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**The Representation of the Algerian Desert in Paul
Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* (1949)**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for a **Master's degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Abstract

The present research investigates the representation of the Algerian Desert in Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* (1949). Following the elements of the theory of space, our dissertation examines the notion of Otherness in the novel. This research paper strives to give a better understanding of the effects of such a lifeless space on people living in it. The work aims at shedding light on Paul Bowles literary work and presents another image of the North African Sahara.

Key Words: Algerian Sahara, Desert, Otherness, Space, Travel Literature.

Declaration

We are aware of and understand the university's policy on plagiarism and we declare that this thesis is the result of our own work. We also attest that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

HADDADI Zakia

GACEM Warda

Dedication

We dedicate our dissertation to all our family members and friends for their support and encouragement.

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We,would like to thank our supervisor Mr.Yousfi for being so kind, comprehensive and helpful throughout the journey of writing our dissertation.

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General Introduction

Introduction

For years many authors all over the world have been fascinated by the intricate beauty of the desert, and many books have shed light on its notion through dragging some characters into it. Our dissertation is about a novel entitled *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) written by the American writer Paul Bowles. It portrays the complex life of a couple that ends up in front of the gutter when the wife falls in love with her husband's friend. All this dramatic scenario is put inside the frame of the desert, a setting that plays a fundamental role in the story with all its events and its ups and downs. Through reading the story we get to feel the real influence of the concept of the desert on the characters' lives.

Desert is an isolated space and so are the human beings, a constituent of isolated feelings that build up strange characters. The perception about the desert differs from one person to another; it all depends on the psychology of the human that is dictated by this term which influences them in a good or a bad way. Some American literary works have been interested in the exquisite Algerian landscape, especially its extraordinary desert; and this is the core of this study.

The Review of Literature

Lorena Pérez Hernandez, in her article *A Cognitive Analysis of Paul Bowles's The Sheltering Sky* published in 1997, shows the fact that the three main characters of the novel (Port, Kit and Tunner) actually represent all together one person. Each protagonist symbolizes one thing in the story. She argues that Port is introduced to us as a subject or a master who takes decisions most of the time and controls the two other protagonists especially Kit who

represents the inner self or a slave who is subjugated to Port. She is his woman, she belongs to him that is why she has to please him and meet all his needs. Followed by the third character Tunner that represents the exterior self of human being to fill in the gap of the story and make a relation between the characters. Hernandez believes that those three constituent parts should be in one person in order to create a complete one. She says that: “only when all these parts exist together can a person function correctly”(p.267). For her, the novel is divided into three important sections: the death of Port, the mental disorder of Kit, and the well-being of Tunner. That is to say that these three episodes are essential to understand the core of life.

Syrine C. Hout in an article entitled *Grains of Utopia: The Desert as Literary Oasis in Paul Bowles's The Sheltering Sky and Wilfred Thesiger's Arabian Sands* published in 2000 studies the method of introducing the “Other” that the authors of the twentieth century have used in their portrayal of the territory of North Africa and Arabia. In this paper, Hout seeks to examine the Arabs and represent them as “Others”. She represents the limited experience between East and West. She also disregards the standard of representing the “Other” societies so as to accommodate their stories with the nearby people of Arabia and North Africa. In addition to the desire of Hout in depicting North Africa and Arabia as Oriental, legendary spots of exoticism and ideal theatres for sentimentalism. That is why we find that the characters of Paul Bowles in *The Sheltering Sky* find that the Oriental satisfies their sexual desires and nihilism, while giving spiritual alleviation.

In her article entitled *L'Altérité Du Désert Dans «The Sheltering Sky» de Paul Bowles*, (2001) Bouvet Rachel gives contribution to shape up our thesis. This article suggests to see the desert as a space of “Otherness” and exposes how it acquires a symbolic value. It tackles the notion of “Otherness” so rich in points of view and avenues for the desirous reader to penetrate the reading of the “Other”, to contemplate it, understand it, and try to grasp the world in all its diversity. Through this article, Bouvet explains the complexity of the concept

of the “Other” since it balances between different disciplines in human relationship with desert.

From this review of literature, one can notice that previous studies have shown that *The Sheltering Sky* depicts the way desert is represented and how it influences people. However, only a slight attention has been devoted particularly to the representation of the Algerian desert and rarely acknowledged. So as to fill this gap, we will support our own interpretation of this novel through the theory of space.

Aims of the Study

The aim of our research is to explore the real meaning of desert which is a flexible world in literature and focus on its importance in building the hectic plot and the characters of the studied novel. Through this dissertation, we will explain how desert is presented in Paul Bowles’ *The Sheltering Sky*. Our motivation in conducting this work is to capture the relationship between the main character of the story and the intricacy of desert as a space.

Thesis Statement

Our problematic is mainly focused on the different angles from which the term desert, as a notion, is tackled, and our main concern is to analyze this concept in order to figure out whether this kind of desert is represented as an exterior isolated place, or as an inner one which bothers the individuals for being different in some fundamental way.

Research Questions

As the title indicates, this study investigates the representation of the Algerian desert in the selected text *The Sheltering Sky*. The questions addressed in the present research are the following:

1. What does the word desert mean?
2. How the desert is described in American literatures?
3. What is Orientalism?
4. How is desert represented in *The Sheltering Sky*?

Methods and Materials

In order to answer the research questions, we will depend on *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) as a primary source and material that will open the way to discuss many points it consists. Moreover, we will adapt the theory of space as a method and approach that explains how this literary work can be interpreted in our point of view.

Chapters Division

Our work will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will highlight the biography of the author Paul Bowles as well as the summary of *The Sheltering Sky* in order to put the readers in the context of the story and make them familiar with the characters. The third point will explain and explore the uniqueness of the Algerian Sahara and provide some information about it. The last point in this chapter will give tribute to the theory of space, which is an appropriate approach to deal with our dissertation.

The second chapter will take the reader into the introduction of Travel Literature as a literary genre. Then it will highlight the American literature and some American authors who wrote about desert. The last one is about the Orientalism in American literature as a rich legacy with an introduction to a bunch of some important elements of Orientalism according to Edward Said's book *Orientalism*.

The third chapter will be devoted to the most important part in our research that is the analysis of the novel in which the desert is represented first as a space of “Otherness” in relation to individuals, who in their turn seek to flee the Western values, and then we will move on to explain how the characters deal with the situation and try to find meaning to their lives.

Chapter One

**Introducing Paul Bowles’
The Sheltering Sky, Defining
the Desert and Presenting
the Theory of Space.**

Introduction

This chapter contains five essential parts which help the reader to have general ideas about our theme. The first part is dealing with Paul Bowles' biography. The second section is a brief summary of the novel *The Sheltering Sky*. The two following parts are about the Algerian Sahara as a touristic place and the term desert with its meaning, origins and synonyms. Then, we will introduce the notion of space as being the appropriate theory of study in our theme. Yet the study of space has newly (from the end of the twentieth century onwards) come into use as a parameter of literary analysis and researches.

1. Biography of the Author

Paul Frederick Bowles was born on December 30, 1910 in New York as a unique child of Rena Winwisserd and Claude Dietz Bowles. He was not only a writer, but also a composer, a translator, a playwright, a poet, a novelist, a music critic, and a traveler. He wrote several short stories and novels.

The talent of writing began to emerge since his childhood. During his early years, his mother helped him to be a successful person by reading to him the works of Edgar Allan Poe as bedtime stories. However, his father was cruel and strict disciplinarian opposed to any form of play or entertainment. In his autobiography *Without Stopping* (1972), Bowles recounts hearing his maternal grandmother tell him that his father had tried to kill him when he was two months old by removing his clothes and leaning him naked by an open window in a deadly winter during a snowstorm and if she did not rescue him, he would soon have been dead. He said of his father, "I took for granted his constant and unalloyed criticism. His mere presence meant misery." Living such cruel practices certainly had a profound effect on him and influenced his writings. This can be felt when we read works in which violent events and psychological collapse are recounted with an elegant style.

In his childhood, Bowles studied music and learned piano at the Model School. The passion of writing was developed when he joined the monthly literary magazine in the public high school in Jamaica. Then he began to earn his own collection of books as soon as he started to write surrealistic poetry and music.

Bowles claimed that Poe influenced him in particular, that is why he chose in 1928 to attend the same university as him, the University of Virginia. But in April 1929, without notifying the authorities of the University or informing his parents, Bowles left his studies to go to Paris. He worked there for the Paris Herald Tribune where his interests turned to music. After few months by July, he returned to New York and worked at Dattons Bookshop in Manhattan where he started to work on an unfinished book of fiction. After the insistence of his parents, Bowles obviated his studies at the same University and began studying composition under Aaron Copland with whom he became a close friend. Again, Bowles left the university after one semester in order to go with Copland who suggested visiting Europe.

In 1930, in Paris, Bowles worked on his first musical composition, the Sonata for Oboe and Clarinet. During this time, he became a member of Gertrude Stein's literary and artistic circle. Stein believed in his talents and she was the first who questioned his ability as a poet. She was also the one who advised him to go to Tangier in Morocco instead of spending his time on the French Riviera, as he had decided. This meeting marked the turning point in his life. In 1931, he went to visit Tangier for the first time with his friend Aaron Copland, but he did not know that he would spend 52 years of his life. During the trip, Bowles fell in love with Morocco. He found inspiration to write many short stories like *Little Stone* and *Midnight Mass*. He knew that Tangier would become his physical and spiritual home. When Bowles saw the desert for the first time he said: "I had a big desire to keep going. That's the main thing to continue and continue. I didn't ask what would happen. I didn't think anything would

happen. I just thought I'd see more and more. I'd feel more and more. And, finally, of course, I'd have to return."

From there he moved to Berlin where he became a friend of British writers like Christopher Isherwood. Later, Bowles participated in Works Progress Administration, with the Federal Theater Project in New York. It was where he started to write music for plays and also working on his own compositions.

When he was 27 years old, Bowles met Jane Auer whom he married after one year. Jane herself also was a writer and playwright. They traveled together to Morocco, a country that became his most potent source of inspiration where he wrote *The Sheltering Sky* or as others called it *A Tea in The Sahara*. Their marriage lasted 36 years until 1973 when Jane died in Spain without giving birth to any. In 1939, he composed *My Heart's in the Highlands* for William Saroyan's and wrote the Denmark Vesey Opera. In 1940, he again produced music for Saroyan like *Love's Old Sweet Song* and *Shakespeare's Twelfth Night*.

By the 1940s, Bowles turned his attention to writing. In 1945, he translated Jean Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos*, a play he named *No Exit*. In the same year, he published *The Scorpion* which was his debut short story, followed by *The Echo* in 1946 and *A Distant Episode* in 1947. After all these experiences of writing, he felt was more comfortable with writing than composing. Some have suggested that the success of his wife with fiction pushed and influenced him to look after his own literary interests. In 1947, following the end of WWII, Bowles received a contract for a novel from Doubleday, so he moved again for Tangier in Morocco. He commented on that: "I was composer for as long as I've been a writer. I came here because I wanted to write a novel. I had a commission to do it. I was sick of writing music for other people." In order to work on his first novel *The Sheltering Sky*, he traveled alone into the Algerian Sahara. The book became best-seller going through three printings in

just two months. In 1952, he published his second novel entitled *Let It Come Down*. Then, he set the third novel *The Spider's House* in 1955. He, in addition to that, composed music for some plays and translated many Moroccan stories and music. Some of these translations were published in 1982 under *Points In Time* and subtitled *Tales From Morocco*.

Bowles spent his final years in his apartment in Tangier welcoming the visitors and the interviewers despite his bad health which led him to death on November 18, 1999 out of a heart attack at the age of 88. He was buried in New York next to the graves of his parents and grandparents.

2. *The Sheltering Sky*: Plot Summary

The Sheltering Sky is the first novel by the American author Paul Bowles, published in 1949. It was named as one of the hundred best novels of the 20th century by both *Times Magazine* and the Modern Library. The novel contains three subtitles: *Tea in the Sahara*, *The Earth's Sharp Edge*, and *The Sky*. In 1990, it was adapted into a notable drama with the same title directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, with a screenplay by Mark Peploe. The movie was filmed in three different places: Morocco, Algeria, and Niger and featured powerful landscapes. It has been influential on musical artists including the Police, using motifs and references from the book on their albums.

Throughout the book, Bowles explores the themes of alienation, existentialism, colonialism, and the loss of meaning and identity through the portrayal of the main characters. The use of different languages such as English, French, Arabic, some Algerian dialects as well as the names of real places give a colorful and vivid depiction of the events of the story to make such a great work of art.

This story concentrates on Port Moresby and his wife Kit -a New York couple- who choose to set off to the North African desert along with their friend Tunner. The three

travelers set off and cross their paths through Algeria determining to leave the modern world behind. The trip initially intended to help Port and Kit resolve their marital problems because they had noticed lately that they did love each other, but became powerless when they discover how happiness escaped their lives and that their relationship began to fall apart. They thought that this journey into the desert would help them revitalize the sense and beauty of their relationship.

Tunner is largely along for the ride, and has his sight on Kit. As he sees his friend's marriage in its way to collapse, his purpose now is to diffuse tension between the couple. Port suspects this, but does not really care. One night, Port invites Kit to accompany him for a walk in the city, but she refuses his advances, so he angrily leaves and ends up having an affair with an Arab prostitute named Marhnia who robs his wallet. In the morning, Port comes back home, he sees Tunner and Kit preparing themselves for the shopping and doubts that they spent the whole night together. Moving on, the Moresbys make the acquaintance of Mrs. Lyle and her son Eric, two Australian tourists, but seem to be very disgusting persons.

In a ride with the two new persons in their car, leaving Tunner and Kit to join them by train, Tunner gets much closer to Kit who in her turn surrenders to his amorous desire and make love together. Port's suspicion about Kit's hidden relationship with Tunner leads him to arrange for Eric Lyle to provide Tunner with transportation to Messad on the pretext that Port and Kit will meet him later. In fact, his main purpose is to separate them as soon as possible and have some moments of intimacy with his wife. Yet, Tunner is already disgusted and cannot wait to make his exit. Eric agrees and takes the opportunity to steal Port's passport without leaving any trace or evidence. Kit feels guilty and sad about Port's casting off Tunner, not about his absence but she is afraid that they will not catch up with him as soon as planned. She spends most of the day in her bed reading and being lost in her books, whereas Port is outside trying to discover every corner of AinKrorfa. While roaming around, he meets a local

shopkeeper, M. Chaoui, who invites him to an evening tea. Once there, Kit amuses and enjoys the atmosphere like never before and the most excited part for her is when the musician with a lute plays for them.

The Moresbys head by bus to BouNoura, another village to discover, where Port finds out that his passport is missing. The local military commander Lieutenant D'Armagnac is informed that it has been sold in the black market of Messad. Port realizes that the only suspect is Eric since his mother does not provide him with enough money. Thus, he is constantly asking for credit and loans to get meet needs. Even after D'Armagnac tells him that it can be brought back by Tunner, Port wants to avoid more contact with him, and he decides privately to carry on his way to El Ga'a in the night by bus with his wife telling nobody about their leaving.

With their arrival to the village, Port faces disease symptoms, and Kit takes him to the local hotel in order to have some rest. But unfortunately, the place does not really accommodate them from fear of infection. They have no other choice but to go forward and maintain their commitment of travelling. Port becomes unable to walk, Kit gets much worried about him and hires a driver to transport them to Sba village where is a military service branch of infirmary of the French army. The doctors diagnose Port with typhoid and Kit nurses him herself becoming increasingly brokenhearted at his condition.

Tunner arrives to BouNoura where he meets D'Armagnac. The latter receives word from his servant that the Moresbys have left the village and went to Sba. He then tells Tunner about Port's health condition and his location to reach them. Tunner arrives there and Kit sneaks out to meet him. She returns in the morning to find Port dead in his bed, it seemed that his situation worsened while she was gone and eventually loosed control of his body. She packs away all of her money into her carrying bag and sets off alone to the Sahara leaving

Port's body in the military infirmary. She sees a caravan of men and goods on a camel's back and without thinking she rushes in front of the caravan with her bag. She insists that they take her along and joins a young man, Belqassim, on his mount who starts touching her, but he is pushed away by his superior, an older merchant. Belqassim assails her while lying down on a rug, she acquiesces finding herself enjoying it, and the two have sexual relation.

Belqassim disguises her to look like an Arab boy and takes her to his house considering her as an unfortunate young traveler rescued by Belqassim as she was dying of thirst and still not fully recovered from the effects of her ordeals. He leads her to a small room and locks the door. She is vaguely terrified for no reason. He visits her every day and stays with her until twilight. Although held captive, Kit welcomes his advances. She is fed four times per day by a black woman. Kit never speaks to anybody in the house except Belqassim who portrays vivid pantomime for her since she does no effort to learn his language. She knows that he, in spite of his youth, has already a wife in Mechria and three living in that house. His wives realize that the guest is actually a woman and they attack her in her room. Belqassim imprisons Kit in a windowless room. She discovers that they have been poisoning her slowly, the reason why her body become weak. Somehow, she escapes to find a market where a man called Amar pays her a jar of buttermilk and takes her to their hotel. She finds herself disoriented and set upon by an assault by his mother because she hates native women. Amar takes Kit to Atalla's café and manages to give them a room.

Suddenly, a French-speaking local finds her; they tie her hands and force her to go back with them to the American consulate in Oran. She is essentially catatonic and unresponsive. Ferry, from the American consulate, informs her that Tunner was looking for her for months and that he is waiting for her arrival, but before they are reunited, she disappears and vanishes back to the streets of the desert.

3. The Algerian Sahara

With an area of 2,381,741 square kilometers, Algeria is the largest country in Africa; and the tenth largest one in the world. There are over 44 million of people from different cultures, dialects, and even beliefs. Having like these big numbers in both surface and population, for sure Algeria attracts tourists from everywhere in the world. Algeria enjoys pleasing sites.

Among the most attractive touristic destinations is the vast sahara which is claimed to be the second largest desert in the world and occupies more than four fifties of the Algerian territory. This extraordinary Sahara is the other big attraction of Algeria which contains the Hoggar Mountains. The latter consists of a plateau made of volcanic rock and eroded cliffs and granite needles from fascinating shapes in pink, blue or black basalt. TassiliN'Ajjer also is another famous prehistoric site in Algeria goes back at least as far as the Neolithic age¹. It is there where the ancestors painted and shaped their lives creating thousands of paintings and mysterious rock engravings, formations and inscriptions. That is why the UNESCO put up TassiliN'Ajjer on the "World Heritage List" in 1982.

The Algerian Sahara is a vast world full of animal migration scenes and human life. And for those who like adventures and discovery, it offers him different activities. From the rock arches, and immense dunes of Tadrart, to the ancient Kingdom of the M'Zab, the vast expanses of the Algerian Sahara fascinates the visitors.

Many years ago, people lived within or on the edge of this part of the country and till now there are many tribes in Algeria who call the Sahara home. More than 2 million people live in this desert and life sometimes can be hard. Most of the nomadic tribes look for places in where they can find water easily like in oases. Being the driest Sahara as the scientists

¹ Neolithic age also called New Stone Age is the last stage of cultural evolution among prehistoric humans.

believe, it is so hard to live in. TassiliN'Ajjer is considered to be the national park which has a unique ecosystem because of its water holding capacities. That is why we find vegetation more than the surrounding desert. In the east of the chain, one can observe the dangerous species of Saharan plants and trees that go back to prehistoric times. This fascinating awesome range of mountains are the rock paintings that archeologists find luxurious in the area. There are more than 30,000 depictions diverse wildlife images and shapes that are exciting from prehistoric age.

Describing Djanet as a jewel of the desert is not enough. It is just like a wonder land; those who visited it can understand and feel it. It is a settlement of many villages in the middle of the Sahara surrounding a breathtaking oasis. Everything is traditional, no urban buildings or transportation. It is like a land that is lost in time, but kept its nostalgia. Exploring the village and the entourage is much better than visiting a museum.

Djanet Oasis does not offer just the excitement and wild attractions. It is where the travelers feel peace and tranquility; it is where they can be free from everything even their own thoughts. In such a desolate area, one can refresh his brain and have an energetic soul. The inhabitants of Djanet are Touareg, a friendly and kind people. The Sahara Desert of Algeria is a land of beauty, title of adventures and a book of history.

4. Desert as an Exotic Space

4.1 Desert and Sahara Definition

Desert, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, is defined as “arid land with usually sparse vegetation”, “an area of water apparently devoid of life”, and “a desolate” or forbidding area”. Accordingly, this space refers to any barren area, a dry land, a region so arid because of the very little rainfall in which few forms of life can exist, that is why we cannot find many plants or sometimes no plants at all and few species of animals. Even though the

desert emphasizes lack of water, it does not mean necessarily that there is a high temperature as many people think. It is true that it is usually sandy like the famous African Sahara, but what lot of people ignore is that there are cold deserts like the one in Asia.

Desert, wilderness, waste or virgin land, all refer to large areas and emphasize lack of inhabitants because of the hard living conditions in which people must struggle to live in. Lack of water and hot weather are the two main enemies of the Nomads. It is not only for the humans to face these hostile conditions, even plants and animals living in the desert have to fight for survival in such a harsh space.

Looking for the real and suitable definition of desert, we have found plenty, albeit semantically related definitions, but one term related them: lack. Henceforth, the word desert refers to any place lacking of something.

In such a desolate place, one's mind can be relaxed and the body can be comfortable. Many writers, scientists, researchers and even artists have been inspired by this space of solitude and meditative repose, human existence, state of confusion, loss of sense of direction, delusion and death. These are not just simple thoughts or feelings; they are the ones that push any one to experience the life there and rethink once more about their real existence which can lead them into two contradictory ways; either to confirm the greatness of God having the power to create such an exotic space, or to totally deny their existence.

Many people think that the word Sahara and desert have the same meaning, but these two words are absolutely not the same. As we have defined it before, desert is any wasteland or desolate terrain that lack rain, animals, and vegetation. In contrast, when we say Sahara we make directly reference to the great desert in Africa. It is the hottest desert in the world and the third largest one following Antarctica and the Arctic. With an area of 9,400,000 square kilometers, it nearly covers half of North Africa, making it almost as much as many large

countries like Russia or Canada. The word Sahara comes from the Arabic language, the plural word (صحارى). So, when we say the ‘Sahara Desert’ it does not mean the ‘desert desert’ but the great desert of Africa.

4.2 Etymology of the Word Desert

The word ‘desert’ in English, ‘*deserto*’ in Italian and Portuguese, ‘*désert*’ in French, and ‘*desierto*’ in Spanish all have the same source where the term desert come from: the Latin ‘*desertum*’ which is the past participle of ‘*désere*’ meaning an abandoned place.

Before the 20th century, the sense of desert had no relation with aridity or barrenness. It was frequently used in the meaning of sparse population. By time, the word has expanded making reference to many other aspects as climate, aridity, sand, and abandonment. Desert, in its large connotation, often refers to wilderness, waste or wasteland. It also refers to leaving, quitting, forsaking or giving up.

5. The Study of Space Theory

The field of literature is a vast and rich domain. Yet the study of space has newly (from the end of the twentieth century onwards) come into use as a parameter of literary analysis and researches. In this part, we will introduce the theory of space as being the appropriate one to study our theme.

Some notable locals, landscapes and other types of geographical traits are often decisive to the effectiveness of art works. Yet the term of ‘Space and Spatiality’ have been decentred as a focus in favour of time or character in the field of literary studies, only passages and research guidelines have included a broad definition of this notion throughout its elements, functioning or representations.

5.1. Definition of Space

Space, in general, is the physical picture of the world that has a certain extension: length, width, and height. It is meant to be the key idea for understanding the structure of the universe that is represented in the coordination of coexisting objects and state of matter. In fact, it consists of any construction of knowledge ensuring that researchers have started to represent the spatiality of human life similarly to the traditional way of interpretation.

However, new approaches in literature rejected the transmitted idea that the space serves as simple as any decor, background or even a setting of description. The majority of people thought that ‘Space’ and ‘Place’ are defined as same aspect while they represent separate concepts that interchangeably interact. For that, Yi-Fu Tuan, a Chinese-American thinker known as the father of humanist geographpy, has contributed to explain the two aspects and explored the main points in which they differ in meaning.

In his book entitled *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*(1977), Tuan defines as it follows: «Space, a central idea in geography, and can be measured in absolute physical format –meters, miles, acres and so on. Place, on the other hand, occurs when humans attach meaning to a geographical area and define it as being more important than its surroundings “(6). According to Tuan, no substantial meaning has been devoted for space, it is something abstract. It tends to be a location without any social attachment for a human being. It has no influence, nor uphold for people to fill the space by bringing it into existence. While the concept of place, in contrast, has been described as an emplacement created by human experiences and aspirations in one particular space where they fulfil their biological requirement like food, water and so on, and by time, people become attracted to that piece of space since it inhabits their personal memories.

Tuan mentions in the same book that “Space is freedom, place is security” (3). That is to say that space is an open blank state with unlimited size; free from boundaries, it can be a city, sea, desert and so on. Whereas place is constantly confined, restricted in size where oneself feel safe and secured. Thus, it shapes people`s identities and in turn people and their culture shape a place.

The notion of space differs in use within the literary text. As Yves Tadie states in his work *Le Récit Poétique*(1978): “In a text, space is defined as the set of signs that produce an effect of representation”¹² (51); meaning that every space in a particular novel has its own definition, it happens according to the author`s intention. It is used either as real space or metaphorical one.

5.2. Types of Space

5.2.1. Real Space

It is viewed that many writers agree to the description of the space and give it a great importance, paying careful attention to all the details probably to provide the drawn out decoration, or the so-called illusion of reality; shapes, colours, lights, dimensions and moving characters. From this prospect, space is mainly connected to the natural setting; landscapes like desert, woods, oceans, or to specific places such as rooms, prisons, gardens, farms etc

Space is primarily understood as a composition of these physical structures being geographically described to reach a dynamic notion in order to create meaning on the semantic level.

The influential Soviet structuralist Yuri Lotman, specialized in the semiotics approach, was from the first scholars who pointed the literary space from the semiotic point of view.

² « Dans un texte, l'espace se définit comme l'ensemble des signes qui produisent un effet de représentation » (Yves, p.51)

Following Lotman's theoretical ideas, "What is not mentioned in the text does not exist" (Lotman, 213). That is to say that literary artistic space is only a prototype of the real one that can definitely not be recreated in other sense by the reader. According to him, describing any place's customs, clothing, or way of life are textual hints in which literary space provide more knowledge about the empirical reality for the reader. Using textual patterns of a space, the author verbalizes and records the real world's image through the exact description of those objects. This is vital not only to imagine space as it is described in the text but also to follow the narration of the physical aspects without going beyond the textual frames; adjusting to reality as given. However, these descriptions may suggest non-spatial meanings called the metaphorical or poetic space.

5.2.2. Space as a Metaphor (Poetic Space)

Over the last fifteen years, researches done by several linguists have proved that the natural language does not only function as a system of arbitrary signs as most linguists assume it to be since the time of De Saussure. A metaphor, as a literary device, draws comparison between two things that are ordinarily unlike but helps to explain an abstract idea in other terms of other one that is more concrete in order to facilitate the understanding of world's large parts that surround us. Nora Plesske, in her book *The Intelligible Metropolis*, states on behalf of Sarah Heinz that 'Following the theory of mentalities, we can thus understand metaphors as part of the outillage mental, or with cognitive psychology as an instrument of thinking and structuring social reality. Due to the transitional characteristics, metaphors are able to grasp non-sensory abstracts in imaginary or emotional categories'' (178).

In order to illuminate the functioning of the semantic system of text, researchers proceeded in a new direction soliciting space in metaphorical terms. In this case, the writer may skilfully use the elements of a space to create an impact of one's emotions. That is, when

two images set in the human mind at the same time, it reacts to the existing contradiction and that space becomes obvious in a deeper meaning. Hence, artistic aspects that are conveyed into space images become the center of interest instead of the concrete space.

In *The Narrative Discourse*, Gerard Genette uses the notion of space rather in a figurative sense since he believed in the existing relationship between literature and space and that it is expressed, at first place, in the level of language (spatial language) “where each element is qualified by the place it occupies in an overall picture and by the vertical and horizontal relationships it maintains with the elements parents and neighbours” (45). Second, he referred to the spatiality of the text or what is also called ‘the structure’ which is applicable also to paragraphs and chapters. In terms of the third element, Genette adds the aspect of literary spatiality that he calls ‘Semantic Space’ (47). This lies in the perception of the reader, it requires much intention in order to capture meaning and break down the limitations of the words.

From this angle, we may point out that space is considered to be a producer of meaning. For example while reading a literary text, we may wonder about the insertion of space that constitutes the story which leads to the interpretation and examination of the issues and techniques of a given element. Thus, Vincent Jouve recommended the three essential questions to ask in an analysis of the description of space as it follows: ‘’ its insertion (how does it fit into this vast whole that constitutes the story?); its operation (how is it organized as an autonomous unit?); its function(s) (what is it used for in the novel?)³ (40).

Gaston Bachelard, a French philosopher and epistemologist, contributes to the definition of space in his work *The Poetics of Space* (1958) which is a phenomenological inquiry to the meaning of spaces such as a house, a drawer or either wide expanded spaces

³ Vincent Jouve : « Son insertion (comment s’inscrit-elle dans ce vaste ensemble que constitue le récit ?) ; son fonctionnement (comment s’organise-t-elle en tant qu’une unité autonome ?) ; sa (ou ses) fonction(s) (à quoi sert-elle dans le roman ?) » (p.40).

like woods and vistas. He considered the house, for example, as an ultimate object being consciously studied. That is to say that the house is the place where personal experience attains its paradigm. He asserts that “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home” (Bachelard, 5), meaning that he examines home as a sort of initial universe where the human soul manifests through poetic and literary image. Bachelard proclaimed that “imagination augments the values of reality” (3). Under the light of this expression, we may retain that in every angle of the house spring up different sensations, for that he appeals human beings to exceed a pure description in order to seize the important qualities of space, it can be, for example, the intimacy of the house or either its bliss and protection that we feel being inside it.

Bachelard emphasizes the power of imagination over structure. In his point of view, imagination is “rather the faculty of deforming images provided by perception; it is above all the faculty of liberating us from first images [here, representations in perception], of changing images” (Kaplan’s *Concept of Intertextuality*, 160). For example while reading a text that describes the sea in a calm water state with a floating ship on, we may receive it as a symbol of silence, resistance, strength and depth of negativity. Using his deeper imagination to examine this description, the author may relate it to his personal life; i.e. the amount of troubles that hurt him silently, yet he resists and never loses strength. Here, space becomes as a fundamental actor of the story which means that it can be used as an explanation of some psychological appearance of characters including elements that influence its existence like climate and environment.

A word does not have to be limited to a single meaning, thus it can represent something which does not exist in the literal sense thanks to symbols. Writers and poets use symbolism in their writings to express an abstract idea in a concrete form by using sensory details which strengthen the work and make it more interesting. This way, an author may

express more and more with less since symbols indicate something usually greater than itself and different from its ordinary. For example, a space can symbolize curiosity about something not reachable for that very moment; here the person desires to catch up maybe knowledge further away than his/her capacity since knowledge has no end.

This perspective, in fact, tends to be less apparent but more open to be interpreted. This demands input from the readers in order to understand it and make it clear in their minds. Since the space is encoded in the brain of the author, readers try to extract its relevant sense. Back to Bachelard who states in his *Poetics of Space*: “The study of symbolic values attached either to landscapes that are presented in the narrators gaze or their places of stay. The house, the closed room, cellar, tomb ... closed or open places, confined or peripheral, underground or above ground, where the imagination of the writer unfolds” (31). Indeed Bachelard stressed out that space is imaginary contingent on what the writer wanted to create by i.e. his intention.

So as to understand the concepts of real space and metaphorical space, the French philosopher Julia Kristiva asserts that “Horizontal axis (subject-addressee) and vertical axis (text-context) coincide, bringing to light an important fact: each word is an intersection of words where at least one other word can be read” (66). It means that horizontal axis portrays the text as a deal between writer and reader, whereas the vertical axis represents a line in which one starts with text at the top and moving down to the exterior or contexts.

For Kristiva “What emerges from a text is not a point (a fixed meaning), but rather a dialogue of writer and reader, text and context” (65). That is to say that a word can highly produce a double meaning with more poignant significance. This symbolism is a sort of secret language between the writer and the reader. Consequently, if everything is exposed then imagination becomes limited and reading becomes a passive practice. Whereas if the story is introduced in complex and tricky themes, readers will be required to read between the lines to

fill up the missing senses. This will become a stimulus for active reading. Thus divergent explanations of the concept of space are represented in reference scope for literature.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have pointed and clarified many important points: the author's biography, a detailed synopsis of the novel, an introduction to the Algerian sahara and explained how the terms Desert and Sahara differ in order to provide a detailed idea and clear comprehension of the research paper. At last, we have dealt with the theory of space and its different types throughout we will help to examine the novel.

Chapter Two

The Representation of the Desert in Some American Literary Works and Orientalism

Introduction

In this chapter we will deal with Travel Literature; its definition, types, and purpose since *The Sheltering Sky* novel was written simultaneously while Paul Bowles made his journey to North Africa. In addition to the analysis of some American writings about desert. More than that we will add another term that will make our research easier to understand; which is “Orientalism” that we will explain by analyzing *Orientalism* by Edward Said.

1. Travel Literature

Travel Literature is one of the types of literature in which the traveler narrates his experience through his voyages and journeys to many different lands of the world. During his trip, the traveler describes what he sees, what happens, what he feels; and sometimes makes comparison with his homeland. He also talks about the people living in that place; their lifestyle, traditions, and even languages. It helps the reader to discover new lands and new places without moving. It can be the author’s imaginary story presented as if they are real events like the adventure stories.

This genre emerged in the 15th century when many travel descriptions were created by the discoverers of that time including Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. But this type of literature got more popular and widely read in the Victorian era. The most popular travel adventures were Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. By the 20th century, Travel Literature became more written and more read. Many new travelers started to note their real experiences in traveling or creating a story from their own imagination, so many readers wanted to explore new lands by traveling through the lines of the book.

Travel Literature can be divided into three categories. The first is called travel guide which helps tourists in travels. The writer should be faithful in the dates and places. The other

type is historic-geographical that is known in Renaissance writings. It describes numerous geographic regions and towns and narrates regional anecdotes and stories. Ibn Battuta's *The Travels* is the best book of this category in which he recounts the trips of his adult life. Personal discovery is the last type and the new one in the world of literature. Unlike the two precedent types, this one underscores the author's voyages to make an interrelation between him and that space. It reveals the inner psychological, spiritual and existential themes. This type is represented in Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* where he speaks about the desert not to give information, but to make reference to his emotions and its relation with it.

The purpose of Travel Literature is to know more about other people and their traditions, customs, beliefs and languages. It also helps to discover new lands and places without going there in person. Travel Literature is still an important form of literature since it is the hard copy of our real world. Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* is a book within the type of Travel Literature. He wrote the story according to his personal experiences in the Sahara desert of Morocco and Algeria of which he got obsessed.

Bowles in his novel tried to transfer his feelings about the desert to the reader and how it made him feel lonely, how it affected him to think twice about his existence. By traveling to this fascinating desert, he knew that he had to describe its influence on him by building characters that embodied him.

2. American Literature:

As many other national literature, the American literature also has its own characters. American writers give a huge importance to the individual. So, they emphasize on the equality of people and their democracy. The boundlessness of space and the celebration of nature also are often present in the American writings. Many American authors were thirsty to create their own new directions of writing breaking up with the old traditions. In addition to

the sense of humor that is represented in plenty of sentimental and serious works that is to say that even in difficult sad situations the human is able to laugh. Moving to the major themes about which the American authors write about most of the time. We find themes like the relationship with nature, society and science and isolation, disillusionment and loss and the American dream. They are the most used themes in the American literature which are represented in many different forms, from novels to short stories.

Literature, in general, is wider than any one's imagination. In fact, literary works can be somehow a solution to the daily issues that humans face. By touching many human's sides and using different styles which can be helpful for the reader who suffers from the same issues as the characters. Many novelists and poets do their best to make the story of American literature worth telling.

2.1. The Desert in Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*

Samuel Clemens alias Mark Twain is a famous American author who wrote numerous novels including the two well-known books *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The publication of these books marked the success of his carrier as a writer. Like Paul Bowles, Mark Twain also wrote about desert in his two novels *Roughing It* and *The Innocents Abroad*.

Although Mark Twain is not considered as a nature writer, in his novel *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), he recounts his traveling experience through Europe and the Holy Land where, with seven other travelers, visited many places including the desert which he describes challenging and resistant, a place which does not accept in anyway the urbanization or development.

The Innocents Abroad plays an important role in highlighting the case of deserts in American literature. Twain celebrates the American desert in order to shape the role of wilderness in building national identity.

Twain's description of the desert is romantic as we find these expressions in many parts of the novel; for example he describes a prone camel by comparing it with "a goose swimming" but a standing camel with "an ostrich with an extra set of legs"p.489. we find in the same lines many beautiful descriptions of different creatures of the desert such as "a mud-turtle" and "the gray lizards".

The celebration of the desert in Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* is an occasion in American writings that the ecocritic Tom Lynch names "xerophilia" which means "desert appreciation". At the point when the nature writers like Edward Abbey and Mary Austin honor the American desert, they are surely following a way blazed by Twain's writings.

2.2. Desert in Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*

Desert Solitaire is an autobiographical book written by Edward Abbey published for the first time in 1986. It portrays Abbey's distraction with the desert of the American Southwest. He depicts how the desert influences on a multifaceted, tactile level.

A large number of thoughts and topics drawn out in the book are opposing. For instance, Abbey is obstinately restricted in different areas to modernity that distances man from their indigenous environment and destroys the desert landscapes, but then at many points totally depends on current creations to settle and explore the desert. Furthermore, he explains his sincere regard for all types of life in his way of thinking. However, he depicts unhesitatingly his disdain for the cows he herds in the ravines, and in another part he cruelly stones a rabbit, irate about their excess in the desert.

Abbey purposely features a significant number of the paradoxes and makes remarks on them in his last section, especially with respect to his conception of the desert itself. He represents the desert as “the flaming globe, blazing on the pinnacles and minarets and balanced rocks”(7).

According to Abbey, the desert symbolizes power and solidarity, but in the other hand, he additionally considers the desert as a merciless, barbaric and cruel. He also claims that it can be both the starting point of one’s life or the ending of another.

The desert about which Abbey writes introduces a strict reality unknown by the majority. It is this cruelty that makes “the desert more alluring, more baffling, more fascinating”(299); expanding the energy of life.

2.3. Desert of Mary Austin’s *The Land of Little Rain*

The Land of Little Rain by Mary Hunter Austin was published in 1903. The book contains a bunch of fourteen short stories about the citizens and the landscapes of the American Southwest. The message that relates the series all together is the environmental conservation that the writer focuses on the most.

The desert landscape first appears in the top of the book, in the first four chapters where Austin writes about the inhabitants and their wildlife in the desert. Then she continues her following five stories describing a particular community of people inside the desert in which they are all associated digressively by the water trails. While the last chapters finish in an undefined and ideal community in the desert.

Austin in this book represents a nitty account of the life and nature of the Mojave Desert which she calls *The Land of Little Rain*. She describes the desert using romantic expressions and beautiful words from the beginning of the book to its end. As a nature writer

Austin succeeded to make her book among the most influential writings of America. She knew how to perfectly depict the land of desert and the nature by building extraordinary images that the reader can imagine while exploring the lines. Desert in Austin's *The Land of Little Rain* represents a calm nature with an innocent desert

3. Algerian Desert as a Conquered Space

3.1. The Desert in Albert Camus' *La Femme Adultère* and *Le Renégat*

Albert Camus is known as an existentialist writer using approximately absurdity in all his novels; questioning the purpose of existence and the meaning of life. Living in Algeria as a pied-noir at the same time of French colonialism, Camus has been obsessed with Algeria, many places affected him. Camus fell in love with the beauty of the country, he had a spiritual relationship with it. This explains why most of his novels' scenes take place in several towns of Algeria. Even though many of Camus' Algerian landscapes are Mediterranean (the scenes set in coastal towns); he does not ignore the fact that the Algerian Sahara fascinates him. It is for him a paradoxical place which represents death and freedom in a strange way. Many researchers agree that Camus uses desert a lot in his writings, which is the result of spending the most of his childhood in the Sahara desert. English Showalter in his study of *L'Exil et Le Royaume* speaks about the desert of Camus saying: "the mirror of humanity's existential aloneness in a barren, meaningless creation."(30).

In his two short stories *La Femme Adultère* and *Le Renégat* published in 1957 in the collection *L'Exil et Le Royaume*, Albert Camus makes the setting of both stories in the Sahara.

La Femme Adultère tells us the story of a female protagonist named Janine who takes the road to the Sahara with her husband, dreaming of a charming oasis where she could finally find herself. During her first visit to the fort, she feels disappointed of the sand that looks at

her from everywhere and the ugly stones of the desert, she feels alone, abandoned and lost. But when she returns there alone later, she discovers the real representation of the desert; the mystery world of the desert liberates her soul. In this limitless space, endless sky and dreadful silence, Janine succeeds to find an emotional connection with the desert and its people. In this story, Camus describes the desert as a peaceful nature where the human can feel safe, tranquil and calm.

In contrast with the first story, the protagonist of *Le Renégat* confronts the real face of the desert where he suffers from the dangerous people of the Sahara. They oblige him to worship their fetish of the desert. In addition to those cruel people who torture him, the renegade is afraid of the desert of his exile, afraid of the silence of both exterior and inner desert. At the end of the story, his awareness does not bring a good result; he does not find the tolerance of the desert, so he simply dies there. The story ends with a line which ensures his tragic death “a fistful of salt fills the mouth of the babbling slave” (). The desert here symbolizes solitude, loss, and death of the protagonist who struggles to worthlessly survive.

Albert Camus knew how to perfectly use the theory of absurdism in his writings, successfully describing the meaninglessness of his characters' lives and their absurdity in a desert that seems to be the perfect space in which persons can meet, as Martin Esslin, in his book *Absurd Drama*, says the feeling of the absurd: “the fear and loneliness in an alien and hostile universe”.

4. Orientalism in Literature:

Orientalism is the study or the way of seeing Arab people and Asian subjects like language, traditions, cultures, religions, customs, history and even the way of thinking which means the Arabs' life style in general.

These studies were done by writers, artists, intellectuals and designers from the west (Europe and USA). The study of the east often includes negative images about Arabs, it often described people as if they are barbaric, exotic, harsh and uncivilized compared to the Europeans and Americans.

These studies also have more emphasize with studying Islam and Muslims and introducing them as if they were terrorists.

The studies became known under the name of Orientalism by the late of 18th century, passing by three steps; colonial Orientalism, post colonial Orientalism and new Orientalism which is still alive today.

Among the main old Orientalists that we may include here is William Jones (1746-1794) who much encouraged the studies of the Orient when he in 1784 created the Asiatic society of Bengal to support the Oriental studies. He himself wrote two books which are the result of his oriental researches *Institutes of Hindu and Muslim Law* published in 1794 and *Muhammedan Law of Inheritance* published in 1792. Henry Thomas (1765- 1837) is another main Orientalist who was influenced by the Orient civilization. He was one of the founders of the Royal Asiatic society in 1807. He wrote several books during his residence in India speaking about different points and treating many subjects like agriculture, commerce and religion. He published *On The Religion and Philosophy of The Hindus* in 1858 and *The Agriculture and Commerce of Bengal in 1792*. The third Orientalist who deserves to be mentioned is Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751-1830) an English philologist and Orientalist who undertook Oriental studies under the influence of William Jones. He, by his side also wrote about Indian and Bengali laws and rules of grammar in his book *A grammar of The Bengal Language* which is published in 1778. After Halhed we can take Charles Wilkins as an important Orientalist too. He also was among the founding member of the Asiatic society

of Bengal in 1784. He was a scholar of Islam Religion and many other religions for having the hobby to know and to learn more about them and their customs. He was a lover of languages too, that's why in 1810 he published the new version of John Richardson's *Persian and Arabic Dictionary*. Horace Hay Man Wilson (1786-1860) the fifth and the last Orientalist in our list. He in addition to the precedent Orientalist was also a member of the Royal Asiatic society, and its director in 1837. His works were essentially based on Indian literature and theatre. He published *Mackenzie Collection: A Descriptive Catalogue of The Oriental Manuscript* in 1828 and *Sketch of The Religions Sections of The Hindus* published in 1828.

4.1. Edward Said and Orientalism:

Orientalism is a book written by Edward Wadie Said (1935-2003) published in 1978 in which he analyzed the term of Orientalism as a critical concept to give a detailed look about the life in the east.

The theorist Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*; employs interpretation and analysis to look closely at western depictions of the "Orient" and question what they are doing and living in reality. One of his main points is that western representations of the east and Middle East consistently identify them as "Other", putting them against the West. Said demonstrates that implicit assumptions about the "Orient's" otherness underline most Western thought and writing about it through thorough research of a variety of texts and other materials.

In the preface to his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said gave many different definitions of the term "Orientalism". Here are a few examples; to begin with, "Orientalism" is a way of thinking that is predicated on an ontological and epistemological contrast between "The Orient" and most of the time "The Occident". Said maintained that his contrast highlighted the Occident's superiority over the Orient's inferiority. Second, Orientalism is a branch of academic study that encompasses anyone who teaches, researchers, or writes about the

Middle East. Third, Orientalism began in the seventeenth century as a “corporate organization for dealing with the Orient”.

Orientalism is defined as a Western way of dominating, reforming, and exercising authority over the Orient. Furthermore, it is a method of dealing with the Orient (the East) that is founded on the Orient’s unique position in European Western culture and experience.

According to this viewpoint, the Middle East is immobile, unchangeable, and unable to identify itself. As a result of Orientalism, the West assumed the role of representing the Orient, exposing it to exploitation. The goal of Orientalism is to seize control of the Orient and deprive it of its power to speak for itself. The Western representation of the Orient, according to Said, is shaped by stereotypes and prejudices.

Edward Said employed many variations of the word “Orient”, which literally means the East, the direction from which the sun rises, in his work *Orientalism*. Geographically, “Orient” refers to the Middle East, Asia, and the Far East, all of which were formerly part of a European empire. The term “Orient” is used by Said to refer to a system of representation created by political factors that brought the “Orient” or “East” into Western Empire, western learning a Western awareness. The term is used by the West in reference to the East. It is a reflection of the inferior, alien (Other) to Occident (West).

Said also clarifies that he is not attempting to cover the entire region. He focuses on how researchers from the United States, England, and France have approached Arab societies in the Middle East and North Africa. His book spans the era from the late eighteenth century to the present day.

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said’s starting point is that the existence and development of every civilization necessitates the existence of a competing “Other”. As a result, Europe created the Middle East (the Orient) as the ultimate “Other” in order to develop its own self-

image. The Middle East (the Orient) and the West (the Occident) are constructed realities that do not correspond to any stable reality that exists as a natural truth.

Edward Said explicitly said in his work that Orientalism was not the result of colonial power. However, it predates colonization as a pattern of knowing. According to him the Orient's vision dates back to the ancient Greeks. Prior to the colonial period, however, Orientalism was a literary discourse with a long history of writers, texts, study, and conceptualizations. As an example of early attempts to build an Orient, Said cited Aeschylus' *The Persians*.

Nonetheless, according to Said, Orientalism has only recently become a "science" or an expanded body of knowledge and tradition. He highlighted two intellectuals who pioneered the shift from literary to scientific knowledge in Orientalism in 18th century. Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetile-Duperron is one, while William Jones is the other. These two intellectuals replaced Orientalism's literary foundations with one that appeared to be scientific and impartial. Their focus has shifted away from the description of the strange and toward its comprehension.

According to Said, knowledge or comprehension of the Orient attained via scientific research leads straight to control and authority over the Orient. The primary premise is that the Orientalist has a better understanding of the Orient than the Orientals themselves. Because of his paternalistic mindset, he comes to the inevitable and reasonable conclusion that put the Orient under his control.

Said's interpretative talents underpin his analysis and create the basis for a debate that has influenced literary criticism, philosophy, and even politics.

Conclusion

It has been shown throughout this chapter that *The Sheltering Sky* is considered to be a kind of travel literature since it contains the suitable characteristics. We also provided some American figures who dealt with the theme of desert in their writings, how they described desert and what it mean to them. in addition to another related theme which is “Orientalism” that we explain according to Edward Saids’ book *Orientalism*. In the light of the preceding elements, we depicted that desert in fact can be understood in different ways according to the writer’s intention and his will of portraying a specific aspect on behalf of this natural landscape in order to add a certain beauty to the text. Having made clear all the points mentioned above, the next chapter will open the doors for readers and make it easier to understand *The Sheltering Sky*’s analysis showing out the representation of the desert in this novel.

Chapter Three

The Representation of the Algerian Desert in Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky*

Introduction

Going on further in this research paper, we will analyze Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* concentrating on the literary representation of the desert -main focus of our analysis- as being an altered space in relation to the protagonists who fight for an authentic space. In our case study, Paul Bowles insisted on the notion of "Otherness" in his novel from his trip to Algerian Sahara, as well as on how the characters try several times to find some meaning for themselves in order to achieve their central goal of unity.

1. "Otherness" of the Desert in *the Sheltering Sky*

"Otherness" is based on two words which are the "other" and the 'difference'. It is the characteristic of what is other; everything that is different from the self. The word "Other" does not mean the individual only as a human being, but it also indicates places, things etc. Therefore, "Otherness" is the gaze of the "Other", it takes its position and its state from this difference. Indeed, space is part of otherness, that is to say it is the representation of space in relation to individuals.

It is customary, when questioning the images of the other in literature, to study human otherness. The fact that the "Other" belongs to the same species as the self-constitutes an implicit shared by all researchers, who take as their point of support, depending on different cases: sexual, cultural, religious, physical, social, etc. to develop their study, when it is not the notion of difference itself that is at the core of the discussion. However, if we define everything that is not me is other, we can expect that the forms of otherness are multiple and cannot be reduced to the human species. It is true that the stories where human otherness constitutes the main, determining form, are the most numerous, but this does not justify excluding others.

Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* forces to rethink the question of otherness -that is the central question in this novel- but which is not just about interpersonal relationships. The protagonists, an American couple traveling in North Africa, forge relationships with several people, but these interactions are incidentally few in number and often stereotyped. It is less the story of two strangers in the middle of the crowd than the story of two Westerners confronted with a foreign geography, one feeling a boundless fascination with the desert, the other being irrational.

Of all the forms of otherness presented in this novel, that of space constitutes the most radical form. The desert is first and foremost, for Port Moresby, an imaginary figure associated with emptiness. The journey begins precisely for this reason, because this figure corresponds to the depressive state in which he finds himself. "Otherness" appears ridiculously when we compare it to the relationship that is established with this lifeless place that becomes the object of the quest. It is therefore important to be able to distinguish different forms of "Otherness", different degrees, and different attitudes even on the part of the person who builds it. Actually, it seems difficult to understand the real issue of "Otherness" in a novel like that of Bowles' in which humans are literally immersed by their surroundings, where the "sheltering sky" crumbles every time it supervises the barren land of southern Algeria. From this point we may wonder: is there necessarily the other "? What can we assimilate of a desert? It is difficult to assign and determine what has nothing human, to consider it as "the other" or "another" in relation to oneself. A language game that may not seem important, but is enough revealing the takeover of human "Otherness".

Before retracing the different stages in the series of transformations, it is important to stop for a moment at the beginning of the novel. The first chapter shows a man in the process of to wake up, to emerge from nothingness in which he was immersed during his afternoon nap: "he had come back through vast regions from nowhere" (11). It's about a particularly

painful scene, because the first thing that brings a feeling of familiarity is infinite sadness: "the certitude of an infinite sadness (...) it alone was familiar" (11).

Accompanied along with his friend Tunner, Port says that "Everything's getting gray, and it'll be grayer. But some places'll withstand the malady longer than you think. You'll see, in the Sahara here... " (16). Here we assume that desert turns out to be a great place for someone looking to escape the Western civilization, in particular the consequences of the WWII, and which at the same time is considered to be an adventure. At this part, a relational reason is added: the text indeed mentions that Port is looking during this journey to reconnect with his wife. It is clear, however, that his attitude very seldom matches this intention. The idea of leaving all that is familiar exceeds the rest and remains the main source of pleasure: "The idea that at each successive moment he was deeper into the Sahara than he had been the moment before, that he was leaving behind all familiar things, this constant consideration kept him in a state of pleasurable agitation "(109). It is necessary for him to escape the known world to find the happiness: the desert is a refuge, a place of exile far from civilization, a different place; no familiar nor westerner.

The scene in which he goes on a bicycle with Kit to visit the surroundings of Boussif offers a good overview of what attracts him in this landscape: It was such a wonderful place, such moments that he loved above anything else in life; she knew that, and she also knew that he loved them more if she could be there to experience them with him. And although he was aware that the very silences and emptinesses that touched his soul terrified her, he could not bear to be reminded of that. (100). If Port greatly appreciates the silence and emptiness that characterize the desert, it is because, basically, that's what he aspires to. The trip to the South will be an opportunity for him to experience a radical transformation. Paul Bowles, when asked about this novel in an interview by Evans in 1971, placed himself his concern in the

foreground: "what I wanted to tell was the story of what the desert can do to us. The desert is the protagonist"(12).

This lifeless place literally fascinates the writer and causes him to lose all human attributes one by one. During his journey, he more and more likes other space, at least as it does. At the end of his course towards the South, he will be literally eradicated, become identical to the desert, silent, empty, and lifeless.

Far from being a simple decor, or an exotic destination, the desert offers the character the possibility of contemplating an interior landscape. For him, life is not taken for granted: it only brings up sadness and appears totally meaningless. Port confesses to Kit that he never really got into existence: "We've never managed either one of us, to get all the way into life" (101). Under the light of this quote we understand that only this inexplicable attraction remains for the endless charge that looms in the distance, a strange pleasure of letting oneself be drawn into the void.

The first step in the alteration of the character, which corresponds to the journey from Oran to BouNoura, coincides with the loss of the passport. By declaring it to local authorities, Port manifests uncertain trouble: " It's strange ', he said with a deprecatory smile, how ever since I discovered that my passport was gone, I've felt only half alive "(159-160). The discomfort created by the loss of the passport seems preventing the man twice to admire the landscape. As it is mentioned in the novel when "The landscape was there, and more than ever he felt he could not reach it. The rocks and the sky were everywhere, ready to absolve him, but as always he carried an obstacle within him" (168). He crosses the obstacle when he decides to leave for El Ga'a anyway.

The recovery of the passport does not give the expected result. It was not stolen by the Arab hostel owner as Port suspected, but by Eric with whom he had made part of the journey

by car. Arriving to El Ga'a, they must urgently set off again in the direction of the health military camp in Sbâ because of Port's epidemic. A course full of unforeseen events which nevertheless seems to be traced in advance in Port's eyes: "it had been one strict, undeviating course inland to the desert, and now he was very nearly at the center" (198). This second stage, from El Ga'a to Sbâ, opens under the sign of the relationship to writing, to trace. Installed in the back of a truck, he remembers that the white space after the word "Profession" had aroused the distrust of Algerian customs officers and that his wife had saved the bet by saying, not that he lived on his pensions, but that he was a writer. Amused for a moment by the idea of getting back to writing, he admits that he prefers not to leave any traces: "It was all right to speed ahead into the desert leaving no trace" (200). The words will come back to haunt him at most strong of his illness, since he will remain alone with them, having lost all contact with his alike.

In the last stage of the journey to Port, who severely altered by the disease, in Kit's eyes seems to be nothing more than a body suffering, a biological organism with nothing human left: "He's stopped being human, 'she said to herself. Illness reduces man to his basic state: a cloaca in which the chemical processes continue. The meaningless of the involuntary" (214). Here we notice that he becomes dehumanized and gets closer to the elements that make him lose his intention. Moreover, it is interesting to observe that the wind and the sand, natural elements linked to the desert, play from this moment a very important role: one has the impression that they somehow preside over the character's agony. The wind begins to blow the very evening of their arrival and transforms into a real sandstorm: "she became conscious of the noise of the wind outside. It was like the roar of the sea. " (206). Compared to the sea, then to an animal, the wind seeks, one would say, to enter the room: "It began to make a singular, animal-like sound beneath the door. (207). It seems like these elements of nature

come to tell something that is going to happen using its specific and different words. It is during this night that Port exchanges his last words with Kit.

During his hallucinations, Port sees the words detach from him. He loses contact with reality and feel carried away in a foreign world. This is highlighted as it follows: “It was an existence of exile from the world” (222). Standing at this point, the sandstorm took him from humanity to the desert, from basic consciousness, from language to matter. In a movement of fusion with the expanse desert, it slides slowly towards nothingness, towards absolute night (“absolute night” 101) which hides behind the protective sky. Bowles described this at the end of chapter 23 as “his cry went on the final imageA black star appears, a point of darkness in the night sky’s clarity. Point of darkness and gateway to repose. Reach out, pierce the fine fabric of the sheltering sky. Take repose.” (233). Focusing on these lines, Paul Bowles gives a description of the dark night which is a symbol to describe the protagonist’s death. That is to say that counting is complete since even words have given way to be finally covered forever by silence. But the fusion goes far beyond the elements of the human body, since the individual seems to have been swallowed up somewhere by the earth and sky, absorbed by the landscape.

2. The inner desert: Absence of Meaning and Union

This part centers on the situation confronted by rational western awareness of finding meaning inside a world that does not offer the guarantee of any supernatural reply to presence. The author seeks to discover within the novel a value of hope. The novel clearly shows bowles' conviction within the "absolute hopelessness of the whole business of living" (DanielHalpern,177). As Port and Kit ponder capriciously from sensation to sensation, unwittingly looking for wholeness in life they feel they have misplaced, the desert gets to be

both an image of their otherworldly vacancy as well as of the void. Here, nature uncovers more starkly than somewhere else its dazzle, totally different confront, its unconcern for the predetermination of man. Among this dry place, Bowles' characters meander capriciously from area to another like purge pioneers ensured as it were by the temporary nature of their civilized awareness.

Bowles said in his *Their Heads are Green and their Hands are Blue* that his expectation within the novel was to appear that "what the desert can do to us, to reveal the inner desert of spirit" (1957.128). His sky just hide sand shelters the heroes from the frightfulness from obscurity in an unoccupied universe. There were no instant of otherworldly understanding further away than the boundaries of the inhabiting self image, just foolishness and death. Bowles protagonists are constrained to experience a sorrowful ripping-away of their civilized sense of self in a universe undressed of meaning that gives no trust of recovery on understanding into any elevated meaning to life. Bowles concedes that he could be a casualty of this rationalistic state of mind which robs its individuals of sense of meaning and clears out them in a consistent state of separated and careless uneasiness: "My books are written from a point of view which precluded the existence of supernatural consciousness... what I wanted was to see everyone aware of being in the same kind of metaphysical impasse I was in. Nobody likes to feel alone. I know because I always think of myself as completely alone and I imagine other people as a part of something else." (Halpern,167).

The stream of his character's otherworldly and passionate life offers solidified inside a benumbed awareness which cannot jump out of itsself-created jail. In any case, inspite of the fact that he rejected the West both in his real life and through his characters, he stands up to the sentimental idea of finding the respectable local in another customs and beliefs; consequently making them into nostalgic images for the solidarity of soul that western man has lost.

There is insufficient alter in Bowles' characters. The antagonistic void of the desert combined with the need of defensive structures advertised by the West only uncover and fulfill the self-destructive natures which characters brought with them. Bowles requests that the obligation for finding meaning rests exclusively on man's capacity to discover a few common ground in life between his intuitive, which pulls him towards his world and individual man, and his rational awareness, which pulls him back into the dull corners of the inward self. Throughout this novel there's a steady want in both Port and Kit to discover a little kind of wholeness in life. As Port recognizes, this is what Bowles' characters are incapable to get a handle on in any changeless and decent form:

"You know, "said Port... 'the sky here's very strange. I often have the sensation when I look at it that it's a solid thing protecting us from what's behind.

"Kit shuddered... "But what is behind?"

"Nothing, I suppose. Just darkness. Absolute night."

"Please don't talk about it now. "There was agony in her entreaty.

"You know what?" he said with great earnestness. "I think we're both afraid of the same thing. And for the same reason. We've never managed, either one of us, to get all the way into life. We're hanging on to the outside for all we're worth, convinced we're going to fall off at the next bump."

At length she said: "But if we're not in it, then we are more likely to— fall off." (101)

Bowles had said that "meaning is always dependent on others, it can never be created in total isolation." Port is incapable to confront up to the unpleasant isolation which his logic requests, however he cannot also give up that nihilistic portion of himself which needs that he remains separated from. Port's death is signified by the physical separation between them; it

is really the moment where their absolute partition starts. Since they do not share life now, they cannot share the same space anymore.

The desert may offer an elude from the grayness of the character's claim culture, but it does not permit them to elude the inner desert of soul which they have received from their western origins.

Conclusion

This excursion to Algerian desert can be seen from two focal points of view. The first has to do with topographical angle through which a surface portrayal of the spots that the three American explorers (Port, Kit and Tunner) set their feet on. Whereas the second is identified with what is mental and profound mulling over how this trip changed the manner in which those travelers see one another and the rest of the world. The arrival in the desert indeed causes a significant deterioration, both physical and mental. This deterioration undergoes progressively, meaning that the closer the human approaches the desert, the more he makes confused noise (his American identity, his language skills, his body), without being intentional of course, until it leads up into emptiness. If he chose Algeria, it is because he does not accept the events that have upset the Western civilization.

In short, we notice that this trip and this displacement in space add a lot of things in the personality of Bowles. His discoveries, his inspirations and his meeting with the "Other" made him this orientalist writer, poet and painter.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

At the end of our work, we moved in the Saharan space altogether with the Paul Bowles in order to discover the representation of the desert space in his novel. This journey in this particular space has offered us the chance to discover and find the other in his cultural habits, in his way of thinking, in his quintessence, predominantly to satisfy our intellectual interest. We have travelled with Bowles all along this trip to know his picturesque literature and read his philosophical contemplations in order to grasp the impact of space on the individual.

The desert landscape is not caught by the faculties, its image is not that of a regular environment plentiful in fauna, verdure and differential minerals; it is a space known through the creative mind, a removed spot resounding with a particular mental express, a specific disposition towards life. Going as far as possible, following the path that prompts the desert, as though to investigate the constraints of our own musings, encountering void until it sucks us in. So, you could state that the desert represents emptiness since it is an unfilled space, a climate where there are no delicate presence (things or individuals), yet it additionally joins the void of presence recognized by Port, which needs reality and interest. It hence arrives to a symbolic dimension, particularly since it is related to death (Port's passing away when he arrives in the desert which appears to be unusual).

Space is a determining component that conducts behavior and individual qualities. Even the Sahara is a conflicted space which represents a symbolic meaning. Furthermore, in this desert space, intercultural experience develops and advances being in contact with the “Other”.

To answer our research questions, we ensure that Bowles is the “Other” according to this desert space. Likewise, the contact between him as an individual and the “Other” (space,

Arabs, and so forth) creates a certain exchange of social and cultural values. In fact, his emotional relationship and admiration for this landscape had a notable effect on the composition of the novel in which it shows that the desert inhabits him.

Port and Kit's inward emptiness is further uncovered and given free curb within the tremendous squanders of the Sahara since it totally denies them of the few sanctions Western society still gives. Paul Bowles in fact is considered to be an orientalist writer since he employed translation and investigation to give a close sight at western representations of the "Orient" and raise doubts about their lives in reality that reliably distinguish them as "Other", putting them against the West. His work clearly outlines the present day man or woman's perplexity for whom there's no put and no esteem that will support life and whose any endeavor to discover a few shape of completion and meaning outside his rational awareness leads him in a way or another towards total self-destruction.

Moreover, we believe that the desert seized the soul of Paul Bowles since he thinks that it is good and terrible on earth at the same time. He is the indication of good to the extent that he considers it as a wellspring of motivation thanks to its enchanting nature and absolute silence. Presently, this good can be transformed into evil and can even be opposed to humans to the extent that it experiences thirst and very hot weather. We, hence, detect that Bowles represents the paradox of this Saharan space like a masterful work of art of the inward desert of his own spirit and barren psychological landscape. As Gena Dagele Caponi calls *The Sheltering Sky* in her *Romantic Savage* "a travel book about an inner journey through states of consciousness" (127).

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Abstract

The present research investigates the representation of the Algerian desert in Paul Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky* (1949). Following the elements of the theory of space, our dissertation will examine the notion of Otherness in the novel. This research paper strives to give a better understanding of the effects of this lifeless landscape on people living in it. The work aims at shedding another light on Paul Bowles literary work and presents a new image of the North African Sahara.

Key Words: Algerian Sahara, Space, Desert, Otherness, Travel Literature.

Résumé

Cette recherche étudie la représentation du désert Algérien dans *Un Thé au Sahara* de Paul Bowles (1949). En suivant les éléments de la théorie de l'espace, notre thèse examinera la notion d'altérité dans ce roman. Cet ouvrage vise à éclaircir l'œuvre littéraire de Paul Bowles et présenter une nouvelle vision du Sahara de l'Afrique du Nord.

Mots clés: Sahara Algérien, Espace, Désert, Altérité, Littérature de Voyage.