A transnational postmodernism: North Africa as a locus for postmodern fiction

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A Transnational Postmodernism:
North Africa as a Locus for Postmodern Fiction

by
Steve Weber

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ABSTRACT

Examining a 25-year period of literature about post-WWII North Africa by Paul Bowles, William S. Burroughs, Kateb Yacine, and Pierre Guyotat, A Transnational Postmodernism describes the creation of a particular kind of postmodern literature that has been shaped by the concerns of its colonial/postcolonial context. Such a shaping introduces postmodernity as a problem. This problem—astutely identified by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s Empire—is that, at the moment of decolonization, as we move from modern to postmodern regimes of power and control, the typical elements of postmodernity (hybridity, et al) are no longer as necessarily liberatory as they once were against modern regimes. Postmodern regimes co-opt elements of postmodernity for their own purposes. Written at the moment of decolonization in North Africa, the novels of Bowles, Burroughs, Kateb, and Guyotat explore how resistances defined and defended in both Postcolonial and Poststructural Theories are actually the ingressions for postmodern power and control. Thus, Bowles’ traveler in North Africa illustrates the vulnerabilities of infinite adaptability under mechanisms of torture and violence found within a colonial regime; Kateb’s Nedjma illustrates a nonlinear filiation whereupon a fragmented, hybrid Algerian identity offers no resolution for a difficult postcolonial situation attempting to negotiate its French colonial past; Guyotat’s novels depict a postcolonial Algeria that is not free, but is further enslaved, setting most of his novels in brothels which are meant to communicate the essentially prostitutional nature of human relationships—especially in a global economy; and, Burroughs’ Naked Lunch explores the International Zone of Tangier as the concentration of numerous Western/global powers within one colonized space where the fluidity/hybridity of individual identity is exploited, proving the individual to be an absolute construct that can be deconstructed and reconstructed according to the whims of the powers that be. In its
effectiveness and its efficiency, the subtle and insidious nature of postmodern control proves to be much more difficult to resist than its more overt predecessor.
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INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF POSTMODERNITY IN THE (POST)COLONIAL WORLD

This dissertation focuses on postmodern literature written in post-World War II North Africa, and its selection of four authors splits this literature into two parts: Americans in Tangier (Paul Bowles and William S. Burroughs) and The Algerian War (Kateb Yacine and Pierre Guyotat). These authors have been carefully chosen to indicate a triangulation of postmodern national literatures: that is, the triangulation of American and French postmodern literature reveals not only the important role North Africa plays in the development of French and American literatures, and not only the vitality of North Africa’s own postmodern literature, but it also illuminates the transnational, symbiotic relationships amongst these three literatures and their development. What is discovered in such a triangulation is that while such transnational networks would provide the necessary conditions for the creation of such remarkable and innovative literature, this literature would also reveal—somewhat paradoxically—everything that is wrong with these transnational networks. More significantly, this revelation—one that I have called “the problem of postmodernity”—is not confined to North Africa; it helps us to better understand the general relationships between power, control, and identity in the postmodern era. This study is concerned with literary explorations of power, control, and identity in a North African, post-WWII, transnational context; it is an attempt to discover what such a context can reveal to us about postmodernity that a study of strictly Western postmodern literature would not necessarily reveal.

These four authors explore postmodernity as a problem in the colonized/postcolonial world—a problem that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri articulate in Empire (2000), disagreeing with much of poststructural theory which had advocated postmodernity as a
necessarily powerful resistance to national and international control mechanisms. Their summary of postmodern (largely Deleuzian) theorists is that their analyses point toward the possibility of a global politics of difference, a politics of deterritorialized flows across a smooth world, free of the rigid striation of state boundaries.

[…] The affirmation of hybridities and the free play of differences across boundaries, however, is “liberatory” only in a context where power poses hierarchy exclusively through essential identities, binary divisions, and stable oppositions. The structures and logics of power in the contemporary world are entirely immune to the “liberatory” weapons of the postmodernist politics of difference. (142)

However, Hardt and Negri believe postmodernity's liberatory potential has been overestimated, especially as this potential has been articulated in the agreement they find amongst poststructural and postcolonial theories:

What if these theorists are so intent on combating the remnants of a past form of domination that they fail to recognize the new form that is looming over them in the present? What if the dominating powers that are the intended object of critique have mutated in such a way as to depotentialize any such postmodern challenge? In short, what if a new paradigm of power, a postmodern sovereignty, has come to replace the modern paradigm and rule through differential hierarchies of the hybrid and fragmentary subjectivities that these theorists celebrate? In this case, modern forms of sovereignty would no longer be at issue, and the postmodernist and postcolonialist strategies that appear to be liberatory would not challenge but in fact coincide with and even unwittingly reinforce the new strategies of rule!

When we begin to consider the ideologies of corporate capital and the world market, it certainly appears that the postmodernist and postcolonialist theorists who advocate a politics of difference, fluidity, and hybridity in order to challenge the binaries and essentialism of modern sovereignty have been outflanked by the strategies of power. Power has evacuated the bastion they are attacking and has circled around to their rear to join them in the assault in the name of difference. (138)

Hardt and Negri argue that there is a “new paradigm of power” and that the “new enemy not only is resistant to the old weapons but actually thrives on them, and thus joins its would-be antagonists in applying them to the fullest. Long live difference! Down with essentialist binaries!” (138). That is, we are now dealing with postmodern regimes of power that are more than capable of utilizing elements of postmodernity to their own advantage. Ultimately,
poststructural and postcolonial theories are guilty of anachronism—that is, they critique/resist a modern paradigm of power after we have already entered a postmodern paradigm of power; this transition between paradigms occurs “at the end of colonialism” which “is also the end of the modern world and modern regimes of rule” (134). Hardt and Negri use the example of Homi Bhabha’s work to illustrate the “accord between postcolonialist and postmodernist theories” (143), where “power is assumed to operate exclusively through a dialectical and binary structure. The only form of domination Bhabha recognizes, in other words, is that of modern sovereignty” (145). Essentially, Hardt and Negri critique an “accord between postcolonialist and postmodernist theories” (143) that has embraced the liberatory potency of difference, fragmentation, hybridity, fluidity, and movement at a moment where this potency is greatly diminished.

While Hardt and Negri’s critique may be accurate regarding this theoretical accord, it is not an accurate assessment when considering the accord between postmodern and postcolonial literatures. That is, the accord we find between postmodern and postcolonial theory can likewise be found in postmodern and postcolonial literature; however, the difference is that where the theoretical accord proposes the essentially liberatory nature of these postmodern elements, the literary accord does not propose that these postmodern elements are essentially liberatory. For example, the Tunisian writer Albert Memmi’s 1955 novel, *The Pillar of Salt*, illustrates radical hybridity as an insoluble dilemma and as a boundless source of anxiety and frustration as it negates all possibilities of community membership. The main source of conflict in this narrative is the Tunisian protagonist’s unsuccessful attempts to shape his fluid identity—in this novel, there is nothing essentially liberatory about such fluidity or hybridity. After failing to come to a satisfying formation of the no less than three parts that form his hybridity
(European/Jewish/Berber), the novel ends when its protagonist leaves Tunisia in frustration and desperation. As in *The Pillar of Salt*, there are groups of postmodern and postcolonial literatures that deal with postmodernity as a problem—a problem in that it does not necessarily help us escape postmodern paradigms of power, but perhaps reinforces them. Thus, the works of Bowles, Burroughs, Kateb, and Guyotat constitute a particular type of postmodern literature with transnational, postcolonial concerns—their concern with the colonized world is what has allowed them to question these so-called liberatory elements which have been celebrated in other forms of postmodern fiction. This literature cannot escape its political, historical, colonial context, and thus it examines the ways in which these typical elements of postmodernity become a problem in such a context; however, unlike the example of Memmi’s novel, this literature does not simply look negatively upon these elements, but it keeps them in play: that is, this literature examines how these elements can be resistance to, but also support for, postmodern regimes of power.

Because the literature being studied in this dissertation is positioned in the colonial/postcolonial world right at the period of transition between modern and postmodern regimes of power; this period that Hardt and Negri had identified as the end of colonialism—which would be 1954-1962 in North Africa—means that the literature written in this context is uniquely positioned to examine the transition that may be less apparent in the Western world.

In terms of understanding the geometry of this project, it may be useful to look to Edward Said who said, “A vast web of interests now [post-WWII] links all parts of the former colonial world to the United States” (*Orientalism* 285). So, with our two parts, we can see something of a transition, or more precisely, a simultaneity. With “Part I: Americans in Tangier,” we begin to see Americans invade Morocco. This invasion begins with Bowles and the success of his 1949 novel, *The Sheltering Sky* (Gertrude Stein was the one who initially told him to go there when he
was a young man), continues with the Beat generation, then reaches its peak with the hippie
generation. The main reason Americans could live in Tangier was due to their government's role
in the control of the International Zone of Tangier which granted special legal privileges to
American citizens (basically, that they would still be treated as Americans under American law
even though they were in a foreign country). Simultaneously, with Part II, the American
government does have a stake in the Algerian War—not just a monetary one (the French military
used a significant amount of American equipment during the Algerian War), but also a political
one. In general, the American government was opposed to independence movements seeking
escape from their colonial empires; perhaps this opposition was due to American Cold War fears
that these newly independent countries would be communist, or simply that newly independent
states would be less “cooperative” to American interests than European colonies had been.
Regardless, the U.S. government's interest in French colonialism should not be underestimated—
as the Vietnam War should indicate; this war had its origins in the collapse of French colonialism
when the French military suffered a dramatic defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.¹ Ultimately, this
dissertation examines this transition from the end of European colonialism to American/Western
transnational control here. But this transition allows for a simultaneity as well, since the decline
of one power happens at the same time as the rise of another, and the two parts of this project are
organized around this simultaneity.

“Part I: Americans in Tangier” exists within a nuanced place where American power is
both resisted and embraced. That is, it would be difficult to find two Western voices who were
more critical of French colonialism and American law, foreign policy, and culture. At the same
time, part of the draw to Tangier was the privileged status these two writers would experience as
Americans: they enjoyed a certain amount of wealth in comparison to the Moroccan populace
and also a privileged legal position. That is, unlike Algeria which was a French colony from 1830-1962, Morocco was a French and Spanish protectorate from 1912-1956, and “the logic of the protectorate system [...] was to preserve Moroccan cultural distinctiveness, enframing it within European infrastructure and administration” (Edwards 8-9). However, Tangier was called the International Zone because it was not a part of the French or Spanish protectorates. It was internationally ruled for approximately 200 years. This rule began when “representatives of Portugal, Sweden, Great Britain, Venice, Denmark, Holland, Spain, France, and the United States formed the Sanitary Council of Tangier, which first met in 1792 in order to lobby for quarantines on ships that might carry the plague” (Mullins 10), then this rule would be formalized because “the Sanitary Council paved the way for the creation of a formal international administration for Tangier in 1923” (Mullins 11). It was in 1923 that “France, Spain, and Great Britain drafted the Statute of Tangier […] which established the International Zone of Tangier” (Mullins 12). While the U.S. did not officially participate in the international administration of Tangier after 1923, “the United States government emerged as a significant participant in the informal and formal colonization of Morocco; from 1787 to 1956, United States citizens and their protégés exercised extraterritorial rights identical to those held by Morocco's 'official' colonizers” (Mullins 13). Due to this unique politico-historical context, American writers in Tangier are positioned in such a way that they can examine liberation and subjugation simultaneously. That is, occupying a kind of liminal colonial space, they are able to enjoy the rights and privileges of American citizens while simultaneously avoiding America's draconian laws regarding drugs and sexuality. Neither colonizer nor colonized, these Americans enjoyed the fruits of colonialism while living with the colonized in such a way as to enable them to simultaneously theorize liberation and subjugation. For this reason, the literature that Bowles
and Burroughs produce is one where liberation is at best, a distant possibility. Whatever resistances their literature displays is only a byproduct of their thorough and nuanced examinations of subjugation and control.

Paul Bowles (1910-1999) first encountered North Africa when he traveled to Tangier at the age of 21 when it had been recommended to him by Gertrude Stein. After 15 years as a successful composer, Bowles would return to Tangier once he starts to experience success as a writer, living there for the rest of his life (his career as a composer meant that he had to be in America much more than he liked). Despite spending the majority of his life in Tangier, he would never feel like he was a part of Moroccan life and culture. Perhaps for this reason, his novels show a concern with the distinction between the traveler and the tourist. The traveler—and certainly Bowles would have considered himself such—is a figure of rhizomatic composition, in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense (see the introductory chapter to their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1980]), capable of traversing all internal and external boundaries, producing identities or subjectivities of radical fluidity and hybridity. In contrast, the tourist illustrates how something as potentially liberating as mobility can be easily controlled by power—movement becomes strictly controlled, perhaps even fixed or stable. While the traveler is clearly the privileged figure in Bowles’ writing, his novels explore the numerous ways in which the traveler proves to be a much more vulnerable figure (who is therefore not necessarily liberatory at all): Bowles’ travelers, such as Port and Kit Moresby from *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), rarely come to satisfactory ends, and are threatened by any and all figures of power. Port dies while confined in a French military base in the Sahara; Kit is subsequently kidnapped by Algerians who erase her identity and create a new one. Bowles’ travelers are figures of
deterritorialization who prove to be particularly vulnerable to various forms of brutal colonial reterritorializations.

Whereas Bowles deals with fluid and mobile subjectivities, William S. Burroughs deals with fragmented ones. Fleeing America's homophobia and its war on drugs, Burroughs was attracted to North Africa largely due to the success of Bowles' *The Sheltering Sky*. While he would not spend nearly as much time in Tangier as Bowles would (Burroughs spent most of 1954-1964 in Tangier), it is a period of time that would define his literary output: Tangier is where Burroughs wrote *Naked Lunch* (1959), *Interzone* (1989; much of this text had been lost for over 20 years), and most of the cut-up trilogy (1961; 1962; 1964)—Tangier was where Burroughs met Brion Gysin who introduced him to the cut-up method—, and his subsequent literary output seems to bear that mark that this period of his life would make. Dealing with fragmented identities, Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch* displays a complex relationship between subjectivity and control where subjectivity is entirely fragmented in order to exploit particular vulnerabilities. For example, there is the man whose asshole gains consciousness and eventually takes over his entire body; similarly, the junky is enslaved to his veins. Burroughs considered the drug problem to consist of two parts: addiction, and “anti-drug hysteria” which “is now worldwide, and it poses a deadly threat to personal freedoms and due-process protections of the laws everywhere” (212). This hysteria allowed for the creation of what Burroughs considered to be an international police state. So, as the junkies are enslaved to their addiction, this exploitation via fragmentation allows for everyone to become subject to extreme forms of control. The International Zone of Tangier becomes the ideal setting for such extreme forms in Burroughs’ literature—the “Interzone” is the concentration of numerous Western/global powers within one
colonized space. What Burroughs discovers in Tangier is how the fragment occupies or even consumes the whole—both on a personal level, and on an international, socio-political level.

“Part II: The Algerian War” continues with many of the same themes and ideas dealt with in “Part I: Americans in Tangier.” However, there are some significant changes to be highlighted here. The first is that the difference between the decolonizations of a protectorate and a colony is that the transition from colonial possession to independent nation is much more violent and traumatic—mainly due to the fact that the colony is much more implicated in a French identity that threatens to be sundered should that identity no longer include its colony. It is perhaps for this reason that war becomes an inevitability and identity itself can become the spoils of war.

The two authors selected for Part II—Kateb Yacine (1929-1989) and Pierre Guyotat (b. 1940)—represent the two opposing sides of this war, but for reasons partially indicated in the previous two chapters, they wind up occupying similar positions. In other words, Guyotat was the French soldier who would begin to sympathize and identify with the struggle of the colonized, while Kateb would dedicate himself to an opposition to French colonialism but find himself largely ostracized by an independent Algerian government. Both writers, sympathetic to the struggle for independence, examine how an independent, postcolonial Algerian nation is not necessarily a solution to the problems introduced by French colonialism; rather, these problems become much more subtle and complex.

The shift from Burroughs to Kateb is a shift from Morocco to Algeria; more significantly, it is a shift in focus to representations of Algeria’s struggle for independence and an independent national identity. Born in Algeria, Kateb was witness to the Sétif massacre of 1945 where thousands of Algerians were killed; for his participation in the demonstrations that led to his massacre, he was imprisoned for a few months. His subsequent publications would prompt an
informal exile during the Algerian War, but his relationship to the newly-independent Algerian nation would also prove to be problematic at best—mainly due to his resistance to the simplistic official form of independent Algerian identity: one language: Arab; one people: Arabs; one religion: Islam. For this reason, Kateb’s most celebrated work, *Nedjma* (1956), is a wonder of miscibility, not just of the poetic, but also of the cultural, linguistic, and political. While *Nedjma* obviously shows that Algeria is not French (this was an argument that had to be made at the time), it indicates an Algerian subjectivity further complicated by a complex colonial situation. *Nedjma* is both fragmentary (composed of six chapters totaling 108 fragments) and anti-teleological (the last page reprints the 45th page, and the narrative jumps from character to character, generation to generation, forwards and backwards in time). The characters themselves are migratory, though not usually according to their own will: they move throughout Algeria as various powers and desires dictate. One of the main concerns of the narrative is with filiation: paternity is permanently destabilized as familial relations between characters are permanently in question (destroying any tree-like structure of genealogy). So what Kateb has done is use the French language in a way that does not communicate French identity and history, but a postcolonial/postmodern fragmentation, migration, and multiplicity—a minor literature of an expression of instability, but one that cannot provide solutions for a difficult postcolonial situation.

Coming from the opposite side of Algeria’s struggle for independence, Pierre Guyotat was a soldier in the French army whose experiences during the Algerian War taught him to slough off his French identity as he allied himself with the Algerians: he went to jail for this fundamental shift in allegiance, undermining France’s military endeavor; years later, his novel *Eden, Eden, Eden* (1970) was banned by the French government. However, the resulting literary
work does not celebrate the Algerian nation or identity—it shows sympathy for the Algerian people while also displaying their severe subjugation. The dominant themes throughout are prostitution and slavery—which are one and the same for Guyotat—, depicting Algeria as an enslaved, prostitutional space, which proves to be the extreme expression of colonial power. Starting from the colonial context and writing novels almost exclusively set in brothels, Guyotat comes to the conclusion that all human relationships are essentially prostitutional; this conception of postmodern power as sexual, and often violent and sadistic, is similar to the one put forth by Burroughs. Moreover, it illustrates how this new regime of power and control does not require overt forces such as militaries and governments, but simply needs an underclass of people whose poverty makes them subject to the desires of any wealthy power.

**Similar Projects, Different Geometries**

There are four books whose studies share a certain kinship to my own: John Maier's *Desert Songs: Western Images of Morocco and Moroccan Images of the West* (1996), Greg A. Mullins' *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs, and Chester Write Tangier* (2002), Brian T. Edwards' *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (2005), and Michael K. Walonen's *Writing Tangier in the Postcolonial Transition: Space and Power in Expatriate and North African Literature* (2011). Upon a cursory glance of the titles of these texts, they appear to have much in common with this dissertation; however, there are important distinctions that should be elucidated here. Perhaps not surprisingly, each one of these transnational literary studies (mine included) use spatial metaphors as a way to theorize the various transnational relationships they explore. While these metaphors might be a convenient way to visualize summaries of these studies, they are also useful for highlighting their most significant differences from each other.
Maier's *Desert Songs* is an extensive New Historist study of transatlantic art and literature of the twentieth century. His book attempts to see the Atlantic Ocean as a mirror: “the mirror in this book evokes the recognition of an ‘East’ as a distorted image of the Western cultural self, an image that nonetheless constructs a self as if it had always existed” (xv); Maier argues that the “West” has a similarly distorted image of the Eastern cultural self. While its title may indicate that Maier's book studies “Moroccan images of the West and Western images of Morocco,” his work is more broadly transatlantic due to the fact that he uses Morocco as a representative for the East, and the U.S. for the West. Maier does state that *Desert Songs* offers “a form of critical triangulation” (2); however, this is simply due to the fact that his first chapter is an analysis of Virgil’s *The Aeneid* which “is not the earliest Orientalist fantasy, but it is the most important in antiquity” (14). The rest of his extensive study examines American and Moroccan literature that “fall into three periods of the twentieth century”:

(1) a classical phase, when the Civilizing Mission of the West and civilization itself were matters of concern, from World War I until the beginning of the Depression, (2) a skeptical phase, suspicious of authority but tied to America's emergence as protector of the Western alliance, from World War II until the time of Moroccan Independence in 1956, and (3) a postmodern phase, from the mid-1960s to the present. (27)

Maier sees the second phase—largely represented by Bowles' work as a turning point where the American perspective undergoes “increased questioning of the Western sense of self and therefore of its civilizing mission” (32). For his Eastern texts, Maier selects Moroccan folktales, the illiterate storytellers—such as Ahmed Yacoubi and Larbi Layachi—whose unpublished works Bowles had translated into English, and “stories written in Standard Arabic” (32) by Abd Al-Majid Ben Jellun, Mohammed Barrada, Mohammed Choukri, and Leila Abouzeid. In short, Maier's study focuses on Anglophone and Arabic literature—with a brief foray into Latin—, but is prevented from a genuinely transmediterranean investigation due to the fact that he does not
include Francophone North Africa literature. Maier's work is quite comprehensive, but it focuses very keenly on a transatlantic investigation of national identities.

Mullins' *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs, and Chester Write Tangier* is organized very similarly—but less comprehensively—to that of Maier's *Desert Songs*. Offering a more conventional structure for a monograph than *Desert Songs, Colonial Affairs* has three chapters dedicated to three American writers—Bowles, Burroughs, and Alfred Chester—and one chapter dedicated to the Moroccan writers whom Bowles had translated: Larbi Layachi, Mohammed Mrabet, and Mohammed Choukri. Mullins employs a combination of “queer theory and colonial theory” (vii) to analyze “homosexual relationships between men who occupy the positions of colonizer and colonized” (ix). However, these sexual pairings do not truly obey this colonial binary; he argues that Tangier is a unique place that “as a border town between North Africa and Europe, it is a site where cultures, sexualities, bodies, fantasies, and politics meet and emerge more complex for having encountered one another there” (x). Rather, these three authors “created literary 'interzones'” which were places of “intermediacy and ambiguity […] outside standard narratives of nationhood and identity” (3); “while they step into a situation that casts them as foreign and white and therefore a 'colonizer,' they write interzone texts that critique binary structures of dominance and that imagine new forms of subjectivity” (15). Such interzone texts are also created by Mrabet, Layachi, and Choukri in that each writer calls “attention to the 'colonial' conditions of their literary collaborations and unsettle facile assumptions about sexuality, politics, translation, and literature” (19). At the center of his argument is the fact that these destabilizing interzones that Mullins investigates are dependent upon a homoeroticizing or queering of colonial relations, leading him to make the following distinction:

I do not wish to suggest that Bowles or Burroughs or Chester were 'sexual colonizers'; or that seeking sex with men in Tangier is morally suspect. Rather, I wish to argue that,
when these Americans became expatriates, they encountered a sexual subculture in which
difference was eroticized through constructions of race, nationality, wealth, religion, and
masculinity. (8)

And while differences may be eroticized, these constructions are not being reinforced, but altered
and weakened. Though less comprehensive than Maier's study, Mullins obeys the inevitable
trade-off, providing a more in-depth examination of his chosen, strictly Anglophone literature.
Being another transatlantic literary study, Mullins does not offer two mirror images like Maier
does (who argued that Western identity was based on its concept of the East, and vice-versa), but
a more cosmopolitan admixture, where men of various backgrounds form new identities in a sub-
culture that undermines the dominant identities of its cultural milieux.

Edwards' *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb, from Casablanca to the
Marrakech Express* is similar to Maier's *Desert Songs* in terms of comprehensiveness, but its
focus is more akin to Mullins' *Colonial Affairs*. Examining “three decades [1942-1973] of
American representations of the Maghreb” (1), Edwards argues that the Maghreb was central to
American Orientalism: “since the late nineteenth century, the Maghreb has been one of the most
familiar locations of the American exotic and one of the places to which filmmakers and
novelists turned often for tales of 'Oriental' splendor and decadence” (1). If the Maghreb seems
less central now, it is because after 1973, “American popular attention turned more decidedly
toward the Middle East coincident with the OPEC price hike and Arab oil embargo” (1). 1973 is
also a significant year because it is “the beginning of an episteme that might be associated with
globalization” (23) and globalization “as episteme would suggest an end to the period referred to
as 'postcolonial'” (24). Edwards organizes these three decades into three periods: “the North
African [WWII] campaign of late 1942 and 1943, […] the fascination with Tangier from the late
1940s through mid-1950s, and […] young American interest in Morocco in the late 1960s
through 1970s” (9). Working within the field of American Studies and quite closely with Edward Said's *Orientalism*, *Morocco Bound* “argues that grappling with the American encounter with the Maghreb matters to our understanding of public thinking about the role of the United States in the world after 1941 and the contested meanings of American national identity in the wake of the encounter” (10-11). This point about American national identity is similar to the one Maier makes in *Desert Songs*—Edwards argues that “representations of the world or the foreign played a special role in rethinking the meaning of American national identity” (4). At the same time, however, if Edwards examines examples of American Orientalism—including films such as *The Garden of Allah* (1936), *Casablanca* (1942), and *Road to Morocco* (1942)—he also argues that “representation of the Maghreb offered the space for the expression of dissenting thought” (20-21). Examples of these latter representations would include works by Bowles where Edwards makes “a methodological argument for how to read post-World War II literature representing the (post)colonial space within a geopolitical, cold war context” (19); works by Burroughs where Edwards argues that “the full contribution of the author's thinking about his geopolitical moment has been largely discounted because of an inability to see the novel [*Naked Lunch*] as deeply engaged in its Tangier context” (20); the works of Jane Bowles, producing “a difficult and brilliant form of writing in a minor English” (21); and Paul Bowles' translations of Mohammed Mrabet, offering “the promise of transnational or supranational communication” (21). However, Edwards is careful to note that the hippie invasion of North Africa—what he calls “hippie Orientalism” (23)—in the 1960s “recedes from the potentialities that emerged from Tangier in the 1950s” (21) due to “a conservative recoil from difference [that] pervades the hippie encounter” (22). Edwards' book shares a common concern with *A Transnational Postmodernism* in that it is an attempt to discover what these works produced in North Africa can tell us about
the postcolonial/globalized world. Where Edwards tries to find out how American national identity is formed (and dissolved) in the Maghreb, I have a somewhat broader scope that attempts to discover how Western power and control as it is exercised/experienced in North Africa is illustrative of how such power/control affect both Western and Eastern identities—that is, identity per se.

If there is a recognizable pattern to the way these studies have been organized, Walonen's *Writing Tangier in the Postcolonial Transition: Space and Power in Expatriate and North African Literature* does not stray from this pattern. After an introductory chapter and one dedicated to Tangier itself (arguing that Tangier was, “for a while, something of a world capital of creative talent” (15) and that “Tangier during the days of the International Zone was both a Western and a Moroccan city” (25)), *Writing Tangier* dedicates five chapters to five Anglophone—mostly American—writers: Paul Bowles, Jane Bowles, William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin, and Alfred Chester. His last chapter is then dedicated to two expatriate Moroccans: Tahar Ben Jelloun (b. 1944), a Francophone writer living in France, and Anouar Majid, an Anglophone writer and academic teaching in the U.S. Walonen's study focuses intently on spatial theory, relying heavily on Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Guy Debord and the Situationists, and what can generally be attributed to cultural theories of everyday life. Arguing that “space and place are socially produced entities” (1) and that “any given social space is the totality of the uses to which it is put and the affective responses that it engenders” (1), Walonen begins to ask how those not native to this place must, in the act of trying to make this space intelligible, read and negotiate these spatial codes. When these outsiders choose to re-present this place, they must draw upon their knowledge of and competence in these spatial codes and translate them through the modes of representation available in their cultural tradition, affectively shading them in the process. It is this act which lies at the heart of the encounter with non-native space, and the effort to make sense of it is endemic to the
literature of travel and of expatriation. This act often involves translating the alien into the familiar; with the distortion of transformation of original significance attendant on any act of translation. (3)

Walonen then argues that the non-native's spatial translation understands “Place as Elsewhere” (4) which includes “both what is imagined to be there and what is imagined as possible there” (5). His book “analyzes the formulations of Elsewhere—the dynamics of imagined alterity of socially produced space—in the works of expatriate authors who lived in Tangier” (5). These authors occupy a unique position in that “they were able to view the changing Maghreb at a degree removed from the distorting influence of the colonial's anxieties about the waning of empire, the native Maghrebine's need to assert a postcolonial identity, and the mid-century American's blinding paradigm of global struggle against communism” (10). These authors also question “the possibility of authentic insiderness in a place whose population is as heterogeneous” as Tangier (11). Of the four books discussed above, Walonen's is the only one to engage with Francophone North African literature—if only briefly—and the conclusion he reaches is that Jelloun and Majid “aimed their social critique at the internal corruption of postcolonial regimes rather than the domination and oppression of the former colonizer” (129). If A Transnational Postmodernism differs from Walonen's point here (and this is one of my central claims), it is that the works of writers such as Bowles, Burroughs, Kateb and Guyotat critique both the colonial and postcolonial regimes.

Maier, Mullins, Edwards, and Walonen establish vital groundwork for any transnational (actually, transatlantic) literary study that includes North Africa. They stand in general agreement with each other both in terms of the organization of their studies and also in the subjects of their studies; and while A Transnational Postmodernism will also have much in common with their statements on Bowles, Burroughs and Tangier, it should be noted that this
dissertation is rather unique in its dedication to both Anglophone and Francophone writers. What is even more remarkable is that this uniqueness exists even when compared to studies that are more dedicated to North African literature. These studies are too numerous to be discussed thoroughly here, but they are all consistent in their exclusive dedication to North African literature. Lengthy works such as Jean Déjeux's *Littérature maghrébine de langue française: Introduction générale et Auteurs* (1973) focuses on “une littérature nord-africaine de langue française écrite par des Maghrébins issues des sociétés arabo-berbères ou même juives est née entre les deux guerres mondiales [a Francophone North African literature written by Maghrebians from Arabo-Berber or even Jewish communities who were born between the two world wars]” (7), and includes twelve chapters on twelve authors: Jean Amrouche, Mouloud Feraoun, Mohammed Dib, Mouloud Mammeri, Kateb Yacine, Assia Djebar, Driss Chraïbi, Albert Memmi, Jean Sénac, Mourad Bourboune, Rachid Boudjedra, and Mohammed Khair-Eddine. This pattern is somewhat altered in Winifred Woodhull's *Transfigurations of the Maghreb: Feminism, Decolonization, and Literatures* (1993); after a few chapters dedicated to well-known Francophone Maghrebian authors (Kateb, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Nabile Farès, Mohammed Dib, and Assia Djebar), Woodhull crosses the Mediterranean, dedicating her last chapter to “French novels of the 1980s that attempt to confront colonial and postcolonial violence and establish solidarity between France and the Maghreb” (135)—these French novelists include Evelyne Sullerot, Marie Cardinal, J. M. G. Le Clézio, Michel Tournier, and Guy Hocquenghem. Finding a more even split between French and Algerian writers is Seth Graebner's *History's Place: Nostalgia and the City in French Algerian Literature* (2007), but Graebner is rather unique in this regard.
An important caveat should be made here regarding North African literature and the question transmediterranean literary scholarship—that is, it is perhaps impossible to say that any literary study of post-WWII French or North African literature is not necessarily transmediterranean in nature. The subject of Alec C. Hargreaves' book, *Voices from the North African Immigrant Community in France: Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction* (1991), highlights this point perfectly. Hargreaves explains that the term *Beur* “was formed by inverting the syllables which make up the word 'Arabe'” (1). He continues:

Beur is a name popularly applied to the sons and daughters of North African immigrants. A longer-established label is that of 'second-generation immigrants,' but as most of those concerned were born in France, this is a misnomer, for they have never migrated from one country to another. In their daily lives the Beurs have, however, been compelled to migrate constantly between the secular culture of France and the traditions carried with them by their Muslim parents from across the Mediterranean. (1)

In other words, in Hargreaves' attempt to focus on literature written in France, the very nature of Beur literature and identity makes avoiding a transmediterranean historical understanding becomes impossible. If we take this point even further, it is not just true of Beur fiction; a transmediterranean element to French identity is also an integral part of innumerable French works that must deal with French empire. Of course, this point is also true on the other side of the sea; it would make very little sense to discuss colonial/postcolonial North African literature without speaking of the Maghreb's relationship to France and to the French language. So even in studies that focus exclusively on Maghrebian literature—monographs such as Isaac Yetiv's *Le Thème de l’aliénation dans le roman maghrébin d'expression française de 1952 à 1956* (1972), Ghani Merad's *La Littérature algérienne d'expression française : Approches socio-culturelles* (1976), Jacqueline Arnaud's *La Littérature maghrébine de langue française, Tome I: Origines et perspectives* (1986),³ Jarrod Hayes' *Queer Nations: Marginal Sexualities in the Maghreb* (2000), Andrea Flores Khahlil's *The Arab Avant-Garde: Experiments in North African Art and
Literature (2003), Réda Bensmaïa's Experimental Nations: Or, the Invention of the Maghreb (2003), Debra Kelly's Autobiography and Independence: Selfhood and Creativity in North African Postcolonial Writing in French (2005), and a great number of others— transmediterranean readings are the only ones that make sense.

What the above indicates is that where North Africa is concerned, transatlantic literary studies and transmediterranean literary studies are robust and lively fields. On the other hand, while A Transnational Postmodernism may cover some well-trod ground, it stands alone in its comparative study of Anglophone and Francophone literature of North African origins; it stands alone as it attempts to traverse the Atlantic and the Mediterranean simultaneously. It is an attempt to see how a cross-section of Anglophone and Francophone literature reveals certain concerns and anxieties about living in a transnational, postmodern era.
PART I: AMERICANS IN TANGIER

CHAPTER 1: PAUL BOWLES: THE EMPTY VESSEL OF POSTMODERN
SUBJECTIVITY

“Security is a false god; begin making sacrifices to it and you are lost”

-Paul Bowles, “Notes Mailed at Nagercoil” (1957)

In relation to the third world, American poet, composer, author, and translator, Paul Bowles (1910-1999) moves in the opposite direction typical of immigration—he leaves the U.S., eventually settling in Morocco. However, while it can be said that he emigrates from the U.S.—he wholeheartedly leaves the U.S. permanently for a lifetime of travel—he does not immigrate to Morocco; there was no conscious decision to spend the rest of his life in Tangier. He concludes his autobiography, Without Stopping (1972), with the explanation that it was pure circumstance that led to his permanent residence in Tangier:

I did not choose to live in Tangier permanently; it happened. My visit was meant to be of short duration; after that I would move on, and keep moving onward indefinitely. I grew lazy and put off departure. Then a day came when I realized with a shock that not only did the world have many more people in it than it had had only a short time before, but also that the hotels were less good, travel less comfortable, and places in general much less beautiful. After that when I went somewhere else I immediately longed to be back in Tangier. Thus if I am here now, it is only because I was still here when I realized to what an extent the world had worsened, and that I no longer wanted to travel. (366)

Contributing to the fact that travel was “less comfortable” was the fact that the mode of travel had changed—in a 1981 interview, Bowles states that if

travel still consisted of taking ships, I'd continue moving around. Flying to me isn't travel. It's just getting from one place to another as fast as possible. I like to have plenty of luggage with me when I start out on a voyage. You never know how many months or years you'll be gone or where you'll go eventually. But flying is like television: you have to take what they give you because there's nothing else. It's impossible. ( Conversations with Paul Bowles 128; my emphasis)
So, if in the latter years of his life we find Bowles stationary in Tangier, this residence lacks the intention, direction, and legality of immigration: he is the traveler who eventually settles down in Tangier—*which does not necessarily revoke his status as a traveler*. In fact, if we accept his definition of the traveler, movement around the globe becomes no longer necessary. Bowles' characterization/definition of this figure of the traveler is the keystone to understanding his writing, his views on colonialism/Westernization, his understanding of identity, and his own relationship to the colonial/postcolonial world. To misunderstand this figure, or to underestimate its importance, would be to misunderstand both Bowles’ work and his life.

Becoming a writer allowed Bowles to embrace the traveler identity. He explains that it was his musical career that necessitated his presence in the U.S.: “once I moved away I saw that all I needed from the States was money. I went back there for that. I’ve never yet gone there without the definite guarantee of making money. Just going there for the pleasure of it, I’ve never done” (*Conversations* 115). It is the shift in careers—from composer to writer—that allows him to leave the U.S. for good: “I might have gone on as a composer. I cut the composing cord in 1947, when I moved here [Tangier], although, as I say, I went back several times to write scores for Broadway. [...] I gave up composing professionally simply because I wanted to leave New York. I wanted to get out of the States” (*Conversations* 115). Why he is able to leave in 1947 is due to the fact that he achieved a certain amount of literary success publishing “A Distant Episode” (1947) and received an advance from Doubleday for *The Sheltering Sky* (1949). 5 1947 is the year he returns to North Africa to write *Sheltering*; his motivation is simple: “I was obsessed by memories of the air and light of North Africa” (*Without Stopping* 170). 6 And while he continues to travel, Morocco becomes his base of operations from this point onward.
Whereas the U.S. is where Bowles did most of his composing, he claims that he “never wrote any part of any book in New York” (*Conversations* 45). In other words, traveling was responsible for his ability and his desire to write: “The transportation of characters to such settings often acts as a catalyst or a detonator, without which there’d be no action, so I shouldn’t call the settings secondary. Probably if I hadn’t had some contact with what you call ‘exotic’ places, it wouldn’t have occurred to me to write at all” (*Conversations* 123). We would do well to follow Bowles’ hesitancy to use the word *exotic* when reading his works. Exoticism, as has already been proven in postcolonial studies, ignores the political and historical in cultural conflicts. To dismiss that Bowles deals extensively with the colonized world would lead only to misreadings; for example, if, like many of his critics, we said that he deals with the Arab world, then our conclusions would have to be about Bowles’ understanding of Arabs (a race of people largely outside of any historical context) rather than of North African colonialism. Therefore, if Bowles himself sees his travels throughout the colonized world as the very source of his writing, then colonialism/Westernization should always be kept in mind when reading his work. It is with this frame of reference that I read four of Bowles' most important works. “A Distant Episode” and *The Sheltering Sky* are similar in that they are postmodern narratives dramatizing the removal of the American from any stable notion of tradition, identity, or selfhood, and his/her relocation beyond in the colonized Islamic world. What we see in both narratives is that the key term in these texts is *colonized* rather than *Arab* or *Islamic*. The difficulties faced by the protagonists in both texts come not from easy notions of alienation or foreignness, but from power structures (including racist, colonial power structures) that exploit typical elements of postmodernity (movement, plurality, fragmentation, destabilized sense of self, etc.) in order to further their control. *Let It Come Down* continues with this idea as it displays what happens
when the Western traveler allows him- or herself to take on the racist, colonial logic of his new surroundings, and The Spider's House completes this idea by arguing that an independent, postcolonial nation can continue colonialism's ideologies and economies in a postcolonial or globalized world (also known as neo-colonialism).

The difference between the traveler and the immigrant is a legal distinction, but it is also ones of intent and of being. Bowles always considered himself an American even though he was very critical of the U.S., personally resisted American identity, and did not know if he would ever return to the U.S.—that is, not until his death, when his remains were shipped back to the U.S. for burial. In a 1990 interview, he was asked if he still feels American—to which he replies simply, “I am American” (Conversations 218). In another 1990 interview he says, “I am a foreigner. It makes no difference that I’ve lived here [Tangier] for 59 years. You can live your whole life and always be a foreigner” (Conversations 239). Bowles never intended for Morocco to be a permanent home rather than a temporary one, which is possibly the main difference between traveler and immigrant—the immigrant is the one who makes his intent known legally, looking for a home whose permanence will have a profound, but permanent and stable effect upon his/her identity. The difference in intent amounts to the traveler’s demand for what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri call “global citizenship”: “The multitude must be able to decide if, when, and where it moves. It must have the right to stay still and enjoy one place rather than being forced constantly to be on the move. The general right to control its own movement is the multitude’s ultimate demand for global citizenship” (Empire 400). The difference between immigrant and traveler is one of varying degree—the traveler demands an even broader citizenship based on temporary residency. However, as will be illustrated below, those who would claim such a right do so at great risk. Travelers are proof of the radical mutability of
postmodern identity, but postmodern power regimes are quite capable of brutally exploiting this mutability in order to further their control. What Bowles' literature illustrates is that at its very basis, subjectivity is an empty vessel to be filled either intentionally by an individual seeking personal agency, independence, and freedom, or—and this is much more likely—to be filled by largely stock identities amenable to the power regimes of the day. Both poststructural and postcolonial theories help us understand Bowles' discoveries regarding subjectivity.

**The Traveler and the Tourist**

It would be difficult to list all the porous boundaries (fluidities/hybridities) contained within *The Sheltering Sky*, but this list would certainly include race, gender, language, individuality, being, and culture, to mention a few. Three Americans—married couple Port and Kit Moresby and their friend Tunner—travel to North Africa. The difference between these three characters is summarized by the distinction between *traveler* and *tourist* provided at the beginning of the novel:

[Port] did not think of himself as a tourist; he was a traveler. The difference is partly one of time, he would explain. Whereas the tourist generally hurries back home at the end of a few weeks or months, the traveler, belonging no more to one place than to the next, moves slowly, over periods of years, from one part of the earth to another. Indeed, he would have found it difficult to tell, among the many places he had lived, precisely where it was he had felt most at home. Before the war it had been Europe and the Near East, during the war the West Indies and South America. And she [Kit] had accompanied him without reiterating here complaints too often or too bitterly. At this point they had crossed the Atlantic for the first time since 1939, with a great deal of luggage and the intention of keeping as far as possible from the places which had been touched by the war. For, as he claimed, another important difference between tourist and traveler is that the former accepts his own civilization without question; not so the traveler, who compares it with the others, and rejects those elements he finds not to his liking. And the war was one facet of the mechanized age he wanted to forget. (6)

Movement does not guarantee a destabilized identity because tourism is a safe form of movement that keeps identity intact—a fixed movement, if there ever was one. Destabilization
happens within a duration of time, when one can properly be said to live in that place, when
*home* becomes a problematic concept. It is this type of movement, a lived movement, and not a
movement held in stasis, that indicates a postmodern subjectivity in Bowles’ writing.

Thus the distinction between tourist and traveler is not just that of movement, but also of
identity. The tourist goes on short forays into the world, only to return directly after. For the
tourist, the world takes on the strictly binary structure of *home* and *away*. The national character
of the tourist’s identity is then able to remain unaltered: for the tourist, there is always a home to
return to. This is not true for the traveler. Home travels with him/her, leaving no part of the
world away so that when s/he returns to the nation of his/her origin, it is no more home than
anywhere else. Residing in a mobile home, as it were, the traveler is able to slough off the
unappealing national characteristics of his/her identity, and take on new foreign characteristics.
The traveler is thus a figure of mobility, fragmentation, fluidity, and adaptability. Bowles’
traveler should not be confused with previous incarnations of the traveler who was guilty of
Orientalist voyeurism and still operated within the home/away binary regardless of how
extensive his/her travels may have been. Confident and secure in his/her own culture’s
superiority, the Orientalist voyeur is incapable of the rejection/acceptance aspect of Bowles’
traveler; that is, the Orientalist voyeur is incapable of rejecting certain aspects of his/her national
identity and of incorporating new foreign elements of identity.

However, if this discussion seems to privilege the traveler over the tourist, it is important
to recognize that the text’s two travelers—Port and Kit—come to very bad ends, while the
tourist—Tunner—is able to leave unscathed and return to America. The safety to the tourist’s
identity translates to a physical safety as well; the text’s argument then appears to be pointing out
the risk and vulnerability inherent in a postmodern understanding of identity. (And ultimately,
we are dealing with new understandings of identity rather than new identities themselves because presumably identity has always functioned in this fashion. And these understandings may not necessarily be completely new as it can surely be proven that such understandings existed previously, but what is new is that Bowles' work begins an era—the postmodern—where such understandings become increasingly more predominant.)

Similar to Bowles’ tourist/traveler distinction, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari draw two distinctions in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) between what they call “tree travel” and “rhizome travel,” and between “moved bodies” and “moving bodies.” Deleuze and Guattari argue that one of the “fundamental tasks of the State” is to transform moving bodies into moved bodies:

One of the fundamental tasks of the State is to striate the space over which it reigns, or to utilize smooth spaces as a means of communication in the service of striated space. It is a vital concern of every State not only to vanquish nomadism, but to control migrations and, more generally, to establish a zone of rights over an entire “exterior,” over all of the flows traversing the ecumenon. If it can help it, the State does not dissociate itself from a process of capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities or commerce, money or capital, etc. There is still a need for fixed paths in well-defined directions, which restrict speed, regulate circulation, relativize movement, and measure in detail the relative movements of subjects and objects. That is why Paul Virilio's thesis is important, when he shows that “the political power of the State is *polis*, police, that is, management of the public ways,” and that “the gates of the city, its levies and duties are barriers, filters against the fluidity of the masses, against the penetration power of migratory packs,” people, animals and goods. Gravity, *gravitas*, such is the essence of the State. It is not at all that the State knows nothing of speed; but it requires that movement, even the fastest, cease to be the absolute state of a *moving body* occupying a smooth space, to become the relative characteristic of a “*moved body*” going from one point to another in striated space. In this sense the State never ceases to decompose, recompose and transform movement, or to regulate speed. The State as town purveyor, converter, or highway interchange: the role of the engineer from this point of view. (385-386; my emphasis)

Moved bodies move according to pathways determined by the State, while moving bodies do not (this sheds new light on Bowles’ preference to travel by sea rather than by air—airline travel operates only via set pathways). The traveler is a moving body; but the tourist is a moved body,
and Bowles was very aware of the relationship between the State, tourism, and moved bodies. In his article on travel writing, “The Challenge to Identity” (1958), Bowles discusses travel books which are “more subjective, more ‘literary’” (360)—books that recount how travel has challenged/altered the traveler’s identity. His conclusion is one drawn from personal experience, arguing that the tourist’s experience could never produce such books, nor such experiences:

It goes without saying that whatever attempts have been undertaken to make a place accessible to the tourist are just so many barricades in the way of the writer, and if he manages to make contact with the place it will be in spite of them rather than thanks to them. The purpose of official aid for the visitor is to make individual research unnecessary; in many countries there is a further, more sinister design in government-sponsored tourist bureaus: a conscious intent to discourage personal relationships between strangers and residents. Writers are particularly suspect, of course, but it is one of their routine tasks to circumvent this sort of thing. “You have no need to talk with anyone,” I was assured by a policeman in an African country. “Our tourist office will supply you with guides at fixed rates and a special booklet in English free of charge that will give you all the information you require.”


There are two dangers that Bowles presents here as a traveler: he will mingle with the residents of that nation; and the State does not know what he will do. These two threats saw him in confrontations with the Moroccan state at various times in his life, most notably with his efforts to record for posterity traditional Berber music and to translate stories from the Maghrebian Arabic dialect. Funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Bowles traveled throughout Morocco in 1959 to create recordings of Berber music to be archived in the Library of Congress. What Bowles found was that Moroccan officials were resistant to his project as it was a direct challenge to the Moroccan identity that the State was attempting to construct:

They hate to admit that such a thing [Moroccan tribal music] still exists in spite of their “deculturizing” programs, and the last thing they want is for the world outside (and particularly the United States) to possess evidence of what they consider to be their great shame—i.e.: the fact that Morocco is in general an unusually primitive region the vast
majority of whose inhabitants have not been imbued with Arab culture, in spite of some eleven centuries of effort on the part of the Arab conquerors. This is an important part of their policy, both internally and externally, and by flouting it I have made even more enemies among that particular group of men. (In Touch 306)\(^7\)

Bowles provides a particularly illustrative episode:

> Few of them are as frank about their convictions as the official in Fez who told me, “I detest all folk music, and particularly ours here in Morocco. It sounds like the noises made by savages. Why should I help you to export a thing which we are trying to destroy? You are looking for tribal music. There are no more tribes. We have dissolved them. So the word means nothing. And there never was any tribal music anyway—only noise. Non, monsieur, I am not in accord with your project.” (Paul Bowles: Collected Stories and Later Writings 808)

Potential friction with Moroccan officials was a source of anxiety concerning Bowles’ translations as well. Larbi Layachi’s *A Life Full of Holes* (1964; published under the pseudonym, Driss ben Hamed Charhadi) caused its author to—in Bowles’ words—grow “increasingly nervous about the possible official reactions to the French edition of his book, which Gallimard was publishing shortly. His anxiety, continually expressed, communicated itself to me, and I too began to think it would be better if he were out of the way. I got him a visa for the United States; he left with Bill Burroughs on the Independence, and has never returned to Morocco” (Without Stopping 355). In The Dream at the End of the World: Paul Bowles and the Literary Renegades in Tangier (1991), Michelle Green confirms that “A Life Full of Holes had been seized by authorities” (309). Similar circumstances are recounted in a letter from Bowles regarding Mohammed Mrabet’s *Love with a Few Hairs* (1967):

> Today I’m posting you a copy of Love with a Few Hairs, before it becomes impossible to send it through the mails. (It’s under consideration now at police headquarters; there’s always a whiff of apprehension in the atmosphere. One can never relax and know that everything’s all right in this place; Big Brother is so prone to misunderstand and decide that one really meant to insult the country.) For this reason Mrabet grows glum from time to time, being certain they will throw him into jail for having dared to write a book. (In Touch 401)
In these ways, the traveler strays from the State’s pathways set for the tourist: Bowles’ unpredictable collaborations with Moroccans garner the unwelcome attention of the State—he and his collaborators are guilty of portraying identities, experiences, and histories not in line with those constructed by the State.

There is one last aspect of the traveler that needs to be outlined: his/her rhizomatic structure. Deleuze and Guattari begin *A Thousand Plateaus* with the juxtaposition of two models: the tree and the rhizome—to “these centered systems, the authors contrast acentered systems” (17). Being acentered systems, “unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature” (21); The acentered “has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills” (21). It concerns “all manner of ‘becomings’” (21) as the “tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, ‘and…and…and…’ This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb ‘to be’” (25). The traveler as s/he is described by Bowles in *The Sheltering Sky* has a rhizomatic composition. Like the rhizome, the traveler’s “fabric” is the “conjunction, ‘and…and…and…’”: the traveler is capable of subtracting/adding any part of itself as it accepts/rejects any and all aspects of any culture it encounters (including its own). And as will be shown below, Bowles’ literature is a radical denial of any possibility of a center in any of his travelers—they are shown to be creatures capable of various constructions, whose absolute deconstruction and reconstruction illustrates that all their various components are equally available for subtraction from and addition to their traveler assemblages. In this way, Bowles constructs a figure whose assemblage is acentered (because there is no part that cannot be removed), fragmentary, adaptable, and rhizomatic.
As opposed to the tourist who moves within the binary of home and away, the traveler moves by proceeding from the middle—as The Sheltering Sky tells us, the traveler belongs “no more to one place than to the next” (6), which certainly fits Bowles’ relationship to the numerous places he had lived. Deleuze and Guattari explain how proceeding from the middle involves a certain way of traveling and moving, and it is one that they find in American literature:

Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation—all imply a false conception of voyage and movement (a conception that is methodical, pedagogical, initiatory, symbolic…). But Kleist, Lenz, and Büchner have another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing. American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. (25)

Deleuze and Guattari mention Heinrich von Kleist again when they draw the distinction between tree travel (which we could surely see as the tourist’s travel) and rhizome travel:

there are two kinds of voyage, distinguished by the respective role of the point, line, and space. Goethe travel and Kleist travel? French travel and English (or American) travel? Tree travel and rhizome travel? But nothing coincides, and everything intermingles, or crosses over. This is because the differences are not objective: it is possible to live striated on the deserts, steppes, or seas; it is possible to live smooth even in the cities, to be an urban nomad […] There are not only strange voyages in the city but voyages in place: we are not thinking of drug users, whose experience is too ambiguous, but of true nomads. We can say of the nomads, following Toynbee’s suggestion: they do not move. They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave, that they leave only in order to conquer and die. Voyage in place: that is the name of all intensities, even if they also develop in extension. To think is to voyage […] (482)

If Bowles can still be considered the traveler even after settling in Tangier, it is due to the fact that the traveler can “voyage in place.” That is, the traveler’s rhizomatic character, its movement by proceeding from the middle, its composition by conjunction, and its ability to add/subtract is what allows the traveler to remain in place but still be traveling. The American who felt at home
elsewhere and the Tangier resident who would never be Moroccan is the one who proceeds from the middle, always looking for additions/subtractions.

However, there is a word of warning here, which can be found both in Bowles’ literature and in *A Thousand Plateaus*. If Bowles’ travelers meet tragic ends, it is because they take on a greater risk as they work against current power regimes. This risk is due to the fact that, as mentioned above, the “differences are not objective” (*Plateaus* 482)—“everything mingles, or crosses over” (482). Trees can become rhizomes, rhizomes become trees; travelers can become tourists, tourists become travelers:

Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees. There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight, but the line of flight is part of the rhizome. These lines always tie back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. (9)

One cannot “posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad” because of the lack of an objective difference—because everything mingles. The traveler can always become the tourist. Where the traveler becomes the tourist is where it is suddenly forced to follow the pathways set for it by power. In Bowles’ literature, we see that the traveler’s deterritorialized line of flight opens it to often brutal reterritorializations. This is the inherent risk of the traveler assemblage, of moving bodies.

In light of such risks, it is important to explain the traveler's motivation. For Bowles, as he explains in the article “Autobiography” (1985), it was simple: “I was addicted to movement; freedom meant the freedom to travel” (21). Bowles quite simply equates traveling with freedom, and a movement that proceeds from the middle appears to be where the greatest freedom can be
found: “When you've cut yourself off from the life you've been living and you haven't yet established another life, you're free. That's a very pleasant sensation, I've always thought. If you don't know where you're going, you're even freer” (Conversations 123). For Bowles, such freedom cannot be attained without risk: “what is freedom in the last analysis, other than the state of being totally, instead of only partially, subject to the tyranny of chance?” (Collected 376). If the tourist is safer than the traveler, it is only due to the fact that the tourist has less chance to be found submitting to such tyranny—but notice that we are only talking about probability, not security. Bowles was quite clear on this topic: “Security is a false god; begin making sacrifices to it and you are lost” (Collected 747); “there is no ‘predictable environment.’ Security is a false concept” (Conversations 91). So there are only greater or lesser degrees of risk; there is no security to be had (as the entirety of his literature displays). If such freedom poses risks, the risk is partly to blame in the traveler’s—and by extension, humanity’s—rhizomatic adaptability. Bowles believes in the “infinite adaptability of human consciousness to outside circumstances” (Conversations 101), but this ability can be to humanity’s detriment: “I suspect that man, being the most adaptable animal of all, will reconcile himself to any situation as long as it is presented to him as something inevitable; he will even agree to the definitive extinction of all life on this planet” (“Autobiography” 27; my emphasis).

“A Distant Episode” (1947) and The Sheltering Sky (1949)

Bowles believed that “what The Sheltering Sky was, really, was a working out of the professor's story, in ‘A Distant Episode.’ In my mind it was the same story retold; it described the same process in other terms” (Conversations 54). Bowles makes the same point about The Sheltering Sky in his autobiography: “In essence the tale would be similar to “A Distant Episode” (Without Stopping 275). In light of such similarity between the two narratives, it makes sense to discuss
them in conjunction. There is a narrative trajectory that both texts follow (“the same process”), and I will begin with an examination of “A Distant Episode” not because it was published first, but because it is a way of studying Sheltering in miniature, beforehand. The following reading of “Episode” is motivated by what it subsequently reveals about Sheltering.

The short story's version of the tale is rather straightforward. An unnamed Linguistics professor—known only as “the Professor”—travels to the Sahara where he hopes to make “a survey of variations on Moghrebi” (Collected 210). In Aïn Tadouirt, he hopes to meet a former acquaintance of his who is a café-keeper—a qaouaji. Upon arrival at the café, he is informed by the new qaouaji that his acquaintance is dead. When he tells the qaouaji that he collects camel-udder boxes, he is told that the qaouaji can lead him to a tribe of Reguibat who sell them. Then the Professor meets the Reguibat; they beat and mutilate him, transforming him into a mute, thoughtless, clownish performer. They eventually sell him to a Fogara villager, and when the knowledge of language begins to return to the Professor, he stops performing, eventually escaping into the desert.

The decisive moment in “Episode” is commonly understood to be when the Professor voices his desire to collect camel-udder boxes. Lawrence Stewart argues that “he who would collect the box of a woman’s make-up does himself become an ornament and a diversion” (31); “the collector finds himself to be the trophy” (55). Brian T. Edwards says basically the same thing: “The Westerner who would collect exotic objects is himself made into an object” (90). However, the argument for some form of ironic justice is not as convincing as it could be when we consider that the Professor’s desire is mentioned in passing, and that he is not in the Sahara simply to collect trinkets. Edwards makes an important point when he mentions that elements of the story are “introduced like clues in a detective story, a metaphor Bowles himself used in
describing his narrative techniques” (90); Edwards then makes reference to the following passage from Bowles’ letters:

No one seems to have realized that practically all the tales are a variety of detective story. Not the usual variety, I admit, but still, detective stories in which the reader is the detective; the mystery is the motivation for the characters' behavior, and the clues are given in the form of reactions on the part of the characters to details of situations and surroundings. [...] there is a reason, and it is usually the reason for the entire story. Often the action of a story is predicated on a bit of unmentioned, subconscious knowledge on the part of a protagonist, but the suggestion is always made and placed in an emotional frame which serves as a clue to anyone who really read the story. (In Touch 227)

Therefore, if “the mystery is the motivation for the characters' behavior,” my intervention here is that the Professor’s motivation is not informed by collecting, but by traveling—the Professor is a traveler as it was defined in the above discussion. The decisive moment is not when the Professor voices his desire to collect these boxes, but when the qaouaji provides him with a choice as to how to collect the boxes: like a tourist or like a traveler. If only the Professor were willing to pay a little more, the qaouaji would deliver the boxes to him despite the qaouaji’s disdain for the Reguibat who sell them (“The man looked angry. ‘Sometimes the Reguibat bring in those things. We do not buy them here.’” (Collected 211)). However, when the qaouaji offers to take the Professor to the Reguibat, the Professor agrees. This agreement cannot be seen simply as the desire to save money because there is also the implication that the Professor feels slighted: when he speaks “the Moghrebi he had taken four years to learn,” the qaouaji replies in “bad French” (211). Whether this slight is based on the perception of the Professor as tourist or colonialist is difficult to say, but either way, it is a denial of the Professor’s traveler status—a colonialist could never be a traveler, because if the colonialist were to reject the worst parts of his/her culture, then s/he could never assent to colonialism. The Professor’s decision to visit the Reguibat, to literally descend “into the abyss” (Collected 215) where the Reguibat are camped, is informed by the traveler’s willingness to leave the road more traveled in order to pursue
knowledge via relationships with the people of a given land (as opposed to the tourist’s manufactured, prepackaged experience that has little to no contact with the people of a given land). The Professor does not visit the Reguibat without trepidation: he feels “uneasy” (212), and is “in a state of nerves” (215). But it is not the desire to collect that motivates him to overcome his fears—it is the desire to learn, to encounter, and to reclaim his status as traveler that had been denied him by the qaouaji and by tourism in general.

The Professor could have saved himself the trouble by paying a little extra, but this would not have taught him anything about the land, its languages, or its people; the pursuit of the boxes is only an excuse to seek out the Reguibat, which points to the most important aspect of the traveler’s composition: his/her constant process of learning. Being a professor, he is the figure of learning par excellence, and as mentioned at the beginning of The Sheltering Sky, it is the constant process of learning from foreign cultures that allows for the traveler’s ability of addition and subtraction. On this point, an important caveat has to be made here: as Edward Said’s Orientalism has illustrated, the Orientalist is very much engaged with a process of learning about foreign cultures, but I propose that the Orientalist's learning is of the same kind—though much more advanced—as a tourist's. On the other hand, the Professor in “Episode” is a learner of the traveler type; in this short story, learning, in fact, takes on an even greater role than movement itself. Michelle Green repeats a story told to her by American author John Hopkins about a disagreement between Brion Gysin and Bowles: “We were talking about [why we were here] and Paul said, ‘We’re here to learn.’ Brion said, ‘No, we’re here to go’” (294). In such a disagreement is evidence of the fact that movement per se is not enough—though perhaps learning per se is. Each author’s dedication to their respective statements is evident in that they each have texts with these statements as their titles. Bowles’ short story “Here to Learn” (1979)
reverses the global direction of “Episode” and Sheltering while maintaining their processes—its protagonist, Malika, is a Moroccan with an overwhelming desire to learn, providing her with opportunities to travel through Europe, and ultimately reside in Los Angeles. However, like her fictional counterparts in “Episode” and Sheltering, all does not end well, as she is left alone and isolated, realizing she cannot return home even when she is physically back in Morocco (it is impossible to return to previous assemblages; there are only new, future assemblages). Like Malika, the Professor is motivated by the inherent desire to learn—so carefully cultivated in the traveler—despite the fact that it could lead to his ruin. This ruin can be found equally well in the East or the West. Anyone can be the traveler, and anyone can take on the traveler’s risks.

It is the Professor’s desire to learn that motivates him to descend into the abyss. After this descent, the Professor is immediately attacked, whereupon he remembers warnings he heard about the Reguibat: “‘The Reguiba is a cloud across the face of the sun.’ ‘When the Reguiba appears the righteous man turns away’” (216). He then reasons that he has found an “opportunity […] of testing the accuracy of such statements” (216-7). If there is any inaccuracy to these warnings about the Reguibat, it is in the fact that they cannot possibly communicate the gravity of his situation. It is at this point that the Professor no longer has control over the additions/subtractions of his rhizomatic adaptability, which is then taken over by the Reguibat. He will not decide what it is that he learns; the Reguibat will decide. It is the Reguibat who will exploit the Professor’s acentered system as they completely dismantle and then rebuild him to their liking. This system is acentered because there is no essential part that cannot be removed and replaced (the abyss is the symbol of the void at the center). It is a matter of who controls this rhizomatic assemblage that decides whether it can be liberatory or oppressive. Once The Professor is no longer in control, he is then controlled by a colonial conflict within a specific
historical and political context that makes him the de facto enemy of the Reguibat. Ignoring such a context is to ignore how colonialism determines/controls identity.

Proving the point about an acentered subjectivity is the fact that language itself can be taken away from a linguistics professor, completely erasing his previous identity. After beatings that end only with unconsciousness, the Professor’s tongue is cut out. Undergoing the horrors of torture and mutilation, consciousness begins to fade as “there was an endless choking and spitting that went on automatically, as though he were scarcely part of it. The word ‘operation’ kept going through his mind; it calmed the terror somewhat as he sank back into darkness” (*Collected* 218). Automaticity takes over as he is “not unconscious, but in a state of utter stupor” (218). “The Professor was no longer conscious; to be exact, he existed in the middle of the movements made by these other men” (218). Cutting out the Professor’s tongue does not simply rob him of speech—it is part of a regime of pain, torture, deprivation, and humiliation intended to rob him of language altogether. The improper usage of “operation” to describe his mutilation is not only a compensatory mechanism (via euphemism) for dealing with trauma, but it is indicative of the way in which his torture will ultimately deprive him of all language, and thus of all thought. They then deposit him “doubled-up into a sack and tied at one side of a camel” (218). He is taken out of the sack so that they can dress him with a “series of curious belts made of the bottoms of tin cans strung together. One after another of these bright girdles was wired about his torso, his arms and legs, even across his face, until he was entirely within a suit of armor that covered him with its circular metal scales” (218). Even after “all his wounds had healed and he felt no more pain, the Professor did not begin to think again; he ate and defecated, and he danced when he was bidden, a senseless hopping up and down that delighted the children, principally because of the wonderful jangling racket it made” (219). The fact that
even language and by extension thought itself can be deprived from a linguistics professor indicates that there is nothing that cannot be taken from him. As Jacques Derrida argues in Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin (1996), language is always other; there is no “mother tongue” that one can possess—language is an “impossible property” (63).

But the story does not end here. The Reguibat decide to sell the Professor to the Touareg at Fogara. It is here that “pain began to stir again in his being” (Collected 220), and in both “Episode” and Sheltering, pain, language, and consciousness are intrinsically connected. Pain, language, and consciousness however do not return to the Professor in the forms that he had previously known them; rather, they take on previously unknown forms in this new assemblage that the Professor has become. Thus the first language to return to him is not a European language, but rather Arabic. His new owner receives a group of men to his house, among them a “venerable gentleman” (220) who speaks classical Arabic about violence toward the French: “Perhaps at In Salah. The French there are stupid. Celestial vengeance is approaching. Let us not hasten it. Praise the highest and cast thine anathema against idols. With paint on his face. In case the police wish to look close” (220). (This anti-colonial rhetoric is essential for understanding how the Professor's fate is dictated by his political/historical context.) The Professor “was conscious of the sound of the old man’s Arabic. The words penetrated for the first time in many months” (220; original emphasis). After some level of language and consciousness have returned, the Professor refuses to dance, indicating that he has, to some extent, now reasserted control over his assemblage again. This sends his new owner into a rage, leaving his house to kill one of the Reguibat in revenge for selling him damaged goods. Further establishing the colonial context is the fact that the new owner is then caught by members of the French military police who “dragged him off to the barracks” (221). Meanwhile, wandering around the house, the
Professor finds a French calendar: on “the white paper were black objects that made sounds in his head. He heard them; ‘Grande Epicerie du Sahel. Juin. Lundi, Mardi, Mercredi…’” (221). It is still telling that Arabic returns first for the Professor, and more powerfully than French. Indicating that these languages are new appendages (rather than the return of the old appendages) is the fact that it is now the Professor who speaks “bad French.”

The colonial context is a vital part of the story, and the fact that it is not accented but subtly alluded to makes it possible to improperly read the story without colonialism in mind—I argue that it is colonialism that actually decides the altercations, the motivations, and the fates of the characters in Bowles’ fiction. Perhaps the most significant event in the story is the Professor’s escape when a French soldier identifies him as a “holy maniac” and takes “a pot shot at him for good luck. The bullet whistled dangerously near the Professor’s head, and his yelling rose into an indignant lament” (222). The soldier can take a shot at the Professor because the story is set during colonialism in North Africa and because he is identified as a “holy maniac” rather than as a Westerner (the soldier never would have shot if he thought the Professor was a Westerner). A holy maniac, or a mejdoub12—“a deranged person believed to be possessed by spirits” (Collected 1050)—is a North African, Islamic figure, and as such is firmly identified as one of the colonized, a target for colonial violence. The shot at the Professor is evidence of his complete transformation via rhizomatic addition/subtraction, which undoes all binaries of race, religion, language, geopolitics, and nationality (indicating how all these categories of identity can be pure constructions). However, in this undoing, it does not simply reverse a racist system of binaries, but indicates Bowles’ belief that “people from all corners of the earth have an unlimited potential for violence” (Conversations 131). As someone who realizes the human capacity to traverse all boundaries while simultaneously resisting such boundaries, the traveler is
in a greater position of risk, being unable to rely on protection from any side,\textsuperscript{13} and being a target of violence from all sides. This risk is increased and aggravated further in sociopolitical systems of legitimized violence such as colonialism.

When asked if \textit{The Sheltering Sky}'s Port Moresby is the Professor, Bowles responds that “They’re all the professor” (\textit{Conversations} 54). Stewart debates Bowles' claim:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Sheltering Sky}’s plotted similarity to “A Distant Episode” is initially misleading, for the episode that began the Professor’s transformation is merely a diversionary excursion for Port and has no permanent effect upon him and no consequences for the novel. Only in the final section of the novel will experiences again parallel the Professor’s; but there they will be the adventures of Kit which re-echo conclusions arrived at in “A Distant Episode.” (57)
\end{quote}

In \textit{Paul Bowles: Staticity & Terror} (1976), Eric Mottram suggests a similar parallel between the fates of Kit and the Professor when “the desert tribesmen [are] using her as they will, as they use the linguistic professor to their will” (6). However, Bowles' claim is clearer if we avoid drawing a parallel between the Professor’s abyss and Port’s descent from the parapet around Oran to visit a prostitute, (near the beginning of the novel), and instead draw the parallel between the Professor’s abyss and the abyss that Port discovers behind the sheltering sky as he approaches death (near the middle). What happens to Kit after Port’s death parallels what happens to the Professor after he enters the abyss; both Port's and Kit's stories constitute one plotline. Returning to Bowles' claim that “they're all the professor,” the parallel that should be drawn is not between Port and the Professor, nor between Kit and the Professor; rather, the parallel should be between the Professor and both Port and Kit: Port's life parallels the first half of the Professor's storyline, and Kit's the second half.

In their constant travels through North Africa, the death of Port Moresby and the disappearance of Kit Moresby in \textit{The Sheltering Sky} are a direct result of attempts to escape American and French authorities, and thus, their attempt to avoid colonial powers. Both
symbolically and literally, Port’s death is prompted by attempts to return his stolen passport. Port, worried that the passport’s return would also return previous identities and relationships that he no longer wants, decides to travel further into the Saharan Desert before his passport can reach him. It is there that, with very little medical aid, the sky no longer shelters him from infinite nothingness, and he dies, succumbing to absolute dissolution. In a similar dissolution, Kit escapes her sheltering identity by “disappearing” from French and American eyes when she escapes into the Casbah of Oran at the novel’s end. Her dissolution is not essentially found in the Casbah—a racist assumption—but in an absolute severance from her sheltering identity: in one and the same moment, Kit casts off her American identity while permanently eluding French and American surveillance. The Sheltering Sky is composed of two lines of flight, the one line of flight continued by the next, composing essentially one line. Evading the passport’s return is essential to this line of flight; in Empire, Hardt and Negri argue that “increasingly less will passports or legal documents be able to regulate our movements across borders. A new geography is established by the multitude as the productive flows of bodies define new rivers and ports. The cities of the earth will become at once great deposits of cooperating humanity and locomotives for circulation, temporary residences and networks of mass distribution of living humanity” (397). However, the fact that Hardt and Negri use the future tense is a telling one. Kit and Port’s line of flight, their deterritorialization is forced into failure via death, madness, and reterritorialization.

Whereas the beginning of “Episode” provides the Professor with the opportunity (rejected) of electing to be the tourist rather than the traveler, in Sheltering we have the figure of the tourist personified in the character of Tunner. While Mottram does not distinguish between tourist and traveler, his pairing of staticity and terror finds an important pattern in Bowles’
fiction: “But who does Bowles allow to survive these brusque collisions? They are those who submit to the discipline of routine” (2). Those who “submit to the discipline of routine” live in a form of staticity, whereas those who do not submit are forced to undergo terrors of all kinds: terror “emerges at the point where it is clear to his characters and to his reader that there is no ultimate tribunal of morality to be relied on” (4). Mottram’s pairing of terror/staticity fits very well with that of traveler/tourist, and accurately describes the structure of the narrative in Sheltering. Tourism is a form of movement that submits to the discipline of routine, and leaves the tourist in a comfortable, unthinking, unquestioning stasis: a disciplined movement creating routine experiences (of which, as explained above, Bowles was very aware). Tunner, as the tourist who submits to the discipline of tourism, is allowed to leave the events relatively unscathed and unchanged, whereas Port and Kit are travelers who actively shirk the duties dictated by tourist discipline, as evinced in their evasion of Port’s passport and their interactions with French/American authorities. As travelers, they expose themselves to the risk of undergoing terrors that leave them irrevocably altered.

A striking contrast can also be found between the motivations for the tourist’s movement and for the traveler’s movement. Like the Professor, Kit and Port are motivated by a desire to learn; almost immediately after the text supplies us with Port’s definition of the traveler, it is explained why travelers would specifically seek out the Sahara in order to alter their rhizomatic assemblages in new and unexpected ways:

She paid him no attention. “The people of each country get more like the people of every other country. They have no character, no beauty, no ideals, no culture—nothing, nothing.”

Her husband reached over and patted her hand. “You’re right. You’re right,” he said smiling. “Everything’s getting gray and it’ll get grayer. But some places’ll withstand the malady longer than you think. You’ll see, in the Sahara here...” (8)
Both Port and Kit are eager to seek out and learn from peoples and cultures that have not been subjected to globalization's/Westernization's homogenization. Tunner, on the other hand, has no real desire to see North Africa or to learn anything about it, which is the main reason why, of the three characters, he is the self-professed “real American” (105)—he will not undergo any processes that challenge his identity (and therein lies his physical safety). His “principle reason” for being there was so that he could be with Port and Kit because “with them as with no one else he felt a definite resistance to his unceasing attempts at moral domination, at which he was forced, when with them, to work much harder” (59). Tunner, who unproblematically embraces his national identity, is unsurprisingly the figure of dominance and colonization, which is reflected in his more personal motivation to go to North Africa only according to some half-felt desire to be with his friends and perhaps to have sex with Kit who he is not truly interested in.

Even more dubious motivations belong to tourists by the name of Eric and Mrs. Lyle, “the young man and his mother, who wrote travel books and illustrated them with their own photographs” (51). Though they may move around the world like travelers and profess to be travelers, they act like tourists according to Port’s definition. Their status as tourists is established in Eric’s first meeting with Port; Eric says, “Unluckily we have an itinerary which we try to follow exactly” (52), to which Port answers, “The only way to travel, at least for us, is to go when you feel like going and stay where you feel like staying” (53). The itinerary firmly establishes the Lyles as tourists in contradistinction to the Moresbys who go where/when they please. The Lyles turn out to be particularly ugly tourists. Their attempts to learn from the people around them are minimal at best as their research resembles Orientalist voyeurism, moving around the world confident in their own superiority. As travel writers, they should be interested in learning, but in fact, what we are shown is that they are only interested in repeating their
ignorant, bigoted statements about the people around them. This is not to say that tourists are bigots (Tunner is not a bigot), but that there is a particular type of tourism that is bigoted. It is no coincidence that we see bigoted statements from the Lyles, the tourist travel writers; their confidence in their own superiority finds expression in these bigoted statements, which are part of a system of racist and colonialist representations of the East fed to the West. A sampling of Mrs. Lyles’ statements is as follows:

“I’ve discovered the sweetest mosque, but it’s covered with brats all shrieking like demons. Filthy little beasts, they are!” (46)

“The stupidity of the French! It’s unbelievable! They’re all mental defectives. Madame Gautier herself told me they have the lowest national intelligence quotient in the world. Of course, their blood is thin; they’ve gone to seed. They’re all part Jewish or Negro. Look at them!” (47)

“Those filthy Arabs have done their work here, the same as everywhere else.” (62)

“The Arabs!” cried Mrs. Lyle. “They’re a stinking, low race of people with nothing to do in life but spy on others.” (63)

“I showed him I knew he was telling me the most fearful lot of lies. Catholics! I daresay they think that makes them superior. It was too funny, when they were all most Jewy; one had only to look at them. Oh, I know Jews, I’ve had too many vile experiences with them not to know them.” (65)

“Some filthy swine of an Arab woman,” she added, with astonishing violence. (82)

The fact that someone who expresses such opinions could be partly responsible for the West’s “knowledge” of the East is both frightening and incriminating—it is part of a very strong indictment of the predominant understanding the West has of the East.

This indictment is also more specifically directed at French colonialism in North Africa. In his hotel bar in Oran, Port reflects on the “sadness inherent in all deracinated things”:

“happiness, if there still was any, existed elsewhere: [...] beyond the mountains in the great Sahara, in the endless regions that were all of Africa. But not here in this sad colonial room.
where each invocation of Europe was merely one more squalid touch” (49-50). Colonialism, as a forced movement, a forced hybridity, is an inherently sad state of affairs which Port hopes to escape with his flight into the Sahara. However, it is dubious whether he is able to avoid deracination as the furthest point to which he flies is where he dies in a French military outpost in Sbâ. Deracination also shows how the figure of the traveler is not necessarily liberatory, but can be co-opted by powers such as colonialism. At no point is this clearer than when Port accuses Abdelkader—the proprietor of Port’s pension in Bou Noura—for the theft of his passport because he was “absolutely the only native who had access to the passport” (151). Though Eric Lyle is the much more likely thief based on character, Port’s racist accusation is evidence of the traveler’s vulnerability to a racist power structure, incorporating aspects of it despite himself. This power structure is expressed violently at a number of points. When Lieutenant d’Armagnac—the “commander of the military post of Bou Noura” (141)—considers “the other soldiers at the post, who would have enjoyed seeing all the natives put behind barbed wire and left there to rot in the sun (‘…comme on a fait en Tripolitaine’),” they want their commander to realize “what worthless scum they [the natives] really were” (141). Such violence is symbolized by a dead fig tree “with masses of barbed wire looped from its branches” (108), which is subsequently described as “skeletal” (112) and whose loops of wire “rubbed” against the branches, “creaking ever so slightly” (118). The argument of such symbolism is evident: French colonialism/military occupation is choking the life out of North Africa. Port’s racist accusation is evidence of the way in which he becomes diminished in such an environment.

The Lyles’ role in this narrative is more than just an indictment of French colonialism: they provide the motivation and the opportunity for the Moresbys’ line of flight. As we get to know the Lyles, they become more and more repellant, culminating in the discovery that they are
involved in an incestuous relationship where Mrs. Lyle pays Eric for sex. What is perhaps most disconcerting for Port is that though claims to move where/when he pleases, the Moresbys coincidentally keep running into the Lyles at subsequent towns. This undermines Port’s claim of being a traveler as his directionless movement matches perfectly with the Lyles’ itinerary. This unmentioned problem resembles the one the Professor faces when he is asked if he would like his camel-udder boxes procured for him like a tourist. Both Port and the Professor choose the traveler’s method as opposed to the safer tourist option, so when Port’s passport is stolen by Eric to be sold on the black market, Port decides to embrace his new passport-less state and follow an undisciplined movement. We know that Port wants to embrace this new state from when he had said previously: “I don’t have to justify my existence by any such primitive means. The fact that I breathe is my justification. If humanity doesn’t consider that a justification, it can do what it likes to me. I’m not going to carry a passport to existence around with me, to prove I have a right to be here! I’m here! I’m in the world!” (88-9). Port demands global citizenship, and his travels after the theft of his passport is an expression of that, but he is also aware of the risks: he says that humanity can “do what it likes to me.” So while the traveler demands global citizenship, this demand does not come with a demand for security. Port is aware that security does not exist, and that this new state leaves him even more vulnerable. With Port’s death in the French military post in Sbâ and Kit’s subsequent sexual subjugation, we realize that the risk is very real—humanity will do whatever it likes with those who demand global citizenship.

With such events and motivation in place, the narrative follows a trajectory that parallels the one experienced by the Professor, where the traveler is dismantled and reconstructed. Port is concerned that after his passport has been found by the French authorities (the idea of this recovery “horrified him” (165)), Tunner will bring it back to him, bringing back previous
identities/relationships. He feels that it is the passport that chases him, eager to deny his global citizenship and status as a traveler: “That passport, official proof of his existence, racing after him, somewhere behind in the desert!” (193). He also finds a certain amount of pleasure in such evasion: “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” (102). His evasion of both Tunner and the passport is what causes the Moresbys to run recklessly towards the center of the Sahara, despite the fact that Port begins to take ill. Their trajectory (Oran → Boussif → Ain Krorfa → Bou Noura → El Ga’a → Sbâ) “had been one strict, undeviating course inland to the desert, and now he was very nearly at the center” (192). This trajectory is the extended version of the Professor’s descent into the abyss. It is at the center, in Sbâ, where Port dies that he discovers the great abyss: “he would see what he never had doubted lay behind” (227) the sheltering sky, which he identifies earlier as “‘Nothing […]. Just darkness. Absolute night’” (94). The emptiness that he finds beyond is also the emptiness that he simultaneously finds at his center. (For this reason, many critics have performed existentialist readings of Bowles’ work, but this existential emptiness is also a poststructural emptiness.) Everything that this traveler had so carefully tried to construct out of himself is ultimately stripped away. He is proven to be an acentered structure when Kit notices that “‘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 hegemony of the involuntary” (208). In dying, humanity can be stripped from Port as well as his identity and his language: his name is conspicuously absent from the few pages describing his death, leaving an inhuman, impersonal “he” to die locked alone in a room; his death is punctuated by an inarticulate crying out. This cry comes after words for Port “have become more difficult to
handle, now” (215). “Less and less he used them in his thinking” (216). It is at this point that Kit has lost both language and identity, closely resembling the Professor's experience during his mutilation and torture.

After Port finds the abyss, Kit is left to continue the Professor’s trajectory. Her moment of truth is when she is reunited with Tunner after Port’s death—“the first moments of a new existence” (231). After her second tryst with Tunner, Kit faces a decision similar to the ones faced by Port and the Professor before her; by following Tunner, she could choose the easier, tourist path, literally returning to previous relationships and identities, or she could opt for the more dangerous, unpredictable traveler option. Kit’s decision to continue on as a traveler is the subject of the third and final part of the novel, epigraphed by a quotation from Kafka: “From a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back. That is the point that must be reached” (259). Kit decides to reach this very point, and it is the same one reached by Port, the Professor, and Malika as well. After fleeing into the desert, she is raped by the nomadic Belqassim and his compatriot. However, she soon feels affection for Belqassim and “the short interlude with the other no longer bothered her, since Belqassim always stood by” (268). Whether Stockholm syndrome plays a part or not, Kit’s sexual treatment is part of a regime of extreme subjugation meant to dismantle and reconstruct her: similar to the Professor, she is reduced to “a piece of property that belonged to their masters, as private and inviolable as the soft leather pouches full of silver these latter carried slung across their shoulders” (271); “Now he owned her completely” (284).

Her fate follows a pattern familiar by now (I will be brief here so as to avoid too much repetition with my discussion of “A Distant Episode”). She begins to lose language: “It was so long since she had canalized her thoughts by speaking aloud, and she had grown accustomed to
acting without the consciousness of being in the act. She did only the things she found herself already doing” (270); “She had not learned his language; indeed, she did not consider making the effort” (277). With the absence of language comes the absence of thought and consciousness: “She sat there, frozen inside her skin, knowing all at once that she did not know anything—neither where nor what she was” (280). Once the previous rhizome has been dismantled, a new one can be constructed: so that Belqassim can smuggle Kit into his village and into his harem, she is made to look “astonishingly like an Arab boy” (272). (As with the Professor, the fact that this transformation can be accomplished undoes rigid binaries of gender, race, and nationality.) When Kit decides to fight back against her captors and bites one of them, language returns—but in a new, altered form: “‘Thank God I have strong teeth,’ she thought, and she saw the words of the sentence printed in front of her” (282). These are the only words she is able to construct until she says to herself that “it’s poison” (288) that she is being fed, which prompts her escape from Belqassim’s harem. With the return of language comes the return of pain and consciousness: “In another minute life would be painful. The words were coming back, and inside the wrappings of the words there would be thoughts lying there” (296). Using her sole remaining possession—her passport—to identify her, French authorities discover Kit and transport her back to Oran. However, like the Professor who escapes into the desert at the very end of “Episode,” Kit escapes into the Casbah of Oran. This escape is suggested to Kit by her handler who mentions the fact that Tunner is waiting for her and adds, “The desert’s a big place, but nothing really ever gets lost there. [...] Things turn up sometimes months later” (310). She goes on: “The Sahara's a small place, really, when you come right down to it. People just don’t disappear there. It's not like it is here in the city, in the Casbah....” (312). Her escape is accomplished via a streetcar
which travels to the “Arab quarter” where it reaches “the end of the line” (313). Because of her new appearance, Kit’s disappearance in the Casbah is complete and easily accomplished.

Similar to the lesson that Malika learns when she returns to Morocco, Kit’s return to Oran where the Moresbys’ travels had started is not a return to a previous state, but illustrates how radically everything has changed. When Kafka said “from a certain point onward there is no longer any turning back,” this point is proven not to be a geographical point, but an internal one—a point where humanity’s capacity for infinite adaptability is embraced rather than ignored. This capacity always remains whether or not one embraces it in the form of a traveler. The majority of humanity does not openly embrace this capacity because with this embrace comes a denial of security; the traveler is forced to accept the increased risk inherent in this capacity, denying that security actually exists beyond a realm of pure statistical probabilities where one can only increase or decrease risk. Risk cannot be eliminated. Perhaps this risk lies in the process of learning itself, which is so essential to the definition of the traveler. That is, the traveler, seeking what s/he does not know, ventures forth towards the unknown, towards risks that cannot be realized until the traveler gets there. Because the figure of the traveler is a figure of tremendous potential resistance to contemporary regimes of power, the traveler also faces tremendous risks to his/her safety.

*Let It Come Down (1952)*

Bowles’ second novel explores the possibility of the traveler’s infinite adaptability being co-opted by a colonial regime, but in a way where the traveler becomes the willing participant of this regime rather than its victim. This co-optation takes on powerful political dimensions in light of the fact that it is achieved when this American traveler travels to the International Zone of Tangier, which was partly governed by the United States. One of the novel’s characters states
that “it was common knowledge that the unseen power behind the Administration [of Tangier] was the United States” (149); and, in his article, “International Zone” (1954), William S. Burroughs’ explains the privileges that Americans enjoy in Tangier:

Americans are exempt from the usual annoyances of registering with the police, renewing visas and so forth, that one encounters in Europe and South America. No visa is required for Tangier. You can stay as long as you want, work, if you can find a job, or go into business, without any formalities or permits. And Americans have extraterritorial rights in Tangier. Cases civil or criminal involving an American citizen are tried in consular court, under District of Columbia law. (Interzone 55-6)

In a similar statement, Bowles describes the revocation of such Tangier privileges after Moroccan independence: “The Americans, having given up their extra-territorial rights if not their Cadillacs, can no longer make faces at the policeman who tries to stop them from going in the wrong direction down a one-way street, or snarl ‘Screw you, Buster,’ at him as he tells them it is forbidden to park in a particular spot” (“Tangier Diary: A Post-Colonial Interlude” 83).

Thus, the setting of this novel introduces a complicated, multi-national colonialism in Morocco that goes well beyond France and Spain, decrying all of the West’s attempts to colonize the East, and the international complicity/cooperation that colonialism demands.

Such condemnation is announced with the very title of this novel; in the novel’s introduction, Bowles admits his fascination with the title: “From the time when I was a boy of eight or nine, I had been fascinated by that brief passage in Macbeth where Banquo comes out of the castle with his son and makes a passing remark to the men outside about the approaching rain, to be answered by the flash of a blade and the admirable four-word sentence, succinct and brutal: ‘Let it come down’” (7). While “succinct and brutal,” there is a certain amount of passivity in this statement, where the only action is a resignation to inaction. In such a statement, violence and murder come like rain (the narrative takes place during Tangier’s rainy season), and all you can do is allow it to come, which is not in your power anyway, so you simply resign
yourself to the fact of its coming. This passive relation to violence is an enveloping in violence (like getting caught in the rain) rather than being a conscious perpetrator of violence. This passivity applies to both the murder at the end of the novel, and to the colonial context. That is, Bowles takes great effort to indicate that the murder is not committed consciously, but is more of a passive act of one who resigns himself to an immersion in violence—which in the same resignation, is one who resigns himself to an immersion in colonialism.

Also, in a different sense, if colonial violence comes like rain, and there is the desire to let it come down, then this could also be the expression of the desire to see colonialism fall—that is come to an end. These are the two attitudes towards colonial violence that Let it Come Down displays: that the socio-political situation found in colonialism is responsible for the impersonal violence in the text, and that the text expresses the desire to see colonialism’s fall. Bowles’ anti-colonialism stance is perhaps nowhere more succinctly stated than in his article for The Nation, “Sad for U.S., Sad for Algeria…” (1958): “since the night of October thirty-first, 1954, I've followed events with the greatest interest. For a long time I've been waiting for the pleasure of seeing France commit suicide, and it's possible that this is one occasion when America won’t be able to stop her from doing it” (477).

The novel begins with Nelson Dyar arriving in Tangier from New York whereupon he is immediately presented as a traveler and not a tourist: “he had not come here on a vacation” (19); “he had renounced all security” (19). When confronted about the possibility that he is a tourist, he states, “Holiday? Nothing like it. I'm staying a while. I'm working here” (105). His status as a traveler—as someone who proceeds from the middle, who lives according to contingency rather than predetermination—manifests itself in his purposelessness. Dyar is repeatedly described as a purposeless figure whose movement is prompted by a shiftless boredom rather than any intrinsic
desire or will. He leaves New York because he felt “he had fallen prey to a demoralizing
sensation of motionlessness” (20), but upon his arrival in Tangier, “he realized that he felt
exactly the same” (22). Regardless of what Dyar does throughout the narrative, this lack of will
is so pervasive that he is continually described as “empty.” When he arrives, he feels “almost as
though he did not exist” (19) and that “the emptiness he felt” threatens him with “a progressive
paralysis” (21). Movement per se (particularly a traveler’s movement) does not guarantee Dyar
any purpose, direction, or fulfillment, and his move to Tangier has solved nothing. When
wealthy Tangier socialite Marqués Daisy de Valverde reads his palm, she tells Dyar,

“I see no sign of work. I see no sign of anything, to be quite honest. I’ve never seen such
an empty hand. It’s terrifying. [...] you have an empty life. No pattern. And nothing in
you to give you any purpose. Most people can’t help following some kind of design.
They do it automatically because it’s in their nature. It’s that that saves them, pulls them
up short. They can’t help themselves. But you’re safe from being saved.” (34)

More than empty, he is “nothing”: “He has nothing, he wants nothing, he is nothing” (36). Dyar
feels that “For years he had gone along not being noticed, not noticing himself, accompanied
the days mechanically” (177). And later, Daisy tells him, “‘God! You’re the greatest monster of
all. Of course! With that great emptiness in your hand. [...] You have an empty hand, and
vacuums have a tendency to fill up. Be careful what goes into your life’” (223). Because Dyar
does not heed Daisy’s warning here—to be wary about how his emptiness becomes filled—
Daisy shows a certain amount of foresight here as Dyar will eventually become the monster that
she sees before her.

Having no desire of his own, Dyar simply has to wait for something to happen: “‘Here I
am and something is going to happen.’ The infinitesimal promise of a possible change” (130).
These sentiments are repeated: “‘What’s going to happen?’ Something was surely going to
happen” (153); “Something’s got to happen in a minute. Something’s got to happen” (215).
There is a remarkable passivity here: “something is going to happen” rather than Dyar is going to do something. Late in the novel, Daisy confronts Dyar about his directionless emptiness:

“‘you’re not really alive, in some strange way. You’re dead’” (221). She then corrects herself:

“‘Oh, not dead! […] Just not alive. Not really’” (222).

Additionally, his nothingness is so pervasive that it invades his surroundings, and he feels he is nowhere: “He still felt coreless—he was no one, and he was standing here in the middle of no country. The place was counterfeit, a waiting room between connections, a transition from one way of being to another, which for the moment was neither way, no way” (143). There is a one-to-one correlation between the character of Dyar and the setting of Tangier. The emptiness found at the center of his traveler assemblage is also identified by Dyar in the acentered structure of his surroundings—the “milieu” or “middle” as Deleuze and Guattari call it. Bowles’ narration expresses a philosophy of life that very much operates within the middle:

life is not a movement toward or away from anything; not even from the past to the future, or from youth to old age, or from birth to death. The whole of life does not equal the sum of its parts. It equals any one of the parts; there is no sum. The full-grown man is no more deeply involved in life than the new-born child; his only advantage is that it can occasionally be given him to become conscious of the substance of that life, and unless he is a fool he will not look for reasons or explanations. Life needs no clarifying, no justification. (183)

But Bowles’ text goes even further; it does not simply refer to acentered structures, but it also describes the rhizomatic space of Tangier itself. As the acentered composition of Dyar is reflected in the space surrounding him, this space also reflects his rhizomatic composition.

Tangier’s rhizomatic space is first described as one that Dyar has difficulty navigating:

This time Dyar was determined to keep track of the turns and steps, so that he could find his way up alone after dinner. Through a short crowded lane, to the left up a steep little street lined with grocery stalls, out into the triangular plaza with the big green and white arch opposite, continue up, turn right down the dark level street, first turn left again into the very narrow alley which becomes a tunnel and goes up steeply, out at top, turn right again, follow straight through paying no attention to juts and twists because there are not
streets leading off, downhill to large plaza with fat hydrant in center and cafes all the way around (only they might be closed later, and with their fronts boarded up they look like any other shops), cross plaza, take alley with no streetlight overhead, at end turn left into pitch black street….He began to be confused. There were too many details to remember, and now they were climbing an endless flight of stone steps in the dark.

[...] In the street Dyar attempted to piece together the broken thread of his itinerary, but it seemed they were going back down by another route, as he recognized no landmark whatever. (166)

Dyar’s difficulty navigating such an urban landscape stems from the lack of a center, striation, or square, grid-like organization, leading to the conclusion that Tangier’s composition is much more organic, resembling a plant of the rhizome variety (the tree-like variety would be a relatively easy space to navigate):

The places through which he was passing were like the tortuous corridors in dreams. It was impossible to think of them as streets, or even as alleys. There were spaces here and there among the buildings, that was all, and some of them opened into other spaces and some did not. If he found the right series of connections he could get from one place to the next, but only by going through the buildings themselves. And the buildings seemed to have come into existence like plants, chaotic, facing no way, topheavy, one growing out of the other. (169; my emphasis)

Such a space thoroughly establishes the setting, where a racist, colonial power structure exploits rhizomatic adaptability, adding new racist, colonialist appendages to both a society and to an individual. In this way, neither the society nor the individual needs complete conversion for colonialism to work—they need only the addition of new colonialist appendages (this allows for all the various logical inconsistencies found within the philosophical standpoints behind the rhetoric of Western empires, and for the simultaneous existence of mutually exclusive subject positions seemingly necessary for colonialism). Dyar’s inner space and outer space are deeply connected—he is described as “an instrument that strives to adapt itself to the new exterior” (191). Dyar adapts himself to his new exterior that is the Tangier colonial context.

Dyar, an empty vessel,19 is so foreign to his new colonial context that he has neither felt nor expressed any particular racism toward Moroccans, but Daisy’s warning goes unheeded as
Dyar is not careful about how his “vacuum” is filled with racist paranoia and violence. This is the structure of the plot: Dyar waits passively for something to happen, and that something is his murder of his Moroccan friend, Thami: the American killing the Moroccan—it is a colonial relation first and foremost that cannot be overemphasized. Thami’s murder takes on greater significance when you consider that he has an anti-colonialist stance: as a smuggler, he believes that “every franc out of which the French customs could be cheated […] was another nail in the French economic coffin” (41), and his friends believe that “it was important to insist on the oneness of Morocco, to refuse to accept the three zones into which the Europeans had arbitrarily divided it” (41). Since this colonial power relation is essentially a monetary one, this murder is impossible until Dyar has stolen a large sum—though not entirely intentionally or willfully; it is only when he fails to deliver the large sum that he decides that perhaps he should keep it and leave. Earlier in the narrative, Thami expresses an opinion that argues that Dyar’s theft then flight is not an act of will: Occidentals “were more prudent than passionate; their fears were stronger than their desires. Most of them had no real desire, apart from that to make money, which after all is merely a habit. But once they had money they seemed never to use it for a specific object or purpose” (44). Even though Thami has not yet met Dyar at this point, this description applies to Dyar more than anyone else. Dyar had no desire to steal the money, but does seem to do it automatically or habitually when confronted with the fact that he cannot get rid of it immediately. And having stolen this money, Dyar really has no idea what he plans on doing with it, other than escaping with it. At the end of the novel, Dyar, whose paranoia toward Thami is fueled by the racist fear that Thami will steal his money, has no concrete plans for his newfound wealth; in the fashion Thami indicated, Dyar suddenly becomes motivated by a paranoid and racist fear rather than any sort of desire.
Racism, expressed at various levels, surrounds Dyar in the International Zone, and it is his immersion in such racism that explains his murder of Thami. The mildest form of racism is the assumption that Occidental people and culture are more sophisticated: at a party at the Bedaoui Palace, “It was taken for granted that they [the Bedaouis] were two debonair bachelors who loved to surround themselves with Europeans” (114); “Most of the Europeans, of course, thought the Moslem gentlemen were invited to add local color, and praised the Bedaoui brothers for their cleverness in knowing so well just what sort of Moroccan could mix properly with foreigners” (113)—what these Europeans do not realize is that it is they who are all on display for the “Moslem gentlemen.” There is also more explicit racism espoused, at one point or another, by almost all of the Occidental characters. In a confrontation between Thami and American writer Eunice Goode, Thami—who sees Goode as “the typical tourist who admired his race only insofar as its members were picturesque”—says, “You want us all to be snake-charmers and scorpion-eaters” (133). To which Eunice responds, “Naturally[…] It would be far preferable to being a nation of tenth-rate pseudo-civilized rug-sellers” (133). More important than subtle or overt racist comments, however, is the fact that the International Zone operates according to a racist economy. Being one of the novel’s wealthier characters, Daisy is quite happy with this economy: “it was one of the charms of the International Zone that you could get anything you wanted if you paid for it. Do anything, too, for that matter;—there were no incorruptibles. It was only a question of price” (26). Likewise, Eunice enjoys exploiting this economy for her benefit: “It seemed reasonable to think that he was not too well off. She hoped that was the case; it could be strongly in her favor. Poverty in other people generally was” (103). In another situation, Eunice, who is in love with a prostitute named Hadija, enjoys “the feeling of power that money gave her” (65) and is quite happy that her money will assure her “complete
ownership over the girl” (154). Presumably, such ownership over people is one of the International Zone’s “charms.”

The beginning of Dyar’s racist paranoia appears—not coincidentally—with the beginning of his feelings that the stolen money is now his property. Now occupying a “proper” position within the colonial relationship, he purchases the services of Thami and his boat to get him out of Tangier. Having made this purchase, his treatment of Thami becomes more brutal, and his thoughts more paranoid and racist. It is at this point—the fourth and final part of the novel, Another Kind of Silence—where all the racism that surrounds Dyar suddenly becomes explicit within him. While Dyar expresses few, if any, racist attitudes earlier in the novel, he begins to express some profoundly racist attitudes at this point: when he is on the boat, being snuck out of the International Zone into the Spanish Zone, he considers Thami and the boat’s driver to be “a couple of idiotic barbarians” (229); Dyar “had heard vaguely that the Spanish Zone was a primitive place, and he pictured it as a wilderness whose few inhabitants lived in caves and talked in grunts or sign language” (233); Thami is “not even a half-wit” (236); Thami gives Dyar “a smile he doubtless felt to be disarming, but which to Dyar's way of thinking was the very essence of Oriental deviousness and cunning” (242; my emphasis); “it was nonsense, this being dependent on an idiot, and an idiot who had given every sign, moreover, of being untrustworthy” (251); “he knew nothing about this country, save that all its inhabitants behaved like maniacs” (263); and, for Dyar, understanding Thami means understanding “the limits of Thami's infamy,” which is “merely a question of knowing how far the man was prepared to go, or rather, since he was a Moroccan, how far he would be able to go. And the answer at this point was, thought Dyar: he will go as far as I let him go” (243; my emphasis). Etc.
It is these racist attitudes towards Thami and all other Moroccans that allow for his paranoia to take hold, and allow for the prevalence of beliefs that he knows are contradicted by rationality. As a true paranoiac, the unreality of each of his imaginings makes them no less convincing:

[Thami] had said he was going to his relatives’ house. But what was to prevent him from going instead to the town and arranging with a group of cutthroats down there to come up after dark? Or even in the daytime, for that matter? What Thami did not quite dare do himself, he could get others to do for him; then he would act his part, looking terrified, indignant, letting them hit him once or twice and tie him up….The scenes Dyar invented here were absurdly reminiscent of all the Western films he had seen as a child. He was conscious of distorting probability […] (251)

In a similar example, Dyar walks through a small town in the Spanish Zone, and even though “fear is without any true relationship to reality,” Dyar still expects an assault from anywhere by anyone:

each time he left a lighted patch of street and entered the dark, he now expected the singers and their friends to be somewhere there waiting, having taken a short cut and got there before him. An iron arm would reach out of an invisible doorway and yank him inside before he knew what was happening, a terrific blow from behind would fell him, and he would come to in some deserted alley, lying in a pile of garbage, his money gone, his passport gone, his watch and clothes gone, with no one to help him either here or in Tangier or anywhere else. (267)

Dyar’s awareness of fear’s disconnect with reality and of a Hollywood imagination is overridden by a fearful paranoid delusion based in irrational racism. Another Kind of Silence is filled with Dyar’s imaginings that Thami or one of his neighboring Moroccans will harm him in a variety of ways, but of course none of these scenarios actually play out. While Dyar is compelled by fear, he essentially does nothing about it—this compulsion leads to nothing. Nothing happens as his fear leads him to sit and wait for something to happen.

Nothing does happen until Dyar murders Thami, and it is perhaps the least motivated act committed in the novel. Fear is not the motivation for the act; it is only a telltale symptom of the
“unseen forces” behind the act. When something does happen, it happens in the passive sense of the book’s title as it lacks a proper agent. Drugs play a significant role here. At the end of the novel, Thami and Dyar eat some majoun (cannabis jam), “each one conscious in his own fashion that as he swallowed the magical substance he was irrevocably delivering himself over to unseen forces which would take charge of his life for the hours to come” (275). It would be a mistake to assume that the “unseen forces” the two men deliver themselves to are simply the forces of the drug. What is achieved with the drug is a further state of suggestibility and passivity. The murderous act that follows is done unconsciously, not due to the influence of drugs (whose influence is really only for a further suggestibility), but to the influence of unseen—because ubiquitous—colonial forces. The extreme fluidity of Dyar’s subjectivity is co-opted and reterritorialized into a colonial act of racist violence. If drugs play any role here, it is in the way that it facilitates humanity’s capacity for rhizomatic adaptability. Majoun’s facilitation for this capacity is succinctly described by Daisy: “That’s majoun for you. You find absolutely new places inside yourself, places you feel simply couldn’t be a part of you, and yet there they are” (212).

**The Spider’s House (1955)**

There is a logical progression that leads up to Bowles’ third novel, *The Spider’s House*, where Bowles moves from evidence of humanity’s rhizomatic capability to the more and more realized political dimension of the manipulation of this capability. While North Africa would continue to be the constant subject of his writing in subsequent translations, essays, and short stories, *SH* is Bowles’ last novelistic word on the manipulation of this capability in North Africa. (Bowles’ fourth and final novel—*Up Above the World* (1966)—has a similar treatment of its manipulation in a postcolonial context, but it takes place in a fictional Latin American country rather than in
North Africa.) As the last novelistic word, SH is the logical conclusion to a line of thinking that sees the historical/political come to the fore. That is, while the manipulation of humanity’s rhizomatic capability certainly has an existential dimension, the colonial context forces the issue into a very political dimension. (For this reason, while existentialist readings of Bowles’ literature may be appropriate, they are incomplete if they choose to turn a blind eye to the political.) The timing could not be more significant here: the writing/publication of SH was during Morocco’s struggle for independence (Morocco gained independence from both Spanish and French protectorates in 1956; this year also saw the end of the international legislation in Tangier), which also coincided with the beginning of the Algerian War (1954-1962). Thus, Bowles found that such a context had to shape his novel: “whether I liked it or not, when I had finished, I found that I had written a ‘political’ book” (Bowles, *The Spider’s House* x). SH, set during that very complex liminal time and space between colonialism and independence, deals explicitly with the difficulties in attempting to navigate a hybrid, fluid identity in the face of independence. Ultimately, the colonial endeavor is continued (in altered form, of course) by the Westernization endeavor: the fluidity/hybridity that is thrust upon the colonial subject survives independence due to the pressures to Westernize on the newly-independent subject.

The settings of each North African novel have been carefully selected for exploring various aspects of humanity’s rhizomatic capability. *The Sheltering Sky*’s Sahara is a Deleuzian smooth space where two Americans’ line of flight finds brutal reterritorializations under both French and North African powers. *Let It Come Down*’s International Zone is a place that implicates the U.S. in an international agreement with French colonialism, utterly transforming an American traveler into a wealthy, violent colonizer. Fez—one of Morocco’s oldest cities (and also the location of one of the world’s oldest universities)—is selected for *The Spider’s House*
due to its depth of North African traditions; Fez becomes the ideal site for exploring the negotiations between colonial identities, Westernized/revolutionary identities, and more traditional North African identities. It is also suitable simply for the fact that “Fez was the fountainhead of resistance to French rule” (SH 166).

Throughout his work, Bowles’ condemnation of Westernization in the Eastern world is apparent (particularly in his endeavor to record traditional Berber music for posterity), and this is especially true in SH. However, it would be a mistake to believe that he romanticizes the purity/staticity of traditional cultures. On this point, he has been quite clear. The protagonist in his short story, “The Time of Friendship” (1967), remarks on the sad state of the colonized Sahara, which is a “full-blown example of the social degeneracy achieved by forced cultural hybridism. Populace debased and made hostile by generations of merciless exploitation” (Collected 288; my emphasis). Bowles’ strong disfavor does not fall on hybridity or any change in traditional cultures per se, but on a particular type of hybridity that has been thrust upon a colonized/Westernized subject who is therefore more easily exploited. It would not be an exaggeration to say that such forced hybridity is the leitmotif of his oeuvre, and that ignoring this leitmotif can only lead to misreadings of Bowles’ work. So, there is the possibility of successfully negotiating hybridity if such a negotiation has been made/controlled by the subjects themselves (i.e.: Bowles' theory of the traveler as a free, independent subject), as opposed to a forced hybridity which has been thrust upon a coerced subject who has no control (i.e.: what usually happens to the traveler in Bowles' literature).

In one of his numerous travel essays, Bowles’ “Casablanca” (1966) describes two Asian cultures—Japanese and Indian—that he believes have successfully negotiated hybridity, and he holds them in contradistinction to the forced hybridity he recognizes in Casablanca: “The
implicit hybridization of the town still bothers me; the Japanese and even the Indians have
managed viable patterns of cultural amalgamation, and perhaps in time there will emerge here
some sort of selectivity with regard to which facets of European life are to be accepted and
which rejected as hazards to the existing future” (75). The selectivity that Bowles describes here
is reminiscent of the one he includes in his definition of the traveler in *The Sheltering Sky*—it is
the presence or absence of this selectivity that dictates the nature of hybridity and also the nature
of the traveler’s rhizomatic assemblage.

And this is the point behind Bowles’ criticism of Westernization: one should not
completely Westernize, or Westernize ad hoc (either choice assumes Western supremacy), but
select only the finest parts of Western culture to adopt as one’s own—as the traveler would make
his/her selections during his/her travels amongst foreign cultures. This travel essay’s date of
publication is a significant one. Well after independence, the colonized subject is now the
Westernized subject, where the latter has become the extension of the former:

> In the daytime the place [Casablanca] is still haunted by a shadowy *présence française*, a
ghost that refuses to be exorcised. Indeed, we shall be increasingly aware of it as time
passes, until there ceases to be any appreciable difference between French and Moroccan
culture. The Moroccans were understandably eager to get rid of the colonizing French,
but it was not immediately apparent that one of their principal objectives was to usurp
their place here by *becoming more French than the French*. (“Casablanca” 75; my
emphasis)

Echoing this statement of “becoming more French than the French” is a very similar one given in
the foreword to *SH*: The Nationalists’ “aim was to make it [Morocco] even more ‘European’
than the French had made it” (x). This is possible because he sees colonialism starting, but also
slowing down the rate of Westernization: “What I failed to understand was that if Morocco was
still a largely medieval land, it was because the French themselves, and not the Moroccans
wanted it that way” (*SH* x). Thus, the official policy of a newly postcolonial state finds itself
enforcing a program of rapidly accelerated Westernization—one that finds itself at odds with a large segment of the population resistant to such acceleration. *SH* accents the suddenness and unnaturalness of the changes in Morocco when its youngest main character—Amar is only a teenager—is troubled by it: “For Amar it was difficult to accept this sudden transition. Why should there be no more drums beaten, no flutes played[?]” (*SH* 49).

*The Spider’s House* is prophetic in the way that it points to an unsuccessful negotiation of hybridity during the highly sensitive formative period between colony and independence in Morocco. Bowles' short foreword to his collection of travel essays, *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (1963), contains some of his most significant statements on this transition. He first makes the point that resistance to change is impossible: “The concept of the status quo is a purely theoretical one; modifications occur hourly. It would be an absurdity to expect any group of people to maintain its present characteristics or manner of living” (*Collected* 701).

However, the change from colonial to postcolonial regime is a complex one, and Bowles identifies the problem of a postcolonial, state-sponsored, haphazard Westernization in the following:

> My own belief is that the people of the alien cultures are being ravaged not so much by the by-products of our civilization, as by the irrational longing on the part of members of their own educated minorities to cease being themselves and become Westerners. The various gadget-forms of our “garbage” make convenient fetishes to assist in achieving the magic transformation. But *there is a difference between allowing an organism to evolve naturally and trying to force the change*. Many post-colonial regimes attempt to hasten the process of Europeanization by means of campaigns and decrees. Coercion can destroy the traditional patterns of thought, it is true; but what is needed is that they be transformed into viable substitute patterns, and this can be done only empirically and by the people themselves. A cultural vacuum is not even productive of nationalism, which at least involves a certain consciousness of identity. (*Collected* 702)

The problem that Bowles specifically identifies in North African postcolonialism is twofold: (1) North African postcolonial identity has been forced to change, and (2) viable traditional patterns
of life and thought are being wholly replaced by a superficially Western form (“superficially Western” because this form does not come with the requisite foundations of Western thought and life). Bowles clarifies this point in his travel essay, “A Man Must Not Be Very Moslem” (1955), wherein he calls Westernization a “worldwide game of refusing to be oneself,” motivated by the desire for “material benefits”:

> Are these benefits worth the inevitable void produced by such destruction? The question is appropriate in every case where the traditional beliefs of a people have been systematically modified by its government. Rationalizing words like “progress,” “modernization,” or “democracy” mean nothing because, even if they are used sincerely, the imposition of such concepts by force from above cancels whatever value they might otherwise have. (*Collected* 776; my emphasis)

So, if humanity has this rhizomatic capability via hybridity/fluidity, it is not that Bowles resists such hybridity, but he certainly resists top-down, government control over it.

*The Spider’s House* is a novel that plays with the possibility of a viable modification/update to traditional life in a postcolonial state, but ultimately shows how it fails in the face of what will ultimately become a state-sponsored Westernization (which will erase traditional life altogether). Fez is perhaps the ideal locale to discover this failure, due to the facts that Bowles considered it “a medieval city functioning in the twentieth-century” (*SH* ix), and that Fez taught Bowles that there was no going back, even for one of the oldest, most traditional Moroccan cities: “For more than two decades I had been waiting to see the end of French rule in Morocco. Ingenuously I had imagined that after Independence the old manner of life would be resumed and the country would return to being more or less what it had been” (*SH* ix). For reasons explained in *SH*, not only is it impossible to go back to a pattern of life that was “more or less what it had been,” but adopting aspects of that pattern and combining them with new aspects into a viable substitute pattern would not be in the cards for Morocco. For Bowles, the transformation of Fez is lamentable—not because Fez has changed, but because it has been
destroyed: “The city is still there. It is no longer the intellectual and cultural center of North Africa; it is merely one more city beset by the insoluble problems of the Third World. Not all the ravages caused by our merciless age are tangible ones. The subtler forms of destruction, those involving only the human spirit, are the most to be dreaded” (SH xi). Elsewhere, Bowles states that SH describes “the disintegration of a culture at the hands of colonialism” (“Aspects of Self” 272).

As with the previous two novels, thinking in terms of travelers and tourists is very useful in SH. Similar to Sheltering, there are three main characters that are divided into two travelers and one tourist: Lee (Polly) Burroughs is the American tourist, while John Stenham is the American traveler and Amar is the Moroccan traveler. As a resident of Fez, Amar is a particular type of traveler: one who can “voyage in place,” as Deleuze and Guattari described it. While it may seem to be something of a paradox that the most traditional, conservative character in the text would prove to be a traveler, he is the best example of how potentially old ways can be combined with new ones into a new viable substitute pattern; Amar’s conservative traditionalism makes him the ideal representative of the old ways of Fez, and of the possibility of negotiating a new post-independence Moroccan hybridity that contains significant remnants of the past. One way to understand the trajectory of the entire novel is that the novel’s two travelers undergo significant alterations, opening up their traveler assemblages to new appendages via learning about each other, allowing for the possibility of a new international community—an idea of community that goes beyond familial, ethnic, or geographic linkages. However, for reasons discussed below, and in a way that is emblematic of Morocco as a whole, this community is stillborn.
Similar to Port and Dyar before him, Amar’s status as a traveler is established early in the novel. Amar is a school dropout—and is therefore, illiterate—who makes a troubling observation about his friends who are currently going to school: “many of his friends had decided what the world looked like, what life was like, and they would never examine again either of them again to find out whether they were right or wrong” (17). Amar then asks: “But suppose the world changes? [...] Then what would you know?” (18). The issue here is the juxtaposition of learning and education. Under colonial rule, education takes on a particularly sinister role—a role that undermines the potentially liberatory role of learning. Amar refuses colonial education for a lifetime of learning, which, as I have already indicated above, has already been established as an integral part of the traveler’s rhizomatic adaptability. The traveler is the one who can perhaps most successfully negotiate changes in the world, and at this point in the novel, major change is in order for the near future of the Moroccan world. According to the overall argument of the novel, the educated Moroccan independence fighters (who can speak French) are not well-prepared for the changes that are coming; they seek to minimize the changes caused by independence, ensuring that the independent nation will be a Westernized extension of the colonized nation. What they know was taught to them by their colonizers, and when the world changes, they use that knowledge to minimize that change to the best of their ability. Though there is no desire whatsoever to leave the French in power, many of the old problems of the colonized state will be perpetuated beyond independence. Amar’s personal conflict with these revolutionaries throughout the novel are indicative of the powerful possibility for change that he sees in Morocco.

Almost all of the conflict between Lee and Stenham comes from their visions of the future of Morocco. Lee, the tourist, has recently traveled to Morocco and does not speak
Arabic; Stenham, the traveler, has lived in Morocco for years and speaks Arabic, although not with perfect fluency. They agree with the fact that Morocco needs to be independent, but they disagree over how it should happen. This question of how is of the utmost importance: Lee believes that independent Morocco should continue down the path of Westernization, and Stenham does not. In Lee’s position lies the basic assumption of Western superiority. She believes in “progress,” which becomes a synonym for Westernization when it is assumed that there is only one pathway for societal progress, which is according to the path the West has set. Lee’s statement—“‘You’d welcome the hospitals and electric lights and buses the French have brought’” (188)—marks her as an “ignorant tourist” (188) in Stenham’s eyes. It is Lee’s faith in Western progress, effectively denying the West’s role in colonialism, that marks her as a tourist; one of the definitions of a tourist in Sheltering is that the tourist takes an uncritical stance towards his/her own society. Lee is not an “ignorant tourist” because she advocates hospitals and buses, but because she does so unquestioningly/uncritically, with no regard for exploitation and denigration. Lee’s position comes dangerously close to the basic colonial position that Bowles describes: “colonizers always think that they are helping and that they are right. They pretend to think that” (“Aspects of Self” 272).

It is easy to criticize a policy of unabashed Westernization, but it is not so easy to put forth solutions that would become new and viable substitute patterns of life. The potential answer is hinted at—but never revealed—via the relationship between Amar and Stenham which ultimately does not come to any satisfactory fruition. The first third of the novel follows Amar’s story, while the second third follows Stenham’s story; both thirds culminate with the initial meeting between these two characters. Amar—through his interactions with members of the Istiqlal—and Stenham—through his conversations with Lee and other Western characters—
illustrate one of the text’s main arguments: there is not a great difference between the two opposing sides—the French and the Istiqlal—in this war of independence. That is, when Stenham is confronted by Moss, a British character whom he considers “pro-French,” Moss refuses to consider the Moroccans’ present culture, however decadent, an established fact, an existing thing. Instead, he seemed to believe that it was something accidently left over from bygone centuries, now in a necessary state of transition, that the people needed temporary guidance in order to progress to some better condition, ‘So that,’ Stenham had bitterly remarked, ‘they can stop being Moroccans.’ For the French had basically the same idea as the Nationalists; they quarreled only over externals. (155; my emphasis)

Stenham takes this point about the basic agreement between these two opponents even further:

“it was as though the two sides were working together to achieve the same sinister ends” (155-6).

These sinister ends, of course, are the elimination of Moroccan culture altogether.

Amar comes to almost exactly the same conclusion through his travails. In a discussion about the Aïd el Kebir—an important Islamic festival—Amar’s father states:

“The friends of freedom don’t want the festival, and they’ll stop it anyway, all by themselves. Don’t you think the French know that? But the French can’t afford to let them stop it. Then everyone would know how strong the Istiqlal is. If someone is going to do something, the French have got to be the ones to do it. They want just what the Istiqlal wants, but they want the credit. They have to make it look as though they were the ones who did it. They’re all working together against us” (121; my emphasis)

Amar’s father’s observation is corroborated by Amar’s own interactions with members of the Istiqlal; the Western features that Amar identifies amongst the Istiqlal prove further that there is little difference between the two opponents, and that both opponents are “working together against” Moroccans like Amar and his father:

[Amar] had never before met a Moslem like this, one whose intentions were so difficult to guess that he might as well have been a Nazarene. (75)

[The members of the Istiqlal] all greeted him in the European fashion, without bothering to lift their fingers to their lips after touching his hand. And for that matter, they were all dressed completely like Frenchmen. (75-6)
The *tarbouche* on his head was the only article of Moslem clothing in the entire room, and it looked strangely out of place. (83)

[…] not only had Moulay Ali sent Benani after him to investigate him—he had instructed him to do it in the manner of the police. (107)

This confusion between the Istiqlal and the French becomes so profound, that Amar’s allegiances can no longer be taken for granted; when Said, Amar’s employer, says that he was afraid that “they’d” caught Amar, “for a moment” Amar “was not sure whether Said meant the French or the Istiqlal” (113). And in fact, Amar’s last interactions with members of the Istiqlal are when they try to use him as bait for the French authorities to facilitate their own escape. Overall, the Istiqlal treat Amar with disdainful curiosity, consistent with attitudes he recognized in his friends who had received a colonial education. Clearly this disdain is not only reserved for Amar, but for all Moroccans like Amar. There is a social hierarchy here established by race and education; the colonizer can ridicule the educated colonized, and the educated colonized can ridicule the uneducated colonized: “it was common knowledge that the boys who did not understand French were treated even worse, made the butt of jokes not only by the French but by the boys who were fortunate enough to know the language” (35). This social hierarchy comes from the adoption of Western views that value Western characteristics over Eastern ones. The Istiqlal, who have adopted such values, clearly perpetuate such views of their own people.

These two separate plotlines—Amar’s and Stenham’s—in the first two thirds of the novel illustrate the essential similarities between the French and the Istiqlal from the perspective of two characters who are supposed to be represented by these two sides; attempting to prove this similarity with only one perspective would obviously weaken the novel’s argument. The binary established by the war of independence is collapsed by the novel’s inclusion of two perspectives that identify with neither side. Where that leaves us is in the middle—the text explores this
middle space, and its people who are caught in the middle and who proceed from the middle.
The text’s accent on this middle space—collapsing the binary—shows each side of the binary to
be untenable, and it also indicates that a solution can be achieved only via the middle because
most of Morocco resides in the middle. Amar, who can largely be understood to represent a large
portion of the Moroccan population, realizes that he is stuck in the middle of this conflict. He
recognizes the “ambiance of suspicion and fear” that he lives in, “being caught between the
diabolical French colonial secret police and the pitiless Istiqlal” (49). Thus, he is warned by his
employer to talk about neither side: “be careful and don’t spread stories, about the Istiqlal, about
the French, about politics at all, any kind of story, or you’ll get us both thrown in the river” (51).

The realization that Amar comes to about this middle space is that it is the least
privileged space for either side, and thus it resides at the bottom of the hierarchy. This position is
what makes it so difficult for Amar to accept the Istiqlal—he cannot understand how it is
justified for the Istiqlal to kill Moroccans who had not whole-heartedly endorsed them: “Had it
been Frenchmen they were killing he would have understood and approved unquestioningly, but
the idea of Moslems murdering Moslems—he found it difficult to accept” (52-3). There is a
sense of betrayal here as allegiances are not as simple as the binary would suggest. When
soldiers march on Fez, Amar’s father notices that the “‘French have sent the Berbers to make
war on us’” (111). Such an allegiance only makes sense with an understanding of the Istiqlal’s
program of Westernization, and that Berber culture will not be welcomed in the new Morocco.
So for the Berbers, is there an essential difference between either side? With the Istiqlal working
against some if not most of Morocco, Amar’s father is able to claim, “‘It’s the end of Islam, all
this. Just as it was written. By the Moslems’ own will’” (120). In light of such allegiances, the
war of independence becomes a very bleak situation: “the blood was ready to come out and spill
on the ground. And no one wanted to prevent it; on the contrary, the people were eager to see it, even if it was to be their own blood” (122).

Stenham’s realization about the middle space is very similar to Amar’s. First of all, he recognizes the Berbers as one of those peoples who are caught in the middle:

Stenham, for his part, could find no simple satisfaction. There was no possible way, he felt, of telling who was right, since logically both sides were wrong. The only people with whom he could sympathize were those who remained outside the struggle: the Berber peasants, who merely wanted to continue with the life to which they were accustomed, and whose opinion counted for nothing. They were doomed to suffer no matter who won the battle for power. (167)

This foretelling of doom is one of the great problems of postmodernity that Bowles communicates in all his writing. That is, if humanity has this incredible capacity for pure adaptability—if this great acentered being can have all its appendages removed and replaced—then what we are really talking about here is a capacity for the erasure of forms of existence, of languages, of philosophies, of religions, of cultures, of customs, of clothing, etc…. This erasure commands so much of Stenham's thought that he is able to hate vehemently both sides of the conflict and announce his allegiance to the peoples caught in the middle: “The French can go to Hell, and so can the Nationalists. It’s as simple as that” (229); “The two adversaries shooting one another down there were equally hateful to him; he hoped each side would kill as many of the other as possible” (291); “He did not want the French to keep Morocco, nor did he want to see the Nationalists take it. […] it enabled him to remain at a distance from both evils, and thus to keep in mind the fact of the evil” (342). And, the city of Fez becomes the symbol of such erasure: “The city was, in a rough sense, a symbol; that was easy to see. It represented everything in the world that was subject to change or, more precisely, to extinction” (203-4). While he concedes that French colonialism is largely responsible for maintaining Fez’ old architecture, “having declared the entire city a monument historique,” he has to acknowledge that this is only
a superficial measure, “that the life and joy had gone out of the place a long time ago, that it was a city hopelessly sick” (168). Colonialism’s program of Westernization will continue even faster when colonialism is over, removing any superficial hindrances it had in place, and Fez will change accordingly, removing all indicators of the uniqueness of place:

Perhaps one could say it [Fez] was already dead in one sense, for most of those who lived in it, (and certainly the younger ones without exception) hated it, and desired nothing more than to tear it down and build something more in accordance with what they considered present-day needs. It looked too impossibly different from any city they had ever seen in the cinema, it was more exaggeratedly ancient and decrepit than the other towns in Morocco. (168)

Such statements lead Stenham to believe that Morocco will undergo total cultural erasure, where previously viable forms of living will be replaced for problematic pseudo-Westernized forms, engulfed in an exploitative global capital system: “When I first came here it was a pure country. There was music and dancing and magic every day in the streets. Now it’s finished, everything. Even the religion. In a few more years the whole country will be like all the other Moslem countries, just a huge European slum, full of poverty and hatred” (187-8).

Part of the problem of the binary (East/West; Istiqlal/France) is its sense of direction: it moves linearly from the colonial past to either a colonial future or a postcolonial future (depending on who wins). What is being suggested here with those who reside in the middle—specifically, both Amar and Stenham—is a proceeding from the middle. In other words, it is not a question of going towards something (towards a goal), but of adapting to the present. While Amar’s and Stenham’s separate paths throughout the first two thirds of the text reveal the basic similarity between the French and Istiqlal positions, their meeting and shared path throughout the final third of the text speak to the possibility where East meets West, without becoming overwhelmed by the West. There is a possibility here of a new community, one that does not rely on identity politics, but accepts the inherent difference in the other. One of the most basic,
and central questions regarding this new middle community is asked by Amar: “was there any hope that any Nazarene would ever aid any Moslem?” (279). Despite the aid Stenham provides to Amar throughout the last third of the novel, the answer to this question is not actually provided until the last few pages of the text, speaking to whether this possibility of a new middle community can be realized.

One of the first things Amar and Stenham’s meeting requires is a kind of de-conditioning from preconceptions of the other based on racist stereotypes (stereotypes are the guardians of the binary). They each identify an inexplicable strangeness in the other that does not match their stereotyped image of the other—an otherness that does not match their ideas of the other, and in fact, this otherness overwhelms their ideas of the other. At first, Amar believes Stenham and Lee are French, but then realizes they are not, and feels “the wave of hatred that had been on its way recede” (137). He also assumes that Lee is a prostitute due to her clothing and the way she conducts herself—upon getting to know the couple, he learns the errors of his thinking. He ultimately decides that they are “two tourists. (Not being French, they fell perforce into this category)” (137). However, he must admit that even the category of tourist cannot accurately describe them: they are “the most foreign of all the foreigners he had seen” (138), and “he found this couple basically incomprehensible” (138). This incomprehensibility stems from the fact that Stenham does not fit into any stereotyped category. When the Istiqlal tells Amar of American support for French colonialism, he does not recognize Stenham as an American: “The story of the evil Americans fascinated him; he longed to see one, to know what they looked like, what color their skin was, what language they spoke, but everyone else in the room knew the answers to those questions, and so he could not ask them” (386). Likewise, a British character tells Stenham: “I can’t believe you really are an American at all” (164).
Stenham goes through a similar realization about Amar when he first sees him. Amar fishes an insect out of a pool, and allows it to fly away. Stenham says that “that was a strange bit of behavior” (250). He believes that Moroccans are not kind-hearted and states, “In all my time here I’ve never seen anyone do a thing like that” (250). He even goes so far to suggest that Amar may be “a Sicilian, or a Greek” (251). As mentioned above, learning is an essentially destabilizing position to adopt, and the inexplicable strangeness that Amar and Stenham recognize in each other makes them question everything they think they “know” about the other. It is at this point in the narrative that these two travelers are able to adopt a position worthy of the title; the last third of the novel is dedicated to their learning about the other, creating the possibility of a community of travelers, of people who reside in the middle.

Thus, it is rather appropriate that these two men travel together, along with Lee, the tourist. Amar considers the strangeness of these travels, calling them an “absurd flight he was making from his own people into a foreign district, with foreigners” (272). Their travels lead them to the setting of the climax of the novel: the festival of Aïd el Kebir in the mountains above Fez. Stenham explains that they are going to Sidi Bou Chta because “there are no French. That means there’s no trouble, either for them or for us. And they’ll really observe the feast. I’d like to see it” (294). This festival serves as the novel’s climax because it brings to a head three major plotlines: (1) whether the festival would happen at all—both the French and the Istiqlal want to control whether it happens or not as proof of who is in power in Fez (the Istiqlal do not want it to happen because national independence is more important than religion); (2) the ideological clash between Stenham and Lee regarding the Westernization of Morocco; and (3) Stenham learning about Amar and his culture. Of course, all three of these plotlines are intricately linked, which is why their resolutions begin at the same time.
The fact that the festival does not take place in the city, but in the rural areas is evidence of the cultural loss that Stenham fears. Even in Sidi Bou Chta, there are, Stenham believes, Istiqlal agents spreading various rumors about French aggression, prompting some to leave Sidi Bou Chta. The festival they witness here is what Stenham fears will be lost from the face of the Earth forever in the face of ever-encroaching Westernization. Stenham’s concern here closely parallels Bowles’ concern, as illustrated by Bowles’ efforts to record Moroccan music and literature for posterity. The Western view of this festival is expressed through Lee’s feelings about it, and therefore these typically Western feelings also explain the motivation for a policy of cultural erasure promoted by the Istiqlal. Lee's disdain is particularly reserved for how the festival is performed by rural peoples, whose Islamic faith still seems to be influenced by ancient indigenous North African faith that preceded Arabo-Islamic colonialism, “where the cult of Pan was still alive, its rites still observed with flutes and drums and masks” (310). Lee's false sense of superiority over “the cult of Pan” goes hand-in-hand with the fear and racism she displays towards these rural peoples: the revellers are “wild animals” whose smiles are “monkey-like” (320); she then considers Amar “a complete young barbarian,” who is an “alert and predatory sub-human, further from what she believed man should be like than the naked savage, because the savage was tractable, while this creature, wearing the armor of his own rigid barbaric culture, consciously defied progress” (345). This racist attitude of Lee’s is perfectly reflected by members of the Istiqlal: Amar, pretending that he feels no allegiance to Stenham or to the people who celebrate the festival in order to protect himself, tells one member what he wants to hear: “‘And then we watched the Aissaoua and the Haddaoua and the Jilala and the Hamacha and the Derqaoua and the Guennaoua and all that filth, because the Nazarene liked to see the dancing.’
He made a wry face at the memory. ‘It makes you sick to your stomach to look at it, all those people jumping up and down like monkeys’” (369).

Upon arriving at Sidi Bou Chta, Lee “felt that the place represented an undefinable but very real danger” (314); this danger is twofold: a danger to her individual identity, and to her belief in “progress” and the Westernization of Morocco. Her belief in Western progress is that humanity undergoes “an endless journey from the undifferentiated toward the precise, from the simple toward the complex” (314). With such an idea of progress, the undifferentiated mass of humanity she sees necessarily marks them as a backwards culture/people. The ecstatic rites performed here are perceived by Lee as an “immense theatre full of human beings still unformed and unconscious, bathed in sweat, stamping and shrieking, falling into the dust and writhing and twitching and panting” (314); as such, she resolves to keep herself separate from such an experience, “determined to let nothing occur that might cause her, even for an instant, to forget her identity” (314). In a similar vein:

she refused to slip into the hypnotic design. If all the members of this particular circle of leaping figures became possessed, took out their souls and threw them onto the pile in the middle (they were doing it; she knew it) so that there was only one undifferentiated writhing mass in there and no one was sure of getting his own back when it was finished, and moreover, no one cared. (319-320)

The fact that such a festival still exists in the present day is evidence of the fact that Morocco is not nearly as Westernized as she believed, or as the Istiqlal would like people to believe. The incompletely colonized will become an obstacle to Westernization.

Far from being evidence of Moroccan backwardness, this ecstatic ritual is evidence of humanity’s rhizomatic capability, of an absolute fluidity of the self, of the empty center, of the acentered human defined by postmodern thinking (though, obviously, not originated in postmodern thinking). Lee, as a tourist who is comfortable in her cultural superiority, is
disgusted by this scene. On the other hand, Amar and Stenham are deeply affected by it, indicating a possibility for creating a new hybridism, and the setting of this scene could not be more appropriate. Sidi Bou Chta is a temporary city, composed of travelers: “The city was several thousand tentlike shelters improvised of sheets and blankets that had been stretched between the trunks of a vast olive grove covering the slopes of two hills” (313). This setting is a city of travelers who revel in their absolute fluidity of self. The great undifferentiated mass of humanity that they form speaks to two vastly opposed possibilities: one is an ancient ritual that celebrates this capability, and by extension, celebrating Amar’s and Stenham’s possibility of meeting in the middle without conventional notions of compromise and/or conversion; and the other is a politics (Westernization) that exploits this capability, creating a human that is both a compromise and a conversion. The compromised, converted human is the one that is the problem that Bowles identifies with typical elements of postmodernity throughout his writing, and it is a concept closely related to the traveler who is violently reterritorialized. That is, whatever aspects of humanity that make the traveler laudable in Bowles’ eyes, are also what make humanity vulnerable to conversion/compromise: and thus its capacity to resist power is also what exposes it to power.

Stenham and Amar’s possibility of meeting in the middle is cut short when Lee offers Amar money to buy a gun, so that he can participate violently in the fight for independence and ensure the Istiqlal’s rise to power. Whether Amar would have done so is unlikely, but this act shows Lee’s willingness to use Amar as a political pawn, which is again reflected by the Istiqlal’s similar willingness towards Amar at the end of the novel. When Amar is locked out of Fez and needs to find out where his family is, he revisits the members of the Istiqlal that he met earlier in the novel so that they can help him find his family. Ultimately, they betray Amar (this
betrayal takes on powerful symbolic importance considering the fact that one member of the Istiqlal points at him and says: “‘There’s your people’” (384), leaving him as a decoy for their escape from French authorities. Amar is able to escape too, despite this betrayal, but this last interaction with the Istiqlal leads him to view Stenham in a very positive light, seeking his assistance, knowing that this is the community that can help him—the one with a person who is so strange, so other, but with whom he can also identify: “He [Stenham] had been a friend; perhaps with time they could even have understood one another’s hearts” (394). Amar's optimism about a relationship with Stenham is starkly juxtaposed to his feelings about the Istiqlal, with whom he “felt absolutely alone in the room, alone in this alien world of Moslems who were not Moslems” (387).

The entire novel, the events that these characters go through, leads to the possibility of this moment: the ending’s resolution to the possibility of a middle community and the answer to Amar’s question—“was there any hope that any Nazarene would ever aid any Moslem?” Those Moslems who act like Nazarenes—the Istiqlal—of course, do not help Amar, which leaves his relationship to Stenham to answer this question. The relationship that they develop contributes to the poignant sadness of the ending. Amar finds out from the Istiqlal that his family is in Meknès. Then, after escaping from both the Istiqlal and the French (one more symbol of Amar’s position in the middle space of this binary), he runs into Lee and Stenham in Fez. When he finds out that they are driving to Casablanca, this appears to be the perfect opportunity for Stenham to help Amar with very little extra effort—Meknès is on the way to Casablanca. However, Stenham is so preoccupied by his romantic relationship with Lee—which the text clearly indicates is a relationship doomed to failure—that he pays little heed to Amar and his plight. Due to his overwhelming preoccupation, Stenham does not understand that he is in a clear position to help
Amar, dropping him off just outside of Fez and telling him that “There’s no time” (405) to take him to Meknès. Lee, who cannot speak Arabic, then makes gun noises at Amar, again suggesting to Amar that he should join the Istiqlal. In a perfect image of desolation, Amar runs after their rapidly receding vehicle, thinking that it “would surely stop” (406), but is finally left standing alone in an empty road. Here, again, Amar’s question—can a Nazarene help a Moslem?—is answered in the negative, but this time, there is a blasé, quotidian reason rather than a political reason for this answer. Of course, the political is a very significant obstacle, but even in situations when this obstacle has been overcome, there are always human foibles or preferences to be dealt with. Stenham’s pursuit of a sexual relationship with Lee, which seems doomed to failure and therefore frivolous, leads Stenham away from what could be a powerful, meaningful middle community, free of national and international control mechanisms or identity politics. It is an example of how our pettier concerns continually prevent us from taking larger, political actions.

In their last conversation, Stenham tells Amar that he should go back to Fez, to which Amar responds, “Back to where?” (404). This is not just a statement that Amar has no reason to return to Fez, but it speaks to the fact that the colonized subject cannot return to a pre-colonial state, and perhaps that he has nowhere left to go, and no one left to turn to. Amar is, at this point, nowhere and all alone. This blank, empty space is Bowles’ ultimate argument about the isolation faced by all Moroccans like Amar: there will be no help from either within the nation or without—nothing but pure isolation. Though Amar is alone and isolated here, his situation resembles the negative possibility of the undifferentiated self displayed at the Aïd el Kebir festival: cultures like Amar’s will eventually become undifferentiated from others in a “vortex of
destruction” also known as Western progress. During his last meeting with the Istiqlal, Amar imagines that he must be in a dream:

it was one of those dreams where all things—the people, the houses and trees, the sky and the earth—are doomed at the outset to be merged in one giant vortex of destruction. Doomed from the start, but unless the dreamer is on the lookout he may not realize what is going to happen, because it is a maelstrom which begins to move only after a long while, declaring its presence in its own good time. In the end, very likely, everything would begin going around, one thing becoming another, and they would all be sucked down into emptiness, silently screaming, and clawing at one another with gestures of the most exquisite delicacy. (391; my emphasis)

The becoming described here is of a very different sort enabled by the undifferentiated humanity of the Aïd el Kebir. It is this type of becoming where humanity’s rhizomatic capability has been exploited for the powers that be, creating the subject that is compromised, converted, and homogeneous.

This undifferentiated nothingness is wonderfully encapsulated by the novel’s title, communicating the text’s general argument; the novel’s epigraph provides a quotation from the Koran: “The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house, and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider’s house, if they but knew” (xxi). This spider’s likeness is then clearly associated with the Istiqlal, whose postcolonial state is “the spider’s house”; Amar conclusively believes that “These men [of the Istiqlal] had no understanding of, no love for, either Allah or the people they pretended to be helping. Whatever they might manage to build would be blown away very quickly. Allah would see to that, because it would have been built without His guidance” (387; my emphasis); “They were no longer Moslems; how could it matter what they did, since they did it not for Allah but for themselves? The government and the laws they might make would be nothing but a spiderweb, built to last one night” (397-8; my emphasis). The frailty of the spider web is ultimately that it is nothing—insubstantial. It provides no way of life, or of thinking, that could
possibly replace such a strong, robust way of life; on the other hand, Stenham believes that men like Amar “embodied the mystery of man at peace with himself, satisfied with this solution of the problem of life” (217). The nothingness that Westernization offers to the postcolonial state is perhaps nowhere more strongly worded in the novel than in Stenham’s view of Lee’s position:

Hers was the attitude of the missionary, but whereas the missionary offered a complete if unusable code of thought and behavior, the modernizer offered nothing at all, save a place in the ranks. And the Moslems, who with their blind intuitive wisdom had triumphantly withstood the missionaries’ cajoleries, now were going to be duped into joining the senseless march of universal brotherhood; for the privilege each man would have to give up only a small part of himself—just enough to make him incomplete, so that instead of looking into his own heart, to Allah, for reassurance, he would have to look to others. The new world would be a triumph of frustration, where all humanity would be lifting itself by its own bootstraps—the equality of the damned. (252; my emphasis)

**The Becoming Minor of Paul Bowles**

The remaining 50 years of Bowles’ life takes an interesting change in literary trajectory. Other than the short novel/novella he published in 1966 (*Up Above the World*), he would not write another novel. His literary output becomes dominated by short stories—wherein Western protagonists become less and less prominent, and are replaced by North African protagonists—and translations. The translations are of particular interest for the fact that many of them do not have original texts. That is, works by illiterate authors like Mohammed Mrabet and Driss Ben Hamed Charhadi were tape recordings of oral recounts, which Bowles then translated while consulting with the author. Such translation, even more so than others, truly puts authorial ownership and subjectivity into question, forming a fascinating amalgam of author and translator. Bowles’ increasing focus on North African characters and authors are part of his “becoming minor” (a term I borrow from Deleuze and Guattari’s *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975)).
If one truly believes in the status of the traveler, and pursues it without being co-opted by the major (which is what happens to Dyar in *Let It Come Done*), perhaps the logical conclusion of the traveler is his/her becoming minor. The traveler from a major culture will become minor, and the traveler from a minor society will become even more minor, both following a path where the traveler simply becomes more and more minor as time goes on. This seems to be the fate of the traveler: if s/he can avoid major reterritorializations, then this true traveler—and I would argue that Bowles was one of these true travelers—has no option but to become more and more minor as time goes on.

If we understand the traveler’s trajectory as one that leads to becoming increasingly minor, then this trajectory explains Bowles’ literary trajectory very well. While all of his literary output was a mixture of various types of writing—such as translation, short stories, novels, poems, and essays—the majority of his writing can be seen as a shift from the dominance of novels to short stories to translation. His novels focus on Western protagonists, but ones who are also travelers, introducing superb elements of minor culture into major Western culture, complicating the West’s majority, and implicating it in a position of hypocrisy (colonialism) concerning all the wonderful stories it tells itself about itself (these stories the West uses to justify its status as major). He then largely does away with Western protagonists altogether, focusing on North African characters in his short stories. His last phase is then a focus on translation, which arguably could be the most minor position an author could take. Looking at Bowles’ life, his philosophy, his politics, his values, and his work, the idea of the becoming minor of the traveler explains why his literary output shifts over time. Why did you stop writing novels? Why did you stop writing? Why are you focusing more on translation rather than your
own work? All these questions that Bowles had been asked so many times throughout his life can be explained by the becoming minor of the traveler’s assemblage also known as Paul Bowles.
Like Paul Bowles, William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) is a traveler whose movement has an intrinsic relationship to his literary output—not only in terms of the concurrence between traveling and writing, but also in the sense that the origins of their literary works have deep roots in the international locales they come to inhabit. In other words, it is impossible to imagine what the literary output of these two authors would look like without traveling, and particularly, without North Africa. However, the relationship between writing and traveling seems to be an inverse one for these two authors. For Bowles, a certain amount of literary success is what allowed him to travel the world, but for Burroughs, travel was forced upon him due to troubles with the law. This is perhaps nowhere more succinctly stated than by one character in Burroughs’ novel *Queer*: “‘How did we all get down here? Spot of trouble in our own country, right?’” (112). For Burroughs, such encounters with the law prompt travel, which, in turn, prompt writing. Like Bowles’, Burroughs’ oeuvre is concerned with humanity’s rhizomatic adaptability in a postcolonial context, but—perhaps due to the problematic causal relationship between encounters with the law and a motivation for travel—Burroughs takes this postmodern problem to even greater heights (or perhaps, depths).

Burroughs’ troubled history of travel is worth highlighting—if only briefly—for the way that it obeys a strict pattern of breaking laws, followed by traveling, then writing. The point here

“A functioning police state needs no police.”

“You see control can never be a means to any practical end...It can never be a means to anything but more control...Like junk...”

-William S. Burroughs, *Naked Lunch* (1959)
is not to reiterate the well-documented Burroughs biography, but simply to recount the relationship between Burroughs’ movement around the globe and the relative sources/subjects of his literary work. As a child, then as a young man, Burroughs found Midwest St. Louis much too stifling an environment, leaving home as soon as possible: he got a degree in English at Harvard, then went to Europe to study medicine (never completed) at the University of Vienna, where he married his first wife, Ilse Klapper, “a German Jew who had fled Hamburg with the rise of the Nazis,” taking “the totally unexpected step of marrying her in order to get her into the United States” (Miles 30). Burroughs’ first marriage—occurring in the late 1930s—is an early example in a pattern of travel becoming a way of evading authority.

He then spent time in Chicago and New York where he mixed with minor underworld characters, but had to leave both cities so as to avoid potential or actual brushes with the law. Most significantly, it was in late-1943 / early-1944 that he met Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. Burroughs co-wrote his first novel with Kerouac in 1945—And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks (2008; written in 1945)—, which was a fictionalized account of how their friend, Lucien Carr, had killed another friend, David Kammerer (it would not be released until 2008—after Carr’s death). This novel is also significant in the way it immediately establishes the major concerns of all of Burroughs’ work. It contains his initial use of morphine (which would soon establish a lifelong addiction to opiates), it illustrates Burroughs’ connection to minor underworld crimes and criminals, and it addresses the difficulties concerning homosexuality in 1940s America (however, this novel does not illustrate the Burroughs character expressing any homosexual desire—quite the opposite).

Burroughs met his second wife, Joan Vollmer at the same time through the Kerouac-Ginsberg circle—“his first and only serious relationship with a woman” (Miles 41). After some
trouble with the law for forging prescriptions, Burroughs convinced Vollmer to move with him to Texas to become farmers, where she gave birth to his only son in 1947. After failing in a marijuana grow-op venture, they moved to Algiers, Louisiana, where Burroughs narrowly avoided serious jail-time: “if he was caught again for drugs in Louisiana, he would go down for a mandatory seven years” (Miles 50). It was on “his lawyer’s advice” (Miles 50) that Burroughs decided to remove his family from the country altogether, relocating to Mexico City in 1949.

The rest of the Burroughs’ story would mark him with infamy. He accidentally kills his wife in 1951, shooting her through the forehead during an extremely intoxicated, failed performance of a “William Tell act” (Miles 53). Initially, he stays in Mexico for the trial, but returns to the U.S. at the end of 1952; he explains himself by stating that his lawyer, Bernabé Jurado, “killed someone and skipped the country. They tried to shake me down for more $ so I followed Jurado’s example” (Burroughs, Letters 142). In 1953, Burroughs travels to South America in search of the hallucinogenic yage, then moves to Tangiers, Morocco in 1954—largely prompted by the inexpensive cost of living, the availability of drugs, and the relatively permissive attitude towards homosexuality.

It is in North Africa that Burroughs would find his voice as a writer, and where all his ideas about power, control, drugs, homosexuality, law, and crime would crystallize. It was in Tangier where he completed some of his most famous works: *Naked Lunch* (1959), *Interzone* (1989; composed of materials written at the same time as *Naked Lunch*) and the cut-up trilogy—*The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket that Exploded* (1962), and *Nova Express* (1964). He would ultimately leave Tangier for good, moving to London in 1966—and it should be noted that much of the latter years of the Tangier period was spent in Paris—, but his life in Tangier left an indelible mark on his career, his development as a writer and theorist, and of course, his literary
oeuvre. All the concerns that his works had expressed previously come into sharper focus during his Tangier period. The discoveries he makes during this period would define his position for the rest of his life, and it would be difficult to imagine what his work would look like without his life in Tangier.\(^3\) Ironically, it is the relative permissiveness that Burroughs discovers in Tangier that allowed him to become the great theorist of control. That is, as his earlier life and his previous works were forced to deal with a more heavy-handed version of power, Tangier’s permissiveness allowed Burroughs to focus on a much more subtle, and insidious version of control; however, it should be mentioned that there is no major disjunction between the heavy-handed and the subtle—dealing with the former was necessary preparation for his discovery of the latter. It is from *Naked Lunch* onwards that Burroughs would dedicate his life to the question of control.

And while the robust scholarship on Burroughs has offered numerous analyses of power/control in his works, what is surprising is that none of it has offered an extended analysis of the literary form that would define *Naked Lunch*: the routine. Even though a significant percentage of this scholarship does mention the routine (the majority does not), it typically does so in either a perfunctory way (usually as a brief point that helps prove a larger point), or as a given (as in using the word “routine” instead of “chapter”). This chapter traces the development of the routine from Burroughs’ earliest works, offering an analysis of the art form itself so as to offer a more thorough understanding of the routine in *Naked Lunch*. What this approach reveals is twofold. (1) The routine as an art form is essential to Burroughs’ understanding of what he called “control societies” as he discovers that art itself—or a perverted version of it—is essential to how control operates. And (2), the dramatic change in Burroughs’ writing—from his previous works to *Naked Lunch*—is partly due to the fact that *Naked Lunch* is exclusively composed of routines, but it is mostly due to the fact that he lived in Tangier. That is, the International Zone of
Tangier was an early precursor to the free trade, postcolonial, globalized world we now live in, but it was the lack of regulation in the International Zone that allowed for further control and subjugation; in other words, colonialism was allowed to collapse because it was an inefficient form of subjugation. The greater permissiveness Burroughs personally enjoys in Tangier—at the very moment of Morocco's transition from protectorate to independent nation—uniquely positions him geographically and historically to offer prescient judgments about how control operates in postmodern life.

**Hippos and Junky: The Disingenuousness of Narrative**

While Burroughs' early works make infrequent use of routines, understanding the routine's development aids a proper analysis of the routines in *Naked Lunch*. His own sense of the routine would change rather dramatically from *Hippos* to *Naked Lunch*, but this radical change incorporates these earlier routines, rather than negating them. In the glossary of underworld jargon included in the publication of *Junky* (1953), Burroughs provides a very basic definition of “routine”: “To give someone a story, to persuade, or con” (132). This definition changes over time as his later routines become much more comic/satirical, but these early routines as cons or scams offer important insight on power's dependence on narrative.

While *Hippos* is a relatively straightforward narrative (other than the interesting structural detail of having two first-person narrators—one for each author), it does have a telling moment in consideration of the routine that is worth mentioning. It occurs near the end of the novel when the Carr character—Phillip Tourian—tells the Burroughs character—Will Dennison—about his murder of the Kammerer character—Ramsey Allen (Al for short). Dennison responds quite practically: “Do you know what happened to you, Phil? You were attacked. Al attacked you. He tried to rape you. You lost your head. Everything went black. You
hit him. He stumbled back and fell off the roof. You were in a panic. You only thought about
getting away. Get a good lawyer, you’ll be out in two years’” (163). And in fact, Dennison was
right: “After two years in Elmira [a reformatory], Lucien Carr was released” (Grauerholz 200).
This advice that Dennison/Burroughs provides is quite interesting in that it does not advocate
that Carr try to escape—perhaps due to the severity of the crime and the questionable possibility
of escape in such circumstances. More importantly, Burroughs is suggesting that Carr use a
routine in order to negotiate with power. That is, the use of a con, of a false narrative, is intended
to play on power’s prejudices in order to get what Carr wants: ultimately, to escape greater
punishment. This routine first needs to obfuscate Carr and Kammerer’s complicated personal
history and therefore Carr’s latent homosexuality or bisexuality (and the moment of panic he
feels when confronted by this latency). Its success then relies on societal homophobia. This
routine works because like all cons, it tells its listener—the “mark”—what it wants to hear; and,
what a homophobic society wants to hear is a story that reinforces its own worldview—in this
case, how dangerous, threatening, and immoral male homosexuality is. For this reason,
Burroughs believes it will be quite easy to argue for a self-defense case that involves a
momentary panic, which a homophobic society would see as quite reasonable. This routine is
also one where Carr/Tourian is both the con-artist and the mark; that is, as someone who is
struggling against his sexual identity, he has to deceive himself into thinking that he was a victim
rather than a participant so that he can fit into larger and equally false narratives about American
masculinity. These negotiations with power and this self-deception become essential to a more
thorough understanding of the routine.

Written approximately five years after *Hippos*, Burroughs’ next novel, *Junky*, begins
where *Hippos* left off—New York, 1945. However, a significantly older Burroughs now
produces a text that is more explicit in its use of routines. Written in the first person and under the pseudonym of William Lee (Lee was his mother’s maiden name), it recounts how Lee becomes addicted to “junk”—the name provided for any opiate, including morphine and heroin. More specifically, this semi-autobiographical novel makes explicit reference to routines themselves, and expands their usage to include a larger understanding of storytelling (i.e.: lying) and narrative.

In the prologue, Lee summarizes his childhood and warns us that he “could put down one of those nostalgic routines” (xxxv). This early mention of routine announces one of the text’s major concerns while at the same time setting forth a strikingly curious theory/understanding of narrative. The “nostalgic routine” of childhood is routine in the sense that it is commonly repeated, undergoing minor and perhaps insignificant changes in its various reiterations. It is the very nature of these routines to be repetitive and redundant. But, if we have all heard these stories before, then why tell them? *Junky* will ultimately reveal that we tell them over and over again in order to achieve some sort of personal gain. Moreover, in terms of routines negotiating with power, Burroughs is aware that he could fashion the more typical elements of his childhood into a “nostalgic routine”—a story that reinforces the status quo by depicting and thereby supporting a vision of American family life both falsified and popularized by artists such as Norman Rockwell (the beat generation was largely a response to such a vision of America). And of course, there is substantial monetary remuneration for anyone who would like to reinforce power’s worldviews—Burroughs is aware that he is forsaking such a reward. However, not only would such an image be distorting for anyone’s story, it is particularly distorting considering Burroughs’ conflicts as a child. While there may be much about Burroughs’ childhood that superficially resembles the typical American middle-class family life, fashioning his childhood
story to fit this mold would be equal parts accurate and inaccurate—the accuracy here producing a con story nonetheless. As all successful liars know, a good lie must contain some elements of truth.

Junky’s subsequent mentions of routines display how narrative—along with reinforcing dominant ideologies—takes on a distinct exchange value here (no art-for-art’s sake here). For example, the junky/doctor relationship depends on the routine—that is, the junky offers a routine in exchange for a prescription of morphine. Again we see the two major aspects of the routine: repetition and negotiation. The junky’s routine with a doctor is typically highly repetitive: “Most addicts put down a story worn smooth by years of use” (17). And, the success of the routine requires a successful negotiation with power—that is, it tells power exactly what it wants to hear, and therefore justifies and substantiates it:

Doctors are so exclusively nurtured on exaggerated ideas of their position that, generally speaking, a factual approach is the worst possible. Even though they do not believe your story, nonetheless they want to hear one. It is like some Oriental face-saving ritual. One man plays the high-minded doctor who wouldn’t write an unethical script for a thousand dollars, the other does his best to act like a legitimate patient. If you say, “Look, Doc, I want an M.S. script and I’m willing to pay you double price for it,” the croaker blows his top and throws you out of the office. You need a good bedside manner with doctors or you will get nowhere. (17-18)

Burroughs’ humorously ironic redefinition of bedside manner implicates the entire medical profession in a power structure that enforces an—at this time—ever-heightening criminalization of drug addicts. The doctor, and by extension the entire medical industry, is not a disinterested researcher/practitioner. Rather, s/he demands payment in the form of a narrative obeisance to their power—one that demands a pretense that this is a just and moral power. Payment here does not take on the monetary form of bribery, but the form of payment is a charade, a one-act play, a fiction. In short, this charade presents both sides of the doctor-patient relationship endorsing the
criminalization of addicts and all its premises (illicit drugs are evil, addicts are a menace to society, etc.). Here the doctor takes on the role of the police and of the final arbiter of morality.

The necessarily literary quality of this payment has vast implications for literature per se. The routine is a form of narrative in which there is always some level (tacit or explicit) of an endorsement of power; or, if the routine can resist that power—as Burroughs’ subsequent work will attempt—then it is still an unavoidable engagement with it. The existence of the routine threatens to overtake all ranges and possibilities of narrative, making its character of routine perhaps impossible to escape. Considering that our understanding of ourselves depends upon the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, then the routine exposes the insidious nature of narrative and communicates that the human condition is an inescapably benighted condition. For example, if you want to tell someone a story that is intended to communicate the truth—as when a customer of Lee’s wants to buy junk on credit while explaining to him how he will have the money soon—you say “this is not a routine” (Junky 42). Invariably, this announcement is followed by a routine. Truth becomes very difficult to communicate through narrative unless it does so in a more roundabout fashion—as indicated by Burroughs’ choice of narrative styles: satire, science fiction, cutups, or routines that announce their existence as such (i.e.: “this is a routine”). Therefore, we need not resign ourselves to this benighted condition—Burroughs’ writing is an attempt to work within the constraints of a routine-informed theory of narrative so as to allow for some level of enlightenment.

Much has been made of the visionary quality of Burroughs’ work. To this discussion, I would add that we see that again here when Burroughs says that you “need a good bedside manner with doctors or you will get nowhere.” In his introduction to Junky, Oliver Harris describes this sentence as only one example in Burroughs’ work “where normally positive
cultural terms are given a deft, subversive twist” (x). Of course, this is the function of satire, and it is such twists that begin to dominate the routines of *Naked Lunch*. Harris then goes on to tell us that this twist involves “telling you how to score from [doctors]” (xi). Such a subversive twist denies the doctor’s role as police officer and final arbiter of morality and firmly repositions him/her in the role of drug dealer. You must deal with this dealer gently—with a “good bedside manner”—or the deal will not go down; you must perform in the role of the ideal, or constructed, patient. However, typical of a successful soothsayer who is a victim of his own success, Burroughs’ advice here seems much less subversive today—in fact, it might be quite mundane. In a world where television advertisements for prescription drugs tell their viewers to “ask your doctor” about their drug (it is not insignificant that such advertisements are illegal in Canada), and in a world where drug companies actively woo doctors so that they will choose—in a very unscientific manner—certain drugs rather than others for treatment, the distance between drug dealer and doctor has been reduced considerably. Burroughs’ project of deconstructing the doctor/dealer false binary has been wholeheartedly embraced and continued by a postmodern society.

There are numerous repetitions and reiterations of the routine throughout *Junky* that need not all be examined here, but looking at all of them reveals that there are two basic types of routines: one where power is the audience, but also one where power is the performer/speaker. When power is the performer/speaker the rhetorical relationship is reversed, but the power dynamic is essentially the same. Thus, Lee explains the police’s use of routines in the execution of their power:

Narcotics agents operate largely with the aid of informers. The usual routine is to grab someone with junk on him, and let him stew in jail until he is good and sick. Then comes the spiel:
“We can give you five years for possession. On the other hand, you can walk out of here right now. The decision is up to you. The decision is up to you. If you work with us, we can give you a good deal. For one thing, you’ll have plenty of junk and pocket money. That is, if you deliver. Take a few minutes to think it over.” (47)

Finishing off this routine as routine, Lee then tells us that oftentimes an informer “ends up doing more time than anybody he set up” (48). Similarly, Lee tells us about the “old cop con” (48) of good cop / bad cop. Of course, what Burroughs puts into play here is the way routines, and the performances of well-known—if not downright clichéd—characters and narratives become instrumental in the execution of power and in its maintenance. Like those who are most subjected to power, power itself needs to perform according to certain prescribed roles. Describing his doctor, Lee says, “obviously he was putting down a self-assured routine for himself and the others” (82).

In both these instances of the police and of doctors, the performance becomes just as important for the performer as it is for the audience. Power needs the appearance of authority in order to maintain its authority. Therefore, looking at the two basic types of routines in Junky, there seems to be the same endorsement of and resistance to power: both types are overt endorsements of power while covertly/subtly implying the illegitimacy of said power. With routines recited by those who are subjected to power (the junky, the criminal, the suspect), there always contains some overt endorsement of power while resisting it at the same time. That is, there is a personal gain here (drugs, money, freedom), but also with something lost as this resistance is only personal rather than collective. The collective and repetitive performance of this type of routine (participation in this routine) is an endorsement of power. Similarly, we see that routines performed by people in positions of power are overtly endorsing the current power structure, but their performances always imply resistance to it at the same time. That is, power’s
shallow, clichéd, repetitive performances illustrate that its foundations have little substance to support it.

In a discussion of a collective endorsement of power, examining power’s use of the routine has obvious implications for propaganda, which is a term that appears near the end of the novel where Burroughs has his harshest criticism for America’s war on drugs. Describing a “nationwide hysteria” of “police-state legislation penalizing a state of being” (119), Burroughs writes:

Safe in Mexico, I watched the anti-junk campaign. I read about child addicts and Senators demanding the death penalty for dope dealers. It didn’t sound right to me. Who wants kids for customers? They never have enough money and they always spill under questioning. Parents find out the kid is on junk and go to the law. I figured that either Stateside peddlers have gone simple-minded or the whole child-addict set-up is a propaganda routine to stir up anti-junk sentiment and pass some new laws.” (120)

Burroughs' use of the phrase “propaganda routine” is strikingly similar to George Orwell's pronunciation that “all art is propaganda” (448). Orwell was communicating that all art has a certain ideological viewpoint that it is communicating. As such, it is operating on the level of “metanarratives” in the sense that Jean-François Lyotard uses this term in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1979). For this reason, when Burroughs discusses a state-sponsored narrative that is used on the entire civilian populace, such as the one about child-addicts, it is no longer simply a routine, but a “propaganda routine.” If there is a distinction between propaganda and routine, it is in scale and purpose. Using the terminology of strategy and tactics from Michel de Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life (1980), propaganda typically works on a larger, strategic level, including the big picture, society as a whole, and metanarratives—whereas routines are used tactically, for momentary gains, advantages, and in smaller, more personal levels. Of course, if Burroughs links the two it is because propaganda could be considered a long con, a very large routine, or a metanarrative routine. The “propaganda
routine” of the child-addict works to endorse a certain ideological viewpoint; its gains are large and strategic, endorsing the current power structure.

On the other hand, a routine need not be ideologically motivated at all; in fact, it could be downright paradoxical in its efforts to seek short-term gains in ways that contradict its long-term goals. For this reason, the junky is willing to participate in the doctor-patient routine, endorsing the current views on drugs, so as to score for the immediate future. At the same time, the “old cop con” is employed in such a way that its disingenuous actors are willing to pretend for immediate gains, even though their participation in this con denies the moral superiority that power claims as its justification. In that short decade between Orwell’s theory of art as propaganda and Burroughs’ theory of narrative as routine, we see a change in attitude that signals the beginning of the postmodern age. While Orwell's concern about propaganda is proposed in all earnestness, Burroughs' routines seems to be more of a reluctant embrace of the disingenuousness of narrative— that is, it seems to embrace cynicism in such a way that disingenuousness becomes the human condition, adopting a position that seems to coincide with Lyotard’s famous definition of the postmodern: “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv). That is, these narratives that always imply their own falsity, strangely are not weakened by such an implication—in fact, they might be strengthened by this postmodern cynicism.

*Queer* (1985) and *The Yage Letters* (1963): The Comedy Routines

*Junky* ends with a consideration of what society would look like without the routine, and it is not optimistic. Having established the routine’s connection to dominant ideologies, eliminating the routine would appear to be liberatory, but Burroughs argues the opposite may be true. He mentions that “telepathy is a fact” and defines telepathy as “contact on the nonverbal level of intuition and feeling” (127). However, establishing this deeper form of communication without
language and narrative allows for the possibility of further control, and this greater manipulation of the individual will potentially be achieved via a drug indigenous to Colombia called yage:

Apparently, I am not the only one interested in yage. The Russians are using this drug in experiments on slave labor. They want to induce states of automatic obedience and literal thought control. The basic con. No build-up, no routine, just move in on someone’s psyche and give orders. (127; emphasis added)

In this discussion of yage, Burroughs clearly highlights power's dependence upon the routine or con as the basic way in which people are subjugated. And while yage may have not fulfilled its telepathic promise, Burroughs does indicate what the ultimate form of control would entail: “just move in on someone's psyche and give orders.” Burroughs did travel to South America to look for yage, whereupon we get the two texts Queer and The Yage Letters (written in 1952 and 1953, respectively). It is in these two texts that we see a rather radical change in the routine, developing into the literary form that would be employed throughout Naked Lunch, and it is with this connection between communication and control that would establish Burroughs as the great theorist of control.

On this point, Gilles Deleuze has been unequivocal: “Control is the name Burroughs gave to modern power” (Negotiations 71). When discussing Michel Foucault’s work on disciplinary society and disciplinary power (largely established in Foucault’s Discipline and Punish (1975)), Deleuze states: “Control societies are taking over from disciplinary societies. ‘Control’ is the name proposed by Burroughs to characterize the new monster, and Foucault sees it fast approaching” (Negotiations 178). And, at a bit more length:

We’re definitely moving toward “control” societies that are no longer exactly disciplinary. Foucault’s often taken as the theorist of disciplinary societies and of their principal technology, confinement (not just in hospitals and prisons, but in schools, factories, and barracks). But he was actually one of the first to say that we’re moving away from disciplinary societies, we’ve already left them behind. We’re moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous
control and instant communication. Burroughs was the first to address this. (Negotiations 174; my emphasis)

While claiming that Foucault was influenced by Burroughs—“Foucault had a very deep admiration for Burroughs” (Two Regimes of Madness 321)—Deleuze gets more specific on the difference between disciplinary power and control:

Control societies will no longer pass through places of confinement. […] Control is not discipline. You do not confine people with a highway. But by making highways, you multiply the means of control. I am not saying this is the only aim of highways, but people can travel infinitely and “freely” without being confined while being perfectly controlled. That is our future. (Two Regimes of Madness 322)

It is with Junky’s concluding remarks about control that Burroughs announces the focus of all of his subsequent work. Burroughs argues that control is his focus because it was the cause of Joan Vollmer’s death, and his writing has always been some attempt to deal with control:

I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan’s death, and to a realization of the extent to which this event has motivated and formulated my writing. I live with the constant threat of possession, and a constant need to escape possession, from Control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and maneuvered me into a lifelong struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out. (Queer xxii)

Exactly how Burroughs attempts to write his way out of control in his early works has to do with the development of the routine, and the culmination of this art form in Naked Lunch. However, there is an important development in the routine between Junky and Naked Lunch that is worth highlighting. Queer and The Yage Letters make two important contributions to the routine: (1) these texts expand Junky’s use of the routine as a con to something more similar to their use in Naked Lunch—what Burroughs called a “frantic attention-getting format […]]: shocking, funny, riveting” (Queer xv); and (2), they establish the other half of the foundation for Burroughs’ thinking about power and control. That is, while Junky almost exclusively focuses on drug use and criminality (legal definitions at the time basically equated the two), it does offer a
brief mention of homosexuality as the other way in which Burroughs is a subject of power: “I was talking to the recurrent cop of my dreams—an irritating, nondescript, darkish man who would rush in when I was about to take a shot or go to bed with a boy” (109). These dreams are a clear indication of the way in which power structures becomes internalized to dictate and control an individual’s actions; it is an example of how control “moves in on the psyche.” All of Burroughs’ subsequent writing about sex and drugs is an attempt to resist such control, while simultaneously illustrating that such control exists, and identifying how it operates.

*Queer* and *Yage* operate under the same stage of development of the routine; they also focus on the same subject matter—the simultaneous searches for yage and sex—and the same protagonist—Burroughs describes the Lee of *Queer* as “not so different from the Lee of the later *Yage Letters*” (*Queer* xiii). While these texts both contain the old type of routines, the development of a new type of routine means a drastic change in audience, and therefore, a drastic change in relationship to power. While the old form of routine involves repetitive, timeworn stories pantomimed for power’s justification, the new routine, and its “frantic attention-getting format” had a very different purpose based on whose attention was desired. Ultimately, these new routines—funny and entertaining—that Lee puts forth in *Queer* are meant to maintain Lee’s tenuous hold on the attentions of his love-interest, Allerton; in a similar fashion, the epistolary form of *Yage* meant its routines were addressed to Allen Ginsberg, whom Burroughs professed to love at the time. These new routines are a mixture of the confidence man or the snake-oil salesman’s routine and a stand-up comic’s routine; that is, they are humorous send-ups of the con or scam. Added to this mixture is the fact that the routine has a frenetic quality—a tendency to take on a life of its own, to get out of control, to go on a Deleuzian line of flight that goes too far.
The main similarity between the two types of routines is that their value comes not in some aesthetic assessment of their quality, but in their exchange values: a good routine is simply one that works; i.e.: it gets you what you want. When power was the narrator of the old routines, the gain was popular support for dominant ideology; or, when the narrator of the old routine was a member of the subjugated, the gain was drugs, money, or freedom. As opposed to the repetitive and clichéd nature of the old routines, the new routines are creative and perfunctory: they are momentary narratives used as a means to an end, to be discarded as quickly as they are conjured. They must be discarded because you are guaranteed to fail earning the audience’s attention if your routine is one they have heard before: Queer explains that Lee is able to hold Allerton’s interest because “Lee had conversational routines that Allerton had never heard” (27). As opposed to those in positions of power, this audience does not want to hear the same old stories. Thus, if there is a power to be addressed here in these new routines, it is not of a larger, social/legal/political power, but a personal one, intrinsically tied to desire and vulnerability (which are inextricably linked to each other in these two texts). However, due to the satirical nature of these routines, there is always some suggestion of critique of contemporary power structures. It should also be noted that these new routines are not as dramatic a break from the old routines as they might appear; that is, the new routines retain the understanding of narrative as a con or scam. The transformation is that the implicit message of the old routines—that since power depends upon snake-oil salesmanship, it is therefore illegitimate—becomes more explicitly satirized. In fact, much of the humor in Burroughs' new routines relies upon exposing the con behind many of our most commonly held beliefs.

Lee explains to Allerton that what he provides is “just a routine for your amusement, containing a modicum of truth” (Queer 103). There are less than a handful of these new routines
in *Queer* and it is interesting to see what truths Burroughs attempts to communicate through them. The first one involves a description of the typical “oilman” and the oil industry as a whole. Not surprisingly, Lee’s routine depicts oilmen as conmen (both *Queer* and *Yage* show some concern over the oil industry’s exploitation of South America): “So the oilman goes back and pulls the same routine on his prospects. Then he gets a geologist down from Dallas or somewhere, who talks some gibberish about faults and seepage and intrusion and shale and sand, and selects some place, more or less at random, to start drilling” (32). The scientist here—like the doctor discussed above—is implicated in the con in that s/he uses the pretense of scientific reasoning (its aura or authority) to justify oil industry endeavors. When science is in the pay of big business, no knowledge is exercised or discovered; like a prostitute, the scientist is paid to perform in a certain role—to enact an old routine of scientificity.

The critique is complete when the prostitutional metaphor implied by such science is made explicit by an explanation of the selection of the driller, who is a prostitute selected from “Boy’s Town” (32). Lee then concludes the routine with further sexual metaphors about the oil industry:

“Now if the well turns out dry the oilman says, ‘Well, that’s the way it goes. Some holes got lubrication, and some is dry as a whore’s cunt on Sunday morning.’ There was one oilman, Dry Hole Dutton they called him—all right, Allerton, no cracks about Vaseline—brought in twenty dry holes before he got cured. That means ‘get rich’ in the salty lingo of the oil fraternity.” (32-33)

In Lee’s attempt to tell a humorous and entertaining story to maintain Allerton’s attention, he is able to speak two truths. While speaking some truth about the oil industry and its pseudo-scientific rationale, Lee is able to subtly announce to Allerton some truth about himself (the two characters do not know each other well at this point). That is, the confluence of dry holes, lubricated holes, drilling, prostitution, homosexuality, and Vaseline, are a way of tentatively
announcing Lee’s identity and intentions to Allerton. Lee's intentions becomes particularly clear when, later in the narrative, he has arranged something of a prostitutional arrangement with Allerton, who has agreed to accompany Lee on his trip from Mexico to South America in search of Yage: Allerton gets an all-expenses paid trip in exchange for sex with Lee twice a week. Lee's routine is therefore quite remarkable in that when he announces his attentions to Allerton, not only does he protect himself with humor, this protection doubles once it begins to satirize capitalist, hetero-normative power structures. Burroughs deconstructs the homosexual/heterosexual binary, offering a counter-narrative to the old routines about masculinity and heterosexuality that are largely responsible for Lee's hesitancy to announce his sexual orientation.

The routine allows for a certain amount of protection during a vulnerable confession. The protection comes from the nature of the routine, which can only communicate truth in a roundabout fashion, and where explicit statements must always be taken with a grain of salt—because of the routine, accepting statements at face value appears naive. Thus, in the routine where Lee tells Allerton the moment of his realization that he “was a homosexual” (*Queer* 39), he then goes on to describe his views of “simpering female impersonators” as “subhuman” (39), and that he had contemplated suicide: “Nobler, I thought, to die a man than live on, a sex monster” (39). This discussion ends when “Lee was getting tired of the routine” (40). What is striking about this routine is that it describes sexual identity amongst derogatory statements about transvestites and homosexuals. In *Queer Burroughs* (2001), Jamie Russell performs a queer theory reading of Burroughs’ work, and reads his work in light of the fact that Burroughs was not understood as a gay novelist. Looking at the routines in *Queer*, Russell states that “What these fantasies alert us to is the degree to which Lee is terrified of losing his masculine self” (27).
According to Russell, the only acceptable form of homosexuality for Burroughs had to be amongst men whose masculinity followed the image defined by a heterosexual majority; Burroughs therefore maintains a strongly masculine identity and displays resistance to, or even disgust for, effeminacy—what Russell calls “effimophobia.”

While Russell's interpretation is quite good, it is only partially correct; the inaccuracy of his reading largely stems from not thinking through the implications of the routine as an art form. As with the old type of routines discussed above, the existence of the new routine threatens to overwhelm all other forms of communication, to the point where all narratives become routines; in other words, it becomes increasingly difficult to discern between routine and sincerity—the distinction becomes vague, if not impossible. Russell is quite correct to say that the statements quoted above display effiminophobia, but do they communicate Burroughs' genuine feelings, or is Lee working within society's homophobic routines so as to make a prostitutional, homosexual arrangement more palatable to Allerton? Is Lee using humor to belittle anxieties surrounding homosexuality? With his use of the phrase “sex monsters,” is Lee satirizing a society that understood homosexuality as a mental illness? Thus Burroughs, as the writer who embraces the routine, becomes a notoriously difficult figure to pin down. More so than others, we must be very careful when deciding which of his statements and actions are earnest/genuine, and which are ironic/amusing satires that have taken on a life of their own, free of their author.

Both Lee and Burroughs himself struggle with the new type of routine after having discovered it. Burroughs’ letters from this time period are quite revealing in this respect. When attempting to write a more conventional—and therefore profitable—novel, he notes its impossibility due to the routine: “I sat down to write a best seller, and the result is another routine” (Letters to Allen Ginsberg 76). His letters are filled with similar statements. When
attempting to finish a chapter of *Lunch*, he states, “every time I try to terminate it, another routine pounces on me” (*The Letters of William S. Burroughs* 299). These inabilities speak to a lack of control over writing: “It’s almost like automatic writing produced by a hostile, independent entity who is saying in effect, ‘I will write what I please’” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 262). And while he acknowledges that the writer of routines is a writer who has no control—and is something more akin to a recording machine—this is the desired state of writing: “I have no control over what I write, which is as it should be” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 289); “I am progressing towards complete lack of caution and restraint. Nothing must be allowed to dilute my routines” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 294).

This lack of control via the routine is not restricted to the literary realm, but it was also one that intensely affected Burroughs’ life, his sense of self, and his understanding of the world around him. The fact that he feels to be “possessed by routines” has profound implications on his self: “I have a feeling that I might turn into somebody else, that I am losing my outlines” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 327). He draws the same conclusion when he claims to “live in a constant state of routine”: “I have entered a period of change more drastic than adolescence or early childhood. [...] I am getting so far out one day I won’t come back at all” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 329). He even goes so far to say that routines have the capacity to tear him apart (*Letters of W.S.B.* 201). Thus, the potential held by the old type of routine to overwhelm and transform everything it touches is realized in the new type of routine. As opposed to the play-acting of the old type of routine, Burroughs literally feels transformed now, and he argues that the routine has the ability to transform the world around it. In this way, the routine as an art form is unique: “I’ve been thinking about routine as art form, and what distinguishes it from other forms. One thing, it is not *completely symbolic*, that is, it is subject to shlup over into ‘real’ action at any time (like cutting
off finger joint and so forth). In a sense the whole Nazi movement was a great, humorless, evil routine on Hitler’s part” (Letters of W.S.B. 216). The lack of distinction here between art and life is one that he felt personally, and he begins to expand it to the human condition. That is, when he was a younger man, Burroughs went to the extreme of cutting off the end of his finger in order to get the attention of a man he was interested in (this tale is recounted in the short story, “The Finger,” in his collection of shorter works called Interzone—however, the gender of the love interest is altered). In a parallel fashion, the rationale that takes on a life of its own and leads to the extreme of self-mutilation develops in a similarly uncontrolled fashion in the Nazi regime. That is, Nazi history may have progressed in an uncontrolled fashion due to the power of narratives—if Germans at that time genuinely believed the Nazi narratives, then their crimes become the logical and inevitable conclusions of such beliefs.

Returning to Russell's point about Burroughs’ effiminophobia, the facts that the routine exists, that Burroughs was the great theorist of the routine, and that the routine was a part of Burroughs’ lived experience, means that one must be very careful when thinking that Burroughs is being sincere. Reading slurs and derogatory attitudes in Burroughs’ literature and associating them with the genuine beliefs of their author becomes very difficult to defend. In fact, it would be very difficult to argue that Burroughs’ entire public persona (one that became quite famous in the latter decades of his life) was not a routine. One needs the same cautious awareness when approaching the literature and the man.

At this point, there is the potential objection that I have taken Burroughs’ statements about the routine too sincerely, and that there is no reason to believe that these statements about routines are not routines themselves. However, routines about routines do not negate what is being said about the routine, but actually reinforces it. That is, following the theory of the routine
to its logical conclusion, the theory would have to adopt the method of the routine. Burroughs asked himself, “Why do I always parody? Neither in life nor in writing can I achieve complete sincerity […] except in parody and moments of profound discouragement” (Letters of W.S.B. 272). Sincerity achieved via the routine becomes a truthful form of communication: what can be sincerely communicated is the lack of sincerity. Or, what can be sincerely communicated is a routine that understands itself as routine. In this way, Burroughs could be seen as quite truthful or sincere: he spoke in routines that identified themselves as routines, or were obviously routines. The definition of insincerity then becomes a routine that attempts to hide the fact that it is a routine. Burroughs’ work is an exposé of all disingenuous routines that claim to be otherwise; routines that announce themselves as such are an ethical form of communication. In a similar fashion, fiction is capable of communicating the profoundest truths because it never claims to be anything but fiction; as a counter-example, historical discourse that does not explicitly acknowledge its own construction has the potential to be much less truthful than fiction.

There are a number of theoretical parallels that are worth mentioning here, and they are all about if/how truth can be communicated. Friedrich Nietzsche, Paul de Man, and Roland Barthes have all theorized about the possibilities and conditions of speaking the truth. Perhaps de Man’s writing on irony provides the most obvious connection with Burroughs’ parodic routines. In “The Concept of Irony,” de Man thinks about the limits of irony only to discover that there are none: “Irony in itself opens up doubts as soon as its possibility enters our heads, and there is no inherent reason for discontinuing the process of doubt at any point short of infinity” (166). (In a similar fashion, I addressed above the absence of limits on the routine.) de Man is thus able to conclude that “irony is everywhere” (179), undermining everything we say, regardless of our good or bad intentions: “Words have a way of saying things which are not at all what you want
them to say. You are writing a splendid and coherent philosophical argument, but, lo and behold, you are describing sexual intercourse. Or you are writing a fine compliment for somebody and without your knowledge, just because words have a way of doing things, it’s sheer insult and obscenity that you are really saying” (181). Burroughs’ parodic routine seems well aware of such an absence of limits on irony.

However, this means that truth—if it can be communicated at all—needs to be communicated in a roundabout fashion. Both Nietzsche and Barthes attempt to address this dilemma. In “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” Nietzsche argues that language is a deeply flawed system of communication—its words/concepts rely upon ignoring differences: “we equate by omitting the unequal” (46). Language is incapable of dealing with the thing in itself, so even at its most basic level, it must operate metaphorically; he then provides his definitions of truth and lie:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins that have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.

We still do not know where the urge for truth comes from; for as yet we have heard only of the obligation imposed by society that it should exist—in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all. (46-47)

Nietzsche has deconstructed the truth/lie binary. That is, human communication—and truth-telling on its most conventional level—is actually predicated on lying and the inaccuracy of language. Lying therefore becomes unavoidable. However, how the truth/lie binary comes about is that truth means lying according to widely accepted conventions, whereas one is accused of lying if one has disobeyed such conventions. What is implicit in this argument is the role of
metaphor. That is, if we abandon the belief (or faith) that language can describe/understand the world in a way that is not anthropomorphizing/reductive/creative/inaccurate, and embrace the inherently metaphorical nature of language even at its most scientific levels, then perhaps we can be more honest with ourselves and with our representations of the universe. For this reason, the philosopher who claims such an important role for metaphor in language and truth would make such extensive use of metaphors in his own writing (in the quotation above, he cannot discuss truth and lie without resorting to metaphor.) Nietzsche would not be able to articulate some truth about the human condition without a concerted and self-conscious use of metaphor. And, in fact, we should be quite wary of truth-statements that claim to avoid metaphorical language. Like the discussion of irony beforehand, this understanding of the metaphorical nature of language fits very well into the routine. Burroughs’ theory of the routine was always critical of conventional understandings of the world that claimed to be free of irony and metaphor. These conventional understandings are lies purporting to be the truth, whereas Burroughs’ highly metaphorical and ironic routines are intended to communicate the truth of the world as he sees it, while at the same time criticizing all those routines around us that claim to not be routines.

There is one last theoretical aside to follow before moving on (of course, there are so many others that are possible), but like the previous asides, this one also helps round out an explication of the routine itself. Perhaps some of Barthes’ most compelling structuralist work involved what he called the “ethics of the sign.” In Mythologies (1957), he argues that “signs ought to present themselves only in two extreme forms: either openly intellectual and so remote that they are reduced to an algebra, as in the Chinese theater, where a flag on its own signifies a regiment; or deeply rooted, invented, so to speak on each occasion, revealing an internal, a hidden facet, and indicative of a moment in time” (28; my emphasis). These two forms are the
ethical signs because they are always understood as signs, rather than “nature.” However, the unethical sign is the “intermediate sign” because “it is both reprehensible and deceitful to confuse the sign with what is signified” (28). In this way, even though his writing would be criticized by some for immorality (Naked Lunch was the target of censorship; the first edition of Junky also included Maurice Helbrant’s Narcotic Agent, which was supposed to serve as a moral counter-balance), Burroughs has created an ethical art form. That is, Burroughs’ routines are at times “openly intellectual” and at others, “deeply rooted.” That is, their satire depends upon a highly metaphorical and openly intellectual critique of Burroughs’ contemporary world; also, in their extreme originality, in their momentary usefulness, and in their ephemeral quality, these routines are “deeply rooted” in a specific moment and context. In short, Burroughs’ routines are ethical in that they always draw attention to their signs as signs. And Burroughs is highly critical of all the uses of unethical signs: all those stories that are told about us, about our nations, about our world, that try to pass off their signs as nature (this is how Barthes defines myth)—in short, he is critical of all those routines that are not honest about their status as routines.

At issue here is the playful, parodic nature of the routine and the way in which no boundaries are respected in the face of a routine: “it is the nature of laughter to recognize no bounds” (Letters of W.S.B. 245). The absolutely irreverent quality of Burroughs’ writing can be attributed to the facts that Burroughs feels that he has no control over the routine (either in his writing or in his personal life) and that the routine puts everything into play. The playful permeability of boundaries is also one to be found in the dichotomy of form/content. That is, the routine is not simply a form of expression, but it also shapes and dictates the nature of the content the routine expresses. In other words, control, sexuality, and drugs are all dealt with in a
manner that reflects the routine’s playful permeability of boundaries. However, “play” is used here in not necessarily a positive fashion—there is the sense of a mischievous resistance while at the same time acknowledging the inherent risks or danger that is involved in a lack of security introduced by mutability. This point will be clearer in the discussion of *Naked Lunch* below, but the way in which drugs are dealt with in Burroughs’ early literature gives us a good example. *Yage* describes the experience of being on this eponymous drug:

> Yage is space time travel. The room seems to shake and vibrate with motion. The blood and substance of many races, Negro, Polynesian, Mountain Mongol, Desert Nomad, Polyglot Near East, Indian—new races as yet unconceived and unborn, combinations not yet realized passes through your body. Migrations, incredible journeys through deserts and jungles and mountains (stasis and death in closed mountain valleys where plants sprout out of your cock and vast crustaceans hatch inside and break the shell of the body), across the Pacific in an outrigger canoe to Easter Island. The Composite City where all human potentials are spread out in a vast silent market. (50)

What is striking about this passage—and all of *Yage* in general—is the way in which it embraces the positive possibilities for drug use to enable humanity’s vast rhizomatic potential to traverse all boundaries (internal and external), and to enable a wide range of becomings (notice that stasis is strongly associated with death—much of Burroughs’ writing indicates a fear of stasis, and speaks of places that inspire “stasis horrors”). The plurality of identities described and the various spaces encountered are unified in the image of the Composite City. This city is a state of existence achieved by drugs, but it is also based on Burroughs’ experiences living in New York City and Mexico City; in fact, the Composite City is transformed into Interzone in *Naked Lunch* as Burroughs’ experiences in Tangier further develop this idea of a postmodern city-space-scape.

Of course, Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) does deal with the ability of drugs to affect the human’s rhizomatic assemblage and its potential for becoming; they even mention that “Americans of the beat generation had already embarked on this path” (282).
However, what is interesting in their argument is the way in which they see the potentiality of drugs as ultimately a failure. That is, one potential supplied by drugs is that of addiction, where a deterritorialized space becomes rigidly reterritorialized: “The casual line, or the line of flight, of drugs is constantly being segmentarized under the most rigid of forms, that of dependency, the hit and the dose, the dealer” (284). Because of addiction and the problems associated with it (though they do not mention Burroughs here, it would not be a stretch of the imagination to believe that this section on addiction is, at least partly, informed by his writing), they then conclude that while the spaces/states enabled by drugs are worthwhile, one should try to get there without drugs: “Drugs are too unwieldy to grasp the imperceptible and becomings-imperceptible; drug users believed that drugs would grant them the plane, when in fact the plane must distill its own drugs, remaining master of speeds and proximities” (286). None of these points are inaccurate concerning Burroughs’ work, but it is really only half the story. Because Deleuze and Guattari deal with drugs only briefly, they are somewhat incorrect due to the summarily dismissive point that they make. Two caveats support their point: (1) Burroughs would eventually argue that what can be accomplished chemically can be done so otherwise, and (2) drug addiction would metamorphose into addiction in general as the metaphor in an understanding of how the human assemblage is vulnerable to manipulation by a control society. While these two points support their claim, it should be noted however that there are celebrations of this drug potential in his work, and it should be also noted that up until his death, he considered these drugs to be beneficial to humanity. Addiction to junk is a very different drug experience than the ones he found in hashish, marijuana, or yage. Lumping these drugs together in one group to be treated equally would be to recreate an error perpetuated by America’s war on drugs, and an error the Burroughs was quite resistant to.36
The dichotomy between *Junky* and *Yage* indicate the spectrum of possibilities enabled by drugs to enhance humanity’s rhizomatic potential. That is, the becomings they enable can lead to the most extreme forms of subjugation—addiction—, or to new human potentials, and everything in-between. Burroughs’ life and work was dedicated to the exploration of this possibility. However, it should be noted that no matter what the end result, no law should intervene. A reason to intervene does not necessarily excuse the intervention. This is why, in opposition to a control society largely implemented by a war on drugs that led to what he believed was an international police state, Burroughs proposed a free society where everyone would mind their own business. So, regardless of the pros/cons of drug use, the intervention could never be defended because it infringed on the right to conduct one’s own business as long as it did not infringe on someone else’s ability to conduct his/her business. Reflecting on his South American travels in search of yage, Burroughs writes, “The missionary told me he wanted to see a law against Yage ‘with teeth in it,’ and he bared his teeth in a most offensive manner, taking the law into his own Spam-eating mouth. After thirty-seven years I hate him at this moment, 9:06 a.m., Tuesday, October 23, 1990” (*My Education* 12). Burroughs unproblematically defends yage due to its latent human potential indicated in the quotation above. However, we should be careful to avoid an easy binary of junk-bad/yage-good. That is, while junk introduces one form of addiction into the human assemblage and it is also the focus for a war-on-drugs control society, junk was also largely responsible for his development as a writer, and it was instrumental in his thinking about power and control. At the same time, while yage opens up a wide variety of human potentials, breaking down barriers and allowing for “telepathic” communication (communication on the non-verbal level, more akin to empathy), it also opens up the possibility of using yage’s ability to communicate on a non-verbal level for a
level of control previously unimagined and unrealized. Burroughs’ work has always been about mitigating/resisting the negative possibilities of the rhizomatic assemblage while enabling/supporting its positive possibilities (“positive” here always means something that contributes to the individual’s liberation).

Burroughs was highly sensitive to the fact that his state of being as either a drug user or as a homosexual could be refashioned, redesigned, redefined into that of a criminal. In this way, something like the war on drugs indicates how members on both sides of the law can be shaped in a control society. That is, the drug-user is not only someone who takes drugs to reshape their being, but a control society attempts to reshape him/her as well. As an imperfect human being, Burroughs was obviously affected by such shaping to a certain degree; his resistance would not be wholly successful. On the other hand, those who are not drug users are being refashioned as well. They have been fashioned into law-abiding, moral citizens, regardless of whatever ethical stances they have made. Dissension from whatever norm is decided upon in a control society is closed off as the “drug-free” are refused access to any thought patterns and lifestyles that are commonly associated with drug use. Here, drugs are not necessary, but there are certain drug-like states that are attractive and liberatory; however, access remains highly restricted.

Returning to the routine, it is an art form that allows us access to thought patterns of a drug state. That is, the routine is the unrestricted articulation of all human potentials—the art that traverses boundaries of all kinds. It identifies and satirizes negative potentials while embracing positive potentials. Nowhere is this clearer than in his subsequent work: *Naked Lunch* and *Interzone*. These are works that were written while he was in North Africa, and Burroughs’ life in Tangier would have a profound effect on all of his future work. The relative freedom that he experiences in Tangier does not lead to a literature of routines that celebrate liberation—on the
contrary, this relative freedom allowed him to focus more specifically on how control operates. While certain laws are obviously oppressive, Burroughs' focus on routines allowed him to make the discovery that only narratives have the power to control the people's hearts and minds; it is only through narrative that we understand ourselves and each other. *Naked Lunch* and *Interzone* are the logical conclusion of all his theorizing on narrative up to this point; they are his masterpieces of the routine form, and his life in Tangier is the last part of the equation required for him to follow the routine to its artistic and theoretical conclusions.

*Naked Lunch* (1959) and *Interzone* (1989): The High-Water Mark of the Routine

*Naked Lunch* and *Interzone* mark the third stage in the development of the routine. This stage is very similar to the previous one found in *Queer* and *Yage*, but with one major difference: the audience is now the general public rather than a personal acquaintance. Now that the routine is no longer addressed to Allerton or Ginsberg, the question of personal gain is removed, allowing Burroughs to focus solely on society at large as he speaks to a general audience. That is, Burroughs extricates the new routine from these personal fetters (the cycle of desire and vulnerability), and reincorporates it into a properly social/political/legal context. After moving to Tangier, a place with liberal attitudes towards drugs and homosexuality, he was able to focus on how prohibitions functioned extra-legally. That is, criminalizing certain activities is a rather clumsy and inefficient way to control the populace. Free from legal constraints regarding drugs and sexuality, Burroughs was able to focus on more subtle and insidious forms of control. His discovery was that narrative in combination with desire, conditioning, and addiction were the best forms of control as they functioned by completely internalizing dominant ideologies to the point where the subject is unaware of his/her own subjugation.
Eric Mottram’s *William Burroughs: The Algebra of Need* (1977) was a seminal study of Burroughs’ work that has functioned as the basis for a large percentage of all subsequent examinations. Mottram’s most thought-provoking commentary involves the necessarily sexual constitution of power in Burroughs’ work, seeing “the erotic nature of power as a structure of orgasmic experience” (52) and that “all power is sado-masochistic” (54). Mottram identifies the thematic importance of *Naked Lunch*’s title:

> Experience of the sickness and the withdrawal became part of the junk materials of *The Naked Lunch*. Burroughs’ own capsulation of its furthest implication is succinct: ‘that frozen moment when everyone sees what is on the end of every fork’—the moment a man realizes his cannibalism, his predatory condition, and his necessary parasitism and addictive nature. (27)

According to this argument, humanity’s relationship with itself is always a question of power that comes in the forms of cannibalism, predation, parasitism, and addiction. At the basis of these four power relations is their sexual constitution. While all these relations involve some sort of need, they exist also because they supply pleasure—in fact, none of these power relations exist without pleasure: the “metaphorical and actual design” of *Naked Lunch* is “addiction, addicted power, addicted inferiority and pleasurable victimization, a world in which love is replaced by separate organisms dedicated to pleasure and egoism, and therefore without a social morality” (27).  

Considering the fact that human relations are dictated by pleasure and need rather than ethics, control in society is constructed around the principle of extracting pleasure. Mottram argues that Burroughs’ exacerbated attack begins where the activities of Orwell’s Room 101 leave off, at the point where it is necessary to expose the erotic motivations of any man who wishes to control another man, or wishes to be controlled. Burroughs’ totalitarian world is not a cold mechanism but a world in which the human is reduced to the animal and mechanical for sexual, orgasmic reasons. (40)
Reaching this point, Mottram explicates Burroughs’ work in such a way that society, in its amoral essence, creates injustice because injustice is pleasurable:

He has grasped an essential fact of twentieth century experience: that the desires of private fantasy have been able to seize power and realize themselves in public action as rarely before in history, and have been rendered legitimate by a model of human nature and government as monstrous as its extreme versions, the concentration camp and the brothel. (45)

The representative act of the human world, as both Burroughs and Bataille recognize, is the erotic act of killing—the central act of transgression against the main taboo of life. Capital punishment is legalized killing, attended by all the hypocrisy of language and anaesthetics of which men are capable. Burroughs describes it with unprecedented realism, intended as a full assault on the erotic nature of power as a structure of orgasmic experience. (52)

So Mottram, in a very convincing fashion, is able to explain the relationship between sex and violence in *Naked Lunch*: power in the novel always involves sexuality because power is never just employed as a means to an end, its use is enjoyed. Whether you are the one to enjoy its use, or its use is enjoyed on you, the enjoyment of power is its own justification. So, when we look at something like capital punishment, Burroughs does not need to point out the faults in capital punishment arguments about justice, deterrence, etc. (those ends to which capital punishment is seen to be the means). Rather, all Burroughs has to do is point out the fact that people kill people because they enjoy it (and of course, even proponents of capital punishment will admit to a certain amount of personal “satisfaction” that results). This is essentially a world that does not operate according to logic, reason, or ethics—even though dominant ideology makes use of many old routines claiming otherwise—but a world that operates according to the extraction of pleasure. That is, capital punishment and the concentration camp are as much products of power’s pursuit of pleasure as the brothel. However, these are “extreme versions” (Mottram’s words) of the use of power, and even though these extremities are particularly illustrative of its use, it would be a mistake to focus solely on these extremities; Burroughs locates the relationship
between power and sexuality at the more mundane, quotidian level, as it operates through narratives (old routines) of various kinds.

In light of this reading of Burroughs, narrative takes on a particularly evil light, where it is no longer a way for power to explain itself, but a way of speaking that obfuscates the pleasure motive behind control. According to Mottram, Burroughs’ villains are the ones who tell paternalist narratives:

Burroughs presents a loveless world whose control is entirely in the hands of capitalists, doctors, psychiatrists, con men, judges, police and military, whose aim it is to perpetuate mass infantilism, apathy and dependence. Swift’s physical nausea in *A Modest Proposal* and *A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* is tolerated through ironic comedy of acceptance. In Burroughs it tends to become horror of the obscenity towards which total power grows. This is why the climax of *The Naked Lunch* is a strictly non-pornographic satire against capital punishment, exposing the perverted sexuality of those who execute or witness or condone it. This scene will appear pornographic only to devotees of execution. It is in fact a necessary enaction of the central sexuality of power in the nation state. (42-3)

Though Mottram does not use the terms *narrative* or *routine* here, it is a term that would fit very well into his argument. For how is “mass infantilism, apathy and dependence” perpetuated but through narrative? How is “acceptance” cultivated but through narrative? How do “capitalists, doctors, psychiatrists, con men, judges, police and military” control but through the acceptance created via the maintenance of their various narratives about themselves?

Routines play a crucial role in what Burroughs called the “algebra of need” (as suggested by his title, Mottram identified the thematic centrality of such algebra). The phrase is the title of one of the routines in *Naked Lunch* and it is explicated in one of *Lunch*’s appendices, “Deposition: Testimony Concerning a Sickness.” This routine expresses the relationship between this algebra and survival:

“Fats” Terminal came from The City Pressure Tanks where open life jets spurt a million forms, immediately eaten, the eaters canceled by black time fuzz…
Few reach the Plaza, a joint where The Tanks empty a tidal river, carrying forms of survival armed with defenses of poison slime, black flesh-rotting fungus, and green odors that sear the lungs and grab the stomach in twisted knots…

Because Fats’ nerves were raw and peeled to feel the death spasms of a million cold kicks…Fats learned The Algebra of Need and survived… (172)

What is described here is immersion in an amniotic fluid of predation. Fats’ survival in such predatory waters depends on his learning of the laws of predation: The Algebra of Need. Presumably, learning this knowledge is also what allows Burroughs himself to survive his own drug addiction. We can read Burroughs’ work as communicating this knowledge that allowed for his survival. For Burroughs, drug addiction works on “total” need, which he describes in “Deposition”:

Junk is the ideal product…the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and bet to buy….The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client. He pays his staff in junk.

Junk yields a basic formula of “evil” virus: *The Algebra of Need*. The face of “evil” is always the face of total need. A dope fiend is a man in total need of dope. Beyond a certain frequency need knows absolutely no limit or control. In the words of total need: “Wouldn’t you?” Yes you would. You would lie, cheat, inform on your friends, steal, do anything to satisfy total need. Because you would be in a state of total sickness, total possession, and not in a position to act in any other way. (201)

The algebra is revealed in drug addiction, where “junk is the ideal product,” but as Burroughs points out, this just reveals a “basic formula.” This formula works with a creation of products that goes along with the creation of buyers manipulated by manufactured needs: there is no junk economy without junkies, and there are no junkies without the creation of junk. In the face of such need, you would be willing to do anything, no matter how unethical. Control is both light and efficient when it is able to operate through manufactured needs (no heavy colonial, judicial, or military machinery required). If someone is not an addict, they are simply someone who is not an addict yet—when he mentions “addicts of drugs not yet synthesized” (91), he is arguing for the state of human nature as that of the potential addict.
waiting to be exploited. Even if we grant that not everyone is an addict, everyone does have this addictive potentiality. Exploitation proceeds then through the manufacture of need, drug addiction being the example par excellence of this manufacture: no one needs drugs until they are manufactured, distributed, and sold (for this reason, both capitalism and marketing speak of generating new needs). Thus the basic formula is, quite simply, to manufacture needs and then exploit people according to this manufacture—and not simply for profit, but more importantly, for the pleasurable control over others (while the addict also extracts pleasure from the satisfaction of his/her addiction).

Extending the algebra beyond junk, this need takes on many forms, and explains so many forms of power’s exploitation of people. Capital punishment in *Naked Lunch* then takes on the form of pleasure and need. According to a manufactured need for justice (i.e. a manufactured need for justice *of this type*) there is an infrastructure of cooperation that are so many unethical acts willingly performed by so many, which brings about the pleasurable act of killing. While it may be true that all humans need justice, all humans need a judiciary system etc., there is no reason to believe that people need *this* judiciary system the way it is currently constituted. Burroughs’ critique is convincing because these latter arguments are the ones he is making via the routine: his comedic, satirical ones lampoon dominant ideology's tired, old routines that rely upon the algebra of need. These various old routines (judiciary, moral, etc.) manufacture the “need” for these social systems in their current form, creating an essentially conservative system perpetuating the need for the status quo.

Deleuze had remarked that Burroughs was continuing the work done by Foucault: “*Control societies* are taking over from disciplinary societies. ‘Control’ is the name proposed by Burroughs to characterize the new monster, and Foucault sees it fast approaching” (*Negotiations*
The transition from discipline to control is also linked to the transition from discourse to narrative/routine. That is, disciplinary power relied upon confinement supported by the appropriate disciplinary discourse. On the other hand, control operates without confinement, and dominant ideology’s old routines are simplified versions of these discourses translated for a general audience; they are narratives for a lay audience, and as such, they do not contain any of the specialized language found in discourse. For example, these old routines teach us that homosexuality is an illness, even though we may not have had any personal experience with psychoanalysis before 1973.

Following this line of thought, discussing Foucault’s later writings on power and discourse produces interesting results. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976), Foucault is concerned with the “proliferation of discourses” that does not create further knowledge and openness, but further control: “Through the various discourses, legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness; from childhood to old age, a norm of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described; pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized” (36). Power does not just operate through overt state, military, and police oppression, but it also operates through these ubiquitous discourses and the control they have (and, due to the ubiquity of discourses, one can never not be under the influence of power which is also ubiquitous—Burroughs himself never attained the degree of freedom that he was constantly working towards). As the object of scrutiny under so many discourses (e.g.: “the medical examination, the psychiatric investigation, the pedagogical report, and family controls” (45)), people are “fixed by a gaze, isolated and animated by the attention they received” (45). And while the subject of Foucault’s study is the various ways human sexuality has been controlled, he
finds that this is not just power’s control over pleasure, but that there is also “the pleasure that comes of exercising a power that questions, monitors, watches, spies, searches out, palpitates, brings to light” (45). However, Foucault does not go too extensively into this point, focusing rather on the control of pleasure. So with Burroughs and Foucault, we have two complementary ideas that are very much in agreement: power’s pleasure motive for control-via-narrative, and power’s control of sexuality via discourse.

Having read Foucault, we should not be surprised that Burroughs also targets doctors and the medical profession for his satire in *Naked Lunch*. One of the longest routines in the book, “benway,” focuses on Dr. Benway who is “a manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control” (19). In his assignment of “Total Demoralization,” he eliminates all overt forms of oppression in favor of more subtle and therefore effective forms of power:

Benway’s first act was to abolish concentration camps, camps, mass arrest and, except under certain limited and special circumstances, the use of torture.

“I deplore brutality,” he said. “It's not efficient. On the other hand, prolonged mistreatment, short of physical violence, gives rise, when skillfully applied, to anxiety and a feeling of special guilt. A few rules or rather guiding principles are to be borne in mind. The subject must not realize that the mistreatment is a deliberate attack of an anti-human enemy on his personal identity. He must be made to feel that he deserves any treatment he receives because there is something (never specified) horribly wrong with him. The naked need of the control addicts must be decently covered by an arbitrary and intricate bureaucracy so that the subject cannot contact his enemy direct.” (19)

What Benway describes here could very much be the operation of medical and psychiatric discourses that Foucault identifies. The effectiveness of Benway’s treatment relies on the subject’s internalization of his medical discourse. That is, medical discourse’s identification of the subject under analysis is then internalized by the subject who identifies him/herself as the subject of that discourse. So when the subject feels that “he deserves any treatment he receives because there is something (never specified) horribly wrong with him,” it is the subject’s sense
of “deserving” where s/he has internalized the discourse, creating a need in this subject for further discourse to discover what is “horribly wrong with him” or her. Not surprisingly, Benway makes his subjects believe that they “suffer” from homosexuality, regardless of what the subject’s sexuality may be—making this “illness” a concern to the entire populace rather than only 10% of it.

However, because we are no longer dealing with confinement—Benway “abolish[es] concentration camps, camps, [and] mass arrest”—there has to be a way for these discourses to reach the general public outside of discourse’s confines. Burroughs identifies the cancerous, bureaucratic state as one that extends these discourses beyond their confines, forcing a simplified version of these discourses—in the form of narratives that serve as bureaucracy's rationale—upon a general populace who must constantly engage with them. In a bureaucratic state, the motivation to control this subject also comes from need, as indicated by Benway’s notion of “control addicts.” And it comes as no surprise that this relationship between the subject and the control addicts is facilitated by a manipulative medico-psychiatric discourse (Benway’s theory and practice); but it is not only through discourse that need is manufactured, but through narrative (discourse being the origin of these narratives.) Need is manufactured in the subject of power so that s/he masochistically desires his/her own subjection and degradation; this subject seeks to participate in the role written for him/her. On the other hand, need also operates within the powerful, who become addicted to the sadistic control over others. Bureaucratic narratives and rationales operate within a sado-masochistic power structure.

Along with the “proliferation of discourses,” Foucault finds a corresponding “proliferation of sexualities” (48) in that power operating as a “mode of specification of individuals” acts “by multiplication of singular sexualities” (47). In other words, various
discourses identify individuals according to a singular sexuality designated by those discourses. Benway takes this point to the extreme, showing how a medical practice and discourse not only controls human sexuality via identity, but by showing how this identity can be manipulated into any sexuality (therefore denying the underlying reality to human sexuality):

“The case of a female agent who forgot her real identity and merged with her cover story—she is still a fricteuse in Annexia—put me onto another gimmick. An agent is trained to deny his agent identity by asserting his cover story. So why not use psychic jujitsu and go along with him? Suggest that his cover story is his identity and that he has no other. His agent identity becomes unconscious, that is, out of his control; and you can dig it with drugs and hypnosis. You can make a square heterosex citizen queer with this angle ... that is, reinforce and second his rejection of normally latent homosexual trends—at the same time depriving him of cunt and subjecting him to homosex stimulation. Then drugs, hypnosis, and—” Benway flipped a limp wrist. (24)

Burroughs' diction here is quite telling: his use of secret “agents” and “cover stories” indicate the powerful role of narrative in the formation of sexual identity—and these cover stories are synonymous with routines. Burroughs reveals that identity can be constructed, depending on the narratives that form its construction. Having revealed that even sexual identity can be manipulated, it is not very difficult to show that sexual identity can be manipulated according to a sado-masochistic relationship with power. That is, if the oppressed can have their sexuality altered—ultimately into a sexuality of submission—, then those in power can also have theirs altered towards the sadistic use of power. Benway succinctly summarizes this relationship with the following image: “And sometimes a subject will burst into boyish tears because he can’t keep from ejaculate when you screw him” (25).

The proliferation of discourses—and their lay-person narratives—in a new age of bureaucratic control societies are clearly parodied in by a proliferation of routines that take these discourses to their horrifying logical conclusions. The most interesting parts of Naked Lunch focus on human conditioning, which Naked Lunch clearly argues is the most effective form of
control. Like the routines dealing with Doctor Benway that were discussed above, “The Examination” routine is one of the best instances of a bureaucratic control state in *Naked Lunch*. In this routine, Carl Peterson is a citizen of “Freeland,” which was based on Burroughs’ travels to Copenhagen at this time. This country’s name, along with the absences of police or a justice system that relies on executions, are meant to prove Dr. Benway’s earlier statement: “I deplore brutality […] It's not efficient” (19). Benway explains to Carl that their goal is to “adjust the state—simply a tool—to the needs of each individual” (157). Carl has been brought to the attention of the doctor and the “Ministry of Mental Hygiene and Prophylaxis” because of the matter of “sexual deviation”: “We regard it as a misfortune…a sickness…certainly nothing to be censured or uh sanctioned any more than, say…tuberculosis […] On the other hand you can readily see that any illness imposes certain, should we say, obligations, certain necessities of a prophylactic nature on the authorities concerned with public health” (157).

Benway then implies that “sexual deviation” means homosexuality, to which Carl responds, “But the whole thing is ridiculous. I have always interested myself only in girls” (159). The rest of the routine is Carl’s defending himself from Benway’s accusation that he is a “sexual deviant.” The homosexual/heterosexual binary then starts to break down as Benway points out that some of the pinup girls to whom Carl masturbated “are really boys. In uh *drag* I believe is the word?” (163). Benway also gets Carl to admit that he sometimes prostituted himself to men when he was desperate for money. This is all part of Benway’s interrogation: “And so, Carl, you will please oblige to tell me how many times and under what circumstances you have uh indulged in homosexual acts?? [..] If you have never done so I shall be inclined to think of you as a somewhat atypical young man” (164). The routine ends with Carl’s desire to escape the interrogation, and Benway’s question: “Where will you go, Carl?” (165). While Carl is not
confined, Benway’s question is quite poignant in that it does not matter where Carl goes, he will be subjected to Benway’s controls.

The nature of the exchange between Benway and Carl should appear quite familiar at this point. Like the demand for narrative indicated in the routines of earlier works like *Junky* discussed above, such interrogations are always about the manipulation of the individual in a form of obeisance to the current control structure. The interrogation asks for narratives that repeat a control society’s view of the world. Notice how Carl is manipulated in a way that ensures that no matter what he answers, he will always be a subject of control regardless of his identity. First, Benway puts forth a highly bigoted view of human sexuality so as to designate it an illness. Then the human is defined in such a way that it would be highly unlikely (“atypical” is Benway’s word for it) that it did not contain some element of this “illness.” In this way, Burroughs shows how everyone is subjected to such controls—not just the people who have been unfairly singled out. In this routine there are obvious parallels to McCarthyism and to the war on drugs, which perform similar interrogations. That is, not only is Burroughs arguing that homosexuals, communists, and drug users are being unfairly targeted by unjust power regimes—he is arguing that everyone is being very strictly controlled in a medico-legal control system that targets such positions. Burroughs’ routine here satirizes the medical industry's ability to manipulate Carl’s identity. More significantly, it satirizes how power demands the repetition of the same old routines it tells its citizens.

*Interzone* serves as a complement to *Naked Lunch*, and while it is too provocative a text to be dealt with in any detail here, it should be mentioned that *Interzone* is the second text that serves as the high-water mark of Burroughs’ use of routines as a literary style. As a collection rather than a novel, it would be easy to argue that *Interzone* alone serves as such a high-water
mark—this is particularly true of the last sixty pages which is simply entitled “Word” and is composed of deleted passages from *Naked Lunch*. The routines in “Word” are even shorter and more disjointed than those in *Naked Lunch*. In fact, this could be the point at which Burroughs starts to move away from the routine and toward the cut-up. Regardless, it is in *Interzone* that we get one of Burroughs’ most important statement about the structure of his contemporary society, and it is one that addresses greater permissiveness in a post-WWII world that is simultaneously seeing the end of colonialism (basically, what he learns in Tangier):

> We have a new type of rule now. Not one-man rule, or rule of aristocracy or plutocracy, but of small groups elevated to positions of absolute power by random pressures, and subject to political and economic factors that leave little room for decision. They are representatives of abstract forces who have reached power through surrender of self. The iron-willed dictator is a thing of the past. There will be no more Stalins, no more Hitlers. The rulers of this most insecure of all worlds are rulers by accident, inept, frightened pilots at the controls of a vast machine they cannot understand, calling in experts to tell them which buttons to push. (71)

Similar to Burroughs' idea that “the whole Nazi movement was a great, humorless, evil routine on Hitler’s part” (*Letters of W.S.B.* 216; quoted above), these “abstract forces” that rule the rulers are the dominant narratives that have taken on a life of their own. Burroughs' work on the routine is the attempt to understand how such narratives operate in a control society; his satire identifies such narratives, laying them bare while he simultaneously brings life to new counter-narratives.

**Conclusion: The Cut-Up Trilogy and Beyond**

*Roads* (1983), and *The Western Lands* (1987)). Clearly, North Africa left an indelible mark on his personal, intellectual, and artistic development. More importantly, it was the combination of the permissiveness of Tangier society, the end of colonialism, and the international character of the city (the International Zone, or Interzone) that allowed Burroughs to glimpse the world's future as a postcolonial, globalized world. However, what is less clear is the presence of the routine in his works after *Naked Lunch*. Because the routine is present in the earliest of Burroughs’ works, it would not be difficult to argue that they are also present in the latest of his works (therefore, some scholars—such as Timothy Murphy—are perfectly happy to discuss routines in Burroughs’ latest works).

But, we should acknowledge the fact that they undergo radical changes after *Naked Lunch* and *Interzone*. That is, formally, Burroughs’ last trilogy of novels are his most conventional. If we want to argue that even these novels contain routines, it would probably be best to argue that they contain a certain sensibility typical of the routine—that is, a narrative that is always a playful, parodic negotiation with the stories that power tells itself. Burroughs’ cut-up trilogy marks a striking formal contrast with previous novels—Brion Gysin introduces Burroughs the cut-up technique which involved splicing his own writing with the writing of other authors and any other materials such as those found in newspapers. However, one could argue that the individual chapters of the cut-up novels form routines (again, scholars have assumed this, if they have not argued this), or that cut-ups are a routine, one that overwhelms Burroughs’ artistic life form almost a decade, to the point where even Burroughs has to acknowledge that he went too far with the form—on the other hand, it would be a mistake to call *Naked Lunch* a cut-up novel, as some early scholars had. The wild boys trilogy abandons the cut-up form though Burroughs acknowledges that it taught him a lot about writing and language, and
its chapters form routines that are less chaotic than those of *Naked Lunch* or *Interzone*—the wild boys novels resemble collections of short stories much more than *Lunch* or *Zone*.

Perhaps the strangest aspect about the current scholarship on Burroughs is that even though *Naked Lunch* is Burroughs' most famous novel, the art form that the vast majority of this scholarship chooses to focus on is the cut-up rather than the routine. If we want to argue that Burroughs does not abandon the routine after *Naked Lunch* (which he does not), then we would have to acknowledge all the formal variations while at the same time arguing for a certain consistency. It does not matter that some of Burroughs' writing may take on some of the outward trappings of conventional prose; it would be best to understand the ways in which the routine has always influenced his writing. In other words, perhaps we would have to define the routine according to what it does rather than what it is: the routine is a postmodern narrative that creates a literature that does not tell the truth, but in lying it paradoxically tells the deepest truth. The routine deconstructs the truth/lie binary: conventional wisdom tells us that a con is a lie, but cons/routines in Burroughs’ capable hands have a way of exposing the most profound lies we tell ourselves.
PART II: THE ALGERIAN WAR

CHAPTER 3: KATEB YACINE: REPLACING THE FILIATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY WITH THE ALLIANCE OF CULTURAL PLURALITY

“[…]l’Algérie n'ose pas encore être elle-même […]Algeria still does not dare to be itself.”
-Kateb Yacine, *Le Poète comme un boxeur*

“Les humaines qui ne savent pas qui ils sont, ni d'où ils viennent, ne peuvent pas vivre [People cannot live if they don't know who they are or where they come from.]”
-Kateb Yacine, *Parce que c'est une femme*

“[…]une langue appartient à celui qui la viole, pas à celui qui la caresse […a language belongs to the one who violates it, not to the one who caresses it]”
-Kateb Yacine, “Kateb Yacine, les intellectuels, la révolution et le pouvoir”

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said criticizes the general understanding of Algerian writer Albert Camus's work: “Camus's readers have imputed to *L'Etranger* the universality of a liberated existential humanity facing cosmic indifference and human cruelty with impudent stoicism” (185). Said continues: Camus's writing conceals “rivetingly complex contradictions, contradictions unresolvable by rendering, as critics have done, his feelings of loyalty to French Algeria as a parable of the human condition” (185). His argument is that rather than understanding Camus' work as the expression of an existential, universal humanity, it must be understood within its historical and political context: “we must consider Camus's works as a metropolitan transfiguration of the colonial dilemma: they represent the colon writing for a French audience whose personal history is tied irrevocably to this southern department of
France” (184). He then concludes that “blocking as it did a compassionate, shared understanding of Algerian nationalism, Camus's limitations seem unacceptably paralyzing” (185).

Because Camus was ultimately on the wrong side of the war, of colonialism, of the fight for liberation (mostly due to genealogy than anything else), Said cites the work of Kateb Yacine as an example of “the decolonizing literature of the time” (185) that offers a more accurate representation of the Algerian experience with French empire—one that also offers a “shared understanding of Algerian nationalism.” One year after Kateb makes a name for himself with the publication of *Nedjma* (1956) and almost forty years before Said's critique of Camus’ “universality,” Kateb offers a similar critique in his 1957 letter to Camus:

Here we are exiled from the same kingdom, like two enemy brothers wrapped up in the pride of possessive renunciation, having haughtily rejected the inheritance so as not to have to share it. But now the handsome inheritance is becoming a haunted place where even the shades of the Family and the Tribe are murdered, according to the double edges of what is nonetheless our one selfsame Word. They are screaming in the ruins of Tipasa and Nadhor. Shall we go together to appease the ghost of discord, or is it too late? Shall we see the gravediggers of the UN disguised as Judges, and then as Auctioneers? I do not expect a specific response, and above all do not want publicity to make the expected noises in the press about our hypothetical coexistence. If one day a Family Council were to meet, it would certainly be without us. But it is (perhaps) urgent to set in motion the waves of Communication, while keeping the appearance of not touching them which characterizes the position of orphans before a mother, who is never quite dead. (qtd in Graebner 255)

Within such a short letter, Kateb succinctly and gracefully encapsulates so many of his ideas and concerns, while displaying the ambivalence of his feelings toward Camus—feelings that are both combative and caring at the same time. Written in the midst of the Algerian War (1954-1962), Kateb's letter announces a sense of the nation whose mutability is dependent upon the historical context. That is, Camus—as a *pied-noir*—belongs to a group that is on the opposite side of the war. However, beyond a certain kinship due to their membership in the intellectual/literary
communities, Kateb is careful to note that their two respective camps are not worlds apart. Though it is a war of independence, he also gives it the sense of a civil war, wherein Kateb and Camus are “like two enemy brothers,” putting the war in familial terms: “Family,” “Tribe,” “a Family Council,” and “orphans before a mother, who is never quite dead.” Despite these intimate connections, Kateb does not want any appearance of “hypothetical coexistence” with Camus because he knows that this would greatly diminish Algeria’s fight for independence. At the same time, Kateb’s use of familial metaphors illustrates a reluctance to completely exclude the pied-noir from a definition of the Algerian nation. Their exclusion is potentially only temporary: it is tactical rather than strategic. He never makes use of the strategic in his definition of the Algerian nation, leaving the future open to the possibility of an independent Algeria that includes the pieds-noirs and French language and culture.

Because Camus’ work makes no real attempt to deal with North Africa, Kateb provides his most scathing criticism of Camus’ work in the following: “I prefer a writer like Faulkner, who is at times racist but one of whose heroes is black, to a Camus who flaunts anti-colonialist opinions when Algerian characters are totally absent from his work, and for whom Algeria is Tipaza, a landscape...” (qtd in Aresu, Counterhegemonic Discourses 40). In light of Edward Said’s seminal study, Orientalism (1978), using Algeria as an exotic or beautiful locale that erases all existence of the people and culture that reside there takes on its full implications. And Kateb was well aware of the dangers of Orientalism well before Said’s work: in a 1964 article, Kateb deplores “le Maghreb décadent des contes orientalistes [the decadent Maghreb of Orientalist tales]” (Minuit passé de douze heures 200). Thus, when Kateb describes writing Nedjma so as to tell France that Algeria is not France, he was well aware that this was an argument that needed to be made at that time, not just politically, but also culturally and
artistically: “the book was a success to the extent that I intended it to be a novel that would show French people, in their language, that Algeria was not French. I wanted to give French people, in book form, an idea of what Algeria was really all about” (Nedjma xxxi).

On the other hand, Camus, who is an Algerian writer, does not write Algerian literature (partially responsible for Camus' incredible success was that the French literary establishment can more readily accept a Camus than a Kateb). For example, the Oran that appears in Camus' The Plague (1947) bears little resemblance to even the Oran in Bowles' The Sheltering Sky (1949). In fact, we have to take Camus' word for it that he is describing Oran—there is very little indication that The Plague could not have been set in any city in France. For this reason, Kateb provides the following judgment of Camus' The Outsider (1942): “ses livres sur l’Algérie rendent un son faux et creux. Dans L'Etranger par exemple, le seul livre où Camus met en scène un personnage algérien, celui-ci n'arrive pas à vivre [his books on Algeria ring hollow. In The Outsider for example, the only book where Camus portrays an Algerian character, this character does not get to live]” (Kateb Yacine, éclats de mémoire, 61). This is not to say that Camus should have gone completely in the other direction—there is nothing inherently wrong with capturing the pied-noir experience—but there is very little acknowledgment of Algerian plurality in the works of Camus.44

While Kateb may acknowledge Camus' “anti-colonialist” opinions,” one major (if not the major) difference between the two writers is Kateb's unquestioning commitment to anti-colonialism from an early age and throughout the entirety of his work. In this respect, he shows an incredible consistency. At the age of 18, Kateb gave a lecture in Paris on Abdelkader (famous Algerian emir who fought Turkish and French colonialism in the 1830s and 1840s), which was subsequently published as Abdelkader et l’indépendance Algérienne (1948). Even at this age,
Kateb's book/lecture is not just a biography of Abdelkader, its purpose is to re-write this period of Algerian history that had been tarnished by the Orientalist tradition of European scholars:

L’émir Abdelkader, souverain d’Algérie, pose les fondations d'un État, où ni l'instruction, ni la justice, ni même les élections municipales n’étaient négligées. Et pourtant, que de savants européens de l’époque se le représentent comme un souverain paresseux, entouré de concubines….

[The Algerian sovereign, Emir Abdelkader, lay the foundations for a new State, where neither education, nor justice, nor even municipal elections were overlooked. And yet, so many European scholars from the time picture him as an indolent sovereign, surrounded by concubines….] (25-26)

And Abdelkader

a commencé à défendre indépendance algérienne contre les Turcs avant de la défendre contre les Français. Ceci confond aisément ceux qui veulent voir une guerre sainte dans tous nos combats, ces visionnaires en chemise de soie qu'une mosquée effraie autant qu'une forteresse.

[began defending Algerian independence against the Turks before defending it against the French. This easily confuses those who want to see a holy war in all our battles, these visionaries in silk shirts are as frightened by mosques as they are of fortresses.] (37)

In this way, Kateb’s work has always focused on a historical and cultural recovery that combats Orientalism by re-appropriating and re-defining Algerian identity: “On croît encore hélas au vingtième siècle, qu'il y a des races incapables d'amour. Heureusement vingt siècles d'une délicieuse poésie placent les Arabes à la tête des peuples amoureux… [Sadly, in the twentieth century we still believe that there are races incapable of love. Fortunately, twenty centuries of exquisite poetry place Arabs at the head of all romantic peoples…” (Abdelkader 10). Love and poetry are instrumental to the Katebian project of recovery (as is Abdelkader himself, who makes various appearances throughout his work).
In a postcolonial world after Algerian independence, his work shifts to an even broader scope: that of the liberation of all subjugated peoples. However, this does not mean that he abandons the subject of a post-independence Algeria; he makes it very clear that the state-sponsored “Arabization” repeats many of the crimes of its colonial predecessor. Kateb's literature—one that through love and poetry attempts to articulate the origins and existence of a pluralist Algerian nation—clearly constructs a minor literature (as indicate above, Camus' literature is not minor) according to its three characteristics outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975): “the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (18).

Due to Kateb's work obviously fulfilling the requirements for minor literature, I am not the first one to make this connection. In a footnote to his *Counterhegemonic Discourses from the Maghreb: The Poetics of Kateb's Fiction* (1993), Bernard Aresu writes, “the concept of 'littérature mineure' [...] aptly describes Kateb's creative project” (76). A lengthier analysis of Kateb's minor literature can be found in Réda Bensmaïa’s essay, “On the Concept of Minor Literature from Kafka to Kateb Yacine” (1994). After explaining the concept of minor literature, Bensmaïa states that there “are minor literatures because peoples, races, and entire cultures were in the past reduced to silence” (220). In such a context, any decision made by writers like Kateb “becomes an urgent question because, as we understand very well by now, every one of the choices they make is a *founding* choice; each one of their words carves out the very flesh of the nation to come” (221). Speaking of *Nedjma* in a 1985 interview, Kateb proclaims: “Je voulais en effet atteindre une sorte d'accouchement de l’Algérie par un livre [Through a book I was indeed hoping to achieve a kind of birth of Algeria]” (*Le Poète comme un boxeur* 27). Perhaps the most important evidence of Kateb's status as minor literature is the general consensus amongst
scholars that he is one of the great founders of postcolonial Maghrebian literature. For example, Aresu writes, “Kateb's fiction can be credited with the foundation of a post-colonial tradition that rewrote, through the incorporation of Arabo-Islamic esthetics, the formal constructs of a foreign genre” (*Counterhegemonic* 11). And Marc Gontard's article, “Francophone North African Literature and Critical Theory” (1992), states unequivocally: “Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma* is a foundational text of our modernity” (37).^{46}

Bensmaïa ends his article: “for Yacine, defending the people no longer means hunkering down and retreating into oneself, but, on the contrary, showing that the people are never one but always plural: a multiplicity of peoples with intersecting destinies” (225). The following analysis reads *Nedjma* and *Le Polygone étoilé* (1966) as postmodern texts, wherein Kateb both delineates and defines a postmodern Algerian identity. Perhaps the most important point to be made here is that Kateb's argument is not meant to be prescriptive; it is not what he thinks Algeria *should be*, since such prescription seems to inevitably lead to oppression (see both “colonialism” and “Arabization”). On the subject of the Arabization of Algeria, Kateb has been very clear and consistent: “L'arabisation ne peut jamais être autre chose que l’écrasement du tamazight [Arabization can never be anything but the erasure of the Berber language]” (*Le Poète comme un boxeur* 107). He even rejects the French and Arabic names of Algeria—*L'Algérie* and *Ldjazaïr*—both of which he considers “touristique,” preferring instead the Berber name of *Tamazight* (*Le Poète* 101-102). The history of Algeria post-1962 is filled with examples of the oppression of the Berber people, language and culture. Kateb was well-known by Algerian authorities for his Berber support, and his opposition to state-sponsored Arabization. And, I should note, I use the appellative, *Berber*, for purposes of clarity—Kateb reminds us about the problem with this term:

Et pourquoi les appelle-t-on ainsi ? Parce que les Romains les ont appelés Barbares : les habitants du pays qu'ils venaient de coloniser, de prétendument civiliser, étaient pour eux
des barbares. Les Romains nous ont nommés autrefois ainsi et nous nous nommons encore ainsi. Par ce nom de Berbères, nous nous insultons nous-mêmes.

[And why do we use this name? Because the Romans had called them Barbarians: the people of the country that they came to colonize, to supposedly civilize, were for them barbarians. In this way we were named long ago, and we still use this name. With this name of Berber, we are insulting ourselves.] (Parce que c'est une femme 44)

Rather than offering simply a prescriptive alternative to Arabization, Kateb's argument about Algeria includes first and foremost an accurate depiction of history and his contemporary world. While his work is an attempt to recover Algerian history, culture, and mythology, this is not a romantic aspiration for an idealized past, but it is meant to form the basis from which one can move towards an accurate and pluralistic notion of the Algerian people to define a new nation. However, this plurality is not just a source of pride, resistance, and strength, but it is also intimately tied with the problem of forming a new postmodern nation—not a problem to be overcome (because it cannot simply be overcome, as Arabization would have us believe), but certainly one that needs to be identified and dealt with in such a way as to limit its potential for further exploitation, oppression, and control, and to encourage its potential for pride and liberation. **Nedjma** and **Le Polgone étoilé** are colonial and postcolonial texts (respectively) that are attempts think through a postmodern/rhizomatic genealogy (or perhaps, anti-genealogy) as an alternative history of Algeria that embraces the plurality of its people. This plurality, including its benefits and its drawbacks, is reflected in and communicated by the incredible complexity of the narrative structures of these two novels.

**Nedjma: Understanding a People via Rhizomatic Alliance (and Rivalry)**

After reviewing the considerable amount of criticism on Kateb's work, it becomes obvious that there is a certain critical refrain composed of points and facts consistently reiterated throughout.
At this advanced point in Katebian scholarship, these points have now become the basis for all further scholarship, and will be treated here largely as “givens.” As I hope to quickly summarize them and move on, they are listed here: the central thematic of geometries, polygons, and numbers (particularly, the number 4); the character of Nedjma symbolizes the Algerian nation; Nedjma's name “means 'star' in Arabic” (Aresu, “Introduction” xxxv); Kateb as nomad; Kateb as iconoclast; Kateb as revolutionary (both in terms of art and politics); Nedjma and Polygone were initially one novel, broken into two according to the publisher's requirement; both novels are fragmentary, repetitive, and genre-defying; Kateb performs “creative violence” on the French language (Aresu, “Introduction,” xlvi); all of Kateb's work is one vast text or project;47 Nedjma is a text composed of “cultural multiplicity” (Aresu, “Introduction” xlvii); Kateb's work creates its own mythology or saga out of important historical figures and out of the contemporary cast of characters who make repeated appearances throughout the entirety of his work; Kateb makes use of circular narratives; Kateb had no compunctions about using the French language as he considered it to be “the spoils of war” that was Algeria's to keep; and, Kateb was one of “[les] pères fondateurs de la littérature algérienne moderne [the founding fathers of modern Algerian literature]” (Djaout, “Une Parole en Liberté” 5), and “Nedjma est [...] le texte fondateur de la littérature algérienne de langue française [Nedjma is the founding text of Francophone Algerian literature]” (Djaout 6). For the most part, I will take these points as givens, so as to not spend too much time proving what has already been proven. However, there is a certain amount of retreading that has to be done on this ground as the elucidation on a couple of these points has been somewhat unsatisfactory. It will become immediately obvious why choosing to retread similar ground is especially appropriate in any discussion of Kateb's work.
*Nedjma* is composed of 108 chapters in a “duodecimal” numbering system (*Nedjma* ix), wherein Parts I, II, and V have only one duodecimal circuit, and Parts III, IV, and VI have two circuits; the novel continuously shifts between characters, points of view, time periods, styles, and genres. Due to the complexity of the novel's structure, a favorite pastime of Kateb scholarship is to reorganize the novel's events into a proper chronological order, and to come to terms with the novel's extremely fragmentary structure. Exactly how accurately scholars have performed the former is not too important, but how they do the latter has important repercussions for understanding Kateb's work and his conception of Algerian identity. What we find is that scholars have come up with some ingenious representations of *Nedjma*’s structure, which at the same time, fall slightly short of their mark in their attempt to conceive of this structure as “circular.” Of these scholars, Charles Bonn's *Kateb Yacine: Nedjma* (1990) contains the most innovative and insightful attempts to contend with the novel's structure (see fig. 1). Bonn makes the following diagram from Marc Gontard's *Nedjma de Kateb Yacine, Essai sur la structure formelle du roman* (1975) and from Jacqueline Arnaud’s voluminous study, *Recherches sur la littérature maghrébine de langue française, tome II : Le cas de Kateb Yacine* (1982):
Fig. 1. *Nedjma*'s Narrative Trajectory, diagram from Charles Bonn, *Kateb Yacine: Nedjma* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990) 34.

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**Diagramme du Récit selon Marc Gontard**

**Et corrections de Jacqueline Arnaud**

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*Fig. 1. Nedjma's Narrative Trajectory, diagram from Charles Bonn, Kateb Yacine: Nedjma (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990) 34.*
Such a diagram is the most effective way to summarize *Nedjma*'s plot. The y-axis lists the nine circuits of the novel's duodecimal system, and the x-axis is the chronological order of events. These events begin in approximately 1140 C.E. with Keblout who is the ancestor from which all of the novel's characters descend; they continue in 1924/1925 which deals with the childhood of the four main characters—Mourad, Rachid, Lakhdar, and Mustapha—, with the relationships between their four fathers, and with *Nedjma*'s mysterious conception; 1943/1944 is when *Nedjma* and Sidi Ahmed (from their father's generation) meet the rest of the four of the main characters, and Sidi Ahmed takes Rachid on a pilgrimage to Mecca; the events of 1945 circulate around the massacre at Sétif; 1946/1947 includes the various difficulties the four main characters have as day-laborers, and their dispersal; sometime between 1947 and 1949, Sidi Ahmed and Rachid try to bring *Nedjma* to their ancient ancestral home of Nadhor, but the residents of Nadhor kidnap *Nedjma*, kill Sidi Ahmed, and banish Rachid; in 1949/1950, Rachid, who is in prison for stabbing someone, stabs Mourad, who is in prison for killing his boss; 1952 or 1956 is when Rachid reflects on the events in his life. The major flaw in the above diagram—which is also reflected in the summary just provided—is that it is not nearly detailed enough and is therefore an oversimplification of *Nedjma*'s narrative complexity; the results of a more detailed diagram would resemble a seismograph rather than a zig-zag. However, this diagram is useful for its ability to give us an idea of this complexity: the diagonal line represents the progress made by a typically chronological narrative; the vertical line through the middle marks the two points that repeat each other at the beginning and the end of the novel; and the zig-zag represents *Nedjma*'s narrative progression. This zig-zag should be kept in mind in the following discussion of *Nedjma*'s narrative “circularity.”
In “The Absence of Itinerary in Kateb Yacine's *Nedjma,*” Louis Tremaine summarizes the literary scholarship on this circularity:

The temporal structure of *Nedjma,* therefore, would result naturally from the fact that Kateb, as an Arab, is a 'circular thinker'—an assertion that is both arbitrary and unverifiable and whose philosophical and historical validity has been discounted by such respected scholars as Mohamed Aziz Lahbibi and Abdallah Laroui” (23).

Tremaine argues that the best way to understand narrative time in the novel is that “time is meaningless for the three [main characters] because they have no itinerary, no goal toward which to move or by which to measure progress [...], moving away from something, but toward nothing” (28). This is a valid point, but it still does not get at the heart of the issue. Another summary of the scholarship on Kateb's circularity can be found in Kamal Salhi’s *The Politics and Aesthetics of Kateb Yacine: From Francophone Literature to Popular Theater in Algeria and Outside* (1999). Strangely, Salhi acknowledges the same scholars and the same problem that Tremaine identified, “exploring the past does not imply a circular notion of time” (24), but ultimately concludes that the “narrative, which so far has progressed in a linear fashion, begins to close up as if completing the circle” (33). In other words, for Salhi, the fact that the novel ends with the repetition of pages from the (near) beginning means that the novel has come full circle. It seems that every path leads to gaol, exile, or psychological collapse. Love is unattainable and rebellion is hopeless, returning to one's point of origins is bound to fail, the uprising was premature, the circle is a trap. Nevertheless, Mustapha's prediction that the motherland will be reborn holds out some hope for the future. (34)

Like Tremaine, Salhi makes some excellent points here, but he too misses the mark with his assertion of the novel's circularity, which seems easily refuted by Bonn's diagram cited above.

The problem with circularity is that as a concept, it does not accommodate whatsoever for fragmentation, or for the plurality of Algerian identity; rather, it does the opposite as it very
strongly suggests unity in the way that imposes closure (Salhi's closing of the circle). This is not to say that the novel or that all of Kateb's works do not contain a unity, but that the closure suggested by circularity is misleading, and as a concept, it should at the very least be modified, if not done away with altogether. As Bonn clearly shows us, this text is not actually circular; the structure of the novel is not strict enough to conform to the circle or spiral analogies. The repetition found in *Nedjma* and throughout Kateb's work is not due to a circular Arabic thinking, but is in fact based upon the repetitive nature of thinking itself. Such repetition is also due to the fact that all of Kateb's work is a minorizing of Francophone literature, in such a way that it collectively communicates an Algerian identity/experience. Repetition is due to the fact that this collective experience includes different people living through similar events (can collectivity be discovered otherwise?).

Kateb is attempting to think through this difficult question of Algerian identity—which is a question that has not been properly posed before—, and the better way to discuss the repetition inherent to the *Nedjma*'s structure would be describe it not as circular, but as circling. This circling is not a constant and perfect repetition like that of a recording; rather, it is a circling that is a constant investigation, bringing new considerations, new contexts, and new details to light. This type of circling is very much the process and form of thinking as both described and displayed in Martin Heidegger's, *What Is Called Thinking?* (1954). The chapters of his book are a series of lectures Heidegger gave in 1951/1952. Each lecture is a return to the same eponymous question. This book is highly repetitive, repeating the same sentences (even within a single lecture), sometimes with only slight variations and additions. The definition of thinking that he provides here is also its display: each lecture is a circling, a process always underway, never stationary, that dwells in uncertainty, and never reaches a definitive, unambiguous statement, but
one version of his definition is the following: “When we think what is most thought-provoking we think *properly*” (145). The process of thinking is one of returning and circling, but always with new discoveries, with new considerations; and in order to reach a new thought, one has to make a leap, and start circling anew. It is a question of constant re-treading of old ground for new discoveries—repetition with variations and alterations. And in between repetitions, we have leaps into a new set of thoughts, into a new subject for reiterations.

Kateb’s attempt to “think what is most thought-provoking”—that is, Algerian identity—is essential to understanding the role of repetition, particularly in the novel’s ending. When the ending reprints pages from the beginning, it is not an attempt to close the circle. It is meant to highlight this poignant moment of diaspora and dispersion and what *Polygone* would call “brutal errance [brutal wandering]” (see below) as inherent to Algerian experience. The beginning and the ending highlight the cycle of meetings and dispersals that the four characters experience as they variously wander the nation throughout *Nedjma*. However, the novel’s ending—though it reprints the same text from the beginning—is not a return to the beginning; it is a non-ending in that it suggests further thinking on this question has now begun (which will ultimately be taken up by *Polygone*). So when Kateb says in 1967 (after Algerian independence), “chez nous le problème de l’existence nationale commence à peine à se poser [for us, the question of national existence is just starting to be asked]” (*Minuit passé de douze heures* 295), which echoes what he writes in *Nedjma*, “this country has not yet come into the world” (245), we understand that Kateb is beginning to pose the question. The repetitions are a constant posing of the question, and it is a suggestion to others that they too must pose this question. And if we had to state this question explicitly (there are a number of formulations we could make here), it would not be too difficult to replace Heidegger’s *What is called thinking?* with Kateb’s question, *What is called Algeria?*
Repetition in *Nedjma* goes well beyond the beginning and the ending discussed above; the following analysis provides a general typology of repetition in the text so as to quickly characterize repetition's ubiquity throughout the text. *Nedjma* is composed of a series of fragments; each fragment provides a very small glimpse of the novel's overarching plot, but not in chronological order. In such a fragmented, disordered text, repetition takes on a number of forms, but it should be clear that none of these forms include replication without alteration. One type of repetition occurs when a character has the same experience repeatedly—as, for example, when Lakhdar is arrested for hitting his boss: “He lets them put on the handcuffs. ‘It's not the first time,’ Lakhdar thinks, as if he were looking for old scars on his skinny wrists” (67). Another closely related type of repetition occurs when similar events involve different characters—particularly from different generations; for example, what happens to the Frenchwoman (Nedjma's nameless mother) is strikingly similar to what happens to Nedjma (summarized above): the Frenchwoman is involved in a love triangle with Si Mokhtar and Mourad's father, which ultimately results in Mourad's father's dead body being discovered in a cave, “cold and stiff near his own hunting rifle, which had betrayed him as the Frenchwoman was to do, fleeing with Si Mokhtar” (136). Such repetitions is why Rachid warns Mourad about the constant threat to their independence that their fathers pose:

Men like your father and mine… Men whose blood overflows and threatens to wash us back into their old lives like disabled boats floating over the place where they capsized, unable to sink with their occupants: we have ancestors' spirits in us, they substitute their eternal dramas for our childish expectations, our orphan patience bound to their paling shadow, that shadow impossible to dissolve or uproot—the shadow of the fathers, the judges, the guides whose tracks we follow, forgetting our own way, never knowing where they are, whether they're suddenly going to shift the light, ambush us, resuscitate without even coming out of the ground or assuming their forgotten outlines, resuscitate just by glowing on the warm ashes, the desert winds that impose the journey and the thirst upon us, until the hecatomb where their old, glory-laden failure lies, the one we'll
have to bear after them, even though we were made for unconsciousness, for frivolity—in other words, for life…. (127)

Another variant of repetition occurs when different versions of the same event are recounted from viewpoints that corroborate each other's versions. There are innumerable instances of this type in the text, but the similarity of the two versions of Rachid's first meeting with Nedjma is perhaps the most striking example. The narrator's version is supplied first:

She came to Constantine without Rachid's knowing how. He was never to know, neither from her nor from Si Mokhtar.

The meeting between Rachid and the unknown woman had taken place in a clinic where Si Mokhtar had entrée... (138)

Rachid's version follows: “She came to Constantine without my knowing how, I was never to know. She was standing there, blank and somber, in the examination room of a clinic where Si Mokhtar had entrée” (139). Repetition also takes on the form of different versions of the same event recounted from viewpoints that contradict each other. Again, examples of this type are innumerable, partly because they really are at the heart of this text (see discussion below). Such repetitions with distortion/disagreement are central to the writing of history and of the formation of identity. *Nedjma* as a whole functions in this way as it presents a very different account of the Sétif massacre than the official version. For example, the official version used words like “suppression” rather than “massacre” and it did not report the subsequent tortures of arrested Algerians which two of the novel's characters are subjected to. In fact, the official version of the Sétif massacre relied upon the understanding that such torture was not discussed or acknowledged: when Lakhdar runs into “one of the non-commissioned officers who had been his guard in La Sûreté” (81) and offers to buy him a drink, explaining, “You acted decent” and “You never hit a prisoner,” the officer provides the typical response: “Don't talk about that!...” (81). Such examples illustrate how the very foundation of colonialism's power depends upon its
official narratives; therefore, counter-narratives recounting such events become essential to anti-colonialism (see my previous chapter on Burroughs for a more thorough investigation of power's reliance on narrative) and are therefore essential to Kateb's attempt to found a nation through literature. While Nedjma's accounts of Sétif functions as one of the larger examples of repetition that contradicts, there are also numerous minor ones strewn throughout the text—such as when a character's paternity is in question, or when two characters are in direct conflict: discussing Rachid's stabbing of Mourad, one prison guard says to another, “That just it. So they showed Mourad the knife, and he said it was his. That's not all. The other one too—they questioned him. He said it was his knife. That's the story” (55).

Some repetitions take on the form of reflection as characters try to piece together events while figuring out everyone's motivations; for example, after the stabbing, Mourad reflects on his entire relationship with Rachid: “I know who Rachid is now. The friend who comes back to me in prison, to wound me with my own knife, Rachid who was my friend, the friend of my brother, who then became our enemy though he was still living in my room, he who followed us, Lakhdar and me, to the yards…” (56). Closely related to this type of repetition is the addition of new details as the same story is retold. This happens a number of times, such as when Rachid has malaria, Mourad keeps getting Rachid to return to certain stories:

In a few days, I more or less reconstituted the story Rachid never told me to the end; he referred only vaguely to the thing, but more and more, frequently, shutting up or starting in again when he felt I was particularly attentive, as if he wished both to confide in me and to make sure I would never take his outpourings to heart. (125)

Such storytelling in fits and starts is reflected in the very structure of the novel itself, which is why, for example, Rachid also has to deal with it when he listens to Si Mokhtar: “the old pirate told me a little more every day” (129).
All these repetitions with variations, these continuously variegated reiterations are Kateb's verbal form of the arabesques or the “polygone étoilés” that Katebian scholars are so fond of noticing.\textsuperscript{49} It also helps us understand Kateb's focus on ancestors and metempsychosis, as the cycles of generations is obviously not circular, but repetitive like ornate arabesques. At first glance, \textit{Nedjma} appears to be the most fragmentary of all his texts—but this is only true if we look at each text decontextualized. That is, if we look at the entirety of Kateb's oeuvre, we see an ever-increasing scope where the repetitious fragments simply become larger as the mythology that Kateb creates takes on ever-greater immensity. We can follow this line of progression from his early poem, “Nedjma or the Knife or the Poem” (1948),\textsuperscript{50} through \textit{Nedjma} and \textit{Polygone}, through to his posthumously published plays (\textit{Boucherie de l’espérance : œuvres théâtrales} (1999)). As the scope increases, the mythology gets larger: we have the speaker of the poem (which is composed in surreal fragments), being multiplied into an array of Algerian characters in the novels, which then are replaced by allegorical, properly mythological characters who take on a truly global relevance: Maghrebian history and tradition (\textit{Saout Ennisa} (1972) and \textit{La Guerre de 2000 ans} (1974)), Palestine (\textit{Boucherie de l’espérance ou Palestine trahie} (1972-1982)), Vietnam (\textit{L’Homme aux sandales de caoutchouc} (1970)), Nelson Mandela (“One Step Forward, Three Steps Back” (1986)), the French Revolution (\textit{Le Bourgeois sans-culotte} (1984)), etc. As the fragments get larger, perhaps even to the point of encompassing entire works, they can never be considered whole because, as Kateb himself has said, all these works are a part of one large project. The point is that Kateb is quite consistent in his vision and his message. The unpublished plays are not a departure from his early poem. They are its logical conclusion. At the core of all of his work is the people's liberation—not just an Algerian people, but all oppressed peoples. His cosmopolitan nature fits into this concern for all peoples, but it is also a
political reality. The struggle for liberation can only be more difficult when others are subjugated as well.

This point about oppression is where content meets form, where anti-colonialism meets postmodernism. Fragments and repetitions in the form of the arabesque allow for a different view of literature—one that is quite common to postmodernism. That is, Kateb freely re-uses pages, characters, events, and ideas in different formulations. These arabesques are formed of thoughts regarding Kateb's question, What is called Algeria? They are the ultimate realization of a Katebian universe created by the circling of various orbits, ultimately forming solar systems and galaxies; they are a proliferation of rotations of various sizes, in various places, with various centers—the orbits get larger and larger (like Yeats' “widening gyre”) as Kateb's body of work grows. The arabesque has a different conception of originality and art, and in this conception, we see Kateb radically departing from conventional Western views about “originality.” For example, there are multiple versions of his unpublished plays, and none of them are definitive; Moreover, Kateb never considered his novels ever to be finished—“toute œuvre reste inachevée [every work remains unfinished]” (Kateb, Le Poète comme un boxeur 184)—, and their final form was partly due to the demands of the French publishing industry. And this connection between Kateb's writing and the arabesque as its organizing principle is not simply a metaphor, but could have its foundation in Islamic calligraphy. That is, in The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy (1994), Abdelkebir Khatibi and Mohammed Sijelmassi argue that “the letter recreated as image has become an essential paradigm of the arabesque” (7). The best way to understand how Kateb's French is—to use Deleuze and Guattari's language—“a deterritorialized language, appropriate for strange and minor uses” (17) means seeing Kateb's poetics as an attempt to re-create calligraphic arabesques in the French language.
Orbits, rotations, and arabesques figure prominently in *Nedjma*’s conception of the Algerian people themselves. Returning to Bonn, we find another diagram (see fig. 2) that is immensely useful in its summary of the two generations of romantic rivalries (Bonn gets this diagram from a dissertation on Kateb by Mireille Djaïder), presenting them in the form of a “polygone étoilé”:

![Diagram of Nedjma's Starry Polygon of Romantic Rivalries](image_url)


The inner circle is Nedjma’s mother (La Française), and the outer circle is Nedjma. Each circle is connected to a square composed of each woman's four suitors. Nedjma's circle include the novel's four protagonists, “dont chacun est supplanté par un rival que le schéma mentionne entre parenthèses [each of which is supplanted by a rival that the diagram includes in parentheses]” (80). This diagram relates circling to the gravity and attraction of celestial bodies. Circling—the
orbital—is around a source of attraction, whether it is a thought under consideration, or a love, like a star, like Nedjma. Notice that this diagram is both ambitious and conservative at the same time. It quite successfully encapsulates one aspect of the novel, but makes absolutely no effort to map out the novel's entirety—and if one were to attempt to map the entirety of Kateb's work, it would not resemble a star so much as a galaxy or a universe, resembling a complex combination of the two diagrams provided above. And, what is striking about both of these diagrams provided by Bonn is how they announce the convoluted plot structures that would become the hallmark of postmodern literature.

The most important feature of this polygonal diagram is the way in which it highlights an alternative, arabesque form of genealogy, or perhaps we should call it the rhizomatic alliance of a non-genealogy. The ambiguity of Nedjma's paternity is the central detail of the novel. This uncertainty, combined with her mixed lineage (her mother is a French Jew), and the fact that she is supposed to represent Algeria tout court, speaks volumes about how Kateb sees Algerian postcolonial identity; moreover, his subsequent writings and interviews corroborate this point. That is, for the formation of an independent Algerian nation, there is no going back in time: Nedjma's mixed and uncertain lineage shows that there is no ideal (i.e.: fictional) past purity to which one can return—Algeria cannot return to the days before the French invasion. At the same time, Algeria's history—French, and otherwise—is essential to its future identity. Algeria is irrevocably hybrid, and all of Nedjma's potential fathers have equal presence in her formation. The addition of uncertainty into the mixture avoids any sort of easy binary, because of course it would be quite false to argue that Algerian hybridity is based on French and Arabic cultures only. There is the doubly-colonized people/culture/language of the Berbers to be considered here (first colonized by the Arabs who were then colonized by the French—we could go further by
mentioning also the Roman and Turkish invasions as well...). This mixture gets complicated further by globalism, Deleuzian schizophrenia, and by a deconstruction of identity—which is all encompassed by an uncertain filiation. Because Kateb had personally witnessed the horrors of an overly-simplified approach to national identity, Nedjma's French/Jewish maternity and her ambiguous paternity are the most important details in a novel that is supposed to capture Algerian culture, identity, and experience. He was a witness to such horrors at the Sétif massacre of 1945, and he would see them again in a post-independence Algeria, and again in Vietnam.... Not only is an uncertain history and identity “correct” to a poststructuralist viewpoint, but it is also the basis for a proper ethics; it is a step towards an ethical treatment of others who do not live elsewhere, but in the same space as you—where the other is genuinely a part of you.

So we see why genealogy and filiation has to be undermined by polyandry. Kateb links polyandry and repetition (as indicated in fig. 2) in one of the most important chapters in the book, where a feverish Rachid starts confessing to Mourad. Not only does it display the repetition of generations (subsequent generations are doomed to repeat past conflicts in an endless proliferation and repetition, as the title of Kateb's first collection of plays so succinctly announces: Le cercle des représailles [The Circle of Reprisals] (1959)), but also the repetition of storytelling and the construction of history—the story has to be told many times, in many ways, from different perspectives, in order for the events to be understood. Rachid, who repetitively tells Si Mokhtar's story, recounts the repetitiveness of Si Mokhtar's life:

[... ] haven't we all seen our origins blurred like a stream in the sand [ ....] That old pirate Si Mokhtar, the fake father who brought me to this city, lost and abandoned...Do you know how many sons, how many widows he's left behind, without even forsaking himself?...He was my father's rival. Who knows which of them is Nedjma's father... (128)

'What escapes me,' he [Si Mokhtar] said, 'is the spawn, the vengeful spawn of all the mistresses seduced, the married women whose second husband I became just long
enough to confuse the chronology of blood, to abandon one more piece of property to the suspect rivalry of two progenitures—one, tradition, honor, certainty, and the other, the offspring of a dry root that may never sprout, yet everywhere green and growing despite its obscure origin...' And the bandit, the second husband, neither polygamist nor Don Juan, but only the victim of his monumental polyandry [...] (129)

Polyandry resists what Deleuze and Guattari called the “Oedipalization of the universe,” where “The Name of the Father encodes the names of history” (Kafka 10). To the genealogical arboresque, Kateb offers the alternative of the polyandrous arabesque. The arabesque is a figure of confusion and rhizomatic proliferation. It is the figure of an infinite variety of polygons, linked together in endless matrices.

However, it would be an oversimplification of Kateb's work to simply see the arabesque as a positive resistance to older, arborescent forms of modern power. If the arabesque is necessarily positive, it is only in the fact that it is a more accurate understanding of the world, but it is also a highly ambiguous figure: it is the figure of alliance and of rivalry at the same time. In other words, if this figure were exclusively devoted to alliance, then Kateb would have presented us with a fantasy world of cooperation. Rivalry is a vital component to identity and community; thus Kateb provides us with friends, relatives, and fellow tribesmen who are simultaneously also rivals. Deleuze and Guattari state that the “tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb “to be,” but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, “and...and...and...” (A Thousand Plateaus 25). What Kateb adds to this equation is that the “intermezzo,” the conjunction, is the realm of the rival as much as the ally—the rival who is also the friend, at the same time. Nowhere does Kateb so succinctly communicate this than in Polygone: “Une seule femme nous occupe / Et son absence nous réunit / Et sa présence nous divise [Only one woman captivates us / And while her absence reunites us / Her presence divides us]” (147). It is this statement that so fully encompasses Algeria's past, its struggle with
colonialism, while also anticipating its post-independence struggles. The arabesques formed by such rivalries are clearly a part of the Algerian experience as Kateb's work understands them, while at the same time, highlighting how its proliferation is also responsible for their subjugation. The matrices of infinitely variegated polygons are formed by both rivalries and alliances, and it is their double composition that Kateb identifies as central to Algerian identity.

**Le Polygone étoilé, “Brutal Errance,” and Exile: The Introduction of Control into Nomadism and Cosmopolitanism**

The transition between *Nedjma* and *Polygone* occurred simultaneously as the one between structuralism and poststructuralism; this simultaneity can be a useful heuristic for discovering the development in Kateb's writing over this ten year period. 1966, the year *Polygone* was published, is also largely understood as the beginning of poststructuralism because that was the year Derrida presented his paper, “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences” at a structuralist conference (entitled “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man”) at Johns Hopkins; it was in this paper that Derrida announced the end of structuralism: “The concept of structure itself—I say in passing—is no longer satisfactory [....] What I have said can be understood as a criticism of structuralism, certainly” (268). Perhaps the best example of this transition to poststructuralism in a theorist's body of work is Barthes, whose *Elements of Semiology* (1964) and *The Fashion System* (1967; but written 1957-1963) are absolute masterpieces of structuralist thinking and writing, but whose *S/Z* (1970) begins to embrace a poststructuralism that will be fully realized in such works as the chaotic and fragmented *A Lover's Discourse* (1977). As was indicated in the section above, the complex structure of *Nedjma* is also a true wonder to behold, but, like Barthes, Kateb would abandon such marvels of structure in *Polygone*. *Polygone* is a more poststructuralist text in that it does away with the
duodecimal structure (in fact, it has no system of parts and chapters at all), it forsakes a Byzantine, overarching plotline, and it more readily incorporates other genres such as poetry and drama, effectively deconstructing the novel as a literary genre. In terms of the synchronicity of these transitions, it is also important to note that these shifts—by both Kateb and French Theory—also matches quite nicely with the shift from colonialism to postcolonialism as this is the time span where a number of colonized countries achieve independence. The shift between *Nedjma* and *Polygone* is also a shift from colonialism to postcolonialism.

The difference between Kateb's two novels is also that between disciplinary power, and control. In *Nedjma* we see discipline's “major sites of confinement” (Deleuze, *Negotiations* 177)—that is, schools, factories, hospitals, barracks, prisons, and torture. However, even in this novel, we also see the breakdown of disciplinary power as these sites seem to be breaking up as colonialism ends: with Ricard's murder, the Sétil massacre, prison, torture, threats of execution, and dropping out of school, we see resistance to all these disciplines, anticipating their ultimate breakdown as they become too unwieldy, too burdensome and clunky. And, quite correctly, it foresees their collapse in the fall of French colonialism during the Algerian War. In perhaps their most striking difference, *Polygone* contains almost none of these disciplinary sites, shifting its setting from Algeria to France (for the most part). However, things seem perhaps more hopeless than before. Movement becomes broader, much less confined to movement between disciplinary sites as it was in *Nedjma*. These sites still exist, of course, but they become much more secondary. So, this freer flow of movement seems to be even bleaker—it suggests even fewer options for the oppressed.

This is partly due to the repetitive, mutable, and proliferating polygon, the symbol of both a self-proliferating control and its resistance which are central to the Algerian experience Kateb
captures. Algerian subjugation as it relates to the polygon is clearly portrayed in his play, *Les ancêtres redoublent de férocité*” (1959):

Corypheus: More prisoners / Chorus: More soldiers / Co: They are going straight to the *polygone*. Ch: the *polygone*? C: Yes, where people are shot... / Ch: polygon, polygon, polygon... / C: They have regulated everything, they spend their time making regulations against us. Polygon, in geometry, says it all... / Ch: Near the same spot where people are shot, there is a concentration camp... / Mustapha (*masked, leaving the chorus*): That's true, I was there, ten years ago; / C: Our land abound in *polygones* / Ch: Not to mention cemeteries. / C: How about empty lots. Jail is just a luxury, in anticipation of peace. / Ch: Polygon, polygon, polygon... / C. (*doctoral*): Every territory is a polygon. Every country is a polygon inscribed in the sphere of the earth. There are regular polygons, hexagons, like France... And there are irregular ones... (ARF, 126-127). (qtd. in Aresu, *Counterhegemonic* 121)

After providing this translation, Aresu concludes that there is “the potential mutation from penal confinement into liberated space” (121) and that “the polygon as territory comes to incarnate a principle of resistance and irreducibility, of foundation and rebirth” (122). Now, while all of this may be Kateb's ultimate goal, it seems to gloss over the difficulty that Kateb is trying to highlight here; Aresu's interpretation seems prematurely positive. There are a number of important statements here, but the most important is the one that every territory is a polygon; the proliferating arabesques of polygons cover the Earth, from its largest segments—countries—through to its smallest: prisons, cells, cemeteries, graves, concentration camps, and firing squads. The juxtaposition between the large and the small polygons here is quite striking, and it offers a sense of hopelessness as the polygons appear inescapable, taking up all levels of space.

However, we must mention that these polygons can be “étoilé”—that is, they can be transformed into something beautiful. Aresu translates “étoilé”: “stellate or star-shaped, also means starlit and connotes ill-fatedness (star-crossed)” (*Counterhegemonic* 30). This becomes an important alteration of the polygon (and perhaps this is what Aresu was getting at). Kateb's entire
work transforms these polygons into stars, but as Aresu's translation points out, they still are not unambiguously positive. The starred polygon is Kateb's transformation of what was once subjugation into art, into identity, into pride, into a beautiful, abstract ideal; but at the same time, Kateb must keep their “ill-fatedness” as this people continually struggles against incredible adversity. In a similar fashion, Nedjma was not unambiguously positive: “Nedjma is a principle of divisiveness. Symbolically, however—her name means 'star' in Arabic—she is also a unitive principle that stands for the Algerian nation” (Aresu, “Introduction” xxxv). Considering that star, étoile, and nedjma are all translations of each other, we could also translate Polygone's title as Nedjma'ed Polygone. All of this is to say that the continuity between the two texts is the mutable and repetitive polygons are always simultaneously liberatory and oppressive, and that this continuity is also expressed via Polygone making use of many of the repetitions and characters that appeared in Nedjma. In other words, working within a European art form, Kateb draws on the arabesque of polygons and on traditional Algerian culture—without suggesting a slavish responsibility to tradition—to create a minor Francophone literature; however, the polygon is also an infinite number of shapes whose ability to control is exercised through its mutability. The étoilé or the starry/starred is about taking back control of that mutability into something that is able to communicate the will of the people while being flexible enough to accommodate that will, without enforcing a will upon that people (in the form of neocolonialism or Arabization, for example), and without viewing the world in a falsely optimistic light or in ways that would be historically inaccurate.

While Kateb's work may be formed of stellate polygons, they are also the attempt to deal with the absolute proliferation of polygons throughout all territories, which greatly diminishes the power of movement as resistance. To a certain degree, movement's failure was dealt with in
*Nedjma,* which was succinctly summarized in the following: “years of perpetual exile, of separation, of hard labor, or of idleness and debauchery” (178). This statement offers no valorization of movement between/amongst such negative spaces. And while Deleuze had argued that “people can travel infinitely and ‘freely’ without being confined while being perfectly controlled” (*Two Regimes of Madness* 322), this is not to say that movement does not necessarily exclude resistance—Hardt and Negri make it very clear that nomadism and miscegenation (two vital parts of Kateb's work) are “figures of virtue” (*Empire* 362), and that “circulating is the first ethical act of a counterimperial ontology” (363). What we need to take away here is that movement is not necessarily successful, and that it can be co-opted. Thus, *Polygone* provides us with a wider range of movement—that now includes France itself—where many of the places of confinement are gone, but control remains.

In *Polygone,* we see movement of a particular kind that is typical of postcolonial globalization: exile as the involuntary nomadism of cheap, foreign labor. That is, as the question of national independence is over, the interrelated problems of poverty, exploitation, and oppression remain, and such exile is solely motivated by the attempt to escape poverty. The sections of *Polygone* dedicated to Lakhdar's travels in France are quite illuminating in this respect. They begin by describing his travels into “la gueule du loup [the lion's den]” (33) as “l'errance brutal [brutal wandering]” (33): “(Their life of crime and failure behind, they would somehow become base, height, or radius to reconstitute the primordial polygon, the country whose dimensions of fundamental inequity kept them in fetters even during their voyage) (PE, 33)” (qtd. in Aresu, *Counterhegemonic* 122-123). This polygonal geometry, in its mathematical repetition of itself, is able to re-create injustice wherever the Algerian goes. Lakhdar's travels (from Algiers to Marseille, Grenoble, Lyon, Villefranche-sur-Saône, and Montparnasse) give the
world a smooth quality—in the Deleuze and Guattari sense—as the change in location changes nothing for the Algerian immigrant; what Lakhdar discovers in France is more Algeria: “Marseille n’était plus que ce corridor de casba [Marseille was only this casbah passageway]” (48). And in no way are Lakhdar's experiences here meant to be unique; they are representative of all Algerians needing to emigrate to France for work (Lakhdar meets many of them), and for the promise of a better life: “En France, les chômeurs ont le baccalauréat. Les ouvriers et les femmes savent lire [In France, the unemployed have a high school diploma. Women and laborers know how to read]” (38).

Lakhdar's travels throughout France are consistent in their display of generalized racism and exploitation: “Ça fait rien / c'est un Algérien / qui travaille beaucoup / et qui mange rien [Don't worry / he's an Algerian / who works a lot / and eats nothing]” (59). He is paid extremely low wages and has to resort to sleeping on pallets in drafty sheds with the rats—that is only when it is possible to find a job in a system that seems to be working against everyone like him, effectively making him more desperate, and keeping his wages low: “Vingt misères ! L’employé. La secrétaire. Et le patron n'est pas là. Toutes conditions réunies pour tenir le chômeur en respect [Damn it! The employee. The secretary. And the boss are not there. All conditions are in place to keep the unemployed at bay]” (54). Such exile and exploitation also has the taint of slavery: Lakhdar works “dans l'argenterie industrielle, comme si on fumait du nitrate d'argent, et même l'eau n'a plus de goût, de même qu'on respire un air artificiel, pas même fétide, un air d'exil et d'esclavage, sans recours [in factory-made silverware, as if we smoked silver nitrate, and even the water has no taste, in the same way we breathe artificial air, not even fetid, an air of exile and slavery, without recourse]” (68). This slavery means living in the “loque d'exil jalonnant les
Paradis des autres [wreck of exile marking out the Paradise of others],” and is filled with “des travaux dégradants” and “humiliants [degrading and humiliating work]” (70).

In this way, where Lakhdar goes and what jobs he finds makes little difference; what was true about Algeria in Kateb’s early works—“Polygone étoilé / Chantier devenu bagne [Starry polygon / Worksite became prison]” (L’œuvre en fragments 105), and “Algérie étant à la fois chantier et prison [Algeria being a worksite and a prison at the same time]” (L’œuvre 139)—becomes true for the France that the Algerian experiences: the proliferating polygons incorporate all territories, ensuring the Algerian’s life of exile and degrading and humiliating work exists in the same space as French paradise. The meaning of the polygon is an unresolvable ambiguity in its dual role of resistance and oppression; Benamar Médiène’s biography, Kateb Yacine: Le cœur entre les dents: Biographie hétérodoxe (2006), reports Kateb saying the following about the polygon:

J’associe toujours le polygone à la Casbah d’Alger, […] Ali la Pointe et tous les condamnés à mort sont des enfants du polygone. Ils habitent une mort violente, comme j’écris dans une impasse. C’est bien la plénitude inextricable du polygone, où le vide intérieur meurt comme un feu de camp et où toutes les formes sont abolies. Mais, on peut habiter l’échafaud, sa tête sous le bras. C’est le sort du poète. Il n’y a plus d’Orient ni d’Occident. Le polygone reprend ses droits. Et, si les rues de Dublin ont des échos à Alger, c’est que l’artiste créateur n’habite pas, il est habité par un certain vertige étoilé, d’autant plus étoilé qu’il est partie du plus obscur de sa ruelle.

[I always associate the polygon with Algiers’ casbah…. Ali la Pointe and all those condemned to death are children of the polygon. They live in a violent death, like I write in a deadlock. That is the inextricable fullness of the polygon, where the inner emptiness dies like a campfire and where all forms are abolished. But, it is possible to live in the gallows, with head under arm. That is the poet's fate. There is no longer an Orient nor an Occident. The polygon reasserts itself. And, if the streets of Dublin have echoes in Algiers, it is that the creator artist does not inhabit, he is inhabited by a certain starry vertigo, all the starrier if he is part of the darkest alleys.] (122)

It is because the polygon exists both in the East and the West—eliminating the Orient and the Occident in a postcolonial/globalized world—that Lakhdar is incapable of leaving the racial
oppression that he experienced in Algeria; it is for this reason that Lakhdar's travels in France provide a reversal of the Orientalist's sense of a vague but constant threat from a foreign environment:

Il monta dans une familiale qui le laissa devant Lyon. Le ciel était sinistre. Il marcha toute la nuit, sentit passer en trombe les lourds routiers, dormit debout, en titubant, dégringola dans un fossé, rencontra deux gendarmes qui le suivirent d'un long regard, tomba en arrêt devant un chat sauvage qui l'observait d'une branche d'arbre, toutes griffes dehors. Puis il entra dans un wagon abandonné en rase campagne, s'écroula, épuisé, sur le plancher humide, et se releva, en pinçant les narines. Aucun doute, le wagon tenait lieu de piscoir.

[He got into a station wagon which dropped him off before Lyon. The sky was ominous. He walked all night, felt the heavy trucks hurtle past, was asleep on his feet, stumbling, tumbled down into a ditch, came across two police officers who followed him with a long look, stopped short in front of a stray cat who observed him from a tree branch, all claws out. Then he got into an abandoned car in the middle of nowhere, collapsed, exhausted, on the wet floor, and got back up, while pinching his nostrils. Without a doubt, the car had served as a urinal.] (65)

If nomads travel in circuits, it is highly appropriate that Lakhdar's story ends abruptly, as a fragment of a trajectory (or perhaps as a tangent), because it is not the travel of a nomad, but rather of an exile—someone who can only move away, and never return. In terms of nomadism, we have two texts' almost perfect reflection of each other: that is, The Sheltering Sky has Americans going on an existential quest through an incomplete nomadic circuit through Algeria, willingly embracing humanity's rhizomatic possibility while unsuspectingly falling victim to both sides of a colonial conflict; in Polygone, we have an Algerian roaming through France, but Lakhdar's travels are motivated by an attempt to escape soul-crushing poverty. Lakhdar's experience is representative of the exile of the formerly-colonized within the former colonizer's nation in what could be called a return of the oppressed. While movement in both these texts may be attempts at liberation, they are also very clearly expressions of subjugation to modes of
globalized control. The exploitation of the day laborer is so much more efficient, effective, and cheaper than older disciplinary forms of labor—the factory—, which is replaced by the work site. The worker does not need to be confined or improved (via constant assessment and surveillance)—only replaced. The day laborer is constantly threatened by unemployment; low wages, a low degree of skill, a high number of workers and their high degree of commutability makes for an efficient system of control. These workers are not forcibly confined at all (like the workers foreseen in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927))—they are more mobile than ever, but poverty and competition more effectively confines them. So what we see with *Polygone* is the dissolution of the cumbersome disciplinary and colonial infrastructure (as we move into postmodern control societies) with no real advancement in the position of the Algerian people. Providing a succinct summary of this situation, Kateb explains in a 1972 interview how French control survives the end of colonialism:

L'histoire de l’émigration, c'est l'histoire de l'Algérie depuis cinquante ans : un phénomène de type colonial qui persiste, une véritable hémorragie humaine fatale au pays. Le problème est de plus en plus aigu. Nous ne perdons pas seulement des jeunes travailleurs, c'est notre jeunesse qui s'expatrie. Ceux qui débraient construire l’Algérie de demain viennent en France balayer les trottoirs.

[The history of immigration is the history of Algeria for the last fifty years: a type of colonial phenomenon persists, a veritable human hemorrhage fatal to the country. The problem is increasingly acute. We are not only losing young workers, it is our youth that is being expatriated. Those who are not employed building the Algeria of tomorrow come to France to sweep its sidewalks.] (*Le Poète comme un boxeur* 70)

Finishing off this question of exile is Kateb's unequivocal assessment of it, the fact that one can experience an interior exile, and the way in which his work has always worked towards eliminating it: “Il y a une chose pire que l'exil, c'est de ne plus y croire, de ne plus croire à sa fin et d'en être indifférent [The only thing worse than exile is to no longer think about it—to no
longer think about its ending, and to be indifferent to it]” (qtd. in Médiène, *Kateb Yacine: Le cœur entre les dents* 179). The body of Kateb's work is dedicated to this thinking about exile, and nowhere is this highlighted more than in *Polygone*'s poignant ending, which draws on Kateb's childhood. His father tells Kateb why he decides to take him out of the madrasa and send him to a French school: “La langue française domine. Il te faudra la dominer, laisser en arrière tout ce que nous t'avons inculqué dans ta plus tendre enfance. Mais une fois passé maître dans la langue française, tu pourras sans danger revenir avec nous à ton point de départ [The French language dominates. You will have to dominate it, to leave behind everything that we have taught you from birth. But once you've mastered the French language, you will safely be able to return with us to your starting point]” (180). However, this puts an end to the rich linguistic and literary tradition his mother had been teaching the young Kateb: she concludes, “Puisque je ne dois plus te distraire de ton autre monde, apprends-moi donc la langue française… [Since I must no longer distract you from your other world, then teach me the French language]” (181). Kateb sees this as the pivotal moment in his life. He continues, “Ainsi se referma la piège des Temps Moderne sur mes frêles racines [Thus the trap of Modern Times closed on my fragile roots]” (181), which introduces him to an “interior exile”: “Jamais je n'ai cessé […] de ressentir au fond de moi cette seconde rupture de lien ombilical, cet exil intérieur [In my heart, I never stopped feeling this second break of the umbilical link, this interior exile]” (181). Thus, the novel's final sentence proves that identity can be separated from genealogy: “Ainsi avais-je perdu tout à la fois ma mère et son langage, les seuls trésors inaliénables—et pourtant aliénés ! [Thus had I lost all at once my mother and her language, the only inalienable treasures—and yet alienated nevertheless!]” (182). So much of Kateb's work is encapsulated in this textual moment: internal and external exiles and alienation are tragic spaces to occupy, and Kateb's work has always been
an attempt to redress this tragedy through its attempts at return and recovery. While his father is wrong about the possibility of returning exactly to his point of departure (the umbilical link cannot be unbroken), there is always the possibility of protecting one's frail roots from the trap of modern times—to recover what has been only partially erased; and if Kateb's work can do that, then perhaps we can avoid the worst thing: to no longer think about the end of exile and to be indifferent to it.

Conclusion: To Reiterate...

In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon sees the necessity of an assertion of a national identity in a war of independence, but this necessity is a temporary one: "Nationalism is not a political doctrine, nor a program. If you really wish your country to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness" (203). The danger of regression that Fanon warns about is of a neo-colonial type, where the colonized take over the powers of the nation, but essentially, nothing changes for the people, and the newly-formed national identity still retains so much of the racism inherent in the old colonialist system, and Europe still retains so much of its economic exploitation of Africa. Nationalism is a necessary step in the process of decolonization: it unites all groups of colonized people (negating their differences) against the colonialist powers. But it is also necessary to move on from this national identity into a political and social consciousness that embraces the differences of the various peoples/tribes/classes of that nation, and guides them towards an economic system that is not just a remake of the exploitation of the lowest class/people found in the previous colonial system (nationalism was always the excuse for such exploitation). It is for that reason that Fanon stresses the importance of a national culture which is not neo-colonial nationalism, but the expressions by the peoples of that nation:
A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. [...] A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence. A national culture in underdeveloped countries should therefore take its place at the very heart of the struggle for freedom. (233)

On these points, Fanon and Kateb were very clearly in agreement.54

In The Colonizer and the Colonized (1957), Albert Memmi makes a similar point about the necessary but temporary presence of nationalism in the war of independence:

In order that his liberation may be complete, he must free himself from those inevitable conditions of his struggle. A nationalist, because he had to fight for the emergence and dignity of his nation, he must conquer himself and be free in relation to that nation. He can, of course, assert himself as a nationalist. But it is indispensable that he have a free choice and not that he exist only through his nation. He must conquer himself and be free in relation to the religion of his group, which he can retain or reject, but he must stop existing only through it. The same applies to the past, tradition, ethnic characteristics, etc. Finally, he must stop defining himself through the categories of the colonizers. (152)

What Memmi states better than Fanon is that, other than that moment in time where identity is necessary for a violent uprising, the expression by a people need not cling to, or react against, a fixed identity. In fact, it is necessary to free oneself from identity—to stop existing through simplistic identities. A people’s expression can make use of all cultural and technical acquisitions, no matter what its origins. Freedom from such identity allows for all kinds of movements and exchanges, which were so strictly controlled under the colonial situation. Both men are arguing here for a postcolonial fluidity as an important element in the definition of the nation once it gains independence.

In his Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (1975), Foucault argues that power in the modern era is executed through the disciplines, and that “one of the primary objects of discipline is to fix; it is an anti-nomadic technique” (218). For this reason, many Kateb scholars
have highlighted Kateb's nomadism, hybridity, and fluidity as important resistances—Kateb's ability to become a nomad in the French language as he minorizes it. I agree with them completely, but what I wished to add to this conversation is that it is not enough to outline how such a writer resists outdated, well-known power structures. He also has very keen insight into newer, more contemporary problems. How does such a writer define these newer problems, and how does s/he address them? And, if possible, how does s/he foresee future problems?

As essential as they may be to a postcolonial nation, Kateb identifies certain failures in movement, hybridity, and fluidity. While Kateb's nomadism and cosmopolitanism were clearly subversive, we also have to acknowledge that some of his movement had been co-opted and dictated—largely due to poverty, and also due to the threat of violence (not only after the Sétif massacre, or after “une perquisition de la DST [a search by French counter-espionage officers]” (Kateb, Le poète 25) of Kateb's Parisian apartment, but also due to confrontations with Islamic groups and some Algerian officials). So movement was not necessarily the expression of freedom, but rather an escape from danger; and hybridity often left Kateb in no-man's land. Kateb's cosmopolitanism was a double-edged sword: some of it is due to the fact that he felt kinship to oppressed people around the world (a hybridity or fluidity that is the expression of solidarity and resistance), but it must also be acknowledged that some of it was arbitrarily thrust upon him as an expression of subjugation, just as colonialism enforces a hybridity that is an expression of subjugation. These failures are articulated through the innumerable repetitions in his work which cannot but appear as an inescapable trap; at the same time, repetitions with variations in his work clearly work towards a more accurate conception of Algerian identity, and as such, they can become vital to the establishment of a national culture.
Through polyandry and rhizomatic rather than arboresque genealogy, Nedjma is the figure of hybridity *par excellence*. But there is no rest for her, nor sanctuary. This hybridity is not meant to be the answer to French colonialism's assertion of racial/cultural/linguistic/national binaries (though it certainly can be), rather it is an attempt at accuracy. It is the starting point from which all considerations of the Algerian nation must contend. It is neither inherently liberatory nor subjugated. The fact that Nedjma herself encounters no satisfactory conclusion speaks volumes here: the ambiguity of her fate points to the difficulty found in both pre- and post-independence Algeria. Any resolution would be an oversimplification of a very difficult problem. Most importantly, what these novels show us is that Algeria does not begin with independence. Rather, it begins with the people who live there and abroad—which defines them is not the state, but rather the rich traditions, histories, cultures, experiences, and languages that inhabit North Africa—which for better or worse, does include French language, people, and culture. Any conception of the people of Algeria will become false and inevitably oppressive if it must rely on erasures of this heritage—this is true whether one erases positive or negative experiences. And, their struggles also define them—the entirety of Kateb's work is dedicated to the constant repetition of these struggles. There is much that he has written that appear to be a solution. To a certain degree, it is, and he certainly intended it to be. But, it is also the description of a problem. That is, much of Kateb's uncertain identity is simply meant to be an accurate description of his current situation. There is much to be said about the troubling aspect of uncertainty as it runs counter to the search for identity so typical in our personal lives as well as in all our narratives—fictional or otherwise. And this explains the appeal of simplistic national identities—people want answers, even (or especially) easy ones. This is where accuracy and uncertainty get steamrolled by falsification and simplicity—so many crimes can be attributed to
simplicity! Sadly, the postcolonial situation continues many of the crimes and mistakes of its colonial predecessor, and the people who lie somewhere between easily identified groupings—people like Kateb—are a target of the new regime almost as much as the old one.
CHAPTER 4: PIERRE GUYOTAT: PROSTITUTED BODIES IN GLOBALIZED SPACE

“In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters.”
-George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant” (1936)

“[..] tout ce qui dans la phraséologie politique contemporaine est oublié: l’énorme masse historique des corps exploités, la cicatrice que l’économie, le désir, ont tracée sur le corps de l’homme tout entière.”

“[..everything that is forgotten in contemporary political phraseology: the enormous historical mass of exploited bodies, the scar that economy and desire have traced on humanity’s entire body.]

-Pierre Guyotat, “L’autre scène” (1973)

The works of Tennessee Williams contain very few references to North Africa, but one image in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) powerfully encapsulates this chapter's subject. During a confrontation with Brick, Big Daddy—Brick's father—describes his travels around the world as ones in which his immense wealth is confronted with soul-crushing poverty. He then provides us with the following disturbing image:

And then in Morocco, them Arabs, why, prostitution begins at four or five, that's no exaggeration, why, I remember one day in Marrakech, that old walled Arab city, I set on a broken-down wall to have a cigar, it was fearful hot there and this Arab woman stood in the road and looked at me till I was embarrassed, she stood stock still in the dusty hot road and looked at me till I was embarrassed. But listen to this. She had a naked child with her, a little naked girl with her, barely able to toddle, and after a while she set this child on the ground and give her a push and whispered something to her.

This child come toward me, barely able t' walk, come toddling up to me and—Jesus, it makes you sick t' remember a thing like this! It stuck out its hand and tried to unbutton my trousers!

That child was not yet five! Can you believe me? Or do you think that I am making this up? I wint back to the hotel and said to Big Mama, Git packed! We're clearing out of this country.... (929-930)
The horror and revulsion that Big Daddy feels here is not simply that of a tourist in a poor country, encountering the exigencies of child poverty. The play works against Big Daddy's displacement of blame onto the cultural/racial other ("them Arabs," "this country") by situating this vignette in the larger context of a discussion about global poverty and the source of Big Daddy's wealth. He recoils in horror because of the way in which he is identified with and implicated in the global trade of sex tourism. His race and his wealth—announced by the cigar—cause him to be “interpellated” or “hailed” by the child prostitute and her mother/pimp.

In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes towards an Investigation” (1969), Louis Althusser explains how interpellation operates: ideology transforms individuals into subjects, and it is achieved through self-identification at the moment when individuals realize that it is they who are the ones who have been hailed. Althusser provides the example of the policeman hailing an individual in the street: responding to the policeman's hailing, “Hey, you there!”,

the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was really him who was hailed' (and not somebody else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. (118)

Returning to Williams, Big Daddy's interpellation inverts Althusser's example. Althusser has a man being hailed by a policeman, and in his moment of recognition, the man sees himself as a subject to power; however, in the Williams scene, the child points out Brick's father as the subject of power, and identifies herself as a subject to this power. That is, rather than the policeman, a figure of authority who embodies one of the repressive state apparatuses, doing the hailing, Williams has the most subjugated figure imaginable doing the hailing; rather than being
interpellated by the one with power, Big Daddy is interpellated by the very person who has the absolute least power. And while this sexual, non-verbal hailing comes from a figure of absolute non-authority, it still performs the same function: it identifies Big Daddy as a subject within the ideology of global capitalism. This is perhaps its most significant implication: such a power structure becomes self-replicating—it no longer needs people in positions of power to rigorously maintain such replication.

Big Daddy's turning away from the child produces the same effect as the individual turning toward the policeman—they are not opposite gestures, but the same gesture. This interpellation identifies Big Daddy as a member of the group of sex tourists in search of what is illegal at home—sex with a child. His horror is not of one who has been incorrectly identified as a sex-tourist (which is what he would like to tell himself), but from the fact that he fully identifies with a capitalist system that, in its unwillingness/inability to provide even the humblest standards of living for everyone, has created a system of immense wealth disparity that serves as the foundation for sex tourism. Further corroborating this reading is the fact that Big Daddy owns a plantation—an industry whose economic foundations were built with colonialism and slavery.58

While *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* avoids the prostitutional solicitation, Pierre Guyotat's (b. 1940) writing is about everything that occurs after the solicitation is accepted. Guyotat's literature refuses the easy exit provided by Big Daddy's false sense of moral/cultural/racial superiority, removing North Africa and the prostitutional scene from the anecdote, and placing them squarely center stage, with all the appropriate lighting and accoutrements. It also reverses the roles of main and supporting characters: Big Daddy becomes the generic john, and the prostitute becomes the protagonist. To striking effect, Guyotat takes everything that is implicit in
the above reading of *Hot Tin Roof*, and creates an explicit, obscene literature. At the heart of the seemingly innumerable prostitutional scenes that Guyotat illustrates are the Algerian War, French colonialism, class division, sexuality, and desire.

What we find in his work is the aporia we must work through: Guyotat attempts a liberatory poetics while presenting absolute and endless subjugation. His work is the intersection of a postcolonial Marxism and an all-encompassing human desire—it is literature entirely devoted to what Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) mentions only briefly:

[...] yes it’s Karl Marx, that sly old racist skipping away with his teeth together and his eyebrows up trying to make believe it’s nothing but Cheap Labor and Overseas Markets. . . . Oh, no. Colonies are much, much more. Colonies are the outhouses of the European soul, where a fellow can let his pants down and relax, enjoy the smell of his own shit. Where he can fall on his slender prey roaring as loud as he feels like, and guzzle her blood with open joy. Eh? Where he can just wallow and rut and let himself go in a softness, a receptive darkness of limbs, of hair as woolly as the hair on his own forbidden genitals. Where the poppy, and cannabis and coca grow full and green, and not to the colors and style of death, as do ergot and agaric, the blight and fungus native to Europe. Christian Europe was always death, Karl, death and repression. Out and down in the colonies, life can be indulged, life and sensuality in all its forms, with no harm done to the Metropolis, nothing to soil those cathedrals, white marble statues, noble thoughts. . . . No word ever gets back. The silences down here are vast enough to absorb all behavior, no matter how dirty, how animal it gets. . . . (317)

Not only does this passage effectively describe Guyotat's work, but it also indicates the crime that his work commits: Guyotat is a former French soldier whose work's sole purpose is to disobey the rule that “no word ever gets back” that the colonies function as “the outhouses of the European soul.” Because he disobeyed this rule, both Guyotat's *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* (1967) and *Eden, Eden, Eden* (1970) faced censorship. Gallimard—his publisher—was worried about censorship before either text was published, and these worries were proven to be well warranted: General Jacques Massu (1908-2002)—who led the Battle of Algiers—forbade his
French soldiers from reading *Tomb* when he was stationed in Germany (Forest 373), and *Eden* had its rather famous “triple interdiction,” a ban that would last until 1981. In “Sur la censure” (2003), Guyotat explains that *Eden*’s censorship is a form of oppression:

La liberté d’écrire, et pour l’éditeur, de publier, doit être totale, c'est une question de civilisation : toute interdiction intellectuelle est une barbarie.

Pour ce qui me concerne, la censure d'*Eden Eden Eden* en octobre 1970 a été administrative (trois interdictions : affichage, publicité, mineurs), pas de procès. Je relie cette décision à ce que j'ai vécu dans l'Est algérien début 1962.


Après dix jours d'interrogatoire très durs, pas de procès mais une mesure administrative aussi : trois mois de cachot au secret : mesure illégale au regard du règlement militaire, dans ses motifs et dans sa peine : une lettre de cachet qui me niait en temps qu'être défendable, une incarcération dangereuse, sans garanties corporelles, dans un sous-sol, au secret : c’est-à-dire que sure le cahier de poste, il était écrit en rouge souligné que la sentinelle qui me gardait quand j'étais tiré une fois par jour du cachot pour faire ma toilette à l'abreuvoir du milieu du camp, devait tirer sur moi sans sommations au moindre écart de mon corps du bord de ce trou d'eau.

Si j'avais été tué, [...] il n'y aurait pas eu d’enquête [...]
Such an example of the strong link between history and literature should remind us that no matter how extreme Guyotat's literature may appear to be, it has an unquestionable basis in history; if his literature appears to be unreal/surreal, it is only because the reader's historical knowledge is incomplete. In other words, the reader's disbelief is attributable to the success of colonialism's, racism's, and patriotism's rhetoric. Guyotat's greatest crime, therefore, becomes the following: in its dealings with French colonialism, his work conflates the cathedral with the outhouse, making sure that word gets back to the continent, effectively denying any flowery rhetoric Europe entertains about itself and, of course, the colonial endeavor. His work is as powerful an indictment of European history as one can find. Because Guyotat's ever-changing poetics are so rigorously theorized and executed, and because they make for what his more some critics would call “monotonous” (Alter 856; Magnan 9; Sollers 56) and “unreadable” (Bouret 148; Sollers 56) literature, the vast majority of literary criticism on his works focus on his poetics. The following analysis addresses poetics when necessary, but focuses on how Guyotat creates a literature that understands major historical events as products of the manipulation of human desire; for Guyotat, there is nothing natural about desire—it is in fact a socio-political construct. The brief but excellent points that Williams and Pynchon make become theses for Guyotat as he attempts to understand the history of North African colonialism and postcolonialism almost exclusively through desire.

**Literary Preamble: *Sur un cheval* (1961) and *Ashby* (1964)**

Like Kateb, Guyotat published at a remarkably early age and while his later works would be a dramatic departure from his early ones, *Sur un cheval* and *Ashby* are worth examining in that they can help us more accurately establish the consistent vision that Guyotat's works contain. As
Heathcote argues, “all of Guyotat's works [...] are [...] part of an uninterruptible continuum” (85). Considering this consistency/continuum, what is rather surprising about *Sur un cheval* and *Ashby* is how prudish they are compared to the later works—they lack any sexually explicit descriptions. *Sur un cheval* is a semi-autobiographical novella: while recounting the events in Guyotat's life that would serve as the basis for *cheval*, Catherine Brun's biography, *Pierre Guyotat: essai biographique* (2005), calls Roger—the novella's protagonist—“le double de Pierre Guyotat” (85). Roger loses out on love more than once because he is too sexually timid; braver, more assertive but less likable young men earn women's affections despite the fact that these women have all expressed a romantic interest in Roger. Brun summarizes the plot as one where “la virginité obstinée du héros [...] repousse successivement les avances plus ou moins ouverte de trois jeunes filles [the hero's obstinate virginity repeatedly rebuffs three girls' more or less overt advances]” (89). *Ashby*, on the other hand, is a rather tame/sexless but sadistic novel, where the wealthy protagonists, Lord Ashby and Lady Drusilla, exploit the poor for personal pleasure, with very little regard for the consequences; however, despite the presence of sadism, it is a novel more in line with Henry James than with de Sade. Thus, what an analysis of these two early works reveals is that their lack of sexually explicit narrative enables us to more accurately identify Guyotat's focus throughout the entirety of his works. That is, the tripartite formation of Guyotat's consistent vision is composed of the following: formal innovation, the connection between sexuality and enslavement, and historical terrors.

Due to the fact that they were not reprinted until 2005, literary scholarship on these two early works is nearly nonexistent. While the vast majority of scholarship on Guyotat focuses on his subsequent work, this scholarship does help us identify Guyotat's consistency regarding formal innovation. In “All that is inhuman” (2006), John Taylor's positive review of Guyotat's
later work—which accurately concludes that Guyotat offers “one of the most extreme reading experiences in world literature” (7)—states that the early works are

love stories, with an arresting emphasis on amorous yearning and sexual abstinence. [...] the first two novels announce the bold writing to come. They display Guyotat's narrowing focus on, not the morality, but the phenomenology of sexual desire; and they show his concern with consciousness, multiple view-points, the non-linear representation of time, and cruelty (especially in Ashby). (6)

Similarly, F. C. St. Aubyn's negative review of Eden, “Pierre Guyotat: Sex and Revolution or Alienation and Censorship” (1975)—which concludes that “Guyotat ends up with neither sex nor revolution, only alienation and censorship” (57)—summarizes his early works as follows:

Neither work is radically revolutionary where politics is concerned. True, in the novel a page or two is devoted to the grisly racial injustices of the Boer War [...] and passing mention is made both of the bombing of Haiphong [...] and of French repression in Indochina in general[...] Otherwise Ashby is a neoromantic, pseudogothic tale abounding in literary allusions to everyone from Shakespeare to Gide and in musical allusion to everyone from Buxtehude to Brahms. In short, a vaguely interesting tale overburdened with its own pretensions, precisely the type of story an educated, sensitive young Frenchman might write about that sceptered isle [Scotland] at the age of twenty-three. (54)

Structurally, Ashby is less complicated than Sur un cheval (in that it uses only three narrative voices rather than Sur un cheval's six) except for a few pages that Brun calls “une mise en abyme des instances narratives”:

L'innovation formelle[...] se concentre dans quelque pages[...] en italique qui viennent superposer à la narration à la première personne d'Angus celle d'Edward, à la troisième personne d'abord, puis insensiblement, comme celui-ci s'épanche dans le rêve, à la première personne. Pour la première fois s'esquisse là une mise en abyme des instances narratives, un relais des voix, le « il » d'Edward se trouvant approfondi dans la remémoration onirique à la première personne

[Formal innovation is concentrated in a few italicized pages that superimposes onto Angus' first-person narration that of Edward's third person narration, which begins in the
first person, and then gradually shifts to the third person as Edward starts to dream. For
the first time, a mise en abyme of narrative instances is being sketched out, a relay of
voices, the "he" referring to Edward finding himself dealt with in depth in first person
dream recollection.] (119)

On the other hand, *Sur un cheval*’s structure is quite complex in that its chapters are narrated in
the first-person by any one of six characters. These early instances of formal innovation will be
vastly expanded upon in his subsequent works.

Guyotat’s focus on the connection between sexuality and enslavement is announced in
*Sur un cheval*’s concluding sentence: “Aurélien, retour de Grèce, était passé dans la région et le
voici au bras de Nine plus esclave que jamais [Aurélien, returned from Greece, had passed
through the area, and now here he was in Nine’s arms, more a slave than ever]” (205). *Sur un
cheval* presents this relationship between Aurélien and Nine as an inferior one, based on sex and
lacking a more profound emotional/intellectual bond. The relationship between Roger and Nine
is more meaningful, but Roger—who “restais vierge [remains a virgin]” (194)—learns that their
sexless relationship cannot triumph over one that is sexually fulfilling:

Moi qui ne l'avais pas encore embrassée, j’imaginais qu'elle était mienne et que la passion
que j’éprouvais pour elle, les marques discrètes de cette passion suffisaient pour qu'elle
me restât fidèle et que la quittât le souvenir trop brûlant de sa liaison avec Aurélien.

Dans l’aveuglement, la confusion où me tenait ma passion, je prêtai à Nine des
sentiments semblables à ceux que j’éprouvais pour elle, une virginité tout aussi violente
que la mienne.

Je fus déçu, douloureusement déçu.

Un soir, je la surpris dans la chambre d'Aurélien[...]

[I, who had not yet kissed her, imagined that she was mine and that the passion I felt for
her, the discrete marks of this passion, were sufficient enough for her to remain faithful
to me, and that the fiery memories of her liaison with Aurélien would leave her.

In the blindness and confusion where my passion kept me, I attributed to Nine
sentiments that were similar to those I felt for her, a virginity just as fierce as my own.
I was disappointed, painfully disappointed.
One night, I surprised her in Aurélien's room.... (198)

Roger learns that the opposite of the old cliché is true: romantic feeling is not nearly as strong as sexual desire, and therefore the abstract (love) is not nearly as strong as the embodied (desire). This lesson is explicitly articulated by Roger near the end of the novella: “Toutes les filles se ressemblent, elle était follement amoureuse de moi, elle me désirait, elle m'offrirait son beau corps, je la repousserais, elle m'oublierait [all girls are the same, she would fall madly in love with me, she would desire me, she would offer me her beautiful body, I would reject her, she would forget me]” (204). The embodied, sexual desire is so strong, that the novella concludes with the idea that one can become enslaved by it; this strength is the necessary precondition for the possibility of enslavement. Here we have something similar to Burroughs' notion of enslavement via the fragment. That is, how one aspect of the human—drugs and addiction—was able to take over the whole, is also true for Guyotat regarding sexuality. Such is the beginning of Guyotat's investigation of human sexuality, and of its connection to slavery. As he explores this connection, enslavement becomes less and less metaphorical with each successive work.

The third and final component of Guyotat's consistent vision is his focus on historical horrors, of which, *Sur un cheval* contains three that deal with racism and colonialism. What is revealing about these instances is the way in which Guyotat is beginning to discover the erotic as a way to understand the motivation to oppress. The first instance is when Roger stays at Lady Drusilla's “château” with its “cinquante domestiques [fifty servants]” (160); the racial other's servitude then takes on an implicitly erotic dimension: “les domestiques s'emparent de moi, une négresse me baigne, une chinoise me sèche, une égyptienne me parfume [the servants grabbed me, a Negress bathed me, a Chinese woman dried me, an Egyptian woman perfumed me]” (160).
Similar to the eroticization and enslavement of the third world recounted in the examples from Pynchon and Tennessee Williams provided above, Guyotat associates servitude with the orient/colonization, with class/capitalism, and with an eroticized subjugation. In this way, St. Aubyn is incorrect to dismiss these brief but significant details—they are not incidental, but central to the novella's main argument and investigation. That is, the inclusion of these moments of historical horror will ultimately come to the fore in Guyotat's subsequent work as he uses the connection between sex and enslavement as a way to understand world history.

Directly related to this example of a racist, eroticized oppression are the next two horrors in *cheval*, and both of them revealing in that they indicate what kind of research Guyotat was doing, and what kind of influences his writing might have had. The first is when Roger is reading “*Les Pléiades de Gobineau*” (200). Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) was most famous for the publication of his four volume series, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-1855), which developed the theory of a superior Aryan race: “Gobineau divided humanity into three races: the brutal, sensual, and cowardly black race; the weak, materialistic, and mediocre yellow race; and the intelligent, energetic, and courageous white race” (Fortier 342). Considering that Gobineau “was a precursor of Nazi racism” (Fortier 342) and that “examples of his racist outlook are common enough in his fictional works” (Fortier 342), Roger's reading material takes on a significance that is thematically consistent with *cheval*'s main concern, and, considering the semi-autobiographical nature of *cheval*, it illustrates the kind of research that Guyotat was doing after WWII and during the Algerian War. Roger's reading is an attempt to understand the position he enjoyed at Lady Drusilla's *château* while simultaneously coming to terms with Nazism and French colonialism. Because Roger experiences the erotic fruition of Gobineau's
thinking, those other products of his thinking—WWII and the Algerian War—will be inextricably tied to eroticism.

In *Sur un cheval*'s third historical horror, Roger's friend's father is writing “un roman sur une vieille affaire criminelle : des jeunes gens ont tué un camarade juif [a novel on an old criminal case: some young people had killed a Jewish colleague]” (204). This murder is most likely a racially motivated hate crime, and in 1961 (the novella's publication date), it could not be more suggestive regarding racism, Nazism, and the Holocaust. Considering *cheval*'s fascination with the erotic, its investigation into sexuality and slavery, and the two historical horrors mentioned above, Guyotat is clearly suggesting that there is an erotic dimension to such hate crimes (and by extension, to racism, war, and genocide). Guyotat's biography helps reveal the importance of this detail. Roger's friend—Julien—is based on Guyotat's friend, Pierre Boncompain (Brun 89), suggesting that Julien's father was based on Claude Boncompain, who was “un pharmacien passionné de littérature, qui a déjà publié huit romans et des essais sur Colette et Stendhal. Claude Boncompain a tôt fait de déceler en l'ami de son fils un vrai écrivain ; c'est lui qui attira l'attention de Pierre sur la construction du roman [a pharmacist passionate about literature, who had already published eight novels, and essays on Stendhal and Colette. Claude Boncompain was quick to notice a true writer in his son's friend; he is the one who drew Pierre's attention to the construction of the novel]” (Brun 85). While *cheval* briefly mentions this character, we must also consider the fact that Guyotat dedicated the novel to Claude Boncompain. Brun's biography makes it clear that Boncompain served as a literary mentor to the young Guyotat; therefore, it is not insignificant that the only mention of Boncompain's work—the only detail that Guyotat selects—is the murder of a Jewish man. It is this eroticized murder that truly announces the work to come.
Guyotat's service as a French soldier in the Algerian War occurred between the compositions of _Sur un cheval_ and _Ashby_, which means that _Ashby_ would deal with slavery in a much more literal fashion. This can be partly explained by the fact that Guyotat's experience as a soldier took on aspects of slavery: in _Littérature interdite_ (1972), Guyotat sees the soldier as a “semi-esclave” (29) who experiences “la lutte de classe exacerbée par le système de hiérarchie militaire [class struggle exacerbated by the system of military hierarchy]” (107). _Ashby_ is clearly more sensitive to the issue of class than is _Sur un cheval_, and is interested in pursuing class issues to their logical conclusion, which is subjugation, torture/sadism, and eventually, enslavement. St. Aubyn dismisses _Ashby_’s presentation of “the grisly racial injustices of the Boer War” as being too brief to be significant (see discussion of St. Aubyn above), but this criticism ignores how the chapter dedicated to the Boer War clearly prefigures the work to come; _Ashby_ recounts the brutal reprisals for one man who has murdered a British colonel (the husband of one of Drusilla and Ashby's friends) “au Transvaal, en 1903”:

Un nègre entra—que les Boers avaient soudoyé—et lui plongea son couteau dans le dos. Sir Pistill hurla, […] il tomba à la renverse et le couteau entra plus profondément.

Le nègre, affolé, au lieu de fuir, s'enferma dans un placard. L'ordonnance et quelques hommes l'en tirèrent quelques instants plus tard.

Sans donner l'alarme, ils le traînèrent au fond du jardin, l’attachèrent à un eucalyptus et lui crevèrent les yeux. Puis, l'ayant dévêtu, ils s’amusèrent à graver sur sa poitrine des obscénités (mots et dessins), avec la point de leurs baïonnettes. Le nègre hurlait, ils le bâillonnèrent.

La nuit venue, ils l’entraînèrent loin dans la brousse et le ligotèrent solidement à un vieil arbre mort, au bord d'un marigot. Ils retournèrent au camp[....]

Trois jours plus tard, l’ordonnance et ses camarades rejoignirent le nègre et lui donnèrent à boire. Le nègre fut ranimé. Les hommes coupèrent alors l'arbre auquel il était attaché et le firent glisser dans la rivière, en le retenant avec des cordes.

Le nègre commença à se débattre et à crier, les poings dans les orbites.

Un gavial brillant sauta hors de l'eau et lui happa une jambe. Le nègre se tordit et lança un bras vers le ciel rose. Les hommes riaient, buvant et dansant enlacés, les pieds dans la vase rougie.
A Negro—whom the Boers had bribed—entered and plunged his knife in his back. Sir Pistill screamed, he fell back and the knife went in deeper. Panic-stricken, the Negro, instead of running away, locked himself in a closet. The officer's orderly and some men pulled him out a few moments later.

Without giving the alarm, they dragged him to the back of the garden, tied him to a eucalyptus tree and gouged out his eyes. Then, having stripped him, they amused themselves by carving obscenities (words and drawings) on his chest with the points of their bayonets. The Negro was screaming, they gagged him.

At nightfall, they dragged him far into the bush and tied him firmly to an old dead tree at the edge of a creek. They returned to camp....

Three days later, the orderly and his comrades went back to the Negro and got him to drink. The Negro was revived. The men then cut down the tree to which he was attached and slid it into the river, while retaining it with ropes.

The Negro began to struggle and scream, his fists in his eye sockets.

A shiny gharial jumped out of the water and bit into one of his legs. The Negro writhed and reached out towards the pink sky. The men were laughing, drinking and dancing together, feet reddened in the mud.

The Negro was nothing more than a trunk of flesh on a tree trunk. A young gharial tried to tear his head off, but the Negro shook it off while screaming.

In the end, the men pulled the tree onto the bank. It slid on the mud littered with bottles and garlands.

The men disappeared into the bush. A vulture fell upon the tree. The gharials went on shore and fell asleep in the sun, eyes half-closed.] (50-51)

This passage displays almost all the elements that would become typical of Guyotat's later writings. British colonialism here is mixed with the unequivocal pleasure British soldiers/subjects receive in torturing and killing the racial other. Their sadism is both gleeful and unthinking in the way in which it seems to obey a certain spontaneity (they do not sound the alarm because even though the laws of this time allow a certain amount of injustice and cruelty,
slightly deeper satisfaction will be achieved with this brand of vigilante justice). The obscene words and drawings carved into the victim's chest indicate how the sublimation of forbidden homo-erotic desire is achieved via torture and murder. If we are to believe Freud's argument that blinding is associated with castration, they take away their victim's sexual power as they exercise their own visual pleasure (their sexual pleasure largely being a visual one rather than a genital one). This scene also occurs in an uncaring universe: Guyotat mixes the local fauna, flora, and environment with the torture, to the point where they even contribute/participate in it. Nowhere is this clearer than when the victim raises his arm towards the sky, appealing for help from an absent or indifferent deity—to the point where the tree and the garlands suggest both a crucifixion and a macabre, bacchanalian Christmas revelry.

This scene is central to the development of the novel's plot, leading up to Lady Drusilla's crisis and eventual death. When she is near death, she asks Lord Ashby, “Raconte-moi tout ce que tu sais sur les supplices [Tell me everything you know about torture] (113). Ashby then supplies a tale about the African slave trade “au temps de Robinson Crusoé” (113) that is very similar to the one from the Boer War (focusing again on the eyes); one African tribe is selling members of an opposing tribe to slave traders:

Un vieil esclave, le ventre ouvert par un coup de lance, tombe dans le marigot ; un nègre lui retourne la tête avec son pied rouge de vase, le vieillard tremble et implore, le nègre brandi sa lance et l'enfonce à deux mains dans la gorge de l'esclave. Le sang jaillit, éclabousse la tunique de capitaine. Celui-ci, de rage, piétine la tête du mort. Le nègre s'accroupit et lui crève les deux yeux avec ses doigts, puis il se relève en essuyant ses mains à ses cuisses. Un matelot s'approche du capitaine et frotte la tunique souillée avec son bonnet. Les autres essaient de rire, le mousse s'appuie à un eucalyptus et vomit sur les racines.

[An old slave, his stomach sliced open by a spear, falls into the creek; a negro turns his head with his foot red with mud, the old man trembles and begs, the negro brandished his spear and with both hands thrusts it into the slave's throat. Blood gushes, splattering the
captain's tunic. Enraged, the captain stomps on the dead man's head. The Negro crouches down and he gouges out both eyes with his fingers, then he gets up, wiping his hands on his thighs. A sailor approaches the captain and rubs the soiled tunic with his hat. The others try to laugh, the ship's boy leans on a eucalyptus tree and vomits on the roots. (114)

While sharing many of the elements with the example from the Boer War above, one significant difference is that these men are not perfectly uniform in their reaction to this violence—there is even resistance to it as the men unconvincingly try to laugh about it, and the ship's boy is repulsed by it. This scene clearly suggests violent men are not born, but created: the ship's boy and the lower ranking sailors are receiving an apprenticeship in violence. Once this apprenticeship is over, they will then be appropriate material for the higher ranks—they will be violent leaders in charge of violent civilizations and the system becomes self-perpetuating. This scene is a reversal of the metanarrative of development: civilization is not violent because it is primitive, but because it is developed. The normally peaceful and perhaps even empathetic human being (represented by the youngest character—the ship's boy) needs to be reconstructed into a figure of thoughtless violence and cruelty.

This historical cycle of violence is played out personally with Drusilla's decline. Ashby states that “elle désira la mort [she yearned for death]” and “plusieurs fois, donc, nous l’empêchâmes de se tuer” [so, we prevented her numerous times from killing herself]” (111). After hearing the story about the slave traders, Drusilla

veut qu'on l’achète comme un nègre, qu'on la batte, qu'on la tue, qu'on l'attache à un tronc au milieu du fleuve, qu'on lui brise les membres, qu'on l'aime pour l'argent, qu'on la montre dans une foire[....]

Mais sous son désir de dénuement, il y a celui de prostituer aussi son corps.

[wants to be bought like a Negro, to be beaten, to be killed, to be attached to a tree trunk in the middle of a river, to have her bones broken, to be valued for money, to be displayed in a fair...
But beneath her desire for poverty, there is also the one to prostitute her body. [116]

Initially, we are led to believe that these are the suicidal thoughts produced by a guilty conscience and by an unrequited love: amongst Drusilla's other crimes, a woman kills herself because Drusilla slept with her husband; and Drusilla is seemingly despondent and heartbroken when her drawn-out seduction of one of her young servants ultimately fails. However, this superficial characterization of her motivation is all thrown into question as we learn by novel's end that she had been molested by her governess. After being a victim of abuse, Drusilla then perpetuates it to her ultimate self-destruction; for this reason, she identifies with both victims and perpetrators: "Je suis le capitaine en bleu, je suis le chef, je suis les nègres, je suis les esclaves, je suis le petit mousse [I'm the captain in blue, I'm the chief, I'm the negroes, I'm the slaves, I'm the little ship's boy]" (115). In her own cycle of violence and abuse, Drusilla becomes a microcosm of the historical examples provided above; thus we see for the first time Guyotat making an explicit link between slavery, poverty, and prostitution, and the way in which injustice becomes self-damaging and self-perpetuating.

The above readings of Guyotat's early works establish a proper foundation from which we can read his most famous texts (Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers and Eden, Eden, Eden) in that the consistency his work shows regarding formal innovation, the connection between sexuality and enslavement, and historical terrors are essential to understanding his later works. In Ashby and cheval, a young Guyotat is beginning to see sexuality in all areas of human experience—especially in those where sex does not take place. His playfulness regarding form and multiple viewpoints only makes his perspective appear all the more ubiquitous. What this means is that he starts to read history as an expression of human sexuality—even, or especially, if that expression is a result of sexual repression (repression and oppression being intricately entwined). With his
attempts to seek out historical origins for the connection between oppression and sexuality—whether these origins are intellectual as in the case of Gobineau, or developmental as in the case of the ship's boy's apprenticeship in mindless violence upon the racial other—Guyotat clearly indicates that human sexuality is a construct (as opposed to a natural, inborn trait). Moreover, his work indicates that both power and control (as they have been theorized in previous chapters of this dissertation) depend on this construction of sexuality, that they would not be able to exist without this construction, and that the manipulation of sexuality is a necessary component of enslavement. In short, he sees twentieth-century history as a result of this manipulation of sexuality.

In the examples of sadism discussed above, we should note that this type of sadism is first and foremost about violence rather than sex (even though its motivation is sexual); we must be very clear that it has very little to do with sadism as the BDSM community understands/defines it, where it is allowed to operate only when clear consent has been given. On the contrary, the sadism in Guyotat's work depends on the impossibility of consent. In this way, Guyotat seems to reverse the priorities of de Sade's sadism; that is, for de Sade, an aristocratic violence perpetrated on the lower classes is—amongst other things—a vehicle to achieve greater sexual fulfillment. However, for Guyotat, repressed sexual desire is a vehicle to achieve greater levels of violence; sexual frustration finds its satisfaction through violence, so sex does not need to appear at all if violence is a warped expression of desire. And if sex does appear, it is only because the allowed pathways for it are violent, oppressive ones. If Guyotat's readers have not recognized this hierarchy, it is only because they choose to see sex as more salacious and less acceptable than violence.
The Prostitutional in Colonial Wars: *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* (1967)

Guyotat's use of allegory in *Tomb* unites WWII and the Algerian War by highlighting the continuity/contiguity between these two colonial wars, effectively conflating them. This conflation is accomplished by the fact that there does not appear to be any passage of time between the first and second chant—the first chant covers WWII, while the second through sixth chants cover the Algerian War (*Tomb* is composed of seven “chants” as opposed to chapters). It is also accomplished by the ambiguity of places and historical events/people. Similar to Burroughs' Interzone, Guyotat takes real-world space and history, and creates a mythology of oppression out of them. Although it would not be too difficult to recognize allegorical representations (Inamenas is Algeria; the captain is Charles de Gaulle; the slaves are Algerians; Ecbatane is France; etc.), the point is that this allegorical space is not meant to contain an accurate depiction of historical events in these two wars, but a depiction of the extremes of sadomasochism in colonial wars (see discussion of Ashby above). If there is accuracy here, it is in showing the operation of colonial war *per se*, not necessarily in accurately representing the particulars in these two wars.

The first chant deals with multiple levels of colonialism. *Tomb* begins: “In those times, war covered Ecbatane” (11). Ecbatane (France) has been conquered by “the North” (Germany)—perhaps alluding to the failure of the Maginot Line—, while “the Buxtehude archipelago” (Britain) is “covered day and night by the shadows of enemy bombers” (11). The split between the north and south and the reliance on these terms adds a level of ambiguity that makes for a north/south parallelism between Nazi-occupied France and French-colonized Algeria, highlighting the fact that WWII Algeria is doubly-colonized. Guyotat increases the ambiguity of allegiances and identities with his reluctance to use proper names: the large groups of “rebels”
and “slaves” in the first chant who fight to free Ecbatane could be easily confused with the rebels and slaves of the later chants who fight to free “the island of Inamenas” which had been conquered by “the men of Ecbatane” (37). Guyotat's use of allegory, and the confusions between North and South, colonizer and colonized, highlights that the colonizer should identify with the colonized because at one point history, France has been both simultaneously. There is also a larger historical parallel of colonized colonizers: Algeria is colonized by France which is in turn colonized by Germany, and North Africa is colonized by the Arabs, then the Turks, then the French. Parallelism through allegorical mythology helps to eliminate bias from the question of history and colonialism (i.e.: “I defend France's activities because I am French”) as it offers a more objective evaluation of them in its stead; Guyotat attempts to reach this level of objectivity by working toward a scientific understanding similar to that of the nouveau roman. This allegory tries to show that violent subjugation, enslavement, colonialism are objectively wrong, no matter who does it, no matter what rationality is used to prop up such endeavors (e.g.: Orientalism, white man's burden, manifest destiny, etc.). The French, colonized by the Germans, can identify with the experience of the colonized Algerians once the categories of “French” and “Algerian” are eliminated. As the French resisted the Germans, they can identify with the Algerian resistance. Considering that national identity makes colonialism possible, allegory becomes necessary because the removal of national identity makes other forms of identification possible.

A good portion of this chant is dedicated to de Gaulle and the promises that were made to Algerians during WWII—mainly the one that Algerians, fighting to free the French from the Germans, would also gain their own freedom from the French. It is on this broken promise that Tomb is at its most historically accurate, perhaps because this accuracy helps make the claim for the continuity between the two colonial wars—because this promise remains unfulfilled, the
second colonial war happens. *Tomb* touches upon the fact that Algerians who fought in the French military did so with this promise in mind:

former soldiers of Ecbatane were continuing the fight, two years after the war had ended, but this time, against those who then governed Ecbatane and whom the war had not moved from power: these soldiers had expected to destroy the interior enemy by destroying the exterior one; most of them were former slaves or sons of slaves, the present government of Ecbatane had not wished to abolish slavery. (22)

The slavery mentioned here takes on the form of colonialism, but it also takes on the forms of prostitution and military service. This point is continued when one of the main characters of the first chant listens to the promise de Gaulle makes while leading the Free French Forces in Britain, but this promise is stated in more epic terms:

Ieressos, having come down from Leuctres to the district of slaves, stops one evening in front of a shack and hears the call of that officer who fled to Buxtehude: the voice calls to resistance those same ones whom Leuctres, not long ago, sheltered at last behind its palisades:

—This fight against an enemy able to enslave your masters, win it with me. Thus you shall deliver your children from a deeper servitude, and your masters liberated by you, I shall oblige them to set you all free. (27)

The first chant—and by extension, WWII—ends when “Ecbatane liberated, the captain, flown out of Buxtehude, restores the Republic; but, beyond the sea, the people submitting to Ecbatane, having liberated it, hope that the mother country will set them free” (42-43). Of course, this hope remains unfulfilled as the captain “disarmed and refused to set free” (43) the slaves of Inamenas. It is then that we discover “Inamenas, during the night, has risen in rebellion” (44), and the book's setting shifts from Ecbatane in the first chant to Inamenas in the subsequent chants.

We should keep in mind, however, that *Tomb*'s historical allusions are not confined to the twentieth century. Most significantly, “Ecbatane” is a “ville de l'Asie ancienne, capitale de la Médie [an ancient Asian city, capital of Media]” (Brun 165), and *Tomb* also takes place in cities
named “Thebes” and “Leuctres.” Guyotat's use of these ancient Greek and Iranian cities mixes the ancient with the modern, showing a continuity of human history which is ultimately a history of slavery. Tomb tells us that “Ecbatane then was still the widest capital of the Occident” (11; my emphasis); this East/West reversal is highly significant—France is given the name of the ancient Iranian city—as it works against national identity, offering an alternate form of identification. The link to ancient Greece and Iran also gives a certain timelessness to the conflict. As Foucault noted in his open letter to Guyotat—titled “Il y aura scandale, mais” (1970)—“Le Tombeau, malgré l'apparence, était hors chronologie : on l'a méconnu en essayant d'y inscrire une date [Tomb, despite appearances, was outside of chronology: we have misunderstood it if we try to assign a date to it]” (160). Tomb's timelessness heralds back to the origins of East/West conflict, and if there is one message Guyotat's timeless allegory communicates, it is that these conflicts inevitably repeat themselves. As the somewhat utopian seventh chant of Tomb suggests (discussed below), as long as the other is understood as someone to oppress and enslave, this vicious circle of colonial wars will be endless.

Guyotat does have his detractors (some of whom he chose to reprint in his Littérature interdite), but the accolades he has received are considerable. Philip Dine's Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992 (1994) claims that Tomb “is, beyond any doubt, the most formally ambitious attempt by an ex-conscript—and, arguably, by anyone—to capture the Algerian experience in literature” (122). Similarly, Philippe Forest's Histoire de Tel Quel: 1960-1982 (1995) calls Guyotat “l'une des plus fortes et des plus singulières figures de l'avant-garde littéraire française [one of the greatest and most distinctive figures of the French literary avant-garde]” (371) and Tomb “un monumental manifeste anticolonialiste [a monumental anticolonialist manifesto]” (372). However, some of the highest praise for Tomb has come from
Alain Badiou; believing that Guyotat's work was “extraordinairement puissante [extraordinarily powerful]” (Images du temps présent 102) and that Tomb was Guyotat's “chef d'œuvre [masterpiece]” (“S'orienter dans la pensée, s'orienter dans l'existence”), Badiou summarizes his own reading of Tomb that he had presented in a 2002 seminar:

Guyotat is the most radical writer of an atomistic vision of bodies. In the real [réel] of colonial war there is nothing but bodies, and between these bodies there is only sexual attraction, which operates like a deathly consumption. The only relief to be found in this universe is in linguistic sublimation. Let's say that for Guyotat, all there is are the sexed body and the poem. (“Beyond Formalization” 341)

Badiou's 2002 seminar makes a number of crucial points. First, he explains Guyotat's theory—that all human relationships are prostitutional—by differentiating between prostitution and the “prostitutional”:

le prostitutionnel est la démocratisation de la prostitution. Pas au sens de la prostitution pour tous. Mais au sens où l’élément nodal de la prostitution (à savoir, l’identification de tout à un espace réduit à l’échange entre corps et argent) est une figure générale qui n'est pas identifiable à la forme particulière qu’elle revêt dans la prostitution proprement dite. On dira donc que le prostitutionnel est parfaitement compatible avec la répression sectorielle de la prostitution.

[the prostitutional is the democratization of prostitution. Not in the sense of prostitution for everyone. But in the sense that the nodal element of prostitution (that is, the identification of everything in a reduced space of exchange between bodies and money) is a general figure that is not identifiable in the particular form it assumes in sexual prostitution. It can therefore be said that the prostitutional is perfectly compatible with the sectoral suppression of prostitution.] (Images du temps présent 100-101)

Thus Badiou reveals how Guyotat's liberatory poetics can be combined with scenes of absolute subjugation: the oppression of the prostitute and the prohibition against prostitution are essential steps in system of control that oppresses everyone via sexuality in a prostitutional universe. In order to understand such a system of control, Guyotat's work focuses more and more on graphic
scenes of prostitution and gay male sexuality—arguably, the most oppressed sexualities. The effort to liberate sexuality through its infinite depictions is meant to undermine a system that prohibits prostitution and gay male sexual intercourse while simultaneously highlighting that such a prohibition finds its release in violence—homo-erotic and otherwise. Graphic depictions of the male prostitute are combined with scenes of absolute oppression in an attempt to undermine both a contemporary capitalist ideology that refuses to see the labor of the oppressed as prostitutinal, and a colonialist ideology that refuses to acknowledge that oppression exists because it is pleasurable.

Badiou continues by stating that Guyotat has created “une cosmologie prostitutionnelle [a prostitutational cosmology]”:

C’est une théorie du monde, une théorie de l’univers, qui est au fond une théorie de l’atomisme des corps. Il y a des corps, il n’y a que des corps, ces corps sont de fait comme au fond les atomes de l’existence déchaînée, et je dis atomisme au sens strict, car il y a une force d’attraction entre ces corps. Ou plutôt, il y a deux forces d’attractions différenciées et intrinsèques : le sexe et la cruauté.

[It is a theory of the world, a theory of the universe which is basically a theory of the atomism of bodies. There are bodies, there are only bodies, these bodies are basically like the atoms of aroused existence, and I say atomism in the strict sense because there is a force of attraction between these bodies. Or rather, there are two differentiated and intrinsic forces of attraction: sex and cruelty.] (Images du temps présent 103)

Badiou then offers his redefinition of liberty in a prostitutational universe: “On appellera 'liberté' le fait de ne pas être réduit à n’être qu’un individu corporel marchand. Ou encore on appellera 'liberté la possibilité d’être dans un rapport générique non prostitutien à l’humanité dans son ensemble [We will call 'Liberty' the fact of not being reduced to an individual body merchant. Or we could also call 'liberty' the possibility of being in a generic, non-prostitutional relationship to humanity as a whole] (Images du temps présent 123). This definition comes from Badiou's
reading of Tomb's final chant, which he finds to be truly optimistic in that it presents a relationship between two characters who appear to have achieved such a state of liberty and equality—their relationship follows the dictates of desire free from the prostitutional context which is constituted by the cruelty of the oppressed/oppressor relationship. Tomb's last two sentences are: “Kment kneels down before Giauhare, and Giauhare before Kment. Fists on the ground, they kiss each other on the knees, on the genitals, on the forehead” (378). Badiou argues that

ils se tiennent face à face à genoux, au contraire du face-à-face cruel. Ils sont dans la reconnaissance, face à face, de leur humanité. [...] C’est prophétique : ça consiste à dire que le non-monde ira jusqu’au pire, mais ce pire est gros d’une aurore, quelque chose va accoucher d’une humanité décisivement nouvelle.

[they kneel face to face, quite the opposite of a cruel face to face. They are in face to face recognition of their humanity. It is a prophecy that consists of saying that the non-world will reach its worst, but this worst is pregnant with a new dawn, something is going to give birth to a decisively new humanity.] (Images du temps présent 113)

The strength of Badiou's reading here seems to rely implicitly on Emmanuel Levinas’ Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority (1961), wherein Levinas argues for the ethical responsibility to the other via their face to face relationship: “The face in its nakedness as a face presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger” (212); “This infinity, stronger than murder, already resists us in his face, is his face, is the primordial expression, is the first word: 'you shall not commit murder.' The infinite paralyses power by its infinite resistance to murder, which, firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the Other, in the total nudity of his defenceless eyes” (199). And perhaps this is the brilliance of Guyotat's work: it takes what is potentially the most face to face relationship—the sexual one—and shows how human society can be constructed into one where sex can be co-opted from ethics to cruelty (from sex to rape,
prostitution, slavery, and exploitation). However, as Lyotard points out in *Libidinal Economy* (1974), because the “most purple sexual arousal, almost blinding, includes words, […] the arse being buggered is also a face which talks to us” (79). Thus this sexual relationship does not need to be face to face, nor does the injunction not to harm others need only be expressed via the facial expression. In this way, sexual activity should also be the foundation for an ethical position via the Other—if it is not seen as such, that is because both power and control have manipulated sexual attitudes to make it impossible to recognize this ethical relationship.

Guyotat's prostitutional cosmology—in all its sexual “obscenity”—is one that displays the absolute oppression of the Other, while simultaneously highlighting that the “arse being buggered” always communicates an ethics of the “infinite resistance to murder” and to rape.

The prostitutional cosmology is essential to *Tomb*'s representation of the two historical terrors of WWII and the Algerian War. However, because these representations and this cosmology function allegorically, Guyotat is also able to claim that “*Tomb* is not a book 'on' the war in Algeria, there is much more to it” (“Art is What Remains of History” 400). On a simple level, this claim can be read to say that *Tomb* is also about WWII: because *Tomb* only alludes to historical events, and because the majority of the narrative alludes to the Algerian War, it is easy to miss—as some reviewers have—that the book's first chant is actually about WWII (WWII is further referenced by the book's dedication to Guyotat's uncle, who “died 1943 at the extermination camp of Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen, Brandenberg” (*Tomb* 10). On a much more complex level, Guyotat's claim is also a suggestion about how *Tomb* functions allegorically—how this allegory relates to specific moments in history, and why allegory can be a useful way to read history.
Paul de Man's and Fredric Jameson's writings on allegory are essential here. de Man's “Pascal's Allegory of Persuasion” (1981) argues that allegory is sequential and narrative, yet the topic of its narration is not necessarily temporal at all, thus raising the question of the referential status of a text whose semantic function, though strongly in evidence, is not primarily determined by mimetic moments; more than ordinary modes of fiction, allegory is at the furthest possible remove from historiography. (51)

Because it is free of mimesis and historiography, allegory “is the purveyor of demanding truths, and thus its burden is to articulate an epistemological order of truth and deceit with a narrative or compositional order of persuasion” (52). The rest of de Man's article is then dedicated to answering the following question: “Why is it that the furthest-reaching truths about ourselves and the world have to be stated in such a lopsided, referentially indirect mode?” (52). His answer to this question is one typical of de Man and of deconstruction in general in that language—and in particular, allegory—will always retain an element of the “undecidable” (69), especially in its most straightforward claims. Jameson's “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (1986) approaches allegory from a much more explicitly political angle than does de Man. He argues that none of the third-world “cultures can be conceived as anthropologically independent of autonomous, rather, they are all in various distinct ways locked in a life-and-death struggle with first-world cultural imperialism” (68). Due to this struggle, he argues that all “third-world texts are necessarily […] allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as […] national allegories” (69). He continues: third-world texts, “even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic—necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society” (69). In almost perfect agreement with de Man's point about the undecidability of allegorical language,
Jameson also argues that “the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemy of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol” (73). He then concludes that because the third world has to exist within “the nightmare of history,” its culture “must be situationalist and materialist despite itself. And it is this, finally, which must account for the allegorical nature of third-world culture, where the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself” (85-86).

de Man and Jameson help explain the role of allegory in *Tomb* in the following ways. Firstly, because colonialism (which includes WWII—see below) is responsible for the historical terrors or the “nightmare of history” in North Africa, Guyotat's writing about it would inescapably take on an allegorical function—*Tomb* is Guyotat's embrace of this function. Secondly, because allegory itself is resistant to definitive, unambiguous narratives of national struggles (these stories are always the same: “we” are the good guys, and “they” are the bad guys; the discussion below highlights *Tomb’s* morally ambiguous representations of both sides in a colonial war), *Tomb* is able to communicate truths that are simultaneously more profound and less clear—these are also the truths that literature in general is able to communicate. For this reason, “the furthest-reaching truths about ourselves and the world” has to be communicated in “a lopsided, referentially indirect mode,” as de Man suggested. Since historical truths are commonly equated with historically accurate details, allegory is able to focus on a different set of truths as it does not have to defend the accuracy of any individual detail. This means that allegory can be a way of telling history that goes beyond the truth of these individual moments in history, using these moments as examples of a larger phenomenon. More specifically, the truths
that are to be found in WWII and the Algerian War speak to larger truths about the inherent violence of colonialism.

All of this discussion of allegory is a way of understanding Tomb's form and content simultaneously: Tomb's prostitutional cosmology is expressed in the form of an epic poem about an allegorical mythology. The fictive places that Tomb describes lack any specific historical references, giving a timeless quality to the text while simultaneously alluding to historical figures and events. Such allusions are constant reminders that the truths of this fiction have a horrifying basis in reality. Partially due to the fact that an individual's story is not necessarily the best vehicle for understanding collective experience, not much of Guyotat's autobiographical works is dedicated to his time spent as a soldier in the Algerian War, but these rare glimpses shed valuable insight on the possible parallels between history and literature. These parallels make sure that we do not hopelessly associate allegory with fiction; in one example, Guyotat witnessed what was done to corpses in Algeria, and compares them to Sophocles' Antigone:

what shocked me the most in that war was the outrageous behaviour done to dead people, the use made of their ears, their bones, their heads—how could one play football with a head, a skull, that children, women, suffered over, not being able to kiss it any longer, whose return to their hands they dreamt about? Antigone again. Ancient Greece surely haunts this book as much as torn Algeria and the Second World War. (“Art is What Remains of History” 400)

Of his autobiographical works, only the brief text, Independence (2011), is entirely dedicated to his experiences in the Algerian War. The descriptions of his experiences makes Tomb appear much less fantastical than we would like to believe. He describes a local guard:

what he recognizes of humanity is what he can torture, nothing more […]; he is all cruelty […] you picture his fingers as they tighten the laces, the slipknot, open and shut the bathtub faucets, apply the electrodes; his crotch belongs to those who handle the
generator and to those who rape; you see his teeth snap the nerve or strip of flesh from which the mutilated member hangs, his rangers lash at the small of the back, his soles crush faces, his genitals search for the most innocent. (11)

Guyotat finishes his description of the guard: “The cruel one in the back tells of how he snapped the neck of the shepherd and his beast and makes the noises with his mouth and his fists” (15). To this personal anecdote of mindless cruelty, Guyotat adds examples from French history: it is “in the Dahra mountains where Pélissier […] fumigates the insurgent tribes in 1845, a war crime” (18); all “19th century French political regimes are soaked in the blood of the Algerian conquest” (19).

To these historical crimes, Guyotat also adds the ones committed by Algerians. When Guyotat unsuccessfully urged Algerian conscripts in the French army to avoid the dangers of voting for independence in 1962, he finds out that upon returning to their douars, “they have been tortured and their throats cut” (22). Likewise, “In Oran […] close to two thousand Europeans […] are massacred, some skinned alive, hung on butcher hooks” (25). The balance that Independence achieves between depictions of atrocities committed by both the colonized and the colonizer can be discovered in Tomb as well, which is why Lyotard's praise of Tomb is very similar to that of Badiou's:

It is not in order to regain their dignity that the workers will revolt, break the machines, lock up the bosses, kick out the deputies, that the victims of colonization will set the governors' palaces on fire and cut the sentries' throats, no it is something else altogether, there is no dignity; Guyotat has so admirably put this into writing with regard to Algeria. […] If some Algerian fights for four years out in the brush or for a few months in the urban networks, it is because his desire has become the desire to kill, not to kill in general, but to kill an invested part, still invested, there's no doubt about it, of his sensitive regions. Would he kill his French master? More than that: he would be killed as the obliging servant of this master, to disengage the region of his prostitute's consent, to seek other jouissances than prostitution as a model, that is to say as the predominant modality of investment. (Libidinal Economy 111; emphasis added)
That is, Lyotard suggests that there is libidinal investments in both the colonizer's desire to cruelly oppress, and for the colonized's desire to violently revolt. The examples of historical terrors that Guyotat offers from both sides of the Algerian War should make us careful to avoid understanding Tomb's allegorical mythology as an exaggeration, or worse, as a fantasy. Certainly, it involves a thematic concentration of such cruelty, but it would be revisionist white-washing to think that such events do not constitute human history, and that these historical moments are not expressions of desire.

*Tomb*'s allegorical mythology is essential to what Badiou called the prostitutional cosmology and to the atomism of bodies attracted by sex and cruelty. However, we can supplement Badiou's concept of the atomism of bodies with the strikingly similar but more robust theory of desiring machines offered by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972):

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said *the* id. Everywhere *it* is machines—real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it. The mouth of the anorexic wavers between several functions: its possessor is uncertain as to whether it is an eating-machine, an anal machine, a talking-machine, or a breathing machine (asthma attacks). Hence we are all handymen: each with his little machines. [...] Something is produced: the effects of a machine, not mere metaphors. (1-2)

There is perhaps no greater literary realization of Deleuze and Guattari's vision of the world than that of Guyotat; however, Guyotat's machines stray into very dark territory. Humanity does not simply have the desire to fuck, eat, and shit, but also the desire to rape, and to kill—the latter two being a significant alteration of the former three. Using the darkest capacities of desiring-
machines as the conditions for all human action/interaction, Guyotat achieves a truly striking leveling out, where historical responsibility is largely dispersed via manipulation/alteration of human desire (for example, see the ship's boy in the discussion of Ashby above). That is, the problem with so many historical meta-narratives (in the Lyotardian sense) about WWII, the Nazis, and the Holocaust, is the way in which they are written to polarize good and evil, relegating all ethical responsibility to the Nazis, while the Allied nations patriotically assume a position of innocence. While Guyotat does nothing to disguise the severity of Nazi crimes, he also directs ethical responsibility onto the French and onto the Algerian nationalists as well. To be clear, Guyotat was not opposed to Algerian independence—his personal history as well as his literature say quite the opposite—but he was unwilling to reduce complex ethical questions to an easy good/evil binary, refusing to depict Algerian nationalists in an unproblematically positive and patriotic position. Tomb does not romanticize the rebel forces as its depictions of their almost equivalent acts of brutality avoids a revisionist white-washing of history, acknowledging the role of terrorism in Algeria on its civilian population. Such an informed perspective is a condemnation of human nature itself, and also perhaps of the perpetuation of interminable conflicts (à la Burroughs). We should note, however, that if we would like to identify Guyotat's true allegiance, he is always concerned with the person in the middle of all these powers—the person who is the most subjugated: the prostitute, and the slave (as was indicated in the previous chapter, Algerian independence was not the all-powerful solution to the problems of the oppressed that was promised).

Whereas Deleuze and Guattari's vision of desiring machines has them working in (relative) harmony through the intrinsic motivation of their own desires, Guyotat's is, on the other hand, a vision of absolute chaos, as his desiring machines combine seemingly at random, as
chance within systems of power (colonialism, war, etc.) dictates, combining to give us a vision of hell on earth—an existential hell, where the greatest of torments are realized solely through human capacity. However, it should be noted that Deleuze and Guattari make the point that is central to Guyotat's prostitutational cosmology, but without highlighting/mentioning this chaotic aspect of control:

sexuality is everywhere: the way a bureaucrat fondles his records, a judge administers justice, a businessman causes money to circulate; the way the bourgeoisie fucks the proletariat; and so on. And there is no reason to resort to metaphors, any more than for the libido to go by way of metaphors. Hitler got the fascists sexually aroused. Flags, nations, armies, banks get a lot of people aroused. (293)

Such is the function of desire in Guyotat's writing—everyone is sexually aroused in Tomb. Both the military/colonial conquest and the war of independence in Tomb are products of desire (even if this desire is controlled/corrupted), and for that reason, this book contains very little characterization, and literally all acts are motivated by a sexual desire of either the sadistic or masochistic sort.74 As illustrated above, sadism is found in both the French and nationalist armies. Stuck in between are its victims, who do not simply suffer, but they suffer sexually, masochistically—sexuality is at the heart of their enslavement.

Guyotat's intricate network of connections between desiring machines is a chaotic tapestry, connecting haphazardly, where chance appears to be the determining factor. However, we should be careful with how chance operates in a prostitutational cosmology. We are not talking about chance in a purely aleatory sense, but chance in terms of exploiting opportunities when they happen to arise within certain social conditions. This chance looks like chaos, but is actually part of a system of oppression. Within colonialism, and more specifically, within a colonial war, the social conditions produce a self-sustaining, self-regulating system where certain actions are very likely, and others, very unlikely. This is how chance operates in colonial war and in a
prostitutional cosmology: chance is dependent upon what opportunities arise, but within colonialism, these opportunities are remarkably consistent. In other words, the effects of ever-present desire can only be limited by opportunity; nowhere is this clearer in Tomb than when a truck-load of soldiers runs over a child:

The child in the sludge looks back, […] the headlights warm up his back and his loins, the soldiers laugh […]; the driver is pushed against his wheel by his comrades, one of them presses down his camouflaged cap over his eyes, the soldier struggles, shouts: “Bastards, I don't want to run over him, I don't want to run over him…”, the truck speeds up, a track catches the child, the soldiers knock on the window, tickle the driver under the armpits, on the neck, on the throat, the driver splits his sides laughing, sobs […] (205)

This scene ends when an officer tells the driver, “Stop shaking. It's just one less of them” (206) and someone else says, “Better kill them young” (206). Here we see that desire can operate at rather low intensities. Due to Freudian psychoanalysis, we have a tendency to see desires as the powerful, determining forces that shape the entirety of our lives. However, the scene described above is not about deep-seated, overwhelming desires, but desires that are opportunistic, thoughtless, momentary, and whimsical; they are desires (as understood by Deleuze and Guattari, not by Freud) that are shaped, conditioned, and satisfied by a colonial system—an amorphous, ever-present desire almost entirely dictated by social/historical/political context. A briefer example from Tomb illustrates the same point when soldiers “harass those unimportant bodies, they beat them by habit, they crush them by boredom” (107). The strength of these desires is irrelevant—even weak desires are satisfied; the only prerequisite is that opportunities arise for their arousal and satisfaction, thus explaining momentary acts of cruelty. They are not necessarily sought out, and are just as quickly forgotten. Reduced to pure desire, Tomb is a world stripped of all psychological complexity, offering a powerful statement about the shape of human history; that is, everything in history—even the worst parts—has occurred because someone
desired it to occur (this is very similar to the criticism of capital punishment in *Naked Lunch*, which does away with all rationalizing, and states quite simply that capital punishment exists because it provides pleasure). Living outside of desire is not a possibility, and desire is shaped not simply by early childhood development (as Freud would have us believe), but by the social, historical, and political context, as Deleuze and Guattari argue.

In *Tomb*, desire is always satisfied, and the opportunities available for their satisfaction depend upon the social hierarchy; this hierarchy is expressed via sexual relations: “Not a single brothel in Titov Veles. Those among the people who do not own a slave, they mate with their children, and if they don’t have any, with the dogs, the bitches, the donkeys, the she-asses half wild and dying under the eucalypti” (345). Here the fucking-machines are limited only by the opportunity of objects to be fucked. Or this limit can be the opportunity to satisfy multiple desires at once:

Anne cuts the meat; Winnetou comes in, his hand around Alix’s waist; all sit down, eat, drink; Winnetou spits on the fur, the twins lay their hands or their lips on the spittle, Winnetou loosens his belt, Alix moves her hand forward, touches, fiddles with the battledress buttons, Winnetou drinks, chokes, Anne slaps his back, Alix licks the splashes of rosé wine on Winnetou’s cheeks; the soldier, drunk, pushes the girl away, he throws himself on her, he knocks her down under him, Anne slips the cup of cream under his lips, Winnetou gets up again, he takes the cup, he plunges his mouth in it, he sucks up the whipped cream, he laps, he licks, Alix pulls him by the belt…

Anne, sprawled on her back, arms folded under her nape, hums with the voice of one who’s having an orgasm; Winnetou, excited by Alix’s caresses, and by Anne’s voice, brings out his dripping snout from the cup, throws the cup away, takes it back, caps Alix’s bare breast with it; then, he rolls over Alix, who panting, unbuttons him and pulls his hardened cock:

—Whip my semen. (325)
Presumably, why would these various desiring-machines keep their desires separate when they can be satisfied simultaneously? So, as the above illustrates eating and fucking simultaneously, there are also other combinations, such as killing and fucking:

— I’ll fuck you to death. (342)

— My husband is the one who killed him. One evening he pushed him here in this room, in fetters; I sucked him, like I am sucking you now, then my husband brained him in front of me, on this sofa, banging his head against the wood of the sofa, with me still sucking him until the cock grew soft and fell inside my mouth. Your cock tastes the same…. (257)

Desires can be shaped, combined, and multiplied (but never subtracted). The result is a world where desire is truly everywhere, in everyplace, in everybody.

In a world of total desire where the only limitations are those imposed by opportunity in a colonial war, there is no room for morality:

— Colonel, one of your captains spoke to me about a young man, named Kment, who with his brothers and sisters prostitutes himself in the higher part of the city. Until the war ends, we must hold on. As for me I want to have my fun, enjoy pleasures forbidden on the continent, therefore, I hand over my authority to you. Your first order, consequently, will be to have that young boy searched for. If you catch him in the morning, bring him to me at once, if you catch him after nightfall, give him a good bed, close the room so that he regains his strength, and his freshness for my benefit.

— General, headquarters are aware of your morals.

— I have no morals. And who informed them? (225)

The General’s amorality is the mark of distinction that has allowed him to rise in the ranks of the colonial army. Quite simply, there is no room for morality in colonial war, which is constituted purely by a colonial desiring-production. Like Burroughs’, Guyotat's text is one in which power is purely of a sado-masochistic kind, free of reason, logic, or morals. This marks an important point of distinction between the writings of the Marquis de Sade and of Guyotat (understandably, critics want to see parallels between the two writers): de Sade’s fiction makes use of characters
in the more traditional sense, who—to a certain extent—have to rely on logic and reason to justify their sexual activities and the power structures that constitute these activities. That is, de Sade offers a reasoned, logical, and philosophical sadism. However, Guyotat’s desiring-machines do not require justifications for their sadism other than the one provided by the socio-political context—in this way, they are operating within a colonial system that simultaneously shapes and justifies these desires for its actors.

What *Tomb*'s prostutional cosmology—or a universe filled with desiring-machines operating within a system of sexual oppression—establishes early in the text is the elimination of a binary relationship between master and slave. In its stead is offered a continuum of power and predation as in the example of WWII France, the colonizer, being colonized by Nazi Germany. Furthermore, this continuum can collapse on itself, forming an Ouroboros-like circle, where victim and perpetrator can exchange places, even if only briefly. In an example very similar to the slave-trader one from *Ashby* provided above, *Tomb* adds animals and the environment to the continuum of predation:

Ierissos pushes back the Queen of the Night, she grabs his wrists, squeezes them around her throat, he breaks loose from her, with the jerky movement of some big insect, a sand blast scratches the glazing, its shade crosses the uncovered breasts of the Queen of the Night, Ierissos looks up, she grabs his wrists, squeezes them around her neck, until she dies, Ierissos is struggling; the body, lifeless under the veils and soaking them in cold sweat, drops before his feet; Ierissos flees to the door, sets it ajar, a big black bird motionless on the threshold, head held up, is watching Ierissos; the child moves forward, the bird attacks the naked leg, Ierissos springs forward, the bird is grappling on to his knee, pricks him with his beak, digs into the wound, parts it and tears it with his claws, Ierissos runs up the orchard, the blood is streaming down along his leg, soaking his sock. Ierissos runs as far as the portal, he wakes up the blond guard asleep against the corner-post, the guard rises on his wooden leg, he loads his submachine-gun, hearing the noise of the breech the bird lifts its head, the guard strikes it with the butt, the bird contracts, its claws pierce the flesh of the knee, under the bone, Ierissos groans, the guard strikes, strikes, the bird, its battered head, its eyes blinded by the blood, by the blows, breaks
loose from the knee of Ierissos who shakes his leg, the bird falls on the flagstone, the guard tramples on it with his boots [...] (21-2)

In a manner befitting the *nouveau roman*, there is no characterization here—only the description of physical action according to various power relations. Ierissos, for reasons that are not explained, becomes the instrument of death for the Queen, and then becomes the victim of the bird’s attack, which is in turn killed by the blond guard. This scene illustrates that while there is a general hierarchical structure of power, it is only the conditions for the connections of desiring machines, not its rules; while socio-political hierarchies create the conditions favorable for certain sexual relations, desires, and violent acts, unlikely alternatives are always possible—desiring-machines take on various connections dependent solely upon what possibilities circumstances allow. This is a question of probability as all connections are technically possible, but most connections made throughout the book are the ones that its conditions favor: the powerful victimizing the powerless.

*Tomb* is a novel of desiring-machines because in its prostitutional cosmology, motivation never leaves the order of shitting, eating, killing, or fucking. There is nothing more complicated in the text than any of these desires. If certain moments of dialogue make these desiring-machines appear something more akin to “characters” in a realist novel, it is only in the pursuit of more shitting, eating, killing, or fucking; these desires are relentlessly pursued throughout the narrative. Complicated questions of politics and history are reduced to these desires. So when Deleuze and Guattari state that “*There is only desire and the social, and nothing else*” (*Anti-Oedipus* 29), this becomes an accurate statement about *Tomb*. Sex and violence throughout *Tomb* are conditioned by the social arrangements of two groups: the colonizers and the colonized, or the wealthy and the poor. Customers pay to have sex with prostitutes. Soldiers of one group kill soldiers of another group. Soldiers kill civilians. Soldiers kill prostitutes. Customers kill
prostitutes. The wealthy eat plenty; the poor eat little. Of course, sometimes there are exceptions to this basic structure of relationships as circumstances allow, but for the most part, these relationships are the entirety of the narrative.

Considering that Guyotat was reading Faulkner and Nietzsche while a soldier during the Algerian War, *Tomb* is the logical intersection of slavery, prostitution, and the bacchanalian (in this way, those who see a literary trajectory via de Sade have been led astray—Guyotat claims to have only read de Sade's biography around this time). He argues that massacres are “un fait qu'il faut comprendre, décomposer, dont il faut ressentir par soi-même l'horreur pour mieux en combattre le retour [a fact that we must understand and dismantle, one that must be felt alone in order to better combat its return]” (*Explications* 78). Thus *Tomb* operates like the other side of the coin of the “horror of existence” that Nietzsche describes in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). That is, Nietzsche argues that the function of Attic tragedy was a way for the ancient Greeks to be able to rationalize, or to come to terms with the daily horrors that they were forced to confront—they turned horror into art. In a postmodern era, where a sizable portion of the Western world is able to live a pacified and isolated existence of ease, *Tomb* serves to remind a complacent Western audience of the global horrors of existence. This aesthetic of human horror is not a way of packaging and selling it, making it glossy and palatable (and therefore unconsidered, as in horror films), but as a way of making it beautiful, “madly beautiful”: “C'est une musique que je dois faire la plus belle possible pour qu'elle soit la plus expressive, pour que cette aberration soit la plus aberrante possible, à la lecture ou à l'audition. Il faut donc produire du beau avec cette aberration, il la faut la plus belle, la plus follement belle” [This music that I make must be the most beautiful possible so that it is the most expressive, so that this aberration is the most aberrant possible, to the reader and to the listener. It must be the most beautiful, the
most madly beautiful)” (Guyotat, “Divinités du Styx…” 87). Tomb is both a reminder and a coping mechanism for dealing with humanity's worst crimes, an artistic form of recuperation that involves the recovering of humanity's dark history, making us dwell within it. It involves reveling in what is lowest—a very strange and intoxicating mix of humanity's highest and lowest achievements—acknowledging humanity's worst while indicating at the same time humanity's promise and recuperation. Guyotat's self-proclaimed project is to re-shape human misery: “cette misère [humaine] dont il faut que je fasse une Musique…! [this human misery from which I must make Music!] (Vivre 199).

The Prostitutional and the Postcolonial: Eden, Eden, Eden (1970) and Beyond

While the majority of this chapter focuses on Tomb and the Algerian War, it would be a mistake to believe that the majority of Guyotat's work focuses on the war. His work is informed, influenced, and haunted by war, but it does not focus on it. Writing about Eden, Foucault accurately predicts why the rest of Guyotat's work would not focus on the war:

Il y manque ce bruit de guerre qui avait permis à votre premier roman d’être entendu. On veut que la guerre ne soit qu'une parenthèse, le monde interrompu ; et à cette condition on admet que tous les extrêmes s’y rencontrent. Je me demande si le Tombeau n’est pas passé à la faveur d’une fausse dramatisation ; on a dit : c'est l’Algérie, c'est l'occupation, alors que c’était le piétinement de toute armée, et le brouhaha infini des servitudes. On a dit : c'est le temps où nous étions coupables, nous nous y reconnaissons, nous voilà donc innocents, alors que ces coups, ces corps, ces blessures dans leur nudité, loin d’être une image de la morale, valaient pour le signe pur de la politique. A l’abri de la grande excuse guerrière, ce que vous racontiez nous parvenait allégé comme un chant du lointain. Votre triple Éden reprend le même discours, mais à la plus petite distance possible, au-dessous des limites de l’accommodation.

[It lacks this war noise that had permitted your first novel to be heard. We want the war to be just an interlude, the world interrupted; and on this condition we accept that all the extremes are found there. I wonder if Tomb had not appeared thanks to a false dramatization; we said: it's Algeria, it's the occupation, while hearing the marching of the
entire army, and the infinite hubbub of servitude. We said: we were guilty then, we recognize that, thus here we are innocent, while these shots, these bodies, these wounds in their stark reality, far from being a moral image, are valued as a purely political sign. Shielded by the great war excuse, what you recounted barely reached us like a song heard from far away. Your triple *Eden* takes up the same discourse, but from the closest possible distance, beneath the limits of accommodation.] (160)

Foucault suggests that war is commonly understood as the exception to the rule, rather than the expression of the rule itself—that is, that the appalling treatment of the other happens only during the exceptional moment of war. To combat this misconception, Guyotat's work leaves the war and descends into the brothel: only the first tenth of *Eden* is dedicated to the Algerian war—the majority is dedicated to the brothel (as is the majority of the rest of his work). Guyotat's work must leave the war in order to articulate a prostitutional cosmology that operates at all times, with or without war. It shows a continuity of oppression from colonial to postcolonial regimes, moving from war to a generalized state of neo-colonial enslavement.

*Eden*'s ban can be partly attributed to its composition and partly to the transition between colonial war to postcolonial brothel. In 1967, Guyotat published “Tam-Tam,” which was an early version of *Eden*'s first 15 pages. In 1969, he published “Bordels Boucherie,” which was an early version of *Eden*'s next 30 pages that was composed in one week, “13-18 aout [August] 1968” (“Bordels Boucherie” 32). The rest of *Eden* was completed in a period of 6 months in “Vitry-sur-Seine, November 1968—April 1969” (*Eden* 181). “Tam-Tam,” published the same year as *Tomb*, “opère la jonction entre les fictions d' Éden, Éden, Éden et de Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats [serves as the transition from *Tomb* to *Eden*]” (Brun 193). Because the “Tam-Tam” section is *Eden*'s only allusion76 to the Algerian War, it contains the most brutal scenes in the book. The worst two are the following:

Peuhl unsheathing dagger at hips, tracing with point of blade—bent: youths gutted against onyx wall—semi-circle around vulva, plunging blade into mute flesh, tearing,
stripping, slicing muscles, nerves running from vulva into flaccid sheath covering strangulated member; member hardened on contact with disturbed muscles, springing out capped with bloody flesh; [...] crouching, head turned back, seizing woman under reddened armpits: sweaty hand slipping on cold flesh; legs spattered with blood from mangled vulva dragging on debris of bones; (6-7)

driver taking spanner, crank, from truck; spanner forcing open suspect’s clenched jaw, driver unbuttoning dungarees, pissing between torn lips, pulling up suspect with three spanner strokes at throat, pushing crank through tear in dungarees, between buttocks; other soldiers aroused, rising from mattresses, grasping, turning crank in suspect’s arse; suspect, head falling back, wet with spittle, onto shoulder, crown touching tormentor’s swollen crotch, lips spitting back excremental saliva, clenching teeth onto spanner; tip of crank forced into loins; pulled out, bloody, by driver, thrown outside command-post, wiped clean on sandbags around perimeter; (10)

Such scenes depict the sexual motivation for an indiscriminate yet organized, state-sponsored terrorism of the native civilian population. Rape, mutilation, torture, and execution are tools of a system of oppression during a colonial war. In contrast to Tomb, Eden's most distinguishing feature in these scenes is that there is no clear sense of two sides being in opposition with each other—i.e.: Who are these soldiers fighting? These scenes display soldiers performing sexual violence on civilians simply for being “suspects.” Suspicion makes an enemy of the entire civilian population, and at times, they are not even labeled suspects at all. “Tam-Tam” can thus be seen as partly responsible for Eden's ban. If this section were included anywhere but the beginning of the text, it surely would not have been read by Eden's censors: they would not have bothered to read the book cover to cover. It is not the extremity per se of “Tam-Tam” that is to blame, but the fact that it exposes the extremity of the Algerian War and its sexual motivation.

While “Tam-Tam” serves as the transition between Tomb and Eden, “Bordels Boucherie” marks the true beginning of Eden, and perhaps of Guyotat's subsequent works as well. “Bordels Boucherie” begins the long second section of the novel, containing two
brothels—one male and the other female—but is entirely devoted to the events in a male brothel. While *Tomb* did contain homosexual acts, this switch in his work to exclusively homosexual activity is a significant one. The key to the role of homosexuality in his work can be found in a 2003 interview:

I think the 'normalisation' of what is called 'homosexuality' is at the same time legitimate and dangerous. Legitimate if only to repair the damage done, in History (and repair in advance, if I can say so, the damage that will continue to be done) to this sexuality (sexual impulse) and allow the widening of sexual desire (the rending), of the senses; dangerous, because it risks producing exclusivity, specialization, fanaticism in a field which is the explosion of limits, play, risk, derision.

What we call 'homosexuality' should awaken sexuality entirely, 'play' a driving and disturbing role in sexuality in general, give back a bit of the freedom it loses in the institutionalisation of what we call 'homosexuality.' Its normalisation makes it lose altogether this fragile and courageous role [...] ("Art is what remains of History" 392-393)

With such a view of homosexuality in mind, *Eden* as gay erotic literature surely played a role in its ban as well. If it offends for what it says about the Algerian War, it also offends in the way that it challenges heterosexual hegemony—and in an oppressive regime, sexual, social, racial, and gender hierarchies all reinforce each other. The ultimate point, however, is that *Eden*, like *Tomb*, works within aporia; it attempts to be a liberatory text while displaying absolute subjugation. It attempts to liberate on the level of sexuality, but it also uses homosexuality to display sexualized subjugation. For this reason, most of the prostitution he depicts is exclusively amongst men, conveniently avoiding issues of gender and the patriarchal exploitation of women. In such a world, one class exploiting another is the predominant form of oppression, and in a global economy, such exploitation makes the third or eastern world into the first world's brothel—both literally, and allegorically, because much of the exploitation of the third world has
to be recognized not only for the money it generates, but also for the pleasure that its domination generates.

At the same time, we must remember that such oppression does not occur solely in the third world. Foucault wrote that “Le Tombeau […] était hors chronologie […] Éden […] est hors lieu [Tomb was outside chronology, and Eden is outside place] (160). Just as Tomb could not be pinpointed to the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century, Eden cannot be pinpointed to Algeria. Eden's universality is the way in which prostitution is the universal experience (see Lyotard: “the prostitutive function of cash in society” (82); “money is the pimp” (126)). If there is a slight attempt to locate that universal experience in Algeria, it is only to highlight the way in which this universal experience has been shaped in a globalized, neo-colonial economy. Eden both does, and does not, take place in Algeria; it would be a mistake to restrict it to a certain country, or even to the postcolonial Eastern world.

Similarly, it would be an oversimplification to understand the function of prostitution as purely condemnation; Guyotat defends prostitutes while equating prostitution with slavery. His position is the logical consequence of a Marxist view of the exploitation of labor, of bodies themselves, and of—quite literally—man's exploitation of man. He offers a vision of all human relationships, which are prostitutional by nature, and where all exploited labor is prostitution. However, Guyotat's work clearly defends prostitutes; for example, in Vivre, he is worried about their exploitation by the state (outlawing prostitution then charging fines is the state's cut of the prostitute's labor). Moreover, Eden's heroes are its prostitutes—they are the central characters who are the most sympathetically presented. Eden's most compelling and ambiguous moment is when a prostitute says to a group of workers, “peasant, throw your tools into river... use your sex... worker, use your sex” (28). Is this prostitute so blind to his subjugation that he thinks his
state is preferable to theirs? Or, are prostitutes the sexual scapegoats of an exploitative economy, working within an ideology that disguises the fact that all of our collective labor is exploited? Couldn't the main criticisms of prostitution—that it is “morally wrong,” dangerous, degrading, exploitative—also be levied at many other professions? Perhaps even more so? (For this reason, Guyotat sees soldiers as prostitutes.) He is attempting to find some sort of liberation of human sexuality, because its repression is essential to both colonial and postcolonial subjugation. In this way, he clearly gets at the heart of this dissertation: liberation and subjugation are deeply interwoven in the same capacity or possibility. His writing of sexuality, his attempt to know it, to learn it (similar to Burroughs' efforts), is an effort at liberation, even while his work displays subjugation. Is the prostitute Guyotat's hero in a narrative of human liberation, or is he the figure of humanity's cruelty towards itself? Certainly both.

As *Eden's* title indicates, this novel does have a third section; the first one is the shortest, dedicated to the Algerian war; the second one is the longest, taking place in a male brothel; and the third one follows a nomad family in the Sahara. These sections are “Edenic” as they are the true origins of humanity: war, prostitution, and slavery (the Saharan nomad family has a literal slave, which was not entirely uncommon even in the twentieth century). Guyotat explains his use of Eden in the following:

> si c’était un 'édén,' il serait déjà abîmé [...] La figuration n'est pas du tout édénique, [...] il faut donc lire ce texte comme rétablissant dans les faits la notion scientifique de genèse, masquée, déformée depuis des siècles sous le mythe d'Adam et Eve'. Nous sommes donc là bien loin d'une 'vision' idéaliste, d'une 'vision' utopiste.

*[if it were an 'Eden,' it would have already been ruined.... The representation is not all Edenic, ...so you have to read this text as re-establishing the facts of the scientific notion of genesis, masked, deformed for centuries under the myth of 'Adam and Eve'.] (Littérature interdite 56)*
Here is where form meets content: in order to combat an idealist, utopian version of humanity's origins, it must abandon an idealist, utopian writing. Guyotat's version of the *nouveau roman*, his attempt to write as objectively and materialist as possible is part of his project to write a more accurate version of humanity's origin so as to simultaneously identify its problems today. *Eden*’s third section is silent in that there is no dialogue amongst characters—only a narrative of described actions; this silence can be understood as the perfection of a purely objective, scientific writing. If speech and dialogue are always the expression of an individual subjectivity, silence is the ultimate expression of a neutral and collective writing.

In the *nouveau roman*’s abandon of the bourgeois, realist novel, it can abandon any requirements for “realism” (which is an ideological construct according to Barthes' *Writing Degree Zero*), and therefore bring slavery, prostitution, and war to their logical conclusions. That is, in the world that Guyotat depicts, these three nouns are intimately linked together—inseparable in their portrayal of a humanity that is always subjected to power, implying (almost never displaying) that if there is any possible liberation, it is only through the ending of human abjection and its interminable conflict found in colonialism and neo-colonialism. This ideological critique is clearly central to Guyotat's work as it denies typical Western attitudes about its own history, and it works at the historical, political level—i.e., if you want to go to war, if you want to colonize, if you want to enslave, this means rape, starvation, an increase in prostitution to service soldiers (along with a comparable increase in human trafficking to meet this new demand), massacres, exploitation, the destruction of the environment, etc. Guyotat holds our gaze here so that we are forced to stare at it in all its ramifications. He does not mention any of the rationalizing arguments for war or colonialism, choosing a method of response that is indirect in that it does not explicitly engage with it (thus legitimizing it), but at
the same time is also direct as it gets at the very heart of the matter by displaying nothing but the human/animal/environmental cost.

Such a pure materiality of writing denies the abstractions that are central to Western thinking. That is, starting with Platonic ideals, there has always been a separation of thinking from material reality. This point seems central to Guyotat's work, which is entirely embodied, being composed exclusively of dialogue and the descriptions of physical actions. Of course, if Guyotat is concerned with materiality and is against idealism, this is why his portrayal of the human is one that is always constantly sweating, bleeding, shitting, pissing, eating, drinking, vomiting, and ejaculating. This is what Guyotat adds to materiality of the human body in literature, which has been traditionally relegated to skin color and texture, hair color, length, and style, facial features, and build. Without the acknowledgment that the human is—partly—a shitting-machine, we are suddenly capable of believing all kinds of nonsense: for example, we are capable of believing in an anthropocentric universe where the only being that matters is the human being, and the creation of the universe was solely for the end result of human existence; once we acknowledge that humans shit and piss like all other animals, it becomes more difficult to deny the continuity of animal life, of which humanity is only one iteration. And if the whole of humanity is not a part of that continuity, then it is also a simple task to remove certain segments of humanity from the whole. Everything becomes possible once we deny these continuities.

It would be too easy and too comforting to dismiss Guyotat as someone who suffers from a warped vision of the world (as many of his detractors have done). Perhaps the first time this accusation was made was “pendant l'interrogatoire en avril 1962, à la Sécurité militaire de Tizi Ouzou, le colonel avait sur sa table les notes de Pierre Guyotat, qui furent confisquées, et un
exemplaire de Sur un cheval [during the interrogation in April 1962 at Tizi Ouzou military security, the colonel had Pierre Guyotat's confiscated notes on the table, and a copy of Sur un cheval]” (Carnets de bord 625). However, Guyotat's notebooks from 1962 provide a succinct response to this accusation: “On me dit « Vous êtes un obsédé sexuel » parce que j'ose écrire que des officiers français violaient des Algériennes [They tell me “You are a sex maniac” because I dare to write that French officers raped Algerian women]” (Carnets de bord 32). If Guyotat's fiction appears warped, it is because it presents a reality too brutal to face.
CONCLUSION: TRAJECTORIES AND GEOMETRIES: MAPPING THE TRANSNATIONAL SPACE OF EMPIRE IN NORTH AFRICA

The comparative literary scholarship in this dissertation was not only suggested by the transnational character of North Africa from 1945 through 1970, but also by the four writers whose very lives and identities were transnational in character. Such a context could not help but shape the literature these writers produced: what they all have in common is the profound influence of North African French colonialism on their work. Both Burroughs and Bowles were forced to leave the U.S. due to its draconian laws and regressive attitudes towards drug use and homosexuality. And because both writers enjoyed relative freedom in Morocco, their writing focuses on drugs and sexuality as tools of control in both the colonial and postcolonial worlds. As for Kateb, he tried to give birth to a fledgling nation with a book, but at the same time, he—like many Maghrebian intellectuals of his generation—would never fully be able to identify with neither his colonial or postcolonial homeland, even to the point where he would be rejected by it, or at least by certain dominant factions of it. Due to his activism and his literature, Kateb spent much of his life away from the homeland that he was hoping to help found. And finally, a young Guyotat would go abroad to fight against an enemy with whom he would soon embrace and identify, to the point where he would consider this enemy territory to be his homeland. There are a surprising number of connections between these authors that are worth mapping out; the following attempts to draw out some of the most important points common to their works.

Among the many lessons learned from each of these authors is that hybridity and plurality is less commonly chosen than it is imposed. For the most part, hybridity is inescapable
in a postmodern, postcolonial world. That is, seeking out a single, unified, monocultural national identity after WWII may very well be an exercise in futility, and for good reason. The idea of a nation-state was in rapid decline after its horrifying realizations during WWII. However, this idea did not simply end: in its death throes in the latter half of the twentieth century, this dying idea would continue to exist in various forms in different political contexts (see Israel, for example). All four of these authors are dealing with identity as it relates to the nation in the aftermath of the failure of the nation-state. What they discover is that hybridity can be both the result of oppression, and the combat against this oppression. However, if combat is possible, it is only with great difficulty: when hybridity is embraced by a relatively free agent, the hybrid figure has chosen the more difficult, less traveled path. When hybridity is imposed, it is partly because hybridity as conversion is easier and safer—and most often, an imposed hybridity can be unethical as it means choosing sides, siding against the oppressed. On the other hand, the free agent who chooses hybridity does so to remain in the middle, which is more perilous, and most often, more ethical. Perhaps most importantly, hybridity can be both smooth and striated—it is capable of incredible movement and fluidity, but it is also capable of being restricting and isolating. Choosing hybridity means being in a permanent state of flux, whereas imposed hybridity means conversion to the dominant ideologies, languages and cultures. Choosing hybridity means becoming increasingly minor, while imposed hybridity means joining the majority. All four of these writers tackle the difficult issue of their own hybridity, and of hybridity *per se* in their works. Hybridity for them is both a strength and a weakness. It comes from within and from without. It is a form of resistance and it is a form of subjugation. It is both tactical and strategic. It is both movement and stasis.
In this way, hybridity seems to operate in a fashion similar to that of “borderlessness at work in the globalized world” as it is articulated in Gayatri Spivak's “A Borderless World” (2012). Spivak argues that the movement of global capital depends upon the reinforcement of boundaries: “capital is in fact borderless. That is the problem. On the other hand, capital has to keep borders alive in order for this kind of cross-border trade to happen. So therefore, the idea of borderlessness has a performative contradiction within it, which has to be kept alive.” She explains that this phenomenon is largely due to the speculation in the trade of soft and hard national currencies—a mobile wealth that is created by the existence of boundaries. She then suggests that this is largely how neo-colonialism functions: “this borderlessness is after all a borderlessness which requires [...] that borders be there, so that the difference between the global north and global south, and within the global north, be kept alive.” However, Spivak argues that borderlessness also contains the possibility of liberation: “We also have to be able to dream of the other kind of borderlessness: unconditional hospitality.”

Spivak's point is central to this dissertation's study: in a postmodern world, global space can be both smooth and striated at the same time, and the play of smooth and striated space largely benefits postmodern systems of control. The four authors here all attempt their own resistances via the play of smooth and striated space, but they are more concerned with delineating exactly how this play has become a new tool of oppression. Bowles' work approaches this problem with its Western version of the nomad—the traveler—who, because s/he makes the globe into smooth space, s/he then in turn becomes a target for, and an expression of, the globe's rigid striation. With Burroughs, it is less about the figure than it is about space and language themselves: control overcomes its strict, striated boundaries by putting everything into play, making the globe into a smooth space; in this way, we see America's war on drugs, its
homophobia, and its cold war become global (or even inter-galactic, if we consider the cut-up novels) control systems that function more efficiently than the previous system of colonial empires fighting each other for specific parts of the globe. Kateb's work illustrates that in both pre- and post-independence Algeria, the globe is smooth but racially striated: that is, for the European the globe is smooth and movement is an expression of dominance and liberation; for the Algerian, the globe is striated and movement is an expression of subjugation. Guyotat's work focused on the battle of empires over striated space, but he also illustrated the complete smoothing out of the entire globe as slavery and prostitution become universal for all human relations, which are striated—polarized—at the individual levels of master/pimp/john and slave/prostitute.

Essential to their investigations of the play of smooth and striated space is the fact that all four writers produced works at the very moment of decolonization. Over time, Bowles navigates this transition by becoming increasingly minor: three of his novels were published before Moroccan independence, and all four were published before Algerian independence. Bowles' postcolonial work moves towards short stories, focusing increasingly on North African protagonists, then his work moves away from short story writing altogether, and his translations of North African writers begin to dominate. With the routine, Burroughs' early works attempt to understand and undermine power's dependence on narratives; however, as the colonial infrastructure starts to be dismantled, *Naked Lunch* (published between Moroccan and Algerian independence) and the cut-up trilogy start to see how control becomes further internalized—not just in the forms of narratives, but also in the more insidious forms of addiction, conditioning, and language itself. Kateb navigates the postcolonial transition by publishing one novel before Algerian independence, and one after. *Nedjma* is largely about the arbitrary, unjust, and
horrifying (see the Sétif massacre) powers the pieds-noirs exercise over the Arabo-Berber Algerians, who are forced to travel between various work sites and prisons; *Polygone* is largely about Algerian migrant labor in France, illustrating that while much of the colonial infrastructure is removed, poverty and cheap foreign labor prove to be superior forms of control (because it is more efficient and less easily resisted). Guyotat's early works contain his still nascent thinking about sexuality, colonialism, and sadism that would not be fully realized until his representation of colonial war in *Tomb*; *Eden*, like *Polygone*, moves into a postcolonial Algeria, illustrating how very little has changed for the oppressed. To clarify, *Eden*, devoid of war, does not as easily degrade to acts of Caligulan cruelty—the warring factions have disappeared, but they are replaced by a more subtle and pervasive racial/economic opposition. Also like *Polygone*, *Eden* is concerned with exploitation via poverty in a postcolonial, transnational space, but this opposition is simpler in its purity of prostitute and john. The cruelty we see in *Tomb* is not utterly absent in *Eden*—prostitutes are still victims of extreme cruelty, but these acts are more random, less systematized than they are during war. The works of each of these four writers navigate the transition to postcolonialism in such a way that documents the modifications and continuations of colonialist oppression.

Typical of a postmodern understanding of art, none of these men considered themselves to be writers in the traditional sense; rather, all four considered themselves instruments or mediums of writing. Bowles claims that he “didn't plan *The Sheltering Sky* at all” (*Conversations* 51), that “one's first novel often writes itself: everything comes out in it” (52), and that “I don't feel that I wrote those books” (122). Burroughs had a similar experience with writing when he suggests that his routines took on a life of their own (even to the point where they take over his and everyone's lives), and his cut-up method radically deconstructed writing's originality and
ownership. Kateb's writing method resembles Bowles': “Quand je me mets à écrire, je ne contrôle pas, je ne me dis pas : Je vais écrire ceci et puis ceci, suivant un plan préconçu [When I start writing, I am not in control, I don't say to myself : I'm going to write this and then this, following a preconceived plan]” (Le Poète comme un boxeur 40). And Guyotat explains his idea of “matière écrite [written matter]” as “a point of knowledge where you have the feeling you are working with the matter itself, molding it, kneading it. And this is no longer ‘writing’” (Strand & Tuttle 19). He continues, “An artist who reaches this point […] no longer knows, in the final count, how he does what he does” (19).

Why this commonality is so important for this dissertation is that it speaks to the postmodern in its postcolonial North African context. That is, these particularly postmodern attitudes towards art, per se,—that the writer is neither the creator nor the genius of great artworks of immense originality—dramatically shifts agency so that artistic creation does not come only from within, but also from without. With such a view of art, the artist's immediate political, historical, cultural, geographical context plays a profound role in art's creation, which means that North Africa itself is instrumental in the creation of the works studied here, and that this context has helped mold a certain kind of postmodernism. Again, with such a view of art, it seems impossible not to see North Africa as playing an integral role in the actual creation of these postmodern works, and as such, these four introduce distinctly postcolonial concerns that perhaps might not have been otherwise present in postmodern art and thinking. Most importantly, these writers were not national products—their creations are all a result of cross-pollination. That is, each writer's most profound artistic influences were not from their fellow countrymen and -women, but from foreigners. This increasingly strengthens the premise of my approach which was always about putting this transnational cast together—a cast whose
members were already transnational to begin with—who illustrate similar concerns about their contemporary age, defining it in similar ways.

Perhaps due to this collision between the postmodern and the postcolonial, all four writers focus on forms of slavery as one of the defining features of the post-WWII era. Bowles' “A Distant Episode” and *The Sheltering Sky* illustrate how the absolute fluidity of the human construct lead to the creation of slaves, making humanity's very design particularly vulnerable to the possibility of slavery. This mix of fluidity and construction means that all of Bowles' subsequent works about the fight over identity will be informed by this constant threat of slavery. Burroughs deals with slavery in a more scientific sense (hence his inclination for science fiction) in that human conditioning makes the human construct particularly vulnerable to slavery. Kateb, in more explicitly colonial and postcolonial terms, investigates not only how slavery is a product of racist colonial and postcolonial economies, but also of religion, as well, which was key to the Arabization of a postcolonial Algerian state: “Toutes les religions commencent par exalter la liberté de l'homme et finissent par le réduire en esclavage [All religions begin by exalting the liberty of man and end by reducing him to slavery]” (*Le Poète comme un boxeur* 168). And Guyotat, of course, was concerned with the slavery of soldiers, prostitutes, and the racial other. What all four writers are investigating is not just a metaphorical slavery, but a literal one that persists in the age of humanity that falsely believes itself liberated. Slavery, then, becomes one of the defining conditions of a postmodern/postcolonial era.

Uncontrolled growth, a common theme in the works discussed in this dissertation, is also central to these defining conditions. It begins with Bowles, who displays that the mixture of drugs and traveling open the human assemblage up to radical transformations of infinite possibilities. Identity is not seen as natural, intrinsic, and inviolable, but as vulnerable and ever-
changing. Burroughs then continues this viewpoint with his central metaphors about control: viruses and cancer. Viruses proliferate through external connections, while cancer proliferates through internal growth. These metaphors understand postmodern power as rhizomatic rather than hierarchical/arboresque as in colonial or other traditional power regimes: control no longer requires a puppeteer manipulating events—control becomes internalized and self-proliferating.

In a fashion similar to Burroughs, Kateb sees endlessly proliferating, mutable arabesques of polygons of all sizes controlling all possible territories, identities, and experiences. These polygons are a newer, mobile, and mutable version of striation, as opposed to the more rigid ones found in colonialism. Guyotat sees prostitution and desire invading all human relationships and all of human history; prostitution becoming *the* way to understand all human relationships throughout history, but especially those in a postmodern, globalized world, where the third world is prostituted to the first. All four of these writers will vary in optimism regarding resistance to uncontrolled growth, but the general agreement appears to be that postmodern control has become less obviously organized, more efficient, and more difficult to pinpoint and resist.

The discussion above addresses the most significant connections to be made between all four writers, but there are other connections to be mapped out as suggested by this dissertation's organization into two parts (Americans in Tangier, and The Algerian War). Perhaps the strongest connection to be made between Bowles and Burroughs is that they both used drugs in Tangier so as to investigate international politics in their writing. (Drugs would also become the subject for both writers—particularly when Bowles writes *One Hundred Camels in the Courtyard* and when he translates the works of Mohammed Mrabet.) Drug use was a way of entering new spaces, for coming to terms with new identities and positions. For Bowles, he initially used cannabis to write the death scene in *Sheltering*. After being able to think the non-space of death (the sky
sheltering us from the nothingness that lies beyond it), he was then able to think the spaces and identities occupied by others, which is why, for example, Bowles was able to claim that “Allal el Fassi, 'the father of Moroccan nationalism,' read it [The Spider's House] and expressed his personal approval” (The Spider's House x). At the same time, Bowles never claimed to achieve something like a reductively simplistic conversion from American to Moroccan—he always claimed a hybrid identity and maintained his American status until the day he died. For Burroughs, drugs would be a constant confrontation with the law—therefore playing an instrumental role in his ability to theorize control. His theorizing would take on a properly colonized space as he resided in Tangier and wrote Naked Lunch and the cut-up trilogy, which was ultimately a sci-fi series on colonialism and Empire (in the Hardt and Negri sense). As Americans in Tangier with (some) money, Bowles and Burroughs enjoyed a certain amount of status and protection, but they were also very critical of colonialism, and wrote works that were anti-Empire, and sympathetic to independence movements. As such, they were Americans who displayed a different sort of hybridity—coming from the opposite direction from Kateb in terms of Empire.

On the other side of this dissertation's divide, both Kateb and Guyotat were greatly influenced by Faulkner and by classic Greek literature. Though at first glance both writers appear to have little in common, we can see how they each uniquely mix slavery, avant-garde poetics and desire to create their own mythologies. Such a mixture displays an interesting broad-lens approach to viewing humanity in that it is an effort to avoid historical idiosyncrasy and to speak to the larger truths of conflict in North Africa—truths about slavery, war, and racism. On the other hand, to a French public that genuinely believed that Algeria was France, an integral part of France (as opposed to the belief that it was simply France's possession), Kateb's and Guyotat's
works are powerful counter-statements. They both draw upon Algerian history, upon the
existence of Algeria as other, so as to prove that Algeria was not France—displaying Algeria as a
viable, valuable, and separate people/culture independent of France—but they do so in very
different ways. Kateb uses Algerian history to, among other things, remind us of the Algeria's
rich cultural traditions that celebrate Algeria's otherness. However, Guyotat's use of history to
prove that Algeria is, and always has been, irrevocably other from France displays a relationship
of exploitation and degradation: he proves quite simply that Algeria is not France because the
treatment of Algerians was not equivalent to that of the French. If their exploitation is similar in
kind—if the French people as well as the Algerian people are exploited—it vastly differs in
intensity. It is the intensity of the exploitation and degradation that radically differentiates
Algeria from France, which was true in both a colonial and postcolonial Algeria. Kateb and
Guyotat reached similar conclusions about colonial oppression continuing in a postcolonial state.

The organization of this dissertation suggests a series of connections that are worth
making between Bowles and Burroughs, and Kateb and Guyotat, but there are also other
connections to be made that should be mapped out as well. For example, Bowles and Kateb were
both interested in a reclamation of traditional North African culture (and in this way, were
resistant to Westernization as cultural imperialism) without naively suggesting that a nostalgic
return to the past was possible. They knew that the erasure of certain cultural practices, arts, and
languages would be the project of a postcolonial nation. For this reason, both Kateb and Bowles
recognized the literary value of the illiterate North African illiterate poet—whether it was
Bowles' work with Mrabet, or with the respect Kateb expresses for a poet like Mouhand ou
Mouhand:

Mouhand ou Mouhand, dans la plupart des cas, les lettrés l'ont pris de haut parce qu'il
était analphabète : il n'a jamais écrit. C'est un poète qui a traversé à pied l’Algérie de fond
en comble, qui a eu une vie passionnante, une vraie vie de poète et qui a une œuvre monumentale derrière lui. Mais qui le connaît en Algérie ?

[In most cases, scholars have looked down on Mouand ou Mouhand because he was illiterate: he never wrote. He is a poet who traveled on foot the entirety of Algeria, who led a fascinating life, a true life of the poet, and who left a monumental body of work behind him. But who in Algeria knows him?] (Corpet, Dichy, and Djaider 68)

Considering that Bowles also recorded traditional Maghrebian musicians, both Bowles and Kateb are concerned with recuperating a lost/forgotten Maghrebian cultural past. Their works are also similar in that they both interested in a forced nomadism as an expression of oppression—but from opposite ends of Empire.

Both Guyotat and Burroughs are concerned with sexualized power and control. They criticized the state of knowledge about sexuality, and questioned why any and all attempts to study sexuality in either the humanities or the sciences met a considerable amount of resistance by authorities. Unsurprisingly, two writers who felt this way about sexuality were forced to defend their work from censorship. In their attempts to create an art form that provided a more accurate understanding of sexuality, they came to similar conclusions about writing: Burroughs and Brion Gysin claimed that writing was considerably behind painting at the time when they developed the cut-up method, and Guyotat has argued that “l’écriture accumule un retard considérable sur la musique ou la peinture [writing has fallen considerably behind music and painting]” (Explications 167). With such similarities in mind, the combination of sex and violence in Guyotat's work is best understood in the same way we are to understand them in Burroughs' Naked Lunch—that is, Burroughs' combination of sex and execution by hangings is, as Burroughs mentions, meant as a diatribe against capital punishment. Burroughs' point is a simple one: capital punishment is not about justice—it exists because it provides a certain number of people with gratification, perhaps even to the point of sexual pleasure. Guyotat's use of the combination of sex and violence is of an even broader scope in that it concerns world wars
and colonial wars. Like Burroughs, Guyotat points out that the violent exercise of power—even in its most extreme and cruel possibilities—is largely motivated by human desire, but he goes even further than Burroughs: concentration camps exist because the exercise of power and cruelty is pleasurable. Unlike many postcolonial theorists, Guyotat does not need to engage at all with colonialist rhetoric concerning intentions (white man's burden, manifest destiny, bringing civilization and education to the rest of the world, protecting people from themselves, etc.), and it is this lack of engagement that is the strength of his argument. It does not validate such arguments through acknowledging them, as it stands confident in the truth of its depiction of the world. Guyotat's confidence in this truth relies upon his role as a witness of historical atrocities.

Both Kateb and Burroughs were interested in making their own mythologies—Burroughs' mythology was a space age mythology of nova criminals and conspiracies, universalizing the phenomena of conflict and control, whereas Kateb's was an a contemporary mythology of Algerian characters and events, used in the construction of a new nation. Both Kateb's and Burroughs' mythologies were interested in the use of medicine as a tool of oppression, though in different contexts. Burroughs was interested in the way in which medicine was used to legitimize and spread America's drug war, which would have vast—seemingly immeasurable—global consequences as it was instrumental in establishing America's Empire. Kateb's concern for medicine was more concerned with colonialism understood in a conventional sense—that is, with the use of medicine as a form of control in the final decades of French colonialism in North Africa. As Richard Keller's *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in North Africa* (2007) argues, Kateb had much in common with the works of Fanon in this sense: “Madness was for many of these authors the paradigmatic sickness of colonialism” (162); “colonial medicine and psychiatry were complicit with these [epistemological, structural, and physical] forms of
brutality” (162). And because they were attempting to write a mythology of the necessarily protean contemporary world, both Kateb and Burroughs never considered any of their works to be completed (even though many would consider their works—Nedjma and Naked Lunch—to be masterpieces). This contemporary mythology would dictate the form of their work which had a tendency to favor fragments over the complete and immutable.

There are many more connections that could be made between these writers, but the numerous connections described above go well beyond similarities in theory and artistry; they describe a general agreement on the characterization of the immediate decades post-WWII. These connections outline certain attempts to accurately capture human experience and its most profound problems. What these four discover is that the world is more globalized than ever before, which means that power and control are more dispersed as well; that the problems they face at home are already problems to be simultaneously faced abroad, and vice versa; that hybridity requires more nuanced understandings than those previously available; that mobility is more likely an expression of enslavement than of liberation; that postcolonial conditions do not differ from colonial conditions as much as is commonly believed; that mythologies are as necessary now than they have ever been; that desire helps us achieve a greater understanding of the motivation to oppress; and that the artwork is profoundly dependent upon its socio-historical context. The problems of the colonial/postcolonial transition that Bowles, Burroughs, Kateb, and Guyotat correctly identify does not necessarily offer immediate, actionable solutions; however, this identification becomes a firm basis from which to pursue solutions, which would not be possible otherwise. The resistance that these four offer to colonial power and postcolonial control is one where the reader achieves a greater awareness of the nature and depths of subjugation.
For Future Development

In its current form, this dissertation examines the works of two American writers, and of one French and one Algerian writer; however, A Transnational Postmodernism would have an even more balanced representation if it were to include the works of the French writer, Claude Ollier, and the Moroccan writer, Driss Chraïbi. Writing additional chapters on Ollier and Chraïbi would constitute a third part of this project entitled, “Colonial and Postcolonial Administration in Morocco.”

Like Guyotat, Ollier is a French nouveau romancier who comes from a position of French empire, but subsequently identifies himself with its victims. Ollier's The Mise-en-Scène (1958) was the first winner of the Prix Medecis; set during the time when Morocco was a protectorate, this novel is about a French engineer by the name of Lasalle who is tasked with designing a road that traverses difficult terrain in the Atlas mountains. While working near a small Moroccan village, he discovers that his predecessor may have been murdered, but he is ultimately unable to confirm whether he is correct or not. The Mise-en-Scène is written in a precise language dedicated to the rendering of a physical reality which was typical of the nouveau roman style; this precision is reflected Lasalle's diary which attempts to record only the most basic facts about each day that Lasalle is working on this project. What both Lasalle and the novel discover is that these efforts—which include the nouveau roman style itself—speak to the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of accurately recording even the most mundane details. When this lesson is considered within the context of French colonialism and the resistance that Lasalle encounters amongst the Moroccan villagers (one of whom may be his predecessor's murderer), The Mise-en-Scène speaks not only to the impossibility of writing an accurate history, but particularly to France's impossibility of truly understanding their colonial endeavor at all.
Also set in the Atlas Mountains but this time in a postcolonial Morocco, Chraïbi’s *Flutes of Death* (1981)\(^7\) is a satire about two police officers who travel to a remote Berber village to look for an unnamed suspect. These two officials from a postcolonial, westernized, and bureaucratic state are confronted with a civilization from the past, and the two groups have difficulty understanding each other. The hybrid figure, Inspector Ali, identifies with the Berbers' culture and concerns, and he is therefore split between morality and duty. The novel ends with an ironic reversal of the power dynamic, where the two police officers are subject to the Berbers' inquest, and only Inspector Ali survives (due to his aforementioned hybridity). The final pages take place some months or years later, when Ali has been promoted to Chief of Police and he is taking a young inspector with him for another inquest in the Atlas Mountains. Chief of Police Ali is a thoughtlessly bureaucratic official who, by all indications, will not be sympathetic to the Berbers this time. In a fashion that is reminiscent of Burroughs, *Flutes* is about a bureaucracy that endlessly reproduces itself in everything it touches. Showing similar concerns to that of Kateb, this homogenizing character of bureaucracy is how Arabization spreads throughout Morocco. And, as Bowles had predicted, the state begins to eliminate its unofficial cultures. The postcolonial state continues the colonial project, but in an altered form.
WORKS CITED


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NOTES

1 Of all the popular representations of the Vietnam War, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) comes the closest to making this connection between the war and French colonialism. Unfortunately, the final cut of the film did not include the lengthy scene of a French family living on a plantation in Vietnam. This scene would not be restored until the 2001 version—*Apocalypse Now Redux*—, and its inclusion makes for a stronger connection to the colonial concerns expressed in Coppola's source material, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). This deleted scene makes it clear that the Vietnam War was both a colonial war and a war of independence.

2 Morocco gained independence in 1956 when most of the French and Spanish protectorates were ceded to Morocco, but not all of it until Spain ceded some of Southern Morocco in 1958. It should be noted that the North African cities of Ceuta and Melilla remain in Spanish possession to this day.

3 Arnaud's second and final volume of this series (*Tome II: Le cas de Kateb Yacine*) was an ambitiously comprehensive 741-page study of Kateb's body of work. Arnaud was also the editor of a collection of Kateb's works: *L'œuvre en fragments* (1986).

4 *Westernization* is a term that Bowles uses frequently, particularly after North African nations gain independence.

5 His literary output increased significantly in 1945, writing a few short stories including “A Distant Episode,” translating numerous short pieces, editing an issue of *View* (see Jeffrey
Miller’s *Paul Bowles: A Descriptive Bibliography* for details), and translating Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit* for a “stage production, directed by John Huston, that opened in New York on November 26, 1946. *No Exit* was a great success. When Knopf later published the play in another translation Bowles’ title, which bore no copyright, was naturally retained” (*In Touch* 579).

6 In his travel essay, “Windows on the Past” (1955), Bowles explains that his youth was occupied by “constant” movement: “I moved around Europe a good deal during my teens and twenties, and by moving around I mean constant displacement, often every day, all year round, an occupation which I pursued with an intensity I find difficult to understand now” (109). During these years Bowles meets a number of authors, including Gertrude Stein, who further impacts his life when she suggests to him, “The place you should go is Tangier” (*Without Stopping* 123). He first visits Tangier in 1931 with Aaron Copland, who was his instructor in musical composition, and immediately falls in love with it. The next two years are filled with travel, including his first trip to the Sahara. He then returns to the United States in 1933 where he becomes an accomplished composer, scoring for the likes of Orson Welles and Tennessee Williams. While Bowles does continue to travel, he lives in the U.S. for the next 14 years while focusing on his music.

7 In “No More Djinns” (1951), Bowles had identified such an attitude in the national independence policy meant to suppress indigenous Berber culture:

> It happens that the things which are of particular interest in Morocco are not of Arab importation, but indigenous to the country—that is, Berber. From the Nationalist point of view the Berbers are little better than animals, improperly Islamized and stubborn in their insistence upon clinging to their ancient rituals. Thus a great puritanical purge has been in
progress for the past fifteen years or so, and will probably continue to go on, until every vestige of spontaneous pleasure in religious observances has been destroyed” (655).

8 They also talk of the “American rhizome”: “everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in immediate connection with an outside. American books are different from European books, even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees.” (19)

9 I am not the first to propose such a comparison—see Lawrence Stewart’s *Paul Bowles: The Illumination of North Africa* (1974), Eric Mottram’s *Staticity & Terror* (1976), Gena Dagel Caponi’s *Paul Bowles* (1998), and Brian T. Edwards’ *Morocco Bound: Disorienting America’s Maghreb, from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express* (2005).

10 Richard F. Patteson’s *A World Outside: The Fiction of Paul Bowles* (1987) draws a similar comparison between “Episode,” *Sheltering*, and “Here to Learn,” arguing that the “fact that Malika’s heart of darkness lies in the opposite direction unmistakably establishes that the alien, at least in Bowles, cannot be seen in purely political, cultural, or historical terms” (71).

11 Paul Auster's *The New York Trilogy* (1987) deals with very similar themes as it too deals with characters who have language taken away from them.

12 Bowles also wrote a short story called “Mejdoub” (1974) which chronicles one man’s efforts to pretend to be a *mejdoub* in order to collect charitable donations. His efforts do not end well as he is a victim of his own success and is mistaken for a real *mejdoub* by authorities who have made begging illegal.
Bowles’ inspiration for the title of *Sheltering* comes from the consideration that one cannot rely on protection: “Before the First World War there had been a popular song called ‘Down Among the Sheltering Palms’ […] It was not the banal melody which fascinated me, but the strange word ‘sheltering.’ What did the palm trees shelter people from, and how sure could they be of such protection?” (*Without Stopping* 275).

A significant portion of Bowles’ work includes travel writing; see his *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue* (1963).

The colonial/military aspect of Sbâ is described in the following: “Dominating the town, the fort sat astride a high hill of sand, a succession of scattered buildings protected by a wandering outer rampart. It was a separate town, alien to the surrounding landscape and candidly military in aspect” (197).

Bowles demands global citizenship as well: “I feel that life is very short and the world is there to see and one should know as much about it as possible. One belongs to the whole world, not to just one part of it” (*Conversations* 90).

The bad weather that arrives at the beginning of the narrative is summarized in the following: “There was the little winter first, thus termed only because it was shorter, and then the big winter, the long rainy season which came two months or so afterward” (51). Rain is a constant in the text’s Tangier setting.
Mottram also draws on the title to discuss rain and violence: “murder is given like rain: it is that natural and inevitable, and a man may be that indifferent to it” (9).

Mottram describes Dyar as “an a-morally innocent tabula rasa” (14).

Eunice’s status as a tourist is similar to the one seen in the Lyles in The Sheltering Sky. She “disliked movement of any kind” (51), “loathed travel” (102), and her attitude towards North Africa is that of an Orientalist voyeur.

Eunice’s complete ownership is supported by a racist logic. Eunice thinks that Hadija “was not a real person; it could not matter what a toy did” (93)—in other words, the racist belief that Hadija is not a “real” person then becomes the rationale for owning her.

Undoubtedly, Bowles would have been aware of the fact that the word barbarian has common etymological origins with the word Berber, which is the European name given to North Africa’s indigenous population.

For an excellent Moroccan novel about traditional beliefs being “systematically modified by its government,” see Driss Chraïbi’s Flutes of Death (1981).

This name has to be influenced by the fact that Bowles met William S. Burroughs in Tangier in 1954. Burroughs published his first novel, Junkie (1953), under the pseudonym of William Lee.
25 Much of Amar’s learning has been in the form of traditional Islamic teachings. These teachings are particularly strong for Amar because his family are “Chorfa, descendents of the Prophet” (SH 19), and he has the gift of “baraka. Many Chorfa had that. If someone were ill, or in a trance, or had been entered by some foreign spirit, even Amar often could set him right, by touching him with his hand and murmuring a prayer” (19).

26 Lee’s short foray into Fez fulfills the definition of the tourist provided in SH: “the tourists come, stay a day or two, and go on somewhere else” (161).

27 For example, Fatima Mernissi’s Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood (1995) is an example of how progress does not have to come from Western thought; Mernissi establishes an Eastern feminism that originates solely from Eastern figures, traditions, thinking, and writing.


29 Burroughs’ semi-autobiographical early novel, Queer (though he began writing it in 1952, it was not published until 1985), is aptly named as it speaks to his attempts to negotiate his homosexual desire, but on another level, it speaks to his difficulties being accepted by others. Much of the autobiographical details from Burroughs’ young life that pepper his subsequent works dwell on how St. Louis society (and, in particular, the all-boys boarding school he went to
in Los Alamos, New Mexico) could neither accept his sexuality nor his seemingly strange behavior/demeanor.

30 As obvious evidence of the profound effect North Africa had on Burroughs, many of his later novels return to a North African setting.

31 Until the recent publication of *Hippos, Junky* was considered to be his first novel—even by Burroughs himself—despite the fact that the existence of the *Hippos* manuscript was widely known.

32 Earlier in the novel, Burroughs described this pairing as “the con-man and tough-guy team” (22).


34 For this reason, a poststructuralist reading of playfulness in Burroughs’ writing is a project that seems to suggest itself. I am performing something of a poststructuralist reading here, but I would argue that it is a tempered reading. There are less tempered poststructuralist readings such as Robin Lydenberg’s *Word Cultures: Radical Theory and Practice in William S. Burroughs’ Fiction* (1987), Timothy S. Murphy’s *Wising Up the Marks: The Amodern William Burroughs* (1997), and David Savran’s *Taking It Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (1998). At the basis of these and other poststructuralist
readings of Burroughs (including my own), is the belief that “the ideas we now recognize as characteristic of post-structuralism and deconstruction were being developed independently by Burroughs almost thirty years ago” (Lydenberg xi). I consider my reading to be tempered in that it agrees with Jamie Russell, who critiques the poststructuralist tendency to valorize the hybrid, schizophrenic subject as essentially positive. My reading of Burroughs is that we have entered the era where such schizoid hybridity is the norm, and the questions become, How does it become the pathway for control? and, How can individuals regain control of their schizoid hybridities to form powerful moments of resistance and potentially liberation? For example, in a 1956 letter, Burroughs provides a list of concerns where schizophrenia is clearly amongst bad company and therefore is not necessarily an aspect of liberation: “my latest concepts on Control, Schizophrenia, Junk, Cancer” (*Letters to A.G.* 148). The interesting link between these four elements is that they all thrive on mobility, mutability, growth, and proliferation. However, a crucial caveat about the schizoid subject in Burroughs’ work and in poststructuralism in general is made by Murphy: “Each ‘person’ is ontologically, rather than clinically, schizophrenic, and thus a community unto him- or herself” (192).

Russell’s *Queer Burroughs* is a good example of this risk as it deals with the fact that a schizophrenic homosexual identity is not liberatory, but is in fact a result of living in a homophobic society that attempts to influence/shape/manipulate such identities.

As indicated in *Last Words: The Final Journals of Williams S. Burroughs* (2000), it is clear that Burroughs was unrepentant about his drug use up until the day he died:

You see what is wrong with Cannabis? It is an *illegal drug*.
And who made it illegal? And why?
Because Cannabis enables one to see those who, for very good reasons, do not want to be seen for what they are: enemies of the mammalian race. (157)

And, despite everything Burroughs would write about addiction and its role in a control society, *Last Words* even defends his use of junk:

> Then I felt the touch of a higher power, and I became a morphine addict. Best thing I ever did for myself. Without God’s Own Medicine I could well have ended up one of those “Write the Great American Novel” [types] that never got off the ground, or an alcoholic academic:
> “Will he get tenure? Will he break up with his lover of ten years?”
> It is one tired soap opera and thanks to G.O.M. I didn’t slip on it. (37)

The touch (nudge) of God’s Own Medicine led me to *Junky*, [to] *Naked Lunch*, to finding a vacation—I mean, of course, *vocation*. A place in life. My place in life—and it opened my eyes to the evil that lurks behind the war against drugs. *Illegal* drugs. Not just any drugs. Once a drug becomes *illegal*, it acquires a sulfurous glow from the depths of Hell. So through G.O.M. I gained self-respect—and in so doing, the respect of others. (37-38)

And, quite simply:

> The present trend on this planet is toward *control*. Make everybody a criminal, to make an *International Police State* necessary.
> “War against drugs is a war against Dissent.” (Drug Policy Letter) [.](Last Words 77-78)

37 It should be noted that even though a good number of the routines in *Naked Lunch* first appeared in Burroughs’ letters to Ginsberg, it was after Burroughs had given up on having a romantic relationship with him. At this point in their relationship, Ginsberg serves as a substitute for a general audience for Burroughs’ routines.

38 There are obvious connections here between Mottram’s reading of *Naked Lunch*, and Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of “desiring machines” in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972); unfortunately, I only have time to suggest a project dedicated to these connections.
Looking at the writing of Burroughs in conjunction with Foucault’s is not whimsical, but leads to some striking similarities—one of the most striking concerns how they discuss massacres in the modern age:

Perhaps Hitler was right in a way. That is, perhaps certain subspecies of genus *Homo sapiens* are incompatible. Live and let live is impossible. If you let live, they will kill you by creating an environment in which you have no place and will die out. The present psychic environment is increasingly difficult for me to endure, but there is always leeway, slack that could be taken up at any time. Safety lies in exterminating the type that produces the environment in which you cannot live. (Burroughs, *Interzone 67-8*)

Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men to be killed. And through a turn that closes the circle, as the technology of wars has caused them to tend increasingly toward all-out destruction, the decision that initiates them and the one that terminates them are in fact increasingly informed by the naked question of survival. The atomic situation is now at the end point of this process: the power to expose a whole population to death is the underside of the power to guarantee an individual’s continued existence. The principle underlying the tactics of battle—that one has to be capable of killing in order to go on living—has become the principle that defines the strategy of states. But the existence in question is no longer the juridical existence of sovereignty; at stake is the biological existence of a population. If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population. (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 137)

Again, I would like to point out the visionary quality of Burroughs’ work. Burroughs is predicting a future that B. F. Skinner’s *Beyond Freedom & Dignity* (1971) would support. Skinner proposes using human conditioning to sidestep freedom and dignity for the purpose of seeking solutions to humanity’s ills. Skinner’s work here is the very thing that *Naked Lunch* warns us against.
As an avant-garde piece of literature, *Naked Lunch* is not exactly a novel, *per se*; as a collection of routines, it is much more akin to collection of short stories. However, if you still wanted to have this book cohere in some way in order to still call it a novel, you could argue that it has thematic coherence in the way that its routines are clearly dedicated to questions of power and control. You could also argue that the routines provide a formal coherence as well. Burroughs himself called it a picaresque novel, which may be the most appropriate way to understand a novel composed of routines.

Throughout this chapter on Kateb, I quote from published English translations wherever possible. In the absence of such translations, I will provide the original French, followed by my own translations in square brackets.

Kateb is actually his last name, Yacine his first; however, almost all scholars refer to him as “Kateb.” Due to the way that French schools did their roll-call, Kateb decided to re-create this order for his publications. This reversal of the order in his name acknowledges the powerful role French colonization had on his development, while at the same time, highlighting the irrevocable changes—even damage—on him.

To be completely fair to Camus however, Assia Djebar does add, in *Algerian White* (1995), that his tragically early death prevented him from becoming a powerful and important voice for Algerian hybridity and reconciliation. She even goes so far as to say that Algerian history may have turned out dramatically different had he lived longer:
Inside the hall (some of the windows soon shattered by volleys of stones from outside), Albert Camus, pale and tense, but determined, reads the text of a speech calling for a truce. On the platform, Ferhat Abbas, the moderate Nationalist leader (who only joined the F.L.N. a few months later) listens to the writer. Nationalist Muslims and liberal Frenchmen mingle and fraternize. Later on, this scene would seem to belong to another epoch. And yet, this dialogue might have led to an Algeria which, like its neighbors, claimed independence without too bloody a price. All Franco-Algerian links would not have been smashed in a single blow: a solution like the one Mandela found in South Africa could have been reached.

But instead the law of arms prevailed (hundreds of thousands of French soldiers, including reservists, on one side; and on the other, a few thousand maquisards in the djebels, a few hundred “terrorists” in the towns). Holding sway over heaps of civilian dead. Nineteen-sixty-two was to see the constitution of an independent and sovereign state, but one which had been bled white.

Thus the last public utterances of Albert Camus, who had placed himself at the very center of the struggle: “My appeal is more than pressing. If I had the power to give a voice to the solitude and anxiety which lies within each one of us, it would be with that voice that I address myself to you. I have loved with passion this land where I was born. I have lived with passion this land where I was born. I have drawn from it everything that I am, and I have never withheld my friendship from any of its people, whatever race. Although I have known and shared the misery and poverty that are plentiful here, this land has remained for me one of happiness and creation. And I cannot resign myself to seeing it become the land of unhappiness and hatred.” (109)

45 It should be mentioned here that all four of the authors I have chosen to analyze—Bowles, Burroughs, Kateb, and Guyotat—have constructed their own minor literatures, in various ways. This dissertation is an attempt to understand these minor literatures that were created at the very moment that colonialism was ending in North Africa.

46 This statement seems irrefutable when we consider the amount of scholarship on Kateb—there is a significantly higher number of books exclusively devoted to Kateb’s work than there are for writers like Bowles or Burroughs.)

47 See Aresu: “the larger 'text' of Kateb's works” (213). Also, see Kateb himself, in Olivier Corpet et al's Kateb Yacine, Éclats de mémoire, p. 63.
Arnaud was also the editor of Kateb's *L'œuvre en fragments* (1986), which, as a collection of previously uncollected or unpublished works, is an important recovery of Kateb's work.

In particular, see the second chapter of Aresu's *Counterhegemonic Discourse from the Maghreb: The Poetics of Kateb's Fiction*:

Chapter two also points out the existence of a network of infrastructural constants infusing Kateb's prose, and particularly the text of *Nedjma*, with a sense of destabilizing order. A narrative movement of repetition and convergence predominates, aesthetically akin to the interlacing of linear features found in the art form of the arabesque. In their obsessive recurrence, the two central metaphors of the star and the polygon similarly suggest another principle of infrastructural unity. (xii)

Both Aresu and Pierre Joris provide English translations of this poem in *Counterhegemonic Discourse from the Maghreb: The Poetics of Kateb's Fiction* and *Poems for the Millennium, Volume Four*, respectively.

*S/Z* is Barthes' final attempt to employ structuralist theory in his thorough dissection of every phrase in Balzac's short story, “Sarrasine” (1830)—however, Barthes has to conclude this book with the caveat that not even the most conventional of traditional literature can be completely accounted for in a structuralist way, and that there are still some remnants of indeterminacy in the text. *S/Z* is a structuralist reading that draws a poststructuralist conclusion.

Kateb returns to this topic in *Mohammed prends ta valise* (1971), again focusing on "l'esclavage [slavery]" and “La vie amère de l'exil! [The bitter life of exile!]” (Kateb, *Boucherie de l'espérance* 320). Like *Polygone*, this play explains that exile and slavery are common to the Algerian experience: “Si pour envoyer l'argent / De France au pays, / Nous sommes obligés / De
vivre dans l'humiliation [In order to send home / Money from France, / We are forced / To live in humiliation]” (349).

53 On this point Kateb and Bowles appear to be in perfect agreement. Both “A Distant Episode” and *The Sheltering Sky* indicate that it entirely possible to lose one's mother tongue. See Chapter 1.

54 The connections between these two men do not end here. Perhaps the most interesting one is the fact that Kateb claims that his mother was treated by Fanon: “Ma mère, rose noire de Blida que Frantz Fanon soigna [My mother, Blida's black rose whom Fanon had treated]” (qtd. in Médiène, *Kateb Yacine: Le cœur entre les dents* 84). Both of Kateb's novels deal significantly with the fact that he believed that the Sétif massacre and his subsequent imprisonment led to his mother's madness (she spent the last 35 years of her life in psychiatric hospitals). Richard Keller's chapter, “Violence, Resistance, and the Poetics of Suffering: Colonial Madness between Frantz Fanon and Kateb Yacine,” in his *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in North Africa* (2007), provides a very good Fanonian reading of Kateb.

55 In the absence of published English translations, quotations from the original French will be followed by my own translations in square brackets.

56 The infrequent references to North Africa in his work is rather surprising considering that Williams was a good friend of Bowles and traveled to North Africa numerous times.

It would be a mistake to treat this brief moment in the play as incidental—it is an important aspect of the sexual and class crises throughout this play. There is one other mention of North Africa in Williams' play, and it is worth considering. Brick asks his father if he is accusing him and his deceased friend of being “ducking sissies? Queers?” (947). Brick continues:

Big Daddy, you shock me, Big Daddy, you, you—*shock* me! Talkin' so—

*(He turns away from his father.)*

—casually!—about a—thing like that...

—Don't you know how people *feel* about things like that? How, how *disgusted* they are by things like that? Why, at Ole Miss when it was discovered a pledge to our fraternity, Skipper's and mine, did a, *attempted* to do a, unnatural thing with—

We not only dropped him like a hot rock! —We told him to git off the campus, and he did, he got! —All the way to—

*(He halts, breathless)*

BIG DADDY: —Where?

BRICK: —North Africa, last I heard! (947-948)

59 After “les Éditions de Minuit qui refusent [les Éditions de Minuit decide not to publish]” Tomb (Brun 138)—of which “Alain Robbe-Grillet se serait vanté d’être l'instigateur de ce refus [Alain Robbe-Grillet would brag about being the instigator of this refusal]” (Brun 139)—“Claude Gallimard prend conseil de son avocat pour savoir si la censure laisserait passer cette épopée érotico-guerrière [Claude Gallimard sought legal advice on whether the censor would ban this erotic war epic]” (Brun 142). (Considering the sadistic material found in both his work and his wife's work, Robbe-Grillet's position would appear somewhat hypocritical unless he was more concerned about political censorship as opposed to a sexual/moral one.) Likewise, in an attempt to avoid censorship, Gallimard published Eden with prefaces by Barthes, Philippe Sollers, and Michel Leiris: “On ne saurait blâmer Claude Gallimard […] de vouloir s'entourer, grâce à des préfaces et autres protestations d'admiration prestigieuses, d'antant de précautions que possible [We cannot blame Claude Gallimard for wanting to surround himself with as many precautions as possible in the form of prefaces and other declarations of prestigious admiration]” (Brun 220).

60 The book was banned by the French Minister of the Interior, Raymond Marcellin, who was “connu pour le zèle qu'il déploie [known for the zeal with which he made use of]” (Brun 224) a law intended to protect French youth. This law was used against Eden (and other texts), and the form of the “triple interdiction” is summarized in the following:

La loi du 16 juillet 1949 modifiée le 21 décembre 1958 (par le biais d'un article 14 visant prétendument la protection de la jeunesse) et le 4 janvier 1967 donne pouvoir au ministre de l'Intérieur d'interdire

« 1) de proposer, donner ou vendre aux mineurs de dix-huit ans les publications de toute nature présentant un danger pour la jeunesse en raison de leur caractère licencieux ou pornographique ou de la place faite au crime ou à la violence ;

2) d'exposer ces publications à la vue du public […] et de faire pour elles de la publicité par voie d'affiches ;"
3) d'effectuer en faveur de ces publications de la publicité ».

[The law of July 16th, 1949 amended December 21st, 1958 (by means of an Article 14 aimed at supposedly protecting the youth) and January 4th, 1967 gives the Minster of the Interior the power to prohibit

“1) offering, giving, or selling to minors under the age of 18 any publications whose licentious or pornographic character, or the amount of crime and violence, poses a threat to youth;

2) displaying these publications to the public and advertising them by way of posters;

3) making advertisements for these publications.”] (Brun 218)

In other words, this triple interdiction meant that these texts could not be sold to minors, displayed in bookstores, or advertised. Such a ban promised “la mort civile. D’autant que la loi est sévère lorsqu’un livre banni est découvert dans une librairie [a civil death. Especially since the law is severe when a banned book is discovered in a bookstore]” (Brun 219); the resulting punishment was “un emprisonnement d'un mois à un an et d'une amende de 1 500 à 15 000 francs [imprisonment of one month to one year and a fine of 1,500 to 15,000 francs]” (Brun219).

In response to this ban, signatures were collected in a petition whose names were reprinted in the last 20 pages of Guyotat's *Littérature interdite* (1972), and included the likes of Kateb Yacine, Claude Simon, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Derrida, Deleuze, Barthes, and Foucault.

61 At this point, Guyotat was reading “Faulkner, Stendhal, Hardy [and] James” (Brun, *Pierre Guyotat* 86), not de Sade. (It is worth noting that Kateb was also greatly influenced by Faulkner.) Guyotat states that “Ashby est […] un adieu surtout à la littérature romanesque traditionnelle, aux délices de la fiction anglo-saxonne, à son mystère, à ses préciosités, à son 'irréalisme' [Ashby is mainly a farewell to the traditional literary novel, to the delights of Anglo-Saxon fiction, to its mystery, its preciousness, its 'lack of realism']” (qtd. in Brun, *Pierre Guyotat* 118).
This is a terminology borrowed from Brun—“terreurs historiques” (120)—, but she mentions it only in passing.

Here we can see Guyotat's most obvious parallel to Burroughs. *Naked Lunch* mixes sex scenes with capital punishment to illustrate that this punishment exists because we take pleasure in it. In a similar fashion, Guyotat illustrates that colonialism exists first and foremost for the colonizer's pleasure.

Freud consistently reads the Oedipus myth—where Oedipus blinds himself in a poetic punishment for sleeping with his mother, destroying the organs that caused him to lust after her—as his evidence for the link between blindness and castration. *Totem and Taboo* (1913): “In the Oedipus as well as the castration complex the father plays the same role of feared opponent to the infantile sexual interests. Castration and its substitute through blinding is the punishment he threatens” (*Basic Writings* 907). In a 1914 footnote to *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud writes: “The blinding in the Oedipus legend and elsewhere is a substitute for castration” (*Basic Writings* 393). *The Uncanny* (1919): “The study of dreams, fantasies and myths has taught us also that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is quite often a substitute for the fear of castration. When the mythical criminal Oedipus blinds himself, this is merely a mitigated form of the penalty of castration” (139).

James Baldwin's short story, “Going to Meet the Man” (1965), provides us with a very similar scene set in the American South, except that he provides a literal castration as opposed to a
figural one. His work comes to the same conclusions about the relationship between sexual desire, racism/colonialism, and torture.

66 Following the point made in the previous footnote, we should also mention that Baldwin draws the same conclusion as Guyotat does here. In “Going to Meet the Man,” the young white boy who witnesses the castration and lynching of an African-American man grows up to become the sheriff who is unable to perform sexually with his wife until he thinks about the beatings and imprisonment of African-American civil rights activists.

67 Tomb “retrouve la forme du « chant », chère aux grandes épopées, de l'Odyssee à Dante en passant par l'Eneide [recovers the form of the 'chant,' central to the great epics, from The Odyssey to Dante via The Aeneid]” (Brun 147). These chants are a gesture towards the most ancient form of Western literature—the poetry sung by bards—, providing an aesthetic representation of horror, subjugation, and mindless cruelty.

68 Guyotat has a personal connection to this historical betrayal. In Formation (2007), an autobiographical text about Guyotat's childhood during WWII, he writes about his “oncle Pierre […] avec son bataillon de tirailleurs algériens [Uncle Pierre with his battalion of Algerian infantry]” (37). The following is what some of those Algerian infantry discover upon returning home:

Fin Mai 1945, le 7ᵉ Régiment de Tirailleurs Algériens, un tiers de ses effectifs tué dans la campagne d'Alsace, débarque à Alger : nombre de ses soldats, sous-officiers, officiers, vainqueurs des Allemands en Italie, en Provence, certains sous les ordres de Pierre, rentrent dans leurs douars de Petite Kabyle : eux qui pensent avoir gagné le droit de vivre dans une Algérie nouvelle, ils y découvrent les restes humains et matériels de la grande répression, par l'Armée Française et des colons, de l'émeute et des crimes du 8 Mai 1945 à Sétif et autour.
At the end of May 1945, the 7th Regiment of Algerian infantry, a third of its troops killed in the Alsace campaign, arrives in Algiers: many of its soldiers, noncommissioned officers, officers, victors over the Germans in Italy, in Provence, some of them under Pierre's command, return to their douars in Lesser Kabylia: thinking they have earned the right to live in a new Algeria, there, in and around Sétif, they discover the material and human remains of the French Army and the settlers’ great repression of the riots and crimes of May 8, 1945. (49-50)

Algerians, expecting freedom, discover Sétif. See my previous chapter for further discussion of the Sétif massacre.

Badiou defines the non-world as the world of Guyotat’s fiction; his is “un monde détruit [a world destroyed]”—“un non-monde de la violence sexuelle absolue [a non-world of absolute sexual violence]” (Images du temps présent 108).

Unfortunately, the English translation of Tomb does not contain this author's note that was included in the original French publication:

Le manuscrit original se présentait sous la forme d'une masse sans alinéa. Pour les besoins d'une meilleure lisibilité éditoriale il parut nécessaire d'en « aérer » la présentation, et liberté fut laissée à une dactylographe de faire dans cette masse le découpage de son choix. L'auteur souhaite néanmoins que soit vu et lu, ce livre, sans alinéa.

[The original manuscript was presented in the form of one block without paragraphs. Under the requirements of an improved editorial readability, it appeared necessary to “aerate” its presentation, and liberty was left to a typist to cut up this block as he chose. The author nevertheless hopes that this book will be seen and read by each reader as he wrote and viewed it, without paragraphs.] (Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats 3)

The editorial decision to introduce paragraphing is similar to the one that was made regarding Kerouac's original scroll of On the Road (1957). Beyond making Tomb appear in a more conventional novelistic form (as opposed to an epic form), the decisions of this typist helps
confuse the issue with arbitrary paragraphing. When *Tomb* makes use of first-person narrative, ellipses indicate the end of a character's narration. The end of this narration would have been clearer when the book was a single block of text. Moreover, the original version of *Tomb* was written “avec italiques pour les 'retours en arrière' [with italics for the 'flashbacks']” (Brun 148). The arbitrary paragraphing and lack of italics is partly responsible for the difficulty of reading *Tomb*, giving some credence to the critique that Dominique Aury makes in her review, “Pierre Guyotat: *Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats*” (1968): “Je suis un fils du vent, dit celui qui parle, mais *qui* parle? Ce *Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats* est construit comme un immense choral à plusieurs voix […] les voix sont interchangeables [I am a son of the wind, someone says, but who is saying this? *Tomb for 500,000 Soldiers* is constructed as an immense chorus of many voices…the voices are interchangeable]” (515-6).


72 For example, when Guyotat was charged in 1962 with “aiding desertion,” it was because he had advised the Algerian conscript, Mostefa Dris—who wanted to join the fight for independence—, to join “la Force Locale—une force d’interposition entre l'ALN et l’armée française, constituée d’Algériens de l’armée française chargés de préparer la mise en place progressive de l'indépendance […] Plus tard, le gouvernement algérien se fondera sur cet épisode pour donner à Pierre Guyotat le titre d’ « Ami du peuple algérien » [the Force Locale—an interposition force between the ALN and the French army, consisting of Algerians in the
French army in charge of preparing the gradual establishment of independence. Later, the Algerian government will use this episode as the basis for giving Pierre Guyotat the title of 'Friend of the Algerian People'" (Brun 101). In *Explications* (2000), Guyotat looks back on his arrest in 1962 and says, "je regrette de n'avoir pas fait plus [I regret not having done more]" (94).

73 Guyotat's public defense of such figures is quite well documented. For example, his "Vive les bouchères de l'interdit [Long live the Merchants of Forbidden Flesh]" (1975)—reprinted in *Vivre* (1985)—defends prostitutes from being unfairly targeted by the state as a source of revenue in the form of fines imposed on an illegal (and ubiquitous) activity. In 1975, a group of prostitutes sought protection from the police in a church. He calls the state, "le phallus-proxénète-État [the state-pimp-phallus]" because it gets a sizable cut of the prostitutes' profits: "Pour le trésor de l'État, outre l'impôt arrachée à une profession reconnue seulement pour être réprimée : 160 francs par jour, pour chacune des 30 000 prostituées de France = 150 milliards d'anciens francs [For the state treasury, in addition to the tax extracted from a profession that is recognized solely for the purpose of being repressed: 160 francs per day for each of the 30,000 prostitutes in France = 150 billion old francs]" (126). Another example is his "Justice pour Laïd Moussa" (1975)—also reprinted in *Vivre*—which recounts his years of defense of Mohamed Laïd Moussa, who had been charged with "homicide volontaire [murder]" (121) while defending himself from an attack in his home. Guyotat identifies all the ways in which Laïd Moussa is a victim of injustice: he lives in "une région raciste" (119); France is "un pays que les racistes déclarent civilisé [a country that racists have declared civilized" (122); France's press is "raciste" (120); and, "L'inculpation d'homicide volontaire renvoie Laïd […] au lieu où la colonisation lui a fait commencer sa vie : la misère, l'humiliation raciste, la suppression de ses droits d'homme,
l’étouffement de sa voix, la prison [the murder charge returns Laïd to the place where colonization had him begin his life: poverty, racist humiliation, the suppression of his human rights, the stifling of his voice, prison]” (121). Laïd's story ends in a way similar to that of the Algerian conscripts in the French Army who would ignore Guyotat's prescient advice to avoid returning to the douars to vote for independence in 1962; despite Guyotat's advice (and that of Laïd's father and lawyers) “à quitter immédiatement Marseille pour l’Algérie, il décide de participer à une fête d’adieux chez quelques amis et y est fusillé à bout portant [to leave Marseille immediately for Algeria, he decides to attend a going-away party hosted by some friends, and is shot there at point blank range” (123). As if Laïd's story did not already prove Guyotat's argument about a racist France and its colonial heritage, his last sentence is conclusive: “Le ou les assassins n'ont jamais été retrouvés [The murderers have never been found]” (123).

Due to his involvement in Laïd's case, Guyotat received “death-threats in a letter from the 'Organisation de libération de la France': 'Mort aux Algériens et à ceux qui les défendent' ['Death to Algerians and to those who defend them]’” (Fox 13). If Guyotat's work appears to be too fantastic, then this real life example proves his point. This episode has random acts of violence, cruelty, and murder, whose source is always French racism towards Algerians. It is the continuation of the Algerian War described in Tomb.

The nouveau roman is an appropriate vehicle for this vision of the world, but that must be discussed later.

In Independence—a text about Guyotat's experience as a soldier in 1962—he says, “I have my copy of The Mansion in the pocket of my fatigues” (26), and that he had already “read The
Unvanquished” (17). In an interview, “Conscience du temps: Entretien avec Pierre Guyotat” (2009), he states, “En Algérie, j’ai lu Naissance de la tragédie [In Algeria, I read The Birth of Tragedy]” (13). He continues: “À l’époque de Littérature interdite (1972), je j’avais rien lu de Sade. Je ne le connaissais que par la biographie que Gilbert Lély lui avait consacrée. C’est beaucoup plus tard, dans les années quatre-vingt, qu’après avoir entendu à la radio un de ses contes, j’ai lu La Philosophe dans le boudoir, Juliette, Justine, Les cent vingt journées... [At the time of Littérature interdite (1972), I had read none of de Sade's work. I knew him only by Gilbert Lély's biography of him. It was much later, in the eighties, after I had heard one of his stories on the radio, that I read Philosophy in the Bedroom, Juliette, Justine, 120 Days...] (14).

76 As in Tomb, these allusions can only be inferred—there are no explicit references to the Algerian War.

77 Graham Fox's translation of Eden may be called into question here. In “The Matter of Writing: On Pierre Guyotat” (1996), Stephen Barber calls it “an extraordinarily voracious and compelling translation” (139). However, in “Eden and Atrocity: Pierre Guyotat's Algeria” (2008), Stuart Kendall characterizes the language of the original French text: “His language here is technical and precise, rigid but also sensual: it is so exact that it can be incomprehensible” (12). Disagreeing with Barber, Kendall concludes that “much of this is unfortunately lost in Graham Fox's English translation” (12). For example, examine the following phrase from Éden: “dans le haut de la rue, sur le seuil d'une menue boucherie peinte en rouge, des enfants, moulés dans de la toile à sac, noient dans la flaque de sangs mêlés une couvée de hiboux brachyotes” (50). Fox translates this phrase thusly: “at top of street, on steps of small butcher's shop painted red,
children, wrapped tight in sackcloth, drowning brood of short-eared owls in pool of mixed blood” (25). However, Edouard Roditi offers us an alternative translation in a brief excerpt of *Eden* published in 1985: “at the top of the street before a small butcher's shop with its store front painted bright red, some children, their bodies moulded in sack cloth, are drowning a nestful of broad-eared owls in a puddle of various mingled bloods” (24). Comparing Fox's and Roditi's translation, Fox makes the questionable decisions to eliminate articles and to translate the French present indicative with present participles rather than the present progressive. Because of these two differences, Roditi's translation is easier to read. The strangeness (awkwardness, perhaps) of Fox's English introduces a level of difficulty to reading *Eden* that was not present in the original French, and makes Guyotat's work even less accessible to an English-speaking audience.

Furthermore, this strangeness moves Guyotat's writing away from the goal of “neutral writing” (67) characteristic of “writers without a style” (68) which was highly regarded by Barthes in his *Writing Degree Zero* (1953). Fox's translation ignores this zero degree of writing which was clearly Guyotat's and the nouveau roman's goal. Responding to the claim that *Eden* was an exercise in style, Guyotat states that in *Eden*, “il n'y a ni 'exercice,' ni 'style' [there is no 'exercise,' nor 'style']” (*Littérature interdite* 65).

78 *Flutes of Death* is the translator's Orientalist version of Chraïbi's original title, *Une enquête au pays*. A more accurate and less sensational translation of the title would be *An Inquest in the Country*.