciences. It is deployed in many social fields such as art, philosophy, culture, politics, social sciences, human geography and literature. That's why "its semantic richness and complexity is due to the cross-fertilisation in history of its meanings in these different worlds. It is, in other words, a 'boundary notion', and therein lies still today... its innovative potential" (David Sibley et al. 2005:22). In this regard, the issue of representation has been of paramount significance as it has been weighed as part and parcel of the western colonial discourse. The latter's aim is to "make the Orient visible (and) clear" (Said 1978:22). For Said, the concept of representation has brought about many interrelated things onto the surface:

In the age of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, representation has thus had to contend not only with the consciousness of linguistic forms and conventions, but also with the pressures of such transpersonal, transhuman, and transcultural forces as class, the unconscious, gender, race, and structure. What transformations these have wrought in our notions of formerly stable things such as authors, texts, and objects are, quite literally, un-printable, and certainly unpronounceable. (1989: 206)¹

The upsurge of academic study of travel writing today is usually associated with the influence of different current theories: (1) poststructuralist theories of mobility and displacement; (2) postcolonial and gender theory. The aim of postcolonial studies is to comprehend, and to contest, the pernicious consequences of the vast European empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and to cast light upon the inequalities that exist between the Self and the Other. Postcolonialist scholars have accordingly sought to understand the processes that first created, and now perpetuate, these inequalities, and they have also concerned themselves more generally with questions relating to how cultures regard and depict each other, and how they interact and encounter. These are research agendas for which travel writing is an immensely useful resource; (3) the culture of travel which subsumes theories of globalization, tourism, postmodern geography, simulation, and the

¹ As portrayed in Said's study, the rise of Orientalist learning, institutions, and literature coincided roughly with the expansion of Western colonialism and imperialism: that is, the period between 1815 and "1914 when European colonial dominion extended to 85 percent of the earth's surface". Pondering the close linkage between academic learning and colonial power, Said in his study was led to associate Orientalism with a quasi-Nietzschean "will-to-knowledge" or "will to- power"; seen from this angle, Orientalist discourse reflects not a serious engagement but rather a social "imaginary" or mode of "representation" imposed for purely strategic ends.

commodification of space; (4) and finally, writing travel as a representational practice can be related to post-structuralist theories of presence/absence and the decentred subject.

Representation presupposes the existence of a certain concrete reality, there in wait for representation and not as an imagined one (Johannes Fabian 1990:753). This means that there is a strong relationship between text and reality; one shapes the other. Debbie Lisle posits that this formulation, that is, texts shaping reality and reality shaping texts, “is that it reproduces a ‘correspondence’ understanding of representation. In other words, it assumes that there is a single, incontrovertible reality awaiting documentation by travel writers, and each travelogue can be judged for how accurately it represents this reality” (2006:11).

Edward Said, the progenitor of the postcolonial discourse, rightly asserts that knowledge on the Orient as a representation of an imagined world exists only in the mind of the Orientalist; it is an invention. Such representation is devoid of transparency and mediated by biases on the Orient and Orientals. This means that travelogues not only disseminated particular ‘facts’ about the Orient, that is, economic, political, religious, cultural and scientific knowledge, but also offered a much more encompassing ‘way of knowing’ the Orient delivered by more popular ‘fictional’ strategies. There is a combination of factual statements and fictional descriptions. In this manner, Said says that

The real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one..., then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the “truth” which is itself a representation. (1978:272, italics original)

A more fruitful approach is the one that sees travel writing as occupying a space of discursive conflict. Travel narratives, in this context, are examples of what Hayden White calls “fictions of factual representations” (1976:21); they claim validity by referring to actual events and places, but then assimilate those events and places to a highly personal vision. Travel writing hence charts the tension between the writers’ compulsion to report the world they see and their often repressed desire to make the world conform to their preconception of it. Indeed, while some travel writers claim documentary status for their work, it is clear that most travel narratives are infused with the traveller-writer’s subjectivity. In the main, this self-perception of the traveller/ reporter/ representer leads to a dichotomous relation between the Self and the Other. As Said notes,

[t]he increasing influence of travel literature, imaginary utopias, moral voyages, and scientific reporting brought the Orient into sharper and more extended focus [. . .] But all such widening horizons had Europe firmly in the privileged centre, as main observer [. . .] even as Europe moved itself outwards, its sense of cultural strength was fortified. From travellers’ tales, and not only from great institutions like various India companies, colonies were created and ethnocentric perspectives secured. (1978:177)

Said posits that Orientalist texts consist of representations “as representations” which by no means depict and portray the truth of the Orient; rather, they employ “various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, ‘there’ in discourse about it. “These representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agree-on codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous orient” (23)². Travellers

² Travellers tend to project their existing opinions about the cultures they encounter in their writing. James Duncan discusses this dynamic in the preface to *Writes of Passage* by manifesting that “representations often reveal more about the culture of the author than that of the people and places represented”(1999:1).

tend to project their existing opinions about the cultures they encounter in their writing. European disciplines such as anthropology, ethnography, sociology, philosophy, history, fiction, and non-fiction (travelogues) captured the non-European subject within European frameworks. The Other/ the Orient is constructed in a representation that is then transmitted from text to text, with the result that Orientalist writing always reproduces its own unchanging stereotype of an unchanging Orient. Orientalism as a discourse constitutes a linguistic repetition structure of representation that draws its reality from the authority of textual repetition rather than any truth-value in relation to what they claim to represent. In a well-known passage, Said suggests that the things to look for in representations of the Other are “style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original” (1978:231).

The concept of representation is achieved and mirrored by means of language. The latter is the central ‘medium’ through which thoughts, ideas and feelings are represented in a culture. Representation through language is therefore cardinal to the processes by which meaning is produced. In Stuart Hall’s take,

representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the “real” world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional; objects, people and events. (1977:17)

Hall manifests that language in this sense is a signifying practice: “representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people” (ibid.:15). Bill Ashcroft and others manifest that language is a cardinal site of struggle for postcolonial discourse as the colonial process itself begins in language. The latter is the most potent instrument of cultural control. Indeed, language exerts a great power as it is the method through which we name the world; “to name reality is therefore to exert power over it, simply because the dominant language becomes the way in which it is known” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995:283). Language is the carrier of significance, and it is loaded with many important issues that postcolonial trend tries to come to grips with like identity and other outcomes of the transcultural encounters and interactions between different people who wield different aspects of coercion on each other.

Travel as a discourse is essentially entwined with other discourses; the travel accounts that were written and recorded during the turn of the nineteenth century are almost analyzed as part and parcel of the colonialist enterprise and expansion. In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Roy Bridges, critic on the approaches to travel writing, comments on the significance of the genre:

Travel writing [. . .] has a complex relationship with the situations in which it arose. It is taken to mean a discourse designed to describe and interpret for its readers a geographical area together with its natural attributes and its human society and culture. Travel writing may embrace approaches ranging from an exposition of the results of scientific exploration claiming to be objective and value-free to the frankly subjective description of the impact of an area and its people on the writer’s sensibilities. (2000:53)

Indeed, travel writing cannot be read as a simple account and record of a journey, a country and a narrator, but must be seen in the light of discourses circulating at the time. According to Tim Youngs travel writing is not a literal and objective record of journeys undertaken. It carries preconceptions that, even if challenged, provide a reference point. It is influenced, if not determined, by its authors’ gender, class, age, nationality, cultural background and education. It is ideological. And it is a literary form that draws on the conventions of other literary genres. Narrators, characters, plots and dialogue are all moulded accordingly (2006:2-3).

3. Cultural Translation as Representation

The concept of representation is a cardinal term in cultural translation. The representation of the other is so difficult to the extent that we talk about unrepresentability of the other. In cultural translation, representation is ambivalent, liminal and situated in the third space, where both the representer and the represented are effaced and forged. The concept of representation is of paramount importance in the assembled essays (*Their Heads are Green and Their Hands are Blue*)³ of the American expatriate, Paul Bowles, who spent more than fifty-two years in Morocco. Bowles left New York in the 1940s and headed for Tangier, the city with which he indelibly identified. Bowles is a composer, a translator, a novelist, an autobiographer and a traveller. His choice of expatriation is attributed to the sense of staleness, aggravation and malaise he felt in the Western world by dint of the aftermath of the Second World War. What's more, Bowles is in constant movement and mobility as he spends most of his life moving in search of the pristine, the mysterious, the queer, the exotic and the atavistic: "when I meet people fellow Americans travelling about here in North Africa, I ask them "What did you expect to find here?" Almost without exception the answer, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense of mystery" (1984: 23-24). This sense of mystery and constant movement is deeply entrenched and expressed in his works, especially his autobiography, *Without Stopping* (1972).

Paul Bowles looked for illiterate Moroccan story-tellers in Tangier, especially Mohammed Mrabet, Ahmed Yacobi, Laarbi Laayachi and others, and translated their stories into English for the Western readership. In this manner, we can position Bowles within the anthropologists of the late nineteenth century and the outset of the twentieth century for whom anthropology was perceived as a science that sought to 'preserve' the traditions of societies that are on the verge of disappearance. Like other diasporic expatriates, Paul Bowles is a "translated man", to use Salman Rushdie's phrase, because he crossed the border from America to North Africa.

Bowles' escape from the grip his civilization had on him took the form of unrelenting movement between cultures and within spaces, but also a movement between the Moroccan oral tradition and the written Western one. This state of life makes him live in a liminal space, a hybrid and in-between space. In the main, Bowles is a mediator and a negotiator between cultures because this new state of life gives him the freedom to translate other cultures. In his influential book, *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha demonstrates that "we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and renegotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (1994: 38). The question that should be posed here is that how does Paul Bowles translate Moroccan culture?

In his writings, Paul Bowles textualizes the Moroccan culture. Writing/translating the Other becomes a means whereby Bowles comes to terms with strangeness of the Moroccan culture and language. Bowles adopts an anthropological approach to the writing and translating of the Moroccan culture. He aspires to possess, know and control the Other. For Bowles, the salvage of the Other and his tradition can be maintained textually. The latter, Bowles deems, is disappearing because of the advent of the process of Europeanisation and the mushrooming of the Moroccan nationalists, who adopt the Western values. In G. D. Caponi's take, "Bowles's interest in ethnography was a clear extension of his romanticism, which led him to pity and nearly despise the Western educated Moroccans who were

³ Paul Bowles. *Their Heads are Green and their Hands are Blue: Scenes from the Non-Christian World*. New York: The Echo Press, 1984 (first published in 1957). The title is taken from Edward Lear's poem, "The Jumblies": "Far and few, far and few, /are the lands where the Jumblies live;/Their heads are green and their hands are blue,/ And they went to sea in a sieve."

changing what the first loved about the country” (1994:177). In this vein, in his assembled travel accounts, Bowles remarks plaintively, thus: “My own belief is that the people of the alien culture are being ravaged not so much by the by-products of our civilization, as by the irrational longing on the part of the members of their own educated minorities to cease being themselves and become Westerners” (1984:viii).

Bowles sets himself as the warden of the Moroccan oral culture because, to his belief, it is weak and in need to be represented. He is to speak on behalf of them. ‘Them’ here refers to the illiterate people and the masses because they epitomize the different and the strange, not the Westernized Moroccans. In a conversation with a westernized Moroccan friend, Paul Bowles writes the following:

“Why don’t you write about the civilized people here instead of the most backward?” [Asked a French-educated man]. I suppose it is natural for them to want to see themselves presented to the outside in the most “advanced” light possible. They find it perverse of a Western to be interested only in the dissimilarities between their culture and his. (1984:32)

In the postmodern period, the demarcation between disciplines is blurred. In these assembled essays, Paul Bowles has the power of language and by the same token he is the one who is capable of representing/translating the other and speaking on his behalf; lacking the capacity to speak and to write in the language of the master, the native is easily manipulated. He is directed to say what the writer wants him to say. Also, the native’s identity is undermined and subsumed within the anthropologist’s. Even as a translated subject, he is there as a narrative catalyst; he is there to serve the purpose of narrativization and exoticization; hence, the confrontational and representational aspect of translation. Bowles exoticizes the Other. The example of Abedsalam, a character in the accounts, is a good instance:

Abdeslam is not a happy person. He sees his world, which he knows is a good world, being assailed from all sides, slowly crumbling before his eyes. He has no means of understanding me should I try to explain to him that in this age what he considers to be religion is called superstition, and that religion today has come to be found to be a desperate attempt to integrate physics with science. Something will have to be found to replace the basic wisdom which has been destroyed, but the discovery will not be soon; neither Abedslam nor I will ever know of it. (1984:82)

By translating the other’s culture, Paul Bowles creates his own place neither that of the metropolis nor that of the periphery, but a place in-between, a third and a liminal space from which he articulates his own self. In the same vein, Paul Bowles, I deem, is virtually ambivalent in his relation to what he writes; he does not write from a Eurocentric perspective nor does he write from an exotic one, but rather he writes from a liminal position. Bowles adopts an anthropological approach to the description of the other, and since there is no much exotic left, he resorts to the technique of the exoticization as a technique that helps him to live in the marginal, the liminality and the third space. For instance, Bowles resorts to exoticisation when he makes company with Abedslam to Istanbul. He exoticises Abedslam to meet his own desires, for the exotic is on the wane.

4. Exoticism and Exoticization as a Mode of Translating the Moroccan Other

Paul Bowles can be subsumed within “belated travellers”, to use Ali Behdad’s own expression (*Belated Travelers* 1994). For Behdad, many travellers at the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, especially with the spread of the *fin de siècle* malaise and the complete change of the Victorian perception of values and traditions, headed for the Orient and they bore in mind one primary motive: to look for the exotic among the Orientals. Victor Segalen, who travelled and lived in the Pacific Islands and China, would

write a book posthumously published called, *Essai sur l'exotisme: Une esthétique du divers* (1904). He defines exoticism as the candidate, so to speak, best suited to protect contemporary life from the relentless dullness wrought by the transformations of capitalism into mass-society imperialism and colonialism. Segalen's definition of exoticism as the "aesthetics of diversity" is appropriate to a travel narrative that frequently depoliticizes the objects of its study, and that seeks to capitalize on anesthetized myths of cultural difference. For Ali Behdad,

Travelling in the Orient at a time when the European colonial power structure and the rise of tourism had transformed the exotic referent into the familiar sign of Western hegemony, these Orientalists could not help but experience a sense of displacement in time and space, an experience that produced either a sense of disorientation and loss or an obsessive urge to discover an "authentic" Other. (1994:13)

Writing from Jerusalem in 1830, Gustave Flaubert, a nineteenth-century traveller and Orientalist, and in a desperately urgent "invitation au voyage", expresses acutely the sense of belatedness late nineteenth-century orientalist felt toward the exotic Other in relation to earlier European travellers. Flaubert writes, "It is time to hurry. Before very long the Orient will no longer exist. We are perhaps the last of its contemplators" (663). Late nineteenth-century intellectuals thus encountered the predicament of how to become travellers-cum-writers of the exotic in an age of colonial dissolution. In this context, following the trail of Gustave Flaubert and other predecessors, mainly the French ones: Gérard de Nerval, Pierre Loti, Lady Anne Blunt, Isabelle Eberhardt, *inter alia*, Paul Bowles undertakes the Orientalist exoticist project, and an exoticist desire for disappearing Other. This desire is deeply rooted in the Orientalist tradition, a desire which Nerval calls "*Le désir de l'Orient*", (a desire for the Orient)⁴. Since there is no exotic left, the traveller resorts to the rhetoric and trope of exoticization, a representational strategy that is deeply seated in the colonial discourse and it is enhanced through the process of narrativization. When we read Bowles' assembled essays, we infer that his travel discourse is virtually ambivalent and "aporia displaces Orientalist pseudoscientific certainty here, allowing for the emergence of a schizoid discourse that simultaneously affirms and exposes the ideological discrepancies and political predicaments of colonial hegemony"(Behdad 1994:14). Paul Bowles finds it difficult to get rid of an authority that contributes to his shaping of a specific vision about the Orient, but at the same time he tries to produce a new discourse of the other that is exotic. For Behdad,

The representation of these belated travelers thus do not close on an exotic signified but practice an open deferment of signification; they are elliptic discourses, uncertain about their representations and melancholic about their inability to produce an alternate mode of writing about the desired Other. (1994:15)

Exoticism constantly resorts to antecedent and ancillary European generated imagery in order to represent differences between *us* and *them*, *here* and *there*, or *home* and *abroad*. Hence, frequently, perhaps in most cases, these differences are not particularly surprising or unfamiliar. Exoticism relies on nostalgia that longs for the past, dwells upon it, and phantasmatically inserts the past into narrations of the present. Strangely, nostalgic yearning for something familiar is mistaken as a desire for something exotic. However, that longed-for past often refers back to "home".

Many postcolonial critics - Edward Said, Arac and Rivto, Graham Huggan, Christopher Miller, among others - have attempted to show that exoticist colonialist expression creates, differentiates, and ultimately vilifies the colonized *other*. In their

⁴ A desire for the Orient (*Le désir de l'Orient*) is an expression firstly used by the French traveller, Gérard de Nerval in his book *Voyage en Orient*. 2 vols. Paris: Garnier- Flammaration, 1980.

introduction to a collection of essays, *Exoticism in the Enlightenment*, Rousseau and Porter argue that exoticist discourses have alternately served as critical weapons directed against “universal monopolies in religious truth and legitimate authority” (1990:12) and as subterfuges for the colonial interventions of a civilization that “increasingly assumed the right to define [and differentiate] human values and conduct in their highest expression” (ibid.:6). According to Graham Huggan,

exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic *perception* - one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery. The exoticist production of otherness is dialectical and contingent; at various times and in different places, it may serve conflicting ideological interests, providing the rationale for projects of *rapprochement* and reconciliation, but legitimizing just as easily the need for plunder and violent conquest. (2001:13, italics original)

Exoticism as a project and as an aestheticizing process conceals more than it reveals. Its politics is often concealed, hidden beneath the layers of mystification. It stemmed mainly from ceaseless overseas exploration and economic expansion and its accompanying quest for new sources of raw material, markets and cheap labor. This exoticism “followed the itinerary of capitalism as it migrated around the globe and often masked the violent seizure and colonial expropriation that was at the heart of its law of movement” (Harry Harootunian 2002: ix). In Deborah Root’s take, exoticism is self-empowering and self referential even, insofar as the objects of its gaze are not supposed to look back (1996:45). For this reason, exoticism has proved over time to be a tool and instrument of imperial power and hegemony. The ultimate project of exoticism is to recapture a lost time, to recover what modernity has erased, obliterated and effaced. Indeed, what exoticism constructed was the loss of something, an immense nostalgia for an experience that never existed and that was now made to appear prior to its narrative.

In this narrative, the old, precapitalist cultures signifying difference, mystification and value have been rediscovered precisely in those colonial sites where the violent process of deterritorialization was proceeding unchecked. Indeed, in his discussion of the Colonial Exposition⁵, the postcolonial writer, Christopher Miller suggests that the colonial exoticism of that event involved a larger project to represent and invent the colonies as Eurocentric fantasies. This reiterates one of the key arguments launched against exoticism - that colonial exoticism constitutes artificial and phantasmatic perceptions of colonial life in order to gloss over harsh realities that the colonial administrations carefully hid from the public’s view (Miller 1990:77-88). So the main critics of exoticism stress upon the fact that the exoticist project has contributed to the imperialist enterprise in terms of conquering and grabbing new lands; indeed, it

signified the primacy of the spatial dimension of capitalist expansion at the expense of its temporal workings and thus managed to displace and often efface the baneful effects of the actual deterritorialization and reterritorialization of land, labor, and capital that transformed and destroyed received cultures of reference to make them little more than outposts of Western civilisation. (Harootunian 2002:ix)

⁵ Miller addresses the rejection and resistance to colonial exoticism promoted by events such as the famous *L’Exposition Coloniale* that took place outside of Paris, in Vincennes in 1931. The Colonial Exposition was an enormous state sponsored fair, and Miller (and others) argues that it served as hegemonic, colonial, and exoticist propaganda.

The encounter and interaction with the Other is not that historical coincidence; it is a historical necessity. In this vein, we can say that via narrativization as a discursive strategy exoticism has itself been re-appropriated and redeployed by the colonialist project. Christopher Bongie is one of the most prominent and distinguished in this field of exoticism and exoticization. Bongie writes in his ground-breaking study *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* that exoticism is a “nineteenth-century literary and existential practice that posited another space, the space of an Other” (1991:4-5). He continues on to posit that

imperialist exoticism affirms the hegemony of modern civilisation over the less developed, savage territories, exoticizing exoticism privileges those very territories and their peoples, figuring them as a possible refuge from an overbearing modernity [...] What needs underlying here, however, is that they are both grounded in a common belief; namely, that there still exists places on this earth that are Other than those in which modernity has come to hold sway. The autonomy of alternative cultures and territories, their fundamental difference from what might call “the realm of the same,” is the one requisite condition of exoticism: only given this difference can individual hope to exercise – be it for imperialist or exoticizing ends – that heroic sovereignty denied him in post- revolutionary Europe. (ibid.:16-17)

The wonder and allure perceived in exotic peoples may precede their violent subjugation and colonialism. What’s more, the magnificence of newly colonized lands may disguise the brutal circumstances of their gain. The exoticist rhetoric upon which these travellers depend to represent the fetishised otherness “masks the inequality of the power relations without which discourse could not function” (Huggan 2001:14). In the same vein, in their co-authored book *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing*, Graham Huggan and Patrick Holland denote that exoticism is a kind of subterfuge utilized by the traveller to hide his voyeuristic predilection over other cultures:

Travel writing tends to function this way, expressing itself through exotic registers that allow for often voyeuristic appreciation of “different” places, cultures, and peoples while reserving the right to judge them according to narrowly ethnocentric tastes. The roving “I”s of travel narratives, like those of ethnographies, seek out difference; but they are less likely than their ethnographic counterparts to relativize their findings, to analyze the local systems through which cultures shape and reshape meaning. Instead, they are often drawn to surfaces more particularly, to bodies onto which they project their fears and fantasies of ethnicized cultural “other”. (1998:32)

As an exoticist mode, European travel writing risks being seen as tacitly imperialist. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo define imperialism as the “expansion of nationality”, so in the same vein exoticism is “the aestheticising means by which the pain of [imperialist] expansion is converted into spectacle, to culture in the service of empire” (13). For Edward Said, exoticism and exoticization function in a variety of imperial contexts as mechanism of aesthetic substitution which

replaces the impress of power with the blandishments of curiosity – with the imperial presence so dominating as to make impossible any effort to separate it from historical necessity. All these together create an amalgam of the arts of narrative and observation about the accumulated, dominated, and ruled territories whose inhabitants seem destined never to escape, to remain creatures of European will. (1978:159)

Paul Bowles exoticizes Moroccans through the process of narrativization. When we peruse his assembled essays, we find out that there is the concealment of imperial authority and the Self’s supremacy through exotic spectacles and scenes. The insertion of scenes which reflect those come across in the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* is not that innocent at all, because behind each exoticized scene there is an ideological tendency towards the inferiorised

“Other”. Abdesalam, for instance, is rendered as the purveyor of the *exotica* through narrativized scenes: “This is the man from whom to learn of love and fighting, of beautiful women and hairbreadth escapes, the whole on the model of the “Thousand Nights and a Night,” of which versions more or less recognizable may now and again be heard from his lips” (Bowles 1984: 139). So, highly unreliable in his portraiture of foreign environments and characters, the exoticist author creates characters based on colonized subjects who often fluctuate between states of unreal god-like divinity and sickly melancholy. Indeed, the unreality of such creations suggests that exoticized characters are sheer figments of the author’s imaginations: obscure invented creations.

The exoticist discourse is mainly based upon the subtle strategy that starkly brands the ‘fascinated’ and the ‘strange’ Other as exotic depending upon the Self’s own determining criteria. To quote Graham Huggan, “exoticist discourse is complicit with the essentialist labelling of marginalised racial/ethnic groups. Exoticism effectively hides the power relations behind these labels, allowing the dominant culture to attribute value to the margins while continuing to define them in its own self- privileging terms” (2000: 24). The people being exoticized via narrativization are at the first sight perceived as being the source of the atavistic, the different and the fascinated, but these exoticized and narrativized Other is marginalized as well.

This narrative strategy or approach is reminiscent of what Derrida calls the “violence of the letter” imposed by one culture over the other, a violence “of difference, of classification, and of the system of appellations” (1976:107). Jacques Derrida regards the anthropological approach that the anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss - and implicitly travel writers, ethnologists, historians, journalists, politicians and students of law, among others - undertakes in his studies of Indians of Western Brazil and other Latin American peoples as a kind of anthropological war made against societies who are perceived as inferior, uncivilized and far from the advanced stage of development that Western societies have reached. This anthropological and epistemological war wreaked upon the “inferiorised” people leads to the domination of those societies, for knowing means appropriating the other.

In *Their Heads are Green and Their Hands are Blue*, the third space of representation is created, a space wherein the representer and the represented are mingled and forged with each other. Cultural translation is a nascent field that makes use of negotiation between cultures. This negotiation takes place in the third space or the “contact zone”. In this context, in her recent book, *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt introduces the concept of the “contact zone” to refer to “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict” (1992:6). The “contact zone” is dealt with in terms of “co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (ibid.: 7). For Pratt, a “contact” perspective blurs any distinctions between separate spheres of coloniser and colonised, foregrounding instead the hybrid constitution of the “contact” subject’s formation: victimiser and victim, representer and represented, coloniser and colonised. The “contact zone” becomes the scene of struggle over the power of representation.

The encounter of the Self with the Other, in Bhabha’s eyes, serves as a location of fissure within a hierarchy of established significance, ripping apart the very ability of colonial discourse to give meaning and validity to the untranslatable, untamed meaninglessness of the Other. The latter is characterised by its untranslatability, incompressibility and unrepresentability. So, Paul Bowles finds it difficult to represent, translate and comprehend the other, not the impossibility of doing so. Bowles’s journey to Tangier, “The Interzone”, the third or the liminal space, is very reminiscent of Joseph Conrad’s character-narrator’s journey into the innermost darkness of Africa. Bowles journeys from the metropolitan city of New

York to the periphery of Africa, but he finds it hard to translate the other's culture, to understand the foreignness of Morocco. So he lives in "the midst of the incomprehensible", to use Bhabha's own phrase.

5. Conclusion

Paul Bowles's career in these assembled essays is to preserve and bring into focus the Moroccan oral culture which is on the wane and on the marginal. This project can be attributed to the fact that Bowles is in search for the exotic and the primitive. He has to speak for the natives who are exoticised and narrativised to meet the writer/ the translator's urgent needs. For Bowles, Morocco is an exotic and liminal space, a space that caters for his desires. The Other/ the Orient is a site of some lost aspects that have been disappeared from the West - spirituality, love, beauty and rejuvenation. Although Paul Bowles tries all the harder to seek the exotic, which exists in the third space of representation, he feels schizoid as a decentred, fragmented and displaced self that is on the move, a fact which evokes the limits of representation itself.

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