A Study of Intertextuality, Intimacy and Place in Barbara Adair's *In Tangier We Killed The Blue Parrot*

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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2006

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DECLARATION

This study represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form to another university. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

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December 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Cheryl Stobie, for her continued guidance and support in the process of this study, and for introducing me to Adair's fascinating novel. I am grateful for the camaraderie of my good friends, Claire Scott and Debbie Turrell. I am indebted to you for your constant support, particularly near the end. Thank you also, Rogier Courau. Finally, thank you to all my family. And always, thank you, Tim.

ABSTRACT

In my thesis, I argue that Barbara Adair's *In Tangier We Killed the Blue Parrot* can be viewed as a palimpsest. In this sense her re-inscription of the lives and fictions of Jane and Paul Bowles in the International Zone of Tangier, Morocco, in the 1940s reflects on and is implicated in the contemporary South African *Zeitgeist*. Through illuminating the spatial and temporal connections between the literary text and the social text, I suggest that Adair's novel creates a space for the expression of new patterns of intimacy. The Bowleses' open marriage and their same-sex relationships with local Moroccans are complicated by hegemonies of race, class and gender. To illustrate the nature of these vexed intimacies I explore Paul's sadomasochistic relationship with the young hustler, Belquassim, revealing the emancipatory nature of the expatriate's erotic and violent encounter with the Other. Conversely, I suggest the shades of Orientalism and exoticism in this relationship. While Adair is innovative in her representation of the male characters, I argue that she perpetuates racial and gendered stereotypes in her representation of the female characters in the novel. Jane is re-inscribed in myths of madness and self-destruction, while her lover, Cherifa, vilified and unknowable, is depicted as a wicked witch. This study interrogates the process of selection and representation chosen by Adair, which proceeds from her own intentionality and positionality, as a South African, as a human rights law lecturer, as a (white) woman and as a woman writer. These explorations reveal the liberatory re-imagining of new patterns of intimacy, as well as the limitations of being bound by the implicit racial and gendered divisions of contemporary South African society.

Introduction

> Mapping, naming, fictional and non-fictional narratives create multiple and sometimes conflicting accretions which become the dense text that constitutes place.
>
> (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin 1998: 174)

Barbara Adair's debut novel, *In Tangier We Killed the Blue Parrot* (2004) (henceforth referred to as *In Tangier*), tells the tale of the American writers Paul and Jane Bowles[1] and their lives in the expatriate community of Tangier's International Zone, in the 1940s and '50s. In her postmodern pastiche, Adair merges biographical details and extracts from the Bowleses' writings in the creation of her own fictional world. This dynamic "*intersection of textual surfaces*" (Kristeva 1980: 65) includes avant-garde figures such as William Burroughs, Gertrude Stein, Alice B. Toklas, Natalie Barney, and a blend of historical and fictional Moroccan characters, amongst other intertextual usages. Adair creates a diegesis that challenges conventional modes of being through her inscriptions of diverse expressions of intimacy. The polyamorous bisexuality of the Bowleses is evident in their open marriage and contingent same-sex relationships, notably Jane's relationship with the market woman, Cherifa, and Paul's sadomasochistic relationship with the young hustler, Belquassim, as well as other love affairs.

[1] In order to make a distinction between Adair's "fictional" representations of Jane and Paul Bowles and the "actual" Jane and Paul Bowles as evinced in biographical commentaries and their own writings, the characters in Adair's novel are referred to by their first names (Paul, Jane) and the actual literary figures are referred to in full as Paul Bowles and Jane Bowles, or by their surname, Bowles. Chapter Two, in which Paul Bowles is the focus of discussion, calls the historical figure "Bowles", and Chapter Three, in which his wife is the focus, calls Jane Bowles, "Bowles." The occasional vexed passages, which make reference to both historical figures, require the use of full names.

Place and the Text as Palimpsest

In view of the thematic concerns of intertextuality, intimacy and place, this study investigates the possibilities Adair's novel offers in terms of new imaginings of sexualities, gender and intimate relationships in the context of transitional democracies.[2] Through comparing the socio-historical, political, geographical and even ideological similarities between the site of the narrative (broadly speaking Morocco, but also more specifically Tangier) and that of the author (South Africa), I argue that *In Tangier* can be viewed as a palimpsest. Traditionally a palimpsest was a parchment or piece of writing material from which one piece of writing had been erased to make room for another, often leaving traces of the first inscription behind (Webster 1981: 682). In this sense, the South African author's "re-inscription" of the lives and fictions of Jane and Paul Bowles provides "a useful way of understanding the developing complexity of *our* culture as previous inscriptions are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness" (own emphasis, Ashcroft et al. 1998: 176). Thus the text as a cultural palimpsest makes imaginative, temporal and spatial connections between seemingly disparate geographic places (discussed more fully in Chapter One). Cheryl Stobie notes that "[j]ust as democratic South African literature and theoretics are exploring the implication of a transitional, newly democratic, multiple society with Constitutional guarantees in terms of sexuality as well as race, the Interzone[3] was a similar interstitial space of developing contradictory and contesting discourses" (2006: 1-2).

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[2] From 1923 to its independence in 1956 Tangier was governed by a conglomeration of Western countries (Finlayson 1992: 53). Adair's narrative takes place in Tangier (as well as other regions outside the city) during some years preceding Moroccan independence. Thus Adair provides several stories that reveal the fraught political environment of the International Zone, foregrounding local nationalist revolts against anti-Western colonial governance, as well as conveying general anti-West sentiments that were felt at the time.

[3] A term coined by the Beat writer, William Burroughs. Burroughs is also represented in Adair's text as the character Bill, a friend of Jane and Paul's (as he was historically).

More than merely travel writing or a historical novel, *In Tangier* has a place in the diverse proliferations of the landscape of South African literatures. It is possible to imagine the ethics of *In Tangier* in a spirit of the "archipelago" of Southern African literatures (Gray 1979: 14). Over two decades later, Gray's metaphor offers descriptive potentiality in terms of embracing the diversity of current writings – a scattering of seemingly different and disconnected islands, yet connected "beneath the surface" (14). Graham Pechey speaks of post-apartheid writing as "in every sense without bounds" (1998: 73). The *Zeitgeist* of contemporary writing is perhaps one of embracing the heterogenous and plural moment whilst simultaneously claiming and legitimating our own subject positions. "Issues of identity seem to be a major theme for South African writers now, perhaps because the way in which we view ourselves has changed so dramatically in the past decade or so" (Shukri 2005). Michael Chapman questions what the role of writing "could be in a new society, one that has moved from a closed Calvinist one to one where anything goes" (2000: 87). There are several ways in which Adair's defiant focus on bisexuality, polyamory and "exoticisation" of the Other reflects this new openness. Questions of ethics and aesthetics (Attridge & Jolly 1998: 2), the interface between race, class and gender (Chapman 2000: 87), "identity [and sexualities] in cultural interchange" (Chapman: 1998: 97), and "greater complexity, more exploration, more cross connections, more doubt" (Boehmer 1998: 54) are issues germane to Adair's text. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin note, "in some sense place *is* language, something in constant flux, a discourse in process", and the postcolonial text negotiates the space between "textual language and the lived space" (2001: 391)

Intertextuality

In arguing that Adair's text is a palimpsest that allows, through its postmodern technique, a space for the expression of new modes of intimacies, this project necessarily looks at the process of "re-inscription" and intertextuality. Through the transposition (Kristeva 1984: 60) of the Bowleses' texts into a new temporal and thetic position, Adair creates "new and hybrid agencies and articulations" (Bhabha 1994: 192), or a "renewed organization of psychic space" (Kristeva 1995: 138) at the interface between intimacy and place.

In this spirit of renewal I investigate the movement of meanings and representations from the "originary" texts by the Bowleses to Adair's *In Tangier.* While this study focuses primarily on one novel, the extent to which Adair borrows the texts of her subjects (and those of others) means that it is essential to analyse and refer to a range of the Bowleses' own writings, critiques of their works and bibliographical material. The scope of intertextual allusions to philosophers, playwrights, writers, musicians, and other historical figures, from Jean-Paul Sartre to Beat figures such as William Burroughs and Alan Ginsberg, Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein, Natalie Barney and others, underlines the intensely dialogic quality of Adair's text.

Inevitably this study also alludes to the connection between the time and place of the narrative and that of the author. This involves an exploration of the manner in which perspectives on place shift for Adair. In the Preface, Adair explains her position as a South African tourist in Tangier, Morocco. I argue that the author's first-person insertion into the geographical site of the novel creates a space for making imaginative connections

between her socio-political *milieu* and that of the landscape she inscribes. Significantly, Adair states her position as a South African at the cusp of a new era:

> It is 11 January 1993 and I am sitting in the Café Hafa in Tangier. [...] For years South Africans have been unable to travel to other countries in Africa. Now for the first time, with the announcement of the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the African National Congress, we can travel. (2004: n.p.)

In the same way, Chris Dunton, in his review for the *Sunday Independent*, reads Adair's text "in the context of South African fiction, post-*Disgrace*" (2004: 18). In addition, he perceives the novel as reflecting on "patterns of social consciousness in the author's own environment" (18). These concerns become the subject of Chapter One. As noted by the authors of *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, the concept of the palimpsest "confirms the dynamic, contestatory and dialogic nature of linguistic, geographic and cultural space as it emerges in post-colonial experience" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 176). Combining theories on intertextuality with theories on place, Chapter One elucidates the possibilities of textual, imaginary and spatial bridges between seemingly disparate temporal and geographic places, crossing divisions of North/South, West/East and Morocco/South Africa. While Wilson Harris's essays on the cross-cultural imagination present a metaphor of "bridges" interconnecting people and places across space and time, Julia Kristeva's poststructuralist theories on transposition or the text as *ideologeme* explain the interconnectedness between texts.

According to Roland Barthes, a text should not be viewed as "finished, a closed product, but as a production in progress, 'plugged in' to other texts, other codes" (Barthes 1988 [1973]: 172). Thus, "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1977

[1968]: 148), and the reader plays an active role in construction of meaning within a text. In terms of this study's focus on place, particularly the environment which informs readings of the text, it is important to remember that "each reader, like each author, brings a past biography and present intentions to a text, so that the meaning of a place or a landscape may well be unstable, a multiple reality for the diverse groups who produce readings of it" (Duncan & Ley 1997: 329). Consequently, "the insights [gained] from interrogating the positional categories that shape a text are too rich to be ignored" (329).

Bearing in mind that *In Tangier* was published in 2004 and is the author's first novel, at present there is only one detailed initial study of the text (Stobie 2006, forthcoming). Richard Patteson, in his study of Paul Bowles's fiction, and Jenny Skerl, in her piece on Jane Bowles, remark that, in comparison to other American writers of the time, the Bowleses have received little critical treatment (Patteson 1987: xi; Skerl 1999: 262). However, in terms of the trend towards readings from a postcolonial and/or queer perspective, it could be suggested that there is a renewed interest in their art.

Of those readings relevant to this study, Timothy Weiss's paper, "Paul Bowles as Orientalist: Toward a Nomad Discourse" (1998), provides a central idea in the re-reading and re-configuration of Paul Bowles's relationship with the East, moving beyond critiques of exoticism and Orientalism, which will be discussed in Chapter Two. Weiss notes how non-Western places serve as the "inspiration, the detonator, and the sustaining environment of existentialist questioning and wandering" in the life and works of Bowles (38). In addition, in a chapter on Paul Bowles in *Writing in the Margins: The Ethics of Expatriation from Lawrence to Ondaatje* (2005), Marilyn Adler Papayanis speaks of the

act of expatriation as an existential quest, an act of "self-artistry" (30). As such, the expatriate often learns to "redescribe himself, making new relationships possible – in theory, if not always in practice" (31). As explained in a discussion of Paul Bowles's transgressive intimacies (Chapter Two), this self-artistry is a process less of self-making than of "self-reflectivity" (30). It requires "self-dismantling" all fixed systems of knowledge that offer the self a sense of unity and security. William Connolly describes this quest as a *"selective desanctification of elements of your own identity"* (in Papayanis: 30). Other recent scholarship on Paul Bowles includes Greg Mullins's *Colonial Affair: Bowles, Burroughs and Chester Write Tangier* (2002) and Abdelhak Elghandor's interview with Bowles, entitled "Atavism and Civilization" (1994).

Of the two relatively recent pieces on Jane Bowles, Jenny Skerl's article, "The Legend of Jane Bowles: Stories of the Female Avant-Garde" (1999), questions the gendered narratives that have marginalised women experimental writers, while Marcy Jane Knopf (1996) explores the bisexual themes in Bowles's *Two Serious Ladies.* Chapter Three utilises Skerl's deconstruction of the myths of madness and self-destruction which are perpetuated in the scholarship on Bowles's work. The force of these myths contributes to a common critical tendency to read her life backward into her work. Chapter Three also employs Knopf's discussion on the bisexual themes in Bowles's work, and thus assists in deconstructing the negative stereotypes of bisexuality in Adair's representation of Jane. It should be noted that the origin of this renewed scholarship is primarily American and that critical material has been difficult to obtain locally. Consequently, this study depends largely on the detailed theoretical frameworks established at the beginning of each chapter. As the palimpsestic quality of Adair's text connects "textual language" with

"lived space" (Ashcroft et al. 2001: 391), this thesis also makes broader intertextual references to topics of discussion in the current South African socio-political environment.

Notably, Adair's text resonates with the African and South African issues on the current media and public agendas.[4] In particular, the passing of the Civil Union Act in November 2006, which allows same-sex marriages, highlights connections between our rights as citizens and the social acceptance (or rejection) of intimate relationships. Religious and other debates questioning the social impact of the new Act draw attention to the difficulty of making choices outside of conservative heterosexual norms (Joint Working Group 2006).[5]

Intimacy

The possibilities (and difficulties) of diverse patterns of intimacy are a central thematic concern of Adair's novel. Karmen MacKendrick's attempt to answer the question of "who is pleased" in the complex power dynamics of sadomasochistic intimate relationships can be momentarily extended to a more general discussion of intimacy. In formulating a response MacKendrick makes a tangential link between intimacy and intertextuality. She states that if the descriptions "become elliptical, we must recall that the ellipsis is the open space of textuality. [...] And yet we can speak and write *about* it, even if ours is a roundabout speaking, circling and returning" (1999: 148). These are pleasures and intimacies that "transgress language, forcing us to find our meanings in the interstices and twists, the absences and silences, the rhythms and rushes of words" (148). Adair's text is

[4] I am referring primarily to the period, January 2005 to December 2006, during which this thesis was written.

[5] A national network of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) organisations.

structurally characterised by "interstices and twists" and "absences and silences." Congruently, this project follows these twists in order to speak to the silences. The positive potential in Adair's representation of Paul's sadomasochistic relationship with Belquassim (discussed in Chapter Two) is juxtaposed with the relative absence of possibility in Adair's stereotyped representations of female characters (discussed in Chapter Three). Cherifa is silenced and othered, and Jane is depicted in terms of myths of madness and self-destruction.

David Bell warns that intimacy "is more tricky to theorise than sex or sexuality" (1995: 313). Nevertheless, the difficulty in defining intimacy reflects on the seeming defiance of categorisation in Adair's re-imagining of the Bowleses and their diverse desires. More than an exploration of sexualities, "intimacy" accounts for shifting dynamics of power in the complex figurations of interpersonal relationships that deconstruct the binary logic of the pair-bond. Intimacy places the focus on the often non-egalitarian nature of relationships, and their (im)possibilities. Underscoring the multiple indicators of the term, Juliana Spahr describes intimacy as including "desire, and conventional domestic relationships, and unconventional ones, [...] and friendship, and close momentary contact between strangers in urban areas, and identity and identification with those like and unlike" (2001: 99). Lauren Berlant's introduction to *Critical Inquiry*'s special issue on intimacy highlights the inseparability of intimacy with systems of hegemony, linking the public and the private in terms of colonialism, imperialism, knowledge, violence and personal attachments. This is particularly relevant in terms of the accusations of exoticisation and Orientalism levelled against Adair's text (Van Niekerk 2004: n.p.), and

in terms of partiality in her re-imagining of the male characters (discussed in Chapter Three). According to Berlant,

> Rethinking intimacy calls out not only for redescription but for transformative analyses of the rhetorical and material conditions that enable hegemonic fantasies to thrive in the minds and on the bodies of subjects while, at the same time, attachments are developing that might redirect the different routes taken by history and biography. To rethink intimacy is to appraise how we have been and how we live and how we might imagine lives that make more sense than the ones so many are living. (1998: 286)

As Spahr suggests, the nomenclature of intimacy provides "overlaps and slippages" (2001: 99) between desire, gendered subjectivities, sexualities, sex and multiple modes of interpersonal relationships. Similarly, the bisexual nature of these intimacies further "threatens and challenges the easy binarities of straight and gay, queer and 'het' [...]. The erotic discovery of bisexuality is the fact that it reveals sexuality to be a process of growth, transformation, and surprise, not a stable and knowable state of being" (Garber 1995: 65-6). The overlaps and slippages inherent in intimate relationships can be exemplified in the relationships between Jane, Paul, Belquassim and Cherifa. Their interpersonal relationships are more complex than "love triangles." To borrow a geometrical metaphor, they can be imagined as taking on a quadrilateral rhomboidal form, neither equilateral nor equiangular, but a constantly shifting construction which can be divided into double triangles. However, the central unifying force of the novel is the dynamic between Jane and Paul and *their* contingent intimacies; accordingly, the narrative shifts between their first-person narration (identified by italics)[6] and the focaliser, Belquassim's, third-person narration. While I will discuss the central concerns

[6] I have retained the italics in my textual citations to indicate the distinction between the Bowleses' first-person narration and Belquassim's focalisation.

in the structural importance of the two local Moroccan characters, Belquassim and Cherifa, my focus has been directed, for the most part, by the concerns arising out of Adair's representation of the Bowleses. Although the novel foregrounds the complexities of open relationships, Adair's representations reflect gendered divisions in the structural oppositions of Paul/Jane and Belquassim/Cherifa (discussed more fully in Chapter Three).

It follows, then, that after conceptualising the potential Adair's novel presents in terms of making temporal and spatial connections between the Interzone and South Africa, this study moves to an exploration of Paul's transgressive, sadomasochistic desires. Historically Paul Bowles has been considered asexual, and his writings make only tentative suggestions toward unconventional intimate relationships. However, in this representation the palimpsest is inverted and what Bowles suppressed Adair has made overt. In discussing these sadomasochistic pleasures I utilise Karmen MacKendrick's terminology of "counterpleasures", as well as Georges Bataille's and Maurice Blanchot's existentialist philosophies on the relationship with the Other as a psychological quest. Through sadomasochistic intimacy a violation of the *physical body* becomes symbolic of an inner shattering of a unified self and of the constant desire to surpass the boundaries of limited life; it is only through destroying the self that it is possible to venture into a world beyond. According to Marilyn Adler Papayanis, eroticism is the "prism through which intimacy between the expatriate and the native is most frequently represented" (2005: 16-7). Consequently, Tangier, described as a "dream city" by Bowles, provides a catalyst for the destruction and surpassing of the limits of the self through the erotic (even violent) encounter with the Other.

In contrast to the relatively liberal and liberatory thematic of Chapter Two, Chapter Three interrogates Adair's representation of female characters as wild, wicked and wanton women. Indeed, Adair's women highlight the compound issues of race and gender in the novel. Jane is re-inscribed into myths of madness and self-destruction, while Cherifa, dark and mysterious, becomes the wicked witch of Adair's tale. The anthropologist Edwin Ardener notes that all discourse is dominantly male or phallogocentric (in Showalter 1989 [1981]). Thus women's language is muted and when women speak, if they speak at all, they must speak through this dominant discourse. However, as Elaine Showalter observes in her appropriation of Ardener's study, there remains a "wild zone" that is outside masculine knowledge and experience, a "female space" (471). According to Showalter, it is the task of feminists to illuminate the feminine voices of this space. While the wild zone signifies a "mother country" or "idyllic enclave" for "liberated desire and female authenticity", it should also be remembered that "there can be no writing or criticism totally outside the dominant structure" (472). Employing a range of feminist theorists from Showalter, through Hélène Cixous and Monique Wittig, to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, as well as other relevant cultural and textual critics, I "voluntarily" enter the wild zone and attempt to write Adair's female characters "out of the cramped confines of patriarchal space" (Showalter 1989 [1981]: 472).

Insofar as the palimpsestic novel reveals modes of being imagined (and not yet imagined) in the socio-cultural text, this study interrogates the process of selection and representation chosen by Adair, which proceeds from her own intentionality and positionality, as a South African, as a human rights law lecturer, as a (white) woman and as a woman writer. Adair's re-inscription of the lives and loves of Jane and Paul Bowles

provides a space for the articulation of what a particular place allows (or inhibits) in terms of intimacy, revealing "the ways attachments make worlds and world-changing fantasies", *as well as* "unliveable relations of domination and violence" (Berlant 1998: 288). While Adair suggests possibilities for change, through embracing the simultaneity of the present and the past (Harris 1999 [1997]: 187) and exceeding the norms of conventional society by imagining new (future) patterns and modes of intimacy, her imaginings are also interpellated by the biases of the contemporary South African social text.

Chapter One

Creating Bridges: *In Tangier We Killed the Blue Parrot* within the Landscape of South African Literature

> The word *chasm* is adopted [...] to imply that within the gulfs that divide cultures – gulfs which some societies seek to bypass by the logic of an institutional self-division of humanity or by the practice of ethnic cleansing – there exists, I feel, a storage of creative possibility that, once tapped, may energize the unfinished genesis of the imagination. In that energy eclipsed bridges and potential bridges exist between divorced or separated or closed orders and worlds, bridges that are sometimes precarious, never absolute, but which I think engender a profound awareness of the numinous solidity of space [...].
>
> (Wilson Harris 1999 [1998]: 239)

> The Past is knocking constantly on the doors of our perceptions, refusing to be forgotten, because it is deeply embedded in the present. To neglect it at this most crucial of moments in our history is to postpone the future.
>
> (Njabulo Ndebele 1994: 158)

> The concept of text as ideologeme determines the very procedure of a semiotics that, by studying the text as intertextuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. The ideologeme of a text is the focus where knowing rationality grasps the transformation of *utterances* (to which the text is irreducible) into a totality (the text) as well as the insertions of this totality into the historical and social text.
>
> (Julia Kristeva 1980: 37)

It is intriguing, I think, that a South African human rights lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand and occasional travel writer should choose to transport the disparate *Weltanschauungs* of the Bowleses into the social, historical and temporal context of contemporary South Africa. The novel actually exists in three timeframes: firstly, 1993 – a year before the first democratic elections in South Africa and the temporal zone of the author, established in the Preface; secondly, the mid-twentieth century Interzone – "a place out of time" (Finlayson 1992: 83); and thirdly, but not least, the time of publication (2004) and thus the time of the reader.

Drawing on the lives of these fascinating literary figures, Adair creates a diegesis which challenges and defies conventional patterns of living and being through her inscriptions of diverse expressions of intimacy. Notions of bisexuality, polyamory and open marriage are further complicated by issues of race and class, as cross-cultural meetings reveal covert and overt hegemonies. Inseparable from, and constantly in dialogue with, these diverse expressions of inter-personal relations are the representations of places in the site of the text as they shift from the café where Adair spots Paul Bowles to the bar (the locus of the focaliser, Belquassim, in the first and last chapters), to the home shared by Paul, Jane and Belquassim (and visited by Cherifa), to the medina, to the marketplace of the *Petit Socco*, and to the wilderness of deserts and mountains.

In terms of the broader aims of this thesis, I investigate what possibilities Adair's novel offers in terms of new imaginings of sexualities, gender and intimate relationships in the context of transitional democracies. Through comparing the socio-historical, political, geographical and even ideological similarities between the site of the narrative (broadly speaking Morocco, but also more specifically Tangier) and that of the author (South Africa) I argue that *In Tangier* can be viewed as a palimpsest. Confirming "the dynamic, contestatory and dialogic nature of linguistic, geographic and cultural space", Adair's "re-inscription" of the lives and fictions of Jane and Paul Bowles in the International Zone provides "a useful way of understanding the developing complexity of [our] culture as previous inscriptions are erased and overwritten, yet remain as traces within present consciousness" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 176). The socio-political climate of the Interzone is comparable to that of the South African transitional democracy. Indeed, contemporary

South African literature explores the implications of living in a culturally diverse society with constitutional guarantees of sexual as well as racial equality (Stobie 2006: 1-2).

It is my intention in this chapter to discuss the possibilities (and difficulties) of positioning Adair's text within the landscape of South African literatures; the significance of Adair's positioning in the Preface; the re-inscription of the past in the present; postmodern techniques in the text; and crossing divisions of North/South, Morocco/South Africa, West/East and local/global.

Conceptual Framework

In taking this psychic leap between geo-political, socio-historical, spatial and temporal worlds – connecting the time and place of the narrative with that of the author – it is useful to expand the notion of the palimpsest by exploring the philosophy of bridges and continuities between cultures suggested by Anglo-Guyanese novelist and essayist, Wilson Harris (1999 [1998]: 1; 242). Harris's belief in the resurgence of the repressed unconscious in the process of writing and the "unfinished genesis of the imagination" (1999 [1998[: 239) shares a kinship with Julia Kristeva's writings on the *semiotic* and *semiotic chora.* Like Kristeva in her mention of a "maternal [...] receptacle" (1984: 25-6) called the *chora* (a disruptive pre-symbolic, hybrid force), Harris borrows a similar maternal metaphor to refer to the "womb of simultaneous densities and transparencies in the language of originality" – an unconscious force which expresses a cross-cultural commonality and the creative potential in a shared language (1999 [1998]: 239).

Harris's essays or 'excavations' on the cross-cultural imagination present a conceptual framework for the interconnectedness of peoples, places and cultures over ages and across geographic boundaries, as Kristeva's theories on intertextuality or *transposition* explain the interconnectedness between texts. Whilst Harris remains purposefully outside poststructuralist and postcolonial debates, Stuart Murray points out that

> [t]he inevitability of the unknowable, the untranslatable, the ungraspable, underpins much of Harris's fiction – the pre-Columbian past that feeds the Guyanese present – and it is these ideas that produce a cleavage between his theories [...] and those emanating from poststructuralist and deconstructive practices. (Bundy 1999: 9)

According to Julia Kristeva, the text functions as an *ideologeme* in that it not only reflects but comprises "elements of society's ideological structures and struggles" (Allen 2000: 214), and is "thoroughly connected to on-going cultural and social processes" (37). Not only are texts "constructed as a mosaic of quotations; [but] any text is the *absorption and transformation* of another [...] and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (Kristeva 1980: 66). In this sense, Adair's text provides an exemplar of the process of absorption and transformation of the Bowleses' writings and of other contemporary social and ideological texts, such as those of the Beat writers, Sartre and others. It is a dynamic "*intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (65). Poetic language can never be fixed or unified in that it refers not only to the communication between the author and reader but also to the manner in which words and texts are always repeated,

refer to, and carry traces of past texts or words. As William Irwin notes in his critique of the misapplication and overplay of intertextuality,

> it is not just *langue* and literature, but the social world – the social text – that provides fabric for the textual tapestry. As for her *Tel Quel* colleague Derrida, so too for Kristeva, there is nothing outside the text. Society and history are not elements external to textuality, to be brought to bear in interpretation. Rather, society and history are themselves texts, and so are already and unavoidably inside the textual system. (2004: 228-9)

Continuing this tapestry metaphor, it can be said in the case of *In Tangier* that texts are woven together out of often disparate pasts, presents, histories, societies and cultures – "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1977 [1968]: 146). From the author's position at the cusp of a new era in South African history (stated in the Preface) to the post-war bohemia of Tangier in the 1940s, the narrative moves between Western existentialism, Moroccan Islam and Catholicism, as well as across divisions of class and race. This well-known metaphor of the "tissue of quotations" cited from Barthes's seminal text, "The Death of the Author", couples with Harris's metaphor of the 'fossil-like' nature of language with its buried inscriptions, or "shared layers of experience" within and between cultures and histories (1999 [1998]: 237). According to Harris:

> All languages are subtly, hiddenly connected, and the live, fossil particularities in the language of fiction – arising from variables of the unconscious/ subconscious/ conscious in the chasm of humanity – help us to arrive upon unsuspected bridges, bridges of innermost content that have a deeper, stranger luminosity and incandescence than the purely formal appropriation by one culture of another's artifacts. (1998: 242)

Crossing Temporal and Cultural Gulfs

Barbara Adair presents a tapestry of past and present inscriptions or the possibility of "shared layers of experience" (237) when she intrudes into the text in the Preface, establishing her presence and position, if only subconsciously, through her first-person insertion into the geographical site of the novel. She addresses the reader directly, as a South African, introducing our own unique political milieu:

> It is 11 January 1993 and I am sitting in the Café Hafa in Tangier. [...] If I strain my eyes I can see the sea, the Straits of Gibraltar. [...] It feels strange to be sitting in a café in Tangier. For years South Africans have been unable to travel to other countries in Africa. Now for the first time, with the announcement of the release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the African National Congress, we can travel. Is it for this reason that I welcome political change in my country or can I muster other reasons for my hopefulness? (Adair 2004: n.p.)

What is historically and spatially significant in this authorial intrusion is Adair's thrill at the lifting of airways sanctions, followed by an unexpected cynicism over the post-apartheid/New South Africa euphoria. She asks, "Is it for this reason that I welcome political change in my country or can I muster other reasons for my hopefulness?" (n.p.). Apartheid not only instigated internal divisions and exclusions, but also the political, economic and cultural isolation of South Africa from the rest of the African continent, as well as Europe and the Americas. In 1975 the Organization of African Unity, consisting of representatives from some 31 African countries, adopted the 'Dar es Salaam Declaration on Southern Africa' urging an African blockade against South Africa until the abandonment of apartheid (Riley 1991: 139). As early as the 1960s Africa and parts of the West refused landing and overflying rights to South African aircraft (Christopher 2001: 174). This has been described as "[o]ne of the most spectacular *spatial* examples of the

imposition of sanctions" (own emphasis, 174). Adair's opening paragraphs suggest more than just the physical constraint of political prisoners, but also an imaginative and psychic arrest and detention. Notably this is the author's first novel, perhaps inspired by the freedom of travel – a release from the confined and regulated life of apartheid South Africa.

Through the political changes figuratively bridging the divide of "institutional self-division" (Harris 1999 [1998]: 239) and thus allowing the opening of the airspace, the author is able to reconnect with the previously inaccessible northernmost tip of the African continent. The author crosses what was previously a void space, or *chasm* (239). Tangier itself can be seen as the point of bridging both African and Western cultures as Adair looks out over the Straits of Gibraltar. Harris suggests that through crossing the "gulfs that divide cultures" (239) it is possible to tap into creative potential, and that "separated or closed orders and worlds" can share a commonality. He makes connections between worlds as he makes "intuitive connections between apparently irreconcilable imaginative writers in the past and the present" (1999 [1975]: 123). Similarly, through re-inscribing the lives of Jane and Paul Bowles, Adair allows history to resurface and attain new meaning. bell hooks speaks of the need to re-energise the present in the face of neocolonial disorder and cultural annihilation through the re-writing and reclaiming of the past. However, it is "a politicization of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act, from that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present" (hooks 1991: 147).

Present, Past, Future: Transformative "Faction"

Shirley Kossick describes *In Tangier* as "a meditation on memory, creativity, morality and the nature of storytelling set against an exotic but politically fraught background" (2004: n.p.). The novel does not present a nostalgic return to a bygone Moroccan bohemia, but rather a disruptive bringing to life of ideologies and ways of being that penetrate and challenge our perception of the world. In her review for the *Pretoria News*, Ann Ussher cautions that this "up-market work, often graphic, [...] would not appeal to the narrow-minded or the homophobic" (2004). In addition, Chris Dunton notes that in Adair's novel "[s]exual encounters are described explicitly" (2004: 18). Undoubtedly, *In Tangier* would provoke criticism from sensitive readers. Adair's text raises issues surrounding open marriage, polyamory, child prostitution, sadomasochism, exoticisation of the other, existentialism and how a place encourages (or inhibits) a movement outside conventional modes of being into the *"here and now"* (Barthes 1977 [1968]: 145) of contemporary South Africa, disrupting monologic thought patterns and inciting debate. As such, *In Tangier* presents a dialogic force – socially disruptive, embodying otherness, and in Kristeva's words, "implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation" (1980: 89).

It is perhaps not so surprising that Chris Dunton (2004), in his review for the *Sunday Independent*, categorises Adair's book as "faction" – a hybrid mix of fact and fiction. This well-known lexical play parodies the assumption that history and fiction are discrete, antagonistic discourses. In Western thought, the former tries to "claim primacy" (Coetzee 1988: 4), promising reliability, relevance, rationality and positivism. "Faction" denotes subversion and defiance, and is problematic as a literary form, yet productive in

destabilising a logocentric view of history, "truth" and the past. According to Moslund, "conventional distinctions between different modes of rendering the past, between story and history, fiction and non-fiction have been radically reassessed and consequently blurred" (2003: 24). History is not solely interested in facts. It borrows the same literary devices to weave an enticing read as those used in narrative. It constructs order and coherency out of often random events, creates a plot, uses flashback, and builds climaxes (Moslund 2003: 24). Ndebele sees the empowering use of fiction as a mode of re-writing the past, "freed from its association with a purely manipulative function, [allowing readers] to recreate themselves by enabling them to freely write their own texts" (1994: 139).

In exploring beneath the surface layer for previous traces (whether of text or discourses of culture and history), Harris, Kristeva and Ndebele share an interest in the possibilities for change and transformation in the process of "re-inscription." Like hooks, Ndebele recognises that the past is "deeply embedded in the present" and that "[t]o neglect it [...] is to postpone the future" (158). The past is constantly being re-written to suit the present. Moslund notes that "history as social memory is customarily changed and transformed in order to preserve or generate a certain social identity that may endorse the realisation of imminent social, political or economic visions" (2003: 9). It is significant that Adair not only re-writes the past but allows the reader to "re-live" it, bringing past and present into a contemporaneous position – not co-existent but intertwined. Thus the text presents a more complex understanding of history, one that envisions bridges between past, present and future. Raymond Williams conceptualises

> a sense of history which is more than, although it includes, an organized knowledge of the past. ... One way of expressing this new sense is to say that past events are seen not as specific histories but as *continuous and connected process*. [...] Moreover ... *history in many of these uses loses its exclusive association with the past and becomes connected to the present but also to the future.* (Own emphasis, quoted in Green 1997: 93)

Adair's postmodern deconstruction of a monologic account of the Bowleses' lives arrives within a debate surrounding the borders between fact and fiction, history and the novel, intertextuality and plagiarism. Indeed, amidst the current controversy surrounding plagiarism in the cases of Pamela Jooste, Antjie Krog and others (Kirby 2005), Adair's novel lies in an ethical hotbed. A conference was held in Rondebosch recently, entitled "Theft or Creative Transformation – The Plagiarism Debate and Creative Writers" (Smit 2005), following a spate of accusations and questions in the media regarding ideas of "truth", originality and authority.

In his review of *In Tangier*, Adam Levin raises questions surrounding the role of the author, the ethics in fictionalising biographical material, the "truthful" or accurate representation of real-life characters, and the extent to which a writer can borrow from other writers. Levin asks: "Can one simply write whatever one fancies about them, slap the word 'novel' on the cover and get away with it?" (2004: n.p.). What this critic fails to acknowledge is the highly partisan nature of history as a discourse and the possibilities for change that creative writing can effect in the minds of readers. Ndebele recognises that "literature may serve to display a recognisable picture of reality, or history, and [crucially] it may serve to bring about a transformation of reader consciousness" (Moslund 2003: 93). Indeed, in terms of the non-conformist lives and contradictory life stories of the Bowleses and the multiple positions adopted by readers of their fictions and lives (see for

example articles by Elghandor 1994; Knopf 1996; Skerl 1999; Weiss 1998), Levin's conviction that "the story, if not the details, [should remain] true to the spirit and motivation of the subject" (2004: n.p.) is problematic in terms of the impossibility of objectivity. Linda Hutcheon asserts that knowing the past "becomes a question of *representing*, that is of *constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording*" (own emphasis, 1989: 74). The well-known South African writer and poet, Antjie Krog, reflects on the interpenetration of fictional and real worlds in *Country of My Skull*. In explaining the decision to include a fictive affair amongst actual narratives from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Krog speaks of her authorial role in interpreting and constructing events:

> I am not reporting or keeping minutes. I'm telling. […] "I am busy with the truth ... *my* truth. Of course, it's quilted together from hundreds of stories that we've experienced or heard about in the past two years. Seen from my perspective, shaped by my state of mind at the time and now also by the audience that I am telling the story to. In every story there is hearsay, there are assumptions, there are exaggerations to bring home the enormities of situations, there is downplaying to confirm innocence. And all of this together makes up the whole country's truth. So also the lies. And the stories that date from earlier times." (1999: 259)

A decade prior to Krog's controversial postmodern text, Coetzee reflected on the interchange between literature and history, rejecting the type of novel which "operates in terms of the procedures of history and eventuates in conclusions that are checkable by history" (1988: 3). Instead he favours one that "operates in terms of its own procedures and issues in its own conclusions [...], evolves its own paradigms and myths, in the process [...] perhaps going so far as to show up the mythic status of history" (3). All these tenets are true of *In Tangier*, in which the pastiche of historical, fictional and doubly

fictional characters and events is, as Levin finally concedes, "powerful and evocative enough to stand on its own" (2004: n.p.).

Post-*Disgrace*? *In Tangier* in the South African Imaginary

For me, the significance of Adair's text lies in its status as a South African novel and in the questions arising out of its place in the landscape of South African literatures. Dunton comments:

> In the end I'm not quite sure what it intends to achieve. One possible way beyond that uncertainty is to read it in the context of South African fiction, post-*Disgrace*: to see it, in other words, as an exploration of notions of choice, distancing and home that reflects, very obliquely, on patterns of social consciousness in the author's own environment. (2004: 18)

It is interesting to note how *Disgrace* has become *the* signifier for contemporary South African literature. *In Tangier* exceeds categorisation as a historical novel or travel writing. Indeed, Dunton places Adair's text within the contested space of South African literatures, *in relation to Disgrace*. Significantly, (in view of my argument for the palimpsestic qualities of Adair's text) he suggests that *In Tangier*, like Coetzee's novel, reflects on the socio-political climate of the author. This supports Ndebele's understanding of the past as "embedded in the present" (1994: 158), Harris's belief in "unsuspected bridges" and "continuities between cultures" (1999 [1998]: 242), and Kristeva's conceptualisation of the text as *ideologeme* – as social worlds/texts in reciprocity with fictive worlds/texts. Commenting on the role of African literatures, Michael Chapman envisions the function and ethics of the novel today:

> It is expected that the African writer address the big sociopolitical issues of the day. The writer who does not may end up being considered irrelevant. Indeed, I shall suggest that, in Africa, the close correlation between the texts of politics and the texts of art poses challenging questions as to what constitutes a literary culture, what might be regarded as the practice of art. (2003: 1)

Likewise, the choices of different modes of personal attachments, sexualities and sexual pleasure, complicated by race and gender, are not only central concerns in Adair's text, but also major socio-political issues in current South African public (and private) debate. In her introductory chapter to *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*, Mikki van Zyl observes how, following the "sexual censorship of the apartheid regime", sex and sexuality have been "thrust into the public domain" (2005: 20). These libidinal dynamics are hardly irrelevant, as in contemporary society sexuality has become the "fulcrum of intersecting political interests, economic imperatives, cultural aspirations and notions of selfhood" (Deborah Posel in Van Zyl: 20). Yet, choices of sexual identity and pleasure that violate heterosexual norms and cross racial boundaries are still the subject of scandal (21). Comparing *Disgrace* and *In Tangier*, Dunton speaks of the interest both texts share: "exploration of notions of *choice*, distancing and home" (own emphasis, 2004: 18). What choices Dunton refers to in Coetzee's novel are not made evident; however, it is worth noting that all the choices made in *Disgrace* evoke an element of scandal or public reproach. Kai Easton discusses the scandalous reception of Coetzee's novel in the public sphere and considers, in view of Dunton's comment, how this "landmark text" has "evolved into a kind of catchphrase or signifier in the South African imaginary" (2006: 187; 191). She asks:

> Had [the novel] been set elsewhere, in another land far away, would the scandal in *Disgrace* – David Lurie's sexual harassment case at the university, the rape of his

> lesbian daughter on her smallholding – have the same power to shock and dismay? What is evoked by setting it in the *new* South Africa, in the Western *and* Eastern Cape, in terms of land, race, nation and gender? What, in the end, causes some readers to 'take offense' and attack not only the text (a fiction), but also its author? (193)

In terms of Dunton's analysis of the shared thematics of distancing and home, I would ask: what does *Disgrace* signify in the South African imaginary and in the landscape of our local literatures, and how do readers respond to Adair's text in the wake of this watershed text? It is worth briefly comparing the (continued) media and academic hype and acclaim surrounding *Disgrace* and the (relatively modest) reception of *In Tangier*, nominated for the *Sunday Times* Fiction Award. Of course, Adair is a human rights lecturer and first-time novelist, whereas Coetzee is a Booker Prize winner, Nobel laureate and doyen in the South African literary and academic sphere. Despite being "set elsewhere, in another land far away" (193), *In Tangier* still enters the realm of taboo, though admittedly not on the same level as *Disgrace* in its ability to incite national and international response. The reviews of *In Tangier* range in tone from Levin's criticism of authorial integrity and ethics (2004: n.p.) to Ann Ussher's word of warning to conservative readers (2004: n.p.).

Employing an almost Brechtian *Verfremdung* (alienation) technique, Adair distances the reader from the familiarity of her/his local socio-political environment and presents disparate world-views in a polyphonic mode, encouraging the reader to become a more productive critic of her/his *own* environment. Moslund notes that the public discourse of post-apartheid South Africa has been characterized by a "culture of amnesia" (2003: 29). The proclamation of a "*New* South Africa" by F.W. De Klerk in his speech of 2 February

1990 signalled the end of apartheid and signified an attempt to create a fissure between the past, present and future (own emphasis, 30). Yet, alongside utopian public discourse and mass media representations of a newly-sprung, integrated, "rainbow nation", there exist "serious attempts to interrogate the past in order to make sense of it and use it for various purposes in dealing with present problems" (30). Indeed much post-apartheid literature emphasizes the inseparability of the past from the present and the sometimes (im)possible future.

Coetzee's *Disgrace* provides a case in point with its "bleak portrait of the nation in transformation" (Easton 2006: 191) and its presentation of a fictional world filled with characters who transgress conventional codes of ethics and expected societal behaviours. Readers find it difficult (perhaps even perverse) to identify with the adulterous and socially fallen David Lurie, and are shocked by Lucy's decision to keep the baby and give the farm to Petrus (191). Similarly, readers of *In Tangier* find it difficult to identify with the possible subject positions represented in this text: Paul's nihilism, existentialism and sadomasochism; Jane's dependency; Belquassim's displacement; and the vilified unknowability of Cherifa. Much like Petrus in Coetzee's novel, Cherifa, Jane's Moroccan lover, is represented in terms of Manichean aesthetics, and her voice and consciousness are silenced. Yet, in Adair's novel, issues of race are doubly compounded by issues of gender. In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", a seminal text in feminist and postcolonial criticism, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that,

> [a]s object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (1993 [1988]: 82-3)

Easton suggests that *Disgrace* "is in fact Coetzee at his most political, for what is stylistically embedded in [his novel] is the interrogative: 'Can we read beyond race?'" (2006: 200). In response to this question Adair's text seems to suggest that as long as the voice of the 'other' is silenced and we have no access to the subaltern subject-position, it is still impossible to know the 'other' and read beyond race. "The politics of apartheid", remarks Van Zyl, has "inscribed race indelibly on the landscape of [South African] sexual identities (2005: 21). Indeed, as an educated, empowered and well-travelled white woman writer, Adair would likely have found it more possible to enter the consciousness of the hybrid character, Belquassim, than that of the illiterate market woman accused of witchcraft. Even those who have explored and anthologized the lives of the Bowleses cannot perceive of Cherifa other than "deeply in shadow" (Spivak 1993 [1988]: 83). Iain Finlayson describes her as a "witch possessed of true, malevolent power" (1992: 141).

In South Africa, recent constitutional guarantees (such as the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000) have seen the empowerment of women in the public sphere: from changes in the workplace to the appointment of the new female deputy president, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the ANC's pledge to increase the representation of women in parliament to 50%; and the focus on re-addressing the gender imbalance in the judiciary, to name a few. However, Cherry Clayton's observation of over a decade ago still resonates within contemporary South African writing and society: "black women [...] have been the last group within the country to find a literary platform" and the feminist impulse in South African women remains "silent and fractured" (1989: 1). Writing in 2001 on "South Africa in the Global Imaginary", Leon de Kock states that

"the question who 'speaks' for South Africa is as vexed today as it ever was" (273). He continues:

> From the earliest of times the South African crisis of inscription has translated into a profound insecurity or a severe arrogance among writers when performing—or not performing, as the case may be—the pronominal slippage from "I" to "we" or "us." It has been a representational slippage—a slippery slope, one might say—that has haunted all manner of writers in and about South Africa. (De Kock 2001: 274)

Cherifa and Belquassim are "presented as structural counterparts of one another by virtue of their attachments to Paul and Jane" (Stobie 2006: 16). However, unlike the dynamic characterisation of Belquassim, the characterisation of Cherifa is static, and the reader is offered little insight into her world-view. In fact, she speaks no more than three times in the entire text. In the first instance she challenges Jane for not yet handing over the ownership of the house to her, as she had promised. Secondly, she comments on the death of Paul's "beautiful blue parrot", which Paul and Belquassim conclude she had killed with magic. Jane suffers what seems to be a stroke while Paul and Belquassim are away. Cherifa's last words inform the returning two men as to which hospital Jane has been taken.

Cherifa's first utterance draws attention to the fact that it is the expatriates or foreigners (Jane and Paul) who have access to land – a home with property rights – and are thus able to inscribe their place in the socio-cultural text. Similarly, the history of South Africa speaks of an equivalence between those who are displaced and dispossessed and those who are silenced and excluded from the literary landscape. The parrot, a "foreigner" (Adair 2004: 58), and perhaps symbolic in the sense that it is the only animal able to

reiterate and learn human language, was conceivably allowed more 'voice' than the silenced Cherifa. Her silence not only highlights the "crisis of inscription" of which De Kock speaks, but also the "erasures" or "slippages" in our cultural inscriptions and, like the unspoken voices in *Disgrace*, "haunts" the text – a disturbing and troubling reminder of the silences that still exist in the South African imaginary today, even after the confessions of the TRC.

The pronominal "we" in the title of the novel provides the 'interpretant' to the mysterious death or accused 'murdering' of the exotic and cherished blue parrot, and thus the key to unpacking the matrix or system of meaning upon which the text is based (Michael Riffaterre in Allen 2000: 119). In an attempt to provide an inclusive space for vocality Adair uses the first person "we" in the title. The plural pronoun seems to infer a shared culpability in the annihilation or erasure of things "other." The death of the exotic bird, the "stranger" (Adair 2004: 58), stands for all that is culturally erased because of its "otherness" or "unknowability." The "we" subconsciously interpellates and addresses *our* subject positions, implicating not only the characters in the text, but also the author and reader, if we are to adopt Kristeva's view of the text as *ideologeme*. Gérard Genette, offering a more structuralist rendition of intertextuality, explains how paratextual elements such as the titles, prefaces, notes and other information outside the actual narrative "help to direct and control the reception of a text by its readers" and underline the transactional nature of the paratextual – the exchange between the narrative, author, and reader and thus the socio-cultural and political text (in Allen 2000: 103). *In Tangier* self-reflexively plays with "the pronominal slippage from 'I' to 'we' or 'us'" of which De Kock speaks (2001: 274).

Far from being cathartic, *In Tangier* invites the reader to rethink the supposedly resolved issues of our transitional democracy and the promises of our new Constitution: issues of race and class in an increasingly non-egalitarian plural society (MacFarlane 2005: 1); explorations of gender and sexualities against the rise of religious fervour; and even more specifically child sex tourism – a recent topic of discussion on the After Eight Debate on SAfm (Perlman 2005). It is worth noting that the social dilemma of child prostitution (a feature of life in the International Zone), expressed graphically in Adair's text, is a rising concern in our own contemporary South African context. Adair offers no moral judgement and her language is almost prurient in its explicitness:

> Belquassim was sitting next to the front door of the bar along with several other boys of the city. [...] Some had the pained expression of children who have seen too much sex and violence, others were carefree and unconcerned about dark and wanton nights. And they all laughed a lot. [...] They all had tubes of Vaseline in their pockets. [...] Belquassim didn't need the Vaseline that time, and the man was quick and generous. As he blinked he could taste the milky semen in the back of his throat, it tasted of uncooked fish and black pepper. He could feel it drip down his chin and onto his white shirt. He could smell fear and semen, an enticing combination. (Adair 2004: 14-5)

In retrospect, this passage reflects on Adair's comments in the Preface and in turn on the epigraph to the narrative taken from *King Lear*, "as flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods; they kill us for their sport." She tries to "flick" away the young hustler who eventually points out Paul Bowles to her and is perhaps a catalyst for writing the novel. Who are the 'gods' in this narrative? In a colonial context does this refer to the colonizer's attitude toward the colonized, or the relationship between Occident and Orient? Or is Adair simply bringing to mind the brutality of Shakespeare's play, the impossibility and

foolishness of quantifying love, and a world of uncertainty, futility, blindness, madness and death accentuated by moments of unprecedented perceptivity beyond conventional mores of moral and social rectitude? Adair draws a morally contentious scene in the Preface (whilst also implying her own prejudice):

> Morocco is filled with hustlers. Hustlers of all kinds. They hustle you for your money, they hustle you for sex, they hustle you for drugs, in fact there is nothing that escapes the hustle. Sometimes it intrigues me, a hustler, does he sell his soul? At other times it is just a slight irritation, *like a fly buzzing around my head that I have to constantly flick away*. (Own emphasis, n.p.)

The questions Adair raises in the Preface are the questions she explores in the narrative. Does Belquassim, a hustler, "sell his soul"? Not only a sexual hustler, Belquassim is also a cultural hustler, entering into a process of exchange between his own Arabico-Muslim-Moroccan culture and the Western-Interzone culture of the expatriates. Adair highlights the vexed and ambivalent position of such a hybrid identity, as Belquassim is situated between worlds and regarded by those who believe in a purist notion of culture as a cultural prostitute. Sitting in a café during their visit to the mountains, Paul and Belquassim are referred to by a "rough looking" Moroccan patron as an "arse-fucking foreigner and his sell-out whore" (80). Following this xeno-homophobic expletive, the patron cuts Belquassim across the face. Later Paul says that he could "*smell the fear. It cut through the room and smashed against me*" (88). Significantly, this is not a private or personal emotion but an external, numinous force. It is a visceral fear that disturbs even the caged monkey and eagle in the room – a fear of transgression against the seemingly eternal, natural and unchangeable ideas of culture and sexuality. Adair includes the voice

of the perpetrator of the cutting, expressing *his* palpable fear of acculturation, even emasculation:

> *"They take our country. They take our culture. They take our women. And now they take our boys. They take what it means to be a man from this country and they leave only sickly women behind. The cutting. I did that because violence makes me a man."* (89)

More broadly, Adair's comments in the Preface allude to Paul Bowles's "hustling" of local stories and music, his "selling" them to the Western readership, and implicitly reveal her own opinion or justification for her self-conscious postmodern technique. Decentring the concepts of originality and authority in the process of "translating" stories, Bowles says:

> If I hear the stories of some of the Moroccan people in Moghrebi or Arabic and then I translate them for an American audience into English, do I impose my understanding on the language? I suppose I must do this, how can I do otherwise? The essence of the story is the same one, but they are my words, I choose them. (55)

De Kock's comments on the role of the writer as "cultural translator" or even "trader" are not dissimilar to Paul Bowles's views on the literal act of translation. Situated in between a transitional but still racially divided South Africa (at the southernmost tip of the continent) and the equally plural but divisive Interzone (at the northernmost tip of the continent), this "South African writer in the full sense requires [an] imaginative inhabitation of the seam" – the meeting point between cultures and worlds (2001: 284). Significantly, those included in the South African canon, from Schreiner to Coetzee, are, like Adair, preoccupied with "cultural doubleness" (284). According to De Kock:

> The writer is always forced into a position of having to negotiate between extremes, into crossing the language-colour barrier; he or she can only be a syncretist and hybridiser. And therefore the basic act of writing is one of carrying information across one or another socio-economic barrier, literally of "trading." [...] I propose, thus, a new identikit portrait: the writer exists at any of several boundaries (not at the centre of one self-enclosed group); his or her act of making literature is part of transferring data across that boundary, from one audience to another – an act which in its broadest sense may be termed "translation." (269)

Adair suggests that it is impossible to separate the author's subjectivity from the process of story-telling or translation. In addition to explorations of modes of intimacy, and the complexities of culture and place, *In Tangier* constantly interrogates the style, technique and act of writing. Paul comments on his thoughts on translation:

> *"Gertrude told me to write. Gertrude introduced me to words.*[...]
>
> *I hate being a tourist.*
>
> *It is a new thing for me to record the story of another. Yes, I do make some changes, but the story and the language are not my own. Now I am playing with the words of another. They are not my words. I do not own them. Yet I feel that they are mine because I write them down."* (124)

This passage not only makes an openly self-reflexive comment on the author's own creative process, but also offers a more general explanation for the postmodern writer's intertextual technique. In the Acknowledgements Adair draws attention to the fact that she has borrowed the words of other writers. "I have used their words. I have used their sentences [...], their paragraphs[, ...] their poetry" (n.p.), she says. Speculatively, the author allows her character, Paul, to elaborate on this postmodern style, underscoring her "deliberate and playful imitative tribute to other writers" (Allen 2000: 216) discussed in

the Acknowledgements. Like Paul she is "*playing with the words of another*" (Adair 2004: 124).

In terms of a poststructuralist critique of the text, centrality should not be afforded to the author or her position as a South African, "displaced" in Tangier as a tourist/traveller comparable with the expatriate Bowleses. This South African focus might be problematic, in terms of my own subject position and identification as a white South African woman reader. However, I would argue it is also interesting critically in terms of the broader underlying questions it asks about how texts function as vehicles for exploring the construction of identity and gendered subjectivities. How do texts act as useful sites for exploring the ways intimacy is staged during periods of social and political transition? How are 'given' subjectivities internalised, subverted or re-invented in different geo-political and historical contexts? Indeed, in exploring the bridges between the diegesis of *In Tangier* and the world of the author,

> one may reflect in new ways upon areas of history that are replete with ironies of involuntary association between cultures. Such ironies highlight an addiction to invariance, closed minds, and divided cultures, even as they disclose, I think, the mystery of cross-cultural wholeness steeped in the freedom of diversity to cross boundaries that restrict our vision of therapeutic and evolving reality. (Harris 1999 [1998]: 240)

Crossing Divisions of North/South, South/South, Morocco/South Africa, West/East

Adair's voyage from South Africa to Tangier and her position in the port city which connects Africa to the Western world bring to mind a series of geopolitical and imaginative border-crossings and cross-cultural meetings: North/South, South/South, South Africa/Morocco, West/East. Rather than reinforcing polarities, Adair's text represents an ideological, cultural and geographic "cutting edge of translation and negotiation" (1994: 38), to borrow Homi K. Bhabha's terminology for culture's hybridity. Declared an International Zone in the early 1920s and governed by representatives from Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Sweden, and, later, the United States (Finlayson 1992: 53), the Interzone, as re-written by Adair, is a radically indeterminate symbolic space – a contact zone where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination" (Pratt 1992: 4). Depicting the complexity and fluidity of the social as well as political boundaries of the International Zone, Finlayson notes:

> The city is not, to put it mildly, homogenous. It is a characteristic of life in Tangier that things, and particularly groups of people, seem discrete. There exists – and has always existed – a variety of complex social divisions and subdivisions that accord with a general instinctive perception of class, national, racial, religious, political and sexual discriminations, and – perhaps surprisingly – degrees of moral standing. These social distinctions, if they do not have the force of law, are at least sanctioned by immemorial usage and, of course, constantly modified by the shifting and unpredictable canons of contemporary political, social and personal convenience. The social borders of this frontier town are as fluid as the boundaries of any Balkan or Middle-Eastern country. (1992: 6)

Tangier cleaves to neither a purely African nor Western identity. Finlayson's description of the port city as "[c]linging like a limpet to the massive head of Africa" (25) highlights the cultural (and political) contingency, mobility and mutability of the International Zone.

Arguably, Morocco's vexed geo-cultural allegiance is a symptom of its complex past – a place inscribed by the autochthonous Euro-Asiatic Berbers, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals, Arabs, Portuguese, Spaniards and the Western conglomeration of the Interzone (25).

Indeed, Tangier is the "only city that [overlooks] both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, thus straddling two worlds" (Pickford: n.d.). Anticipating Bhabha's exposition and coining of terms such as "border lives" (1994: 1), and "migrant" identities that inhabit the spaces "in-between" (1) fixed geo-political boundaries and are thus always in transit, Paul Bowles in *Let It Come Down* describes the ambivalent position of the frontier city of Tangier as "counterfeit, a waiting room between connections, a transition from one way of being to another, which for the moment was neither way, no way" (in Finlayson 1992: 233). This transitory place, described as "a place out of time" (83), qualifies Bhabha's "culture in the realm of the *beyond*" (1994: 1). Tangier's Interzone provides an apt diegesis for *In Tangier*'s self-reflexive focus on "*postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism*" (1), the "post" *Zeitgeist* of the late twentieth (and early twenty-first) century. Geographically and culturally the port city presents an interstitial space that presents the appropriate condition for following Bhabha's imperative to question the stability, authenticity and authority of the West's grand narratives:

> The 'beyond' is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past[; ...] but in the *fin de siècle*, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. [In the beyond there is] an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà* – here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth. (1)

The characterisation of Belquassim is indicative of this "moment of transit." He expresses the concomitance of the hybrid identity: "exploratory", "restless" and rootless, Belquassim's locus is not the "home" to which his son urges him at the end of the novel, but rather a yearning for the numinous "beyond." Both author and hybrid focaliser are depicted looking out over the Straits of Gibraltar to "see beyond", to see the "world outside Tangier", "another world" (Adair 2004: Preface; 12; 163).

Torn between past and present, dream and reality, and Moroccan and Western expatriate ways of seeing and being, Belquassim can be seen as a symptom of the geographic liminality and indeterminacy of the Interzone. His psychic intermediacy at the beginning and end of the narrative is set against the liminal *mise en scène* of the bar that overlooks the Straits: the bar is the threshold between inside and outside, Morocco and the Western world beyond. Belquassim describes the bar as "the line that separated one world from another" (13-4), separating the rampant sexuality and hedonism of the expatriate scene (Papayanis 2005: 201) from the regulated, spiritual day-to-day existence of Islamic Morocco. Occupying this transgressive space, Belquassim sips on the "fierce fiery yellow liquid" prohibited by his faith (Adair 2004: 1), highlighting his already complicated and contradictory subject position at the outset of the narrative. It is interesting that Finlayson sub-titles his novel *City of the Dream* (1992), for Belquassim equates the International Zone and the freedoms it allowed to a dream. Caught between the inescapable present reality of conforming to expected gender/culture norms (the responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood suggested by his son's reminder that supper is ready and that his wife is

waiting for his return), and memories and longings for an alternate existence without bounds in the Interzone, he speculates about his past experiences with the Bowleses:

> After meeting Paul and his wife, Jane, Belquassim had begun to believe that even he and his world mattered and had meaning, and that he could belong in the life they showed him. Even he could be free. This was a world that was open to everyone. [...] He had come so close to living a dream, this world and this life. He could touch it. He could feel it. He could smell it. [...] He was in the constant presence of a dream. He remembered Paul saying, "A writer [...] does not try to escape from reality, he tries to change it so that he can escape from the limits of reality. [...]" And Belquassim had escaped the limits, he had pushed the limits, and for a short time it seemed as if he had won. They had all escaped. But now, bound by his life he knew that that long sleep was over. The dream was over. He was awake. (6)

Like dreams which create bridges between the repressed unconscious and the conscious, allowing forbidden desires to break through to consciousness in a disguised form during sleep (Meyer et al 1992: 57), Adair's Tangier allows for the re-inscription and *transposition* of fictional and historical texts into a new temporal and "thetic" position. Thus Adair creates "new and hybrid agencies and articulations" (Bhabha 1994: 192) and a "renewed organization of psychic space" (Kristeva 1995: 138) for the exploration of new patterns of intimacy, that perhaps still belong to the realm of taboo: bisexuality, polyamory, sadomasochism, love triangles and exoticisation. Thematically and stylistically innovative and exploratory, *In Tangier* embraces "the hybrid moment outside the sentence – not quite experience, not yet concept; part dream, part analysis; neither signifier nor signified" (Bhabha 1994: 181). It is perhaps not so incidental that Bhabha chooses to elaborate on the hybridity of culture, and thus intrinsically language, through turning to Roland Barthes's exploration of the cultural space "outside the sentence" in *The Pleasure of the Text*. However, it is Bhabha's specific focus on the location and source of

the semiotician's philosophy that is of particular significance, in terms of the palimpsestic traces inscribed in the paratextual landscape of Adair's novel. Submerged in a daydream in a bar in Tangier, in a similar way to Adair, "Barthes attempts to 'enumerate the stereophony of languages within earshot': music, conversations, chairs, glasses, Arabic, French" (180). Supplementary to the limited, linear syntactical sentence lies the lexical, "definitive discontinuity" of the "language lined with flesh" (Barthes in Bhabha 1994: 180), which Bhabha refers to as the *outside* of the sentence. Notably the setting is of primary importance. This linguistic critique is informed by the *sense of place* which provided the catalyst for Barthes's essay, as Adair's locale becomes the locus of the focaliser. The bar has "*the feel of the International Zone, Tangier, owned by no one*" (2004: 21). It is described as a "*mini replica*" of the city, a place where no one has "*any essential identity*" (21). The following important passage "confirms the dynamic, contestatory and dialogic nature of linguistic, geographic and cultural space" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 176), illustrating the interaction and dialogue between these elements as they create the textuality of a particular time-space:

> What we encounter outside the sentence, beyond the occidental stereotomy, is what I shall call the 'temporality' of Tangiers.
>
> [...]
>
> In Tangiers, as time goes by, it produces an iterative temporality that erases the occidental spaces of language – inside/outside, past/present, those foundationalist epistemological positions of Western empiricism and historicism. Tangiers opens up disjunctive, incommensurable relations of spacing and temporality *within* the sign [...]. The non-sentence is not before (either as the past or a priori) or inside (either as depth or presence) but outside (both spatially and temporally ex-centric, interruptive, in-between, on the borderlines, turning inside outside). (Bhabha 1994: 182)

The Straits of Gibraltar, which Adair and Belquassim gaze over and beyond, present a fluid zone between Europe in the North, Africa in the South, and the Americas in the West, and thus by extension between Orient and Occident. Similarly, the Cape at the southernmost tip of the continent is the meeting point of Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It is perhaps more true to say that we exist in the interstitial space between West and East – a socio-economic and ideological space between the rich North (Europe, USA and First World nations) and poor South (Africa and other Southern, Third World nations). Morocco is situated in a similarly liminal space, acting as a gateway between Africa and the West, a member of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), yet seeking inclusion within the European Union. Tangier, like the Cape, can be described as "a crossroads of civilisations" and a "gateway to the African continent." Therefore, it would not be unusual for South African readers to relate their own geo-spatial position to that of the text. This positionality is interesting in terms of the social geographers James Duncan and David Ley's observation that

> each reader, like each author, brings a past biography and present intentions to a text, so that the meaning of a place or a landscape may well be unstable, a multiple reality for the diverse groups who produce readings of it. [... Consequently] the insights from interrogating the positional categories that shape a text are too rich to be ignored. (1997: 329)

Whilst these issues are more geo-political than literary, they do provide contemporary debate and are in many ways inseparable from the socio-cultural milieu which informs our South African fictions. Briefly returning to the *Disgrace/In Tangier* comparisons discussed earlier, I would suggest that Adair's text addresses the same "post-modern engagement with a colossal theme" as Coetzee's *Disgrace:* "the impact, in Africa and

elsewhere, of an expansionist Western political philosophy and the process of its subsequent dissolution, which raises the wider issue of the cultural authority to which fiction written in the Western tradition can lay claim" (Lowry 1999). Elizabeth Lowry's statement raises various issues surrounding Adair's text in terms of place: transculturation, postcolonial perspectives, "what constitutes a South African story?" (Chapman 1998: 86), and "the rhetorical question: is South Africa, Africa, or the West?" (Chapman 2000: 88). Additionally, to what extent have the Southern psyche, politics, economy and culture been affected by a multidimensional Americanization, and what possibilities do emerging counter-representations and visions from the South present (Slater 2004: 53)?

From a geo-political perspective, Adair's text tacitly reconnects the northern- and southernmost points of the African continent. This is topical in view of the political and media agenda of promoting the homogenising ideal of an "African Renaissance", attempting to turn our focus back toward the African continent and a proud "African" identity. Beyond its obviously politico-economic *raison d'être*, the recent South Africa-Mali project involving the restoration of the ancient (even mythical) Timbuktu library resonates distinctly with Ndebele's portent of the *imminent*, *immanent* past, "knocking constantly on the doors of our perceptions, refusing to be forgotten [and] embedded in the present" (1994: 158). Researcher and translator Farouk-Alli comments on the contemporary relevance of the stories retrieved from the thirteenth-century books, which tell tales of "humour, pathos [and] forbidden love" and reflect on "how we deal with existential issues of the human condition, issues that we face even today" (Krouse 2005: 8). Moreover, in his address at the SA-Mali Project Fundraising Dinner, President Mbeki

expressed his understanding of the retrieval and revival of the past as a catalyst, "a turning point in the history of Africa and its people", vital for envisioning an African future (Mbeki 2005). The media coverage of the South Africa-Mali Project reflects a developing awareness of cross-cultural, pan-African connections in the South African imaginary. Indeed the hyphenation of the two ostensibly radically disconnected countries suggests a geo-political and psychic allegiance and re-inscribes a distant and 'outlandish' place (Mali, a North African country and long-time trading partner with Morocco) into the here and now of our own South African time-space. These political, cultural and psychic bridges between worlds that were previously disconnected by cultural and economic sanctions are indicative of a vested interest in the literal and figurative exhuming of a shared past. Ironically, as Bhabha points out, these "hybrid hyphenations emphasize [simultaneously] the incommensurable elements" (1994: 219) in this homogenising *intra*continental project whilst also reflecting on the uncanny "shared layers of experience in person and society" (resonating with Harris's concept of "creoleness") which requires thinking beyond binary divisions and an essentialist view of culture (Harris 1999 [1998]: 237).

Significantly, Bhabha draws on the meditations of Harris in his seminal text, *The Location of Culture*. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said have been referred to as the "Holy Trinity" of postcolonial theory (McLeod 2000: 29) and "a methodological compass" for social geographers (Hubbard et al. 2004: 54). A key thinker on space, culture and hybridity, Bhabha, like Harris, "suggests that a cultural space is the location of shared practices which, while generated in response to particular historical and geographical conditions, cannot simply be said to belong to one discrete culture or

another" (2004: 55). Bhabha elaborates and utilises Harris's observation of a "certain *void* or misgiving attending every assimilation of contraries" and the requisite "acceptance of a *concurrent void*" necessary for cultural change (own emphasis, Harris in Bhabha 1994: 38). This void "reveals the cultural and historical dimension of [the] Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha 1994: 38). It is this Third Space which bears the inevitable contradictions of any attempt to assume a pure, original or unifying concept of culture. Adopting the poststructuralist view of language and the subject as never fixed and always in process, Bhabha's Third Space, "though unrepresentable in itself, [...] constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (1994: 37). So too the recent "*revision* of African history" (Krouse 2005: 8), exemplified in the translation and appropriation of the Timbuktu manuscripts, reveals the inherent contradictions in "the restrictive notions of cultural identity with which we burden our visions of political change" (Bhabha 1994: 38). "Caught in the discontinuous time of translation and negotiation" (38), thirteenth-century Timbuktu, rather than reaffirming an essential "Africanness", attests to a hybrid, international African culture where merchants participated in a cross-cultural exchange, "trading gold from West Africa to Europe and the Middle East" (Dlamini 2005) – an "open[ing of] the repressed abundance of intercultural riches inscribed in our history" (Slater 2004: 151).

As Doreen Massey suggests, "[a]rriving in a new place means joining up with, somehow linking into, the collection of interwoven stories of which that place is made" (2005: 119). Sitting in the bar in Tangier, Adair links into the interwoven stories of Tangier, and the

desire to inscribe her own story is perhaps triggered by the sight of the old man pointed out as "the famous American writer, [...] Paul Bowles" (2005: Preface), who like Adair is also looking out across the sea. Belquassim, a fictional character derived and reinvented from Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky*, becomes the eyes of the author and reader as he too stares out to see Spain, "another world" (2005: 163). Even at the end of the novel the reader is left looking out, uncertain and ungrounded. Thus, in Adair's novel, like Paul Bowles's narratives, the "orient is a vehicle to something else, call it a nihilism or a *nomadisme*, that transcends the binarisms of cultural difference" (Weiss 1998: 38). Author, focaliser and historical character urge the reader (and potentially the South African literary landscape) to look outward, "towards a positivity and aliveness to the world beyond one's turf, whether that be one's self, one's city, or the particular parts of the planet in which one lives and works" (Massey 2005: 15):

> What is at issue is [...] the change in perspective ... the imaginative opening up of space. It is to refuse that flipping of the imaginative eye from modernist singular temporality to postmodern depthlessness; to retain at least some sense of contemporaneous multiple becomings [...]. We read so often of the conquest of space, but what was/is at issue is also the meeting up with others who are also journeying, also making histories. And also making geographies and imagining space. [...] Conquest, exploration, voyages of discovery are about the meeting-up of histories, not merely pushing-out 'across space'. The shift in naming, from *la conquista* [the conquest] to *el encuentro* [the encounter], speaks also of a more active imagination of the engagement between space and time. (120)

Chapter Two

"In the Constant Presence of a Dream"[7]: Counterpleasures and the Transgression of Limits in Paul's[8] Intimacies with Others

> *What is pleasure? It is different for all of us. Sometimes pleasure for me requires a rule to be broken, at other times it does not. Have I harmed anyone with my pleasure? And if I have harmed them it is surely only because they themselves have their own rules that they believe I have broken – that is how I harm them.*
>
> (Barbara Adair 2004: 61)

> The limit is only there to be overreached. Fear and horror are not the real and final reaction; on the contrary, they are a temptation to overstep the bounds.
>
> (Georges Bataille 1987 [1957]: 144)

> The quick of life would be the burn of a wound – a hurt so lively, a flame so avid that it is not content to live and be present, but consumes all that is present till presence is precisely what is exempt from the present.
>
> (Maurice Blanchot 1995 [1980]: 51)

Through re-inscribing the lives of the eccentric expatriate Bowleses in a pastiche of polyphonic vocality, Adair's text could aptly be described as rhizomatic (to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's botantical metaphor) in that the text itself "enacts the subjectivities of deterritorialization: burrowing through substance, fragmenting into simultaneous sprouts, moving with certain stealth, powerful in its dispersion" (Kaplan 1996: 87). Like the hybrid space of Tangier's Interzone with its multiple society of expatriates mixing with the already complex cross-cultural history of local Moroccans, *In Tangier* presents a

[7] (Adair 2004: 6)

[8] This serves as a reminder that in this chapter the "fictional" characterisation and re-inscription of Paul Bowles will be referred to by the first name only (Paul) and the "actual" Paul Bowles, as evinced in biographical commentaries and his own writings, will be referred to in full as Paul Bowles or the surname Bowles. In the following chapter Adair's representation of Jane Bowles will be referred to as Jane and the historical figure as Jane Bowles or Bowles.

text between and interconnected with other texts, as well as a fictional world between past and present, Self and Other.[9] As the "rhizome destabilizes the conventions of origins and endings" (Kaplan 1996: 87), the palimpsestic nature of *In Tangier* bears the traces of the past in the present. However, in this re-inscription the plaque has been turned around and engraved on what was originally the back side: what the historical Paul Bowles kept latent in terms of sexuality and intimacy, Adair has *inverted* and made overt.

In this chapter I explore Adair's inverted re-visioning of "intimacy" in her characterisation of Paul and his relationship with others, informed largely by the existentialist theories of Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot and in terms of the relationship with the Other as a psychological quest. The erotic nature of the love scenes in *In Tangier* and the seeming affinity for the exotic in the characters' love affairs, as well as Adair's descriptions, necessitate a study of the text outside conventional and trite accusations of "immorality." In view of expatriate ethics Marilyn Adler Papayanis perceives Bataille as of "signal importance in providing a language – a discourse – of existential experimentation that brings to the fore the radical risk and reward" (2005: 37) in psychic dismantling:

> Expatriate desires are suffused with a kind of eroticism that is to be distinguished here from "mere" hedonism. Eroticism is the prism through which intimacy between the expatriate and the native is most frequently represented, drawing together different modes of desire: the carnal, the spiritual, the destructive, the life

[9] Julian Wolfreys makes the distinction between other and Other, stating that in Lacanian psychoanalysis the other refers to "that which is not really other but is reflection and projection of the ego", whilst the Other signifies a "radical alterity irreducible to any imaginary or subjective identification" (2004: 168). Jacqueline Rose explains the Lacanian Other as that "fantasized place" that "appears to hold the 'truth' of the subject and the power to make good its loss" (168). Similarly, Levinas distinguishes others as the "not-self", and the Other as the "figure of absolute otherness [...] or alterity" (168). These categories of other and Other, though not entirely exclusive, should be read in the context of the self's encounter with radical alterity (*i.e.*, the Other). In this sense the self is always in a dialectical relationship with the Other.

> affirming, the violent, the passive, the quotidian, the sublime, the transgressive, and the domestic, the exotic and the mundane. (16-7)

I suggest that the relationship between self and Other as represented by Adair reveals a quest for the impossible annihilation of difference or alterity – the search for the infinite, for what Bataille refers to as "discontinuity of being" (1987 [1957]: 13). In this sense the expatriates' journey out into the wilderness or desert, beyond the walls of the city, runs parallel to the growing intensity and intimacy of the expatriates' interaction with the Other. They together represent what may be seen as a nihilism, but rather (through the lens of *In Tangier's* re-visioning of Bowles and his *oeuvre*) I would suggest is a utopian vision, challenging the limits and boundaries of love/intimacy and suggesting new possibilities beyond the limits of the known. Counter to mainstream societal views, "sexuality and love do not live in the bedroom of Oedipus", say Deleuze and Guattari; "they *dream* instead of wide-open spaces, and cause strange flows to circulate" (own emphasis, Patton & Protevi 2004: 188).

Following the dream imagery established by Bowles, continued by Adair and affirmed by the writers of *Anti-Oedipus*, my own approach to this chapter may appear full of diversions and "strange flows" (188). However, Adair's oscillation between her own creative fiction and Bowlesian (and other) intertexts necessitates my own intertextual oscillation, "between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987 [1980]: 25). The heuristic quality of Adair's text presents the complex task of discussing lateral, "simultaneous sprouts" in the linear, consecutive scope of an essay. To formulate some structure, let me outline the "sprouts" of this rhizomatic chapter. I begin by exploring

Bowles's vision of Tangier (and the Maghreb) as a "dream space" and Adair's appropriation of this motif in her construction of *In Tangier* as a space outside conventional moral strictures. This leads into the section entitled "Envisioning counterpleasures", which elaborates on the alternative intimacies inscribed in Adair's text through the conceptual lens of sadomasochism, elucidated by Karmen MacKendrick. In the third section I look at the notion of the "dream city" as a signifier of the postmodern, connecting Adair's postmodern style with Bowles's anti-modern world-view and exploring the de-centring effects of this dream city on its subjects. Making a close analysis of Paul Bowles's initial description of Tangier, I entitle the fourth section "The topography and psychology of the dream city", and discuss how this space engenders an encounter with and transgression of the limits of the conscious, rational world. In the fifth section I explore this transgression in terms of the experiences of counterpleasures in the dream space, as explicated in the sadomasochistic intimacies between Paul and Belquassim. Finally I comment on how the image of this labyrinthine dream space "pass[es] into flesh and blood in the *flâneur*" (Jokinen & Veijola 2000 [1997]: 28), embodied to varying degrees by Bowles, Adair and Belquassim, whose *Wanderlust* brings them to the limits of the city, and the self.

In Tangier as a "Dream Space"

This chapter is guided by the recurring motif of the dream which pervades Adair's novel, as it is focalised by Paul Bowles's lover, the fictional character, Belquassim. The focaliser's nostalgic barroom toast, "[t]o Paul and Jane" (Adair 2004: 1), initiates his recollection of the bohemian expatriate life in the Interzone of Tangier – an existence in which he had "come so close to living a dream" (6). As if through a kaleidoscope,

Belquassim self-reflexively suggests the colourful and non-linear structure of his story, implicitly constructing the narrative of his own unconscious desires, just like the Cubist painters that strike up his first recollections of the *Zeitgeist* of the mid-twentieth century Interzone: "They tried to express their unconscious desires on canvas. The unconscious is like a Cubist painting. It has no discernible pattern. Straight lines, but they are not linear" (2). Adair's text, like a Cubist painting, presents different perspectives simultaneously, surpassing the three dimensional world, transforming it into a surreal dream zone. Notably, Paul Bowles, in his first encounter with Tangier in 1931, perceived the city as the route to the unconscious – a veritable dream city (Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 110).

It is the psychoanalytical characteristics of the dream which provide a catalyst for a discussion on what possibilities (and dangers) Tangier creates for the "factional"[10] characters in Adair's novel. As the dream presents a threshold between the conscious and unconscious world, so Paul seeks liminal landscapes filled with dangers, risks and possibilities, which could as easily be described as "dream zones" as they could "nightmare zones." Always in transit, he moves out from the culturally indeterminate in-between space of the bar to the serpentine streets of the Arab Quarter (with its potential for political violence), to the dangerous Rif Valley and the ecological frontiers of the desert, mountains and island. I would suggest that Adair's text, imbued as it is with dream imagery – a hypnotic meditation on love filtered through whiskey, hashish, spells and

[10] These "factional" characters are a product of Adair's creative licence in creating a hybrid mix of the historical, as known through biographical writings, with fictional elaboration. The characterisation of the focaliser is a case in point. Adair derives the name Belquassim from Paul Bowles's novel, *The Sheltering Sky*. However, Adair's character is entirely unlike Bowles's Bedouin who kidnaps the character Kit for his sexual pleasure. Combining fiction with fact, Adair could possibly have modelled Belquassim on Bowles's intimate companion, a young Moroccan artist, Ahmed Yacoubi. Sawyer-Lauçanno speaks of Bowles and Yacoubi "mutually teaching and nurturing each other" (1989: 294). Likewise, Adair suggests a system of cultural exchange between Paul and Belquassim.

witchcraft – provides a dream space for the destruction and surpassing of the limits of the self through brutal sexual encounters that reflect master/slave dialectics.

Adair's re-creation of the International Zone creates a dream space for expression of socially transgressive desires and patterns of intimacy. Like the dream zone which is outside and beyond the moral strictures of society, Tangier is a place where "[e]veryone is somehow outside of social morality" (Adair 2004: 24). Both Freud and Jung believed that "dreams result from the repression of desires, which because of the influence of the superego can only be fulfilled in a distorted way during sleep" (Meyer et al. 1993: 57). The dangerous energy created by forbidden desires does not dissipate but constantly seeks satisfaction. Suppressed by the ego and superego, these desires occasionally "[break] through to consciousness in a disguised form, where they are experienced in a dream" (57).

The dream permits the surpassing of limits, allowing one to transgress the boundaries of societal strictures and norms. Similarly Adair's dream space allows Paul not only to escape geo-political limits but also (if only temporarily) the bodily limits between self and Other in the violence of his intimacy with Belquassim, pushing the coal of his hashish stick into Belquassim's back as he simultaneously penetrates him sexually (Adair 2004: 134). In order to explain this sadomasochistic intimacy I move from dream analysis to borrow Georges Bataille's and Maurice Blanchot's theories on the relationship between the death drive (Thanatos) and life drive (Eros). These theories will be examined further in the chapter, in the section entitled "The topography and psychology of the dream city."

"Tangier during the days of the International Zone, a city with many identities and therefore none, is the perfect setting for a fictional exploration of the anguish involved in the construction of human identity, the most basic shelter of all", says Richard Patteson in his study of Paul Bowles's fiction (1987: 47). Patteson reveals the parallel in Bowles's life and writing between the disintegration of the traditional religious, familial, marital, social and political "shelters" promised by the utopian ideals of modernity, and the existential angst which accompanies the collapse of the "shelter" of the modern concept of a stable, fixed identity. In his fictional writing Bowles explores the indeterminacy of identity and its associated feelings of alienation and anxiety. This displacement results from the Western subject's escape from a bleak and meaningless world in the wake of genocide, nuclear warfare and shifting political boundaries, into the equally unstable East with its transitional democracies rife with political tension in the battle between embracing traditional culture and submitting to the homogenising forces of Western "Modernisation" (Patteson 1987: x).

These Bowlesian thematics are reflected in Adair's re-imagining of the Interzone, a textual palimpsest for the author's own socio-political and cultural milieu, with its hybrid spaces and characters caught in the vexed and indeterminate cultural and moral ground between East and West, Orient and Occident. Adair's adoption of this Bowlesian, reactionary, anti-modern *Weltanschauung* suggests the postmodern mode of being and perceiving present in Bowles's avant-garde expatriate life and work. Just as the Bowlesian world provides a matrix for the disintegration of the self, the heterogeneous and hybrid demographics of Adair's Interzone provide a matrix for the complex patterns of love, sexuality and intimacy (core determinants of identity). Adair disrupts stable, monological

concepts of intimacy in her imagining of the contingent, bisexual, polyamorous relationship between Jane and Paul Bowles, and their respective relationships with the local inhabitants, Cherifa and Belquassim. Adair's act of story-telling not only *bridges* the space between modern and postmodern, but through "the act of signification, inscribing experience in words, [...] *creates* space" (de Certeau 1984: 122) for these new modes of being.

The shelters of identity, love and intimate relationships are as nebulous, nostalgic, shifting and beyond absolute control as a dream. Significantly, the "dream" is the common motif in Paul Bowles's vision of Tangier (and the Maghreb), as well as the focalising metaphor that encapsulates the diegesis of *In Tangier.* The dream makes all that is inconceivable conceivable in this in-between site of transition – a literal 'contact zone' with its often "asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt 1992: 4) – and creates possibilities for actual *and* imaginative travel, transculturation, and the exploration of new patterns of intimacy.

Adair becomes a dream traveller, moving between the real and the imagined. She brings to life the words of the "dead", borrowing from Moroccan story-tellers, iconic figures from the Beat movement and existentialist philosophers, amongst others (Acknowledgements 2004: n.p.). In the Preface she sets and fulfils her own dream scene in being able to travel for the first time whilst her home country experiences the surreal watershed moment of a new democracy. The unfamiliarity and displacement brought on by travel seem to invite an entry into a dream world, one where the author sees (or *envisions*) the legendary Paul Bowles, the inspiration for her novel. Adair's vision of

Bowles is suitably ephemeral for he is "[o]n the other side of the café at a table on the edge of the shaded garden" and her description of "an old man" with "white hair [...] writing in a notebook" remains open and inconclusive as she leaves, seeing him "[lift] up his head and [look] out across the sea" (2004: Preface).

For Adair and Belquassim "[t]ravel, then, is not simply a luxury or a leisurely philosophical activity but operates as a metaphor for the cultural displacement and sense of unfamiliarity engendered by social change" (Kaplan 1996: 82). Both Adair and the characters of her novel are imbricated in the ambivalence and unpredictability of the in-between space of their transitional democracies. The author, outside her home country as the ideological supremacy of apartheid is dismantled, is torn between her skepticism surrounding the political changes taking place and her enjoyment of the freedom to travel that the "release of political prisoners and the unbanning of the African National Congress" allow (2004: Preface). Similarly, the diegesis imagined by Adair centres on the final days of the Interzone, characterised by the intensifying political instability prior to Moroccan independence in March 1956. Other than certain intertextual markers, Adair's dream zone permits the inscription of only one specific temporal marker, the day when Belquassim recalls "Paul had told him that he needed him. It was a Monday, in 1949" (Adair 2004: 9).

For Bowles, as for Adair and her fictional focaliser, Belquassim, travel opens up new possibilities and the Interzone becomes a figurative "dreamscape" in the uncertainty of their respective presents. Adair builds suspense and an anticipation of an unknown future in her prefatory notes as well as the novel itself, as she along with Bowles and Belquassim

constantly look out beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, imagining a world beyond the present. I would argue that this day-dreamer's gaze creates a textual dream space for experimenting with the enactment of previously unimaginable desires for both the "factional" characters, as well as for the author (and contemporary reader). In this sense, the South African human rights lecturer fulfils the "fabulating function" (1997: 228) Deleuze perceives as the role of the writer, whose task as "seer or becomer" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994 [1991]: 171) is not to address a people that already exist, but "consists in inventing a people that is missing" (Deleuze 1997: 228).

Envisioning "Counterpleasures"

Implicated in contemporary South African issues of race, class, and gender, Adair's novel constructs counter narratives to conventional, socially-acceptable patterns of intimacy, love and sex. If anguish is experienced in the contingent "shelter" of postmodern subjectivity, then it is even more viscerally evoked in the sexual and intimate subject positions explored in Paul Bowles's relationships with Belquassim and Jane. The sadomasochistic elements of these relationships, which raise questions surrounding the dialectic between Eros (the life drive) and Thanatos (the death drive), form a central theme for analysis in this chapter. "Betrayal, moral confusion, love, lust and loss" are the subject of this text, says Marlene van Niekerk (2004: n.p.). Reaffirming common perceptions of what constitute a "normal" love relationship, Van Niekerk refers to "power struggles in *dysfunctional* relationships" (n.p.). Furthermore, Van Niekerk implicitly suggests that it is not only the Bowleses, but also Adair, in her presumable perpetuation of an Orientalist discourse, who is caught in the "traps of desire and exoticism that any western writer confronting any 'other' will encounter" (n.p.).

Accusations of exoticism, sadomasochism, pornography and domination could be levelled at *In Tangier*. However, Adair's sensitive and highly evocative depiction of the network of love and power dynamics in these relationships invites a more complex reading: one that perceives these contentious issues beyond a monological, orthodox understanding of love, intimacy and pleasure. Discussing the intimate relationships of these ex-centric expatriates, who choose to break beyond the disciplinary restraints and controls of productive and reproductive Western capitalist heteronormativity, requires a register befitting their marginal, counter-(re)productive pleasures. "They have no sensuality, only rules and counter-rules" (Adair 2004: 34), says Paul of the two American women tourists, seduced by the wiles of a young Moroccan drummer, yet bound by their sexual repression and fear of losing control of the "framework [they] need to cling to" (32). Creating a counterpoint to the dominant fictions of heterosexual life and love, both Paul Bowles and Adair share in the exploration of "counterpleasures", to borrow MacKendrick's terminology. According to MacKendrick:

> Counterpleasures take up a highly disruptive place within, at the margins of, and explosively beyond [the institutions of pornography, Christianity, and erotic domination]. That is, Sade and Masoch do not give us pornography in any usual sense; they make use of pornographic techniques to problematize pleasure and unfold startling possibilities in language and narrative structure. [...] Sadomasochistic eroticism intensifies relations of control and subordination by fundamentally (that is, at the very beginning or foundation) altering their meaning, removing power from its orderly binarism of oppression to create a transgressive, postsubjective and highly Bataillean erotic. (1999: 14)

Whilst these issues remain morally contested in contemporary society, Adair effectively evokes the existential risk and potential fear in opening oneself to multifarious intimacies,

presenting introspective reflections on loss, suffering, pain and the surpassing of limits. Belquassim introduces the reader to the transgressive desires which characterise his relationship with Paul, evoking images and bodily metaphors of colonialist inscription, power dynamics and choice. Belquassim says he had "chosen to follow him" (Adair 2004: 11) and embraced "[t]he pain that he now knew was his relationship with Paul. Pain so beautiful, the pain that his body wanted so much" (2004: 10). Yet more than the intense intimacy which evokes the odd alliance between pleasure and pain, there is tenderness and the desire for an impossible closeness, one that challenges *and violates* the boundary between self and Other.

In Tangier presents a meditation on love that contests all that mainstream society claims love is not: lust, desperation, obsession, contingency, violence, jealousy and multiplicity. The world that Belquassim shares with Jane and Paul is as transitory as the concept of love as it is explored in Adair's novel. Indeed, the interrelations between the central characters address the banality of common conceptions of intimacy and love.

The Dream (City) as a Postmodern Signifier

The dream presents a suitable signifier of the postmodern condition with its connotations of indeterminacy and the disintegration of the separation of reality and fiction. Already decentring an objective, conscious reality in the opening paragraph, Belquassim delves into the unconscious mind, stating the subjective, mutable nature of memories, which are as much reconstructions of reality as dreams: "Strange, he thought. Memories are remembered so that the adventure can be told. The telling of a memory makes the story,

the story that is more exotic than the experience. What happened itself is not real, *only the story is real*. The real adventure" (own emphasis, Adair 2004: 1).

Belquassim's reminiscences take on the quality of a lucid dream, as the reader imaginatively, together with Belquassim, takes a sip of the "fierce fiery yellow liquid" (1) and enters an altered state of consciousness – a dream world where fact and fiction seamlessly merge in the re-inscription of the Bowleses' lives, and the narrative structure escapes a linear teleology. Space takes precedence over time. Belquassim speaks of "endless journeys across so much space" (7) and the "space of the half-day" (4). Moreover, the novel's trajectory is driven by the alternating insights into the consciousness and world-views of Jane, Paul and Belquassim, rather than by a definitive plot structure. Notably, Cherifa, Jane's Moroccan lover and a central figure in the narrative, is given no interiority. This silence is suggestive of on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's feminist postcolonial critique that if "the [male] subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak 1993 [1988]: 83). This will be the focus of discussion in Chapter Three.

The catalytic impact of Paul Bowles's first encounter[11] with this liminal port city, the gateway between Africa and Europe, on his self and writing cannot be underestimated. Tangier, the International Zone at the tip of the African continent, was for Bowles the edge of the Western world of reason, democracy, history, the idea of a universal "we" and a universal truth (the key ideas upon which modernity is based). Bowles's writings disrupt

[11] Paul Bowles first visited Tangier in 1931, and after marrying Jane Auer in 1938 and travelling between Central America, Europe and New York he finally bought a house in the city in October 1947 where his wife joined him in January the next year (Sawyer-Laçanno 1989: 262; 268).

and overturn the authority and status of the ideals of modernity. Considering modernity and postmodernity not as distinct epochs but as modes, it is possible to perceive Bowles's world-view as counter-modern or even postmodern in view of the reactionary denotation of the prefix "post."

Adair's re-inscription of Bowles's life and writings, far from presenting a disjunction between Bowles's and her modes, suggests their shared incredulity toward metanarratives (Jean-François Lyotard's dominant assertion about the postmodern condition in his "Missive on Universal History" (1992 [1984])). Bowles's need "to seek diversity" (Bowles 1963: xxi) and his stance against the homogenising forces of "Europeanization" (xxiii) indicated in the Foreword to his travel narrative, *Their Heads Are Green and Their Hands Are Blue*, resonates with Lyotard's comments on "the failing of modernity ... [which] could be connected to a resistance on the part of what I shall call the multiplicity of worlds of names, the insurmountable diversity of cultures" (1992 [1984]: 31). Bowles speaks against the "irrational longing [of members of Eastern cultures] to cease being themselves and become Westerners" (1963: xxii).

The character and terrain of Tangier, the inspiration for many of Bowles's novels and short stories, highlight the central features of the postmodern dilemma: "the particularity, randomness, and *opacity of the present* ..., [the] question of [...] identity, [...] and the loss of unanimity" (own emphasis, Lyotard 1992 [1984]: 26). Adair has Paul describe the city as a place "*owned by no one* [...,] *outside that world which is supposed to give us meaning*", a place where "[*n*]o-*one* [...] *has any essential identity, we all just exist*" (2004: 21).

In Bowles's novels, as in *In Tangier*, the significance of the city (and its surrounds) exceeds its mere physical geography. Its topography and social demographics enter the psyche of its visitors and become symbolic of a greater psychological narrative. As a postmodern "playground", Tangier, like "the word *postmodernity* [is] able to embrace [the] conflicting perspectives" (Lyotard 1984: 30) that arise out of the deconstruction of the universal rational modern subject. Finlayson's *Tangier: City of the Dream* suggests the capacity for this city not only to decentre western culture but also the western subject. According to Finlayson, "Morocco, a traditionally violent country, offered no fixed certainties. Tangier, a cosmopolitan city of many races, creeds and castes, offered no fixed centre of religious or moral law. It was, to that extent, anarchic and potentially disturbing, a key or parallel for the destruction of character" (1992: 162).

Tangier provides the backdrop (or objective correlative) to the disruption and subversion of the Cartesian, fixed, unified ego, highlighting the contingency of subjectivity. To the *Paris Review*, Bowles remarked that the "transportation of characters to such [exotic] settings often acts as a catalyst or a detonator, without which there'd be no action, so I shouldn't call the setting secondary" (Finlayson 1992: 161).

The Topography and Psychology of the "Dream City"

Described as a "dream city", Tangier (and the Maghreb) represented for Bowles the edge of the conscious, rational world and a gateway to the unconscious – the physical place reflected the inner geography of the writer's imagination. Bowles's description of the city reveals the interconnection between bodies and places, and his belief in "a secret

connection between the world of nature and the consciousness of man, a hidden but direct passage which bypassed the [conscious] mind" (Bowles in Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 110). In his autobiography Bowles describes this poignant first encounter with the city:

> If I said that Tangier struck me as a dream city, I should mean it in the strict sense. Its topography was rich in prototypal dream scenes: covered streets like corridors with doors opening into rooms on each side, hidden terraces high above the sea, streets consisting only of steps, dark impasses, small squares built on sloping terrain so that they looked like ballet sets designed in false perspective, with alleys leading off in several directions; as well as the classical dream equipment of tunnels, ramparts, ruins, dungeons and cliffs … (Bowles 1985: 128)

Bowles presents an image of the city as an archetypal *shadow* world with its "covered streets", "hidden terraces" and "dark impasses." This is a scene rife with the risks and possibilities of liminality, with doors opening into secret rooms and cliffs that hang over the unknown depths below. His vision of serpentine alleys and passages mimics a psychic journey of interiority; winding into the inner cavities of the inner city mirrors the writer's exploration into his own inner *shadow* self. The pace of Bowles's description as he jumps from one image to the next, the images separated only by commas, highlights the verve and ebullience of his encounter with a scene which presents immense peril, a sense of displacement and the illusion of reality, with its "sloping terrain" and concealed precipices.

Bowles's Tangier is a site of ever-present unknowns and in its dream capacity is entirely Other, even as this encounter with *Destrudo* or Thanatos (the destructive death drive) exists simultaneously with the encounter with Eros (the creative life or sexual energy). Whilst Bowles's image of the city incites fear, it is also seductively erotic, inviting the

subject into its dark alleys and secret rooms. According to Freud, tunnels and entrance-ways were symbolic of the vagina in dream analysis. Conceivably these *gynecoid* symbols suggest the subject's departure from the reason and logic of the phallogocentric order into the mystery, irrationality or "false perspective" of the *anima* (the unconscious female element present in every man) (Meyer et al. 1993: 80). Bowles constructs an intensely gendered dreamscape. Likening the city squares to "ballet sets designed in false perspective", he evokes the erotic associations of the art of ballet with its connotations of femininity and intense emotion, not to mention tortured constraint. This feminine image exists alongside the phallic images of protruding brutal cliffs, and the masculine war images of "ramparts, ruins [and] dungeons." Re-visualising *anima* and *animus*, feminine and masculine, Bowles's Tangier becomes a bisexual dreamscape filled with the possibility of multiple encounters, uninhibited by society's gender-role prescriptions. This is a scene not only of adventure and danger, but also manifold unbounded alternatives for the city stroller, with its "doors opening into rooms" and endless passages, tunnels and corridors. Equally, the dreamscape opens up possibilities for this writer-composer's creative mind, considering the Jungian precept that the balanced and uninhibited coexistence of *anima* and *animus* in the individual liberates creative expression (Meyer et al. 1993: 81). This creative-destructive dialectic anticipates the central drive of Bowles's fiction: the encounter and interaction with the Other detonates the subject's simultaneous inner psychic journey as s/he continues on a journey out in a search for the ever-ephemeral object of desire. According to Papayanis, this quest entails a type of "self-artistry" that is a process of constant "self-reflectivity" (Papayanis 2005: 30). It requires "self-dismantling" all fixed systems of knowledge that offer the self a sense of unity and

security, or a *"selective desanctification of elements of your own identity"* (William Connolly in Papayanis 2005: 30).

Intestinal "corridors" and tunnels with orifices opening into "dark impasses" evoke an almost erotic bodily topography of the city. In addition to the symbolism attached to mysterious dark coves, Freudian analysis holds that "elongated objects" and the rhythmic action of climbing stairs, as suggested in the "streets consisting only of steps" (Bowles 1985: 128), signify the phallus and sexual activity (Meyer et al. 1993: 58). Moreover, in Bowles's short stories such as "The Echo" and "Pages from Cold Point" in particular, "homosexuality, the problematic nature of family ties, and expatriation are intimately intertwined [...]. Repressed sexual desire, often operating on an unconscious level, is the moving force behind so much of human action" (Hibbard 1993: 29). Georges Bataille explains the apparent paradox that "[e]roticism is one aspect of the inner life of man. We fail to realise this because man is everlastingly in search of an object *outside* himself but this object answers the *innerness* of the desire" (1987 [1957]: 29). Adair utilises this correlative between the outer and inner (and interpersonal) journey in the relationships between Paul and Belquassim.

The dream city is composed of endless openings out. Terraces above the sea, ramparts and cliffs, literal and figurative hiatuses, suggest the uncanny simultaneous sensations of terror and temptation in facing the limit. Yet, Bataille recognises that

> we are wrong to take this limit and the individual's acceptance of it seriously. The limit is only there to be overreached. Fear and horror are not the real and final reaction; on the contrary, they are a temptation to overstep the bounds. We know

> that once we are conscious of it, we have to react to the desire ingrained in us to overstep the limits. (Bataille 1987 [1957]: 144)

Bowles's dream city invites transgression of the bounds of the life drives (the ego's survival drive and Eros's sexual drives), evoking in his visceral description of the exotic city Bataille's definition of "eroticism" as "assenting to life to the point of death" (11). The life drives are actions of constant repetition in satisfying the demands of survival of the individual and the species through reproduction. According to Bataille, reproduction implies the separate, isolated and *discontinuous* state of existence. There is always a gulf between me and you ("If you die, it is not my death" – a view that bears comparison with Blanchot's observation of the impersonality of the intensely personal experiences of passion and death) (in Bataille 1987 [1957]: 12). It is the body that strives through the sexual act to bridge the gulf and achieve a state of continuity or fusion, a lost primordial unity. Thus, "unlike simple sexual activity", eroticism is a psychological quest "independent of the natural goal: reproduction" (11). Its intent is both the (impossible) continual intensification of sexual tension and pleasure, and its release. However, the state of life (and thus the erotic impulse) necessitates constant tension. It is only death that promises a totally tensionless state – Nirvana, the unconscious ideal of life (Freud in Meyer et al. 1993: 50).

In Adair's novel Gertrude Stein inspires Paul's visit to Tangier, instructing him to "go to a place where you will be *beyond life*, where you can be an outsider" (own emphasis 2004: 110). In view of the cliffs and terraces of Bowles's death-defying dream imagery, expressing the desire to surpass the limits, it is significant that Nirvana literally means "blown out" in Sanskrit and refers to the "emancipation of the soul through the extinction

of the self" (Webster 1981: 643). Consequently, Tangier (and the Maghreb) becomes a metaphorical Nirvana for the expatriate, a postmodern space for experimenting with subjectivity. As Bowles was inspired by the city's ability to decentre and shatter the self, he was also drawn to the desert, which Adair has Paul describe as the "vacuum of humanness, the depletion of anything that resembled meaning or morality" (2004: 10) – a metaphoric Nirvana. MacKendrick notes that "Bataille's fascination is with the body of the shattered subject, the transgression of the seemingly insurmountable boundary between discontinuous living and the continuity of death. It is not the death of the *body* but of the *subject* that is sought" (1999: 118).

In the Bataillian sense the Interzone presents a physical 'contact zone,' where bodies, in sexual and sensual intimacy, enter into postmodern play with positions of identity. Reconciling the apparent mutual exclusivity of Eros and Thanatos, Bataille explains the inseparability of the two, explicating the psycho-analytic implications of Bowles's vision of Tangier. Bataille suggests that eroticism "opens the way to death. Death opens the way to the denial of our individual lives" (1987 [1957]: 24). The boundary and limit of life is death; thus, life by definition is discontinuous. In sadomasochism a violation of the physical body becomes symbolic of an inner shattering of a unified self and of the constant desire to surpass the boundaries of limited life; it is only through destroying the self that it is possible to venture into a world beyond. "Without doing violence to our inner selves", Bataille asks, "are we able to bear a negation that carries us to the farthest bounds of possibility?" (24). Papayanis notes that in the Bowlesian *oeuvre* "the committed wanderer achieves a productive self-estrangement that clears the way for creativity" (2005: 145). Bowles, lost in the oriental city, echoes Bataille's idea of a self-

negation that bears the writer to "farthest bounds of possibility." In an interview Bowles says, "When you've cut yourself off from the life you've been living [...] and you haven't yet established another life, you're free. ... If you don't know where you're going you're freer. ... 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" (in Papayanis 2005: 145).

It is significant that Bowles's relocation to Tangier coincides with his gradual transition from composing music to writing. The dreamscape of Tangier revitalised his creative self, tapping into the unconscious world of the shadow and the myths and archetypes of the collective unconscious. Bowles had found a place that permitted a freer imaginative and physical being outside the sexually and culturally repressive moral strictures of post-war Western society. Whilst writing encouraged the creation of his own dark shadow mythologies, he "always felt extremely circumscribed in music" (Bowles in Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989: 255); in an interview in 1952 Bowles comments that "a desire came to me to invent my own myths, adopting the point of view of the primitive mind. The only way I could devise for simulating that state was the old Surrealist method of abandoning conscious control and writing whatever words came from the pen" (Bowles 1985: 261-2).

These dream images speak of the way "we live our lives – through places through the body" (Nast & Pile 1998: 1). In his biography, Sawyer-Lauçanno comments that "[f]or Bowles the notion of the outer and inner selves still held sway, and as in childhood, the idea of revealing one's true self was completely repugnant to him" (1989: 109). Having learnt to suppress and curtail his free expression and true nature as a child, as a defence mechanism against his father's constant criticism and control, as a young man he

continued this self repression under the sexual and political panopticon of the "McCarthy era of persecution and police spies" (Norse 1990 [1989]: 235). Harold Norse recalls how "homosexuality was regarded as a lurid, criminal act, worse than murder (55); "gays were entrapped through enticement by plainclothesmen, and freethinkers were accused of being Reds in rabid witch-hunts" (235).

Bowles's vision of the labyrinthine city is perpetuated in his novel, *Let It Come Down*, where Nelson Dyar's escape from the puritanical morality of America to the disorienting and maze-like streets of the International Zone leads to a psychic state of self-dismantling or "disintegration", where "going to pieces is inevitable" ([1952] 1984: 234). On a journey from the safety of their typically Western or American origins to exotic "unknown" destinations (typically North Africa or South America), the characters of Bowles's fiction find themselves disoriented and lost in cities or wildernesses, where their physical displacement becomes an objective correlative for their metaphysical state. The reader's horror is amplified by the realisation that physical threats are not exterior to the self but interior, an aspect of the psyche that is inherent and beyond escape. Steven Shaviro's insights into Bataille's interpretation of the Greek myth of Theseus in his search to slay the Minotaur in *Visions of Excess* explicates the psychic journey upon which the Bowlesian plot and narrative structure depend. Bataille notes:

> Theseus can no longer thread the labyrinth in order to confront the monster. For the confrontation has already taken place as soon as Theseus is lost in the labyrinth; and he is already lost in the labyrinth even before he makes the decision to enter. The acephalic man "[…] is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words as a monster." (In Shaviro 1990: 108)

"We're all monsters [...]. It's the *Age* of Monsters", ([1952] 1984: 238) Daisy De Valverde says to Dyar, in *Let it Come Down*. According to Shaviro, "philosophy and criticism can seek, as always, to normalize this monstrosity. [...] But they will never be able to abolish – or, on the other hand, to conceptualize or formalize – the 'vertiginous fall' in which the violent heterogeneity of existence is ecstatically affirmed at the very point of its annihilation" (1990: 108). The labyrinthine city becomes a map for the inner psychic state. Bowles's fictional characters realise that the alterity they fear in their exotic surroundings is actually a symptom of their own inner psychic ambivalence, caught in the schizophrenic dream of modernity. "With love, as with life itself", says Zygmunt Bauman, "it is the same story again: only death is unambiguous, and escape from ambivalence is the temptation of Thanatos" (1994 [1993]: 108-109).

It is significant that Bowles's fictions are "usually characterized by a 'voyage out,' or boundary crossing, into an exotic and disorienting landscape, [...] and a narrative chain of events set in motion by the inevitable encounter between the expatriate and the native, which leads to an epiphany of violence or cultural confusion" (Papayanis 2005: 153). *In Tangier* follows a similar narrative structure, beginning in the Preface with Adair's own arrival in the exotic location of Tangier and then moving (almost seamlessly) into the narrative proper where Belquassim tells the tale of a psychic, emotional and intimate "voyage out." In his review, Chris Dunton notes that it is the "extraordinarily affective tension shared by the four chief characters that propel the book's main energies" (2004: 18). As in Bowles's narratives, the catalyst for the sequence of events is the encounter between the expatriates (Jane and Paul) and the local inhabitants (Cherifa and Belquassim). However, unlike most of Bowles's writings the narrative is imbued with the

psychic and emotional tone of the local inhabitant who shares Paul's attentions and affections, that is Belquassim, not the occidental subject.

Counterpleasures of the Dream Space

The encounter between self and Other in Bowles's texts, as in *In Tangier*, is almost always violent or potentially destructive. Whilst *In Tangier* re-inscribes a Bowlesian proclivity for violence, perhaps more alarming is the destructive capacity expressed in the intense erotic intimacy shared between Paul and Belquassim. The relationship between Paul and Belquassim challenges our conventional understanding of love and intimacy, unravelling the true complexity and intensity of intimacy as expressed in the dialectic between Eros and Thanatos.

Adair's exposé of taboo topics such as child prostitution, sex tourism, homoeroticism, bisexuality and sadomasochism, and responses to Adair's novel such as those levelled by the *Pretoria News*, suggest that somehow "we have come to have a rather pastoral and sanitized conception of love" (MacKendrick 1999: 117). Our very desires, according to Kaja Silverman's extension of Lacanian psychoanalysis, have already been mediated by culture (1983: 166), which in our South African context (as in most Western societies) is capitalist and patriarchal. Raoul Vaneigem in *The Book of Pleasures*, the inspiration for Karmen MacKendrick's study of *Counterpleasures*, notes that "the socially acceptable forms of pleasure, especially erotic pleasure, have been limited to what is at least potentially re/productive" (MacKendrick 1999: 2-3). The rules of familial, marital, religious and legal institutions dictate the sexual and intimate positions and possibilities open to the individual (Silverman 1983: 180). So whilst the male subject in the

phallogocentric order may possess the penis which resembles the signifier of the privileges and potency present in the Law and Name of the Father, "the penis can never approximate the phallus" (1983: 184), for the phallus always exceeds the penis (184) – it is an *ideal* which can never be met in the individual subject, and incurs an extreme cost. Bowles's characters are ineffectual in terms of their Oedipalisation into society and obedience to the phallic regime. Like Bowles himself, they flee the West and its social norms.

In Adair's text, "the body is a site for the deployment of power relations, a limit, for the possibilities of sexualisation, and in the end only an ambiguous source for sexual expression" (Weeks 1989: 177). Through the lens of Bataillian eroticism, it is possible to perceive that in the relationship between Paul and Belquassim, "the limit is only there to be overreached" (Bataille 1987 [1957]: 144). The skin is the surface that separates one being from another, even in the most intimate moments. In the encounter with this limit between two bodies and subjectivities, the skin represents the boundary that must be overcome. The skin, as a natural boundary, invites seduction and presents the "temptation to overstep the bounds" (144) of the Other and in turn the self, through its rupture – through literally and metaphorically scratching, burning, or cutting the skin, the false enclosure of the Ego.

Belquassim provides a very visceral metaphor of the power-play of a sadomasochistic intimacy in the opening chapter. Complicating the binaries of oppressor and oppressed, Belquassim actively seeks pain and violation. The body becomes the surface for colonial inscription, yet simultaneously subverts the power held by the coloniser by highlighting

the obvious play in seeking the roles of "top" (sadist) and "bottom" (masochist), represented in the image of a record player:

> As Belquassim sat in the study of the house he could hear in the record the perfumed explosion of the trumpet, that perfect explosion of pain. The pain that he now knew was his relationship with Paul. Pain so beautiful, the pain that his body wanted so much. The needle would hiss over the vinyl, scratching the black skin. Paul's music set out a story that could not be described in words, it could never be told. But even though Belquassim loved the music more than the stories, he knew that Paul's needed his words. His stories were like pictures created by hashish, they painted him into an unknown world of raw emotion that he had never recognised or known existed.
>
> [...]
>
> [H]e had chosen to follow him, and it was the fact that he followed Paul that made him feel alive, the pain of life. (Adair 2004: 10; 11)

This poignant image of the black skin of the vinyl whirring beneath the sharp edge of the record player's needle becomes a motif for the power-knowledge-pleasure dynamic of Paul and Belquassim's relationship. Paul "needs" Belquassim's words as much as Belquassim desires to be "painted into an unknown world of raw emotion" (10). This image connotes not only colonial inscription onto the local landscape and culture through the act of translation, but also onto the colonial body, as the needle hisses over the vinyl, "scratching the black skin" (10).

Postcolonial hermeneutics may explain the image as a continuation of the binary distinctions of the active West and passive East in portraying the colonial subject as the inactive and receptive black vinyl whose story or song can only be voiced through the West and its symbolic "record player." The use of record and record player highlights the intention of Paul's visit to the exotic city of Tangier: he had come to record the local

music, to capture local stories and present them to the Western world, a project that may be construed as perpetuating an interest in mystifying the Orient as a strange otherworldly place caught in an amoral haze of hashish and bohemian living. The conversion of local oral tales to translated text may also imply the Western commodification of an exoticist or Orientalist discourse. It may be said that the Western pseudo-anthropological obsession of "recording" and inscribing the knowledge of other cultures onto mass produced and marketable vinyl records, and the record player as a symbol of Western culture, present a most fitting metaphor for Edward Said's understanding of Orientalism as:

> a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geopolitical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which [...] it not only creates but also maintains; it *is*, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world [...]. (1995 [1978]: 12)

Without negating the ethical implications of Orientalism, I would argue that the encounter with the Other, as represented in Adair's text, is so riddled with the complexities and existential possibilities of alternative intimate relationships that it exceeds a purely racist and imperialistic critique. John MacKenzie, in his critique of Said's *Orientalism*, looks at the exchange between Orient and Occident as a creative catalyst. Whilst this cultural hybridity is often unbalanced and implicated in the implicit hegemonies of North/South, East/West or Orient/Occident, MacKenzie observes that

> [...] the Orient can be the means for a counter-western discourse, that it can offer opportunities for literary extension, spiritual renewal and artistic development. Thus the Orient, or at least its discourse, has the capacity to become the tool of

> cultural revolution, a legitimizing source of resistance to those who challenge western conventions, introspection and complacency. (1995: 10)

Adair's encounter with the exotic location of Tangier presents an opportunity for "literary extension" and "artistic development" in her re-inscription of the Bowleses life and work. Moreover, her re-imagining of Paul's counterpleasures exemplifies MacKenzie's claim that the Orient can present a "legitimizing source of resistance to those who challenge western conventions" (10). However, avoiding the trap of an unfettered celebration of the transgressive, and a revelry in the perverse pleasures of sadomasochistic, polyamorous intimacies, MacKendrick reminds us that these nonteleological pleasures also threaten to destabilize our own (impossible) attempt to maintain stable subjectivities. Similarly, Adair portrays these quixotic counterpleasures of the dream city without underlining the thwarted nature of these complex intertwined love affairs, shadowed by suffering, jealously and betrayal. The older Belquassim, bound by the institutions of marriage and fatherhood, looks back on his love in the Interzone, and is still haunted by intense "anger and [...] jealousy until it burst inside his head. Exploded like an orange smashed against the concrete beachfront pathway" (Adair 2004: 5). Despite his apparent reintegration into societal norms, the remnant of the dream cannot be separated from his consciousness or subjectivity. These are pleasures that "cut across the boundaries of this subjectivity at multiple points, in pleasure as the *defiance* of pleasure" (own emphasis, MacKendrick 1999: 13).

Pleasure becomes subversive when it becomes multiple, without end, beyond gratification and outside productive societal norms. Adair's novel thus presents a space for exploring alternative patterns of intimacy, marginalised in our contemporary society. Consequently,

the Tangier presented in Adair's text, a figurative dream space, "has the capacity to become the tool of cultural revolution, a legitimizing source of resistance to those who challenge western conventions" (MacKendrick 1999: 10). Likewise, the Interzone becomes a microcosm for the author's experimentation, not only with postmodern techniques, but also diverse desires and pleasures.

Beyond the limited connotations of domination and oppression, the image of the record player underlines a controlled system of restraint, which depends as much on the vinyl's timed rotation as it does on the needle's fine-tuned restraint. This is a synchronous relationship which does not necessarily place sole power in the "top." Rather, it speaks of a "polymorphous" power (Foucault 1990 [1976]: 11) as a "multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation" (93). Fixed binarist hegemonies constantly shift as pleasures intensify.

There is a certain element of the ritual or performative in the complex equation of intimacies between Belquassim and Paul and Jane, "this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power" (Butler 1993: 241). Hence, it is fitting that the relationship between Paul and Belquassim exceeds and disrupts the implicit hegemonies in the binary of "two" for it cannot be discussed without including the "third" corner of the triangle, Jane, or for that matter, Cherifa. Each is implicated in the other. To reiterate the geometric metaphor I utilise in the introduction, the relationships take on a quadrilateral rhomboidal form, neither equilateral nor

equiangular, but a constantly shifting construction which can be divided into double triangles.

"To understand the perverse pleasures of restraint and restrained (ritualized, ceremonial, and especially *stylized*) violence (including the pleasure of pain)", according to MacKendrick, "we must remember what Foucault has told us: that it is always the body that is at issue, especially in pleasure. And it is perhaps *in restraint that the body comes into its fullest pleasure*" (own emphasis, 1999: 102). Belquassim relates the anticipated and timed "explosion of the trumpet, [to] that perfect explosion of pain" (Adair 2004: 10). He, like the musical instrument that is controlled and restrained by the musician, is able to reach that climax of pleasure-pain. The destructive nature of the pleasure-pain dialectic suggests the post-subjective rupture of the self in the moment of intense intimacy, as the needle breaks the skin. Blanchot attests that intimacy "makes presence explode into pieces, abolishing it in some manner or exalting it to the point of destruction" (in Shaviro 1990: 154). "Intimacy is the hyberbole of presence", Shaviro explains. "I cannot maintain my selfhood in the face of someone who is simply *too close*. The other's intrusion interrupts the movement by which I establish a relation to myself. I no longer have the freedom that comes from reflection and distance" (154).

This is the "joy of rapture and rupture" (MacKendrick 1999: 150) which tears the self apart, leaving it lost, emphasizing the simultaneous danger in the extreme openness and exposure of this intimacy *and* the sublime pleasure of abandon:

> If I abandon myself to joy that crosses the limit of my self, if I abandon myself *in* joy at the limit, the limit which is my-self, then I abandon myself to, or in, or as

> my own loss. This is to assent at once to death and to life, to life up to the point of death.
>
> [...]
>
> I can only abandon myself to joy and in joy, in acceptance, in return, which is to say that it is a sacrificial joy. In this claim I insist on the double sense of abandon: it is at once the sense of being lost or left and the sense of "wild abandon", of un-self-conscious freedom. In its divine form it is the impossible, the utter openness of possibility, which, as we shall see, sacred space implies. (150)

Whilst there is delight in this abandon, it cannot be separated from the feeling of abandonment which pervades the end of Belquassim's narrative. This sense of loss echoes through the focaliser's final question: "And when I sold myself, what did I receive in payment? Only a dream, and I have already spent my dream" (Adair 2004: 164). Yet, is the dream not more tangible and lingering, even permanent, than it may seem, for after highlighting his sense of loss, he is immediately reminded of the power of his sacrificial love as he "put his hand to his shoulder and felt the small raised scar on his skin, [... which] nestled between his shoulder blades, protected" (164)? Thus, the "politics of connection and disconnection" take place on the body (Nast & Pile 1998: 3), and the dream becomes rooted in the physical marking on his body – more real than the home his adolescent son is guiding him toward. His consent to leave the bar and his reminiscences of the Interzone, saying, "Yes, let us go home" (2004: 164), become profoundly ironic for this hybrid figure who not only exists on the margins of East and West but also the conscious and unconscious world. For Belquassim there is "no interval between dreaming and waking. In this sense, it is possible to say: never, dreamer, can you awake [...] *The dream is without end, waking is without beginning; neither one nor the other ever reaches itself. Only dialectical language relates them to each other in view of a truth*" (Blanchot 1995 [1980]: 35-36).

Adair sets a surreal scene as the focaliser fails to recognise his own son when he enters the bar, and then attempts to draw Belquassim and the reader into (un)real affairs of domestic life, with "Mamma" waiting at home having prepared a "favourite [...] lamb *tagine*" (2004: 164). The liminality of his position is intensified in the final paragraph:

> Belquassim drained the rest of the whisky from his glass. It ran like a flame down his throat. He got up slowly from the barstool and took the boy's hand. Gently the boy led him across the bar towards the door, the front door that led down to the ocean. In a hoarse voice he replied, "Yes, let us go home." (164)

Like a sleep-walker he is led by the hand out of the dream space of the bar, the place where he met Jane and Paul, a hazy dream scene which "smelt of musk and opium" where you "could hear a million languages, dream languages from far away" (4). Although there is the suggestion of "home", Adair leaves the focaliser and the reader on the threshold, "at the front door that led down to the ocean" (164). For the focaliser the act of gazing across the ocean into the beyond signifies both imaginative *abandon* (a catalyst to the retelling of his story), as well as emotional *abandonment*. The love, freedom and "wild abandon" of the Interzone remain a dream for the focaliser. Perceiving the end of their bohemian lifestyles in a newly independent Islamic Morocco, the expatriates "had all escaped" (6), returning to Europe, America or other exotic destinations. Adair evokes a powerful sense of loss and desertion as it appears that Jane (in death) and Paul (for reasons that remain unknown) have deserted the young hustler. Love is an ambivalent state for the focaliser; the rapture of "raw emotion" (10) is inseparable from anguish: "Suffering, he thought, is just about being alive. The immediacy of my own suffering, maybe, helps me to see the world more clearly" (11). Thus, the closing moments of the narrative, as Belquassim

touches the scar between his shoulder blades, evoke a sense of the sublime. According to MacKendrick the subject enters the sublime when pleasure and pain cross and "the will moves with pain, into pain, [...] it affirms intensity by saying yes" (1999: 152). Belquassim chooses to pursue the pleasure that is pain through his relationship with Paul: "he had chosen to follow him, and it was the fact that he followed Paul that made him feel alive, the pain of life" (2004: 11). The final words, "Yes, let us go home" (164), are redolent with irony for the hybrid figure who is caught between the dream of the Interzone and the beyond. No longer "content to live and be present" (Blanchot 1995 [1980]: 31), Belquassim has forgotten his son, his locus, the reasonable rational world, the limit, and in so doing overreached the limits and abandoned the self. Bataille writes that there is "a sort of rapture – in anguish – [that] leaves us at the limit of tears: in such a case we lose ourselves, we *forget ourselves and communicate with an elusive beyond*" (own emphasis, in MacKendrick 1999: 150). It is this moment of rapture in anguish that recalls the reader to the moment when Belquassim received the scar between his shoulders.

Adair begins an exposition on the pleasure of restraint and restrained violence. In Paul's seemingly authoritarian diction, it should be remembered that, performatively, sadism is the "seduction of control" and the "rule of seduction is intensification" (132), as is evident in his controlled and restrained movements, intermittently building suspense through his protracted rhetorical questions on love and cruelty:

> "Come and sit here. Take off your shirt, I want to look at you and I want to touch you." The darkness was sinister, and the light from the lamp made the room glow like an undeveloped film. Belquassim took off his white shirt. It was wet with sweat and clung to his arms as he pulled it over his head. His body was stiff. Paul leaned over and took a nipple between his fingers, on which the black residue of the hash stuck to his skin. He held the nipple without a caress. Then he brought the

> lighted hashish stick close to the small raised nipple, until Belquassim felt it hot against his skin. He tried to move away but Paul held him close. "Do you think I am going to burn you?" And he laughed at Belquassim's fear. (Adair 2004: 132-3)

The dark, "sinister" setting with its dim light evokes the image of the sadist's torture chamber, where even the environment remains controlled. The sadist's pleasure depends, paradoxically, on both apathy and intensity, two states equally explicated in this passage. The distance and disconnection established in Paul's authoritarian voice co-exist and amplify the intensity of his actions as he brings the hashish closer to Belquassim's nipple. Presenting a self-reflexive commentary on sadomasochistic intimacy, Adair has Paul speak to Belquassim of a "cruelty [manifested] in love" (Adair 2004: 133), which very nearly echoes Bataille's interpretation of de Sade's texts. Remembering that the sadist's pleasure is in utter self-negation, Bataille writes:

> All the great libertines who live only for pleasure are great only because they have destroyed in themselves all their capacity for pleasure. [...] They have made themselves insensitive; they intend to exploit their insensitivity, that sensitiveness they have denied and destroyed and they become ferocious. Cruelty is nothing but a denial of oneself carried so far that it becomes a destructive explosion; insensibility sets the whole being aquiver, says de Sade. (1987 [1957]: 173)

Bowles as a young boy learnt to curtail his outward enjoyment of any object of pleasure because his father would inhibit or forbid these, rebuking the young Bowles for his love of reading, writing and other creative arts, pleasures he as a child had been denied. The relationship between father and son was characterised by Claude Bowles's "desire for control over his child and Paul's fervent resistance to such control. For Paul, it was a struggle for his own private identity. To yield to his father would mean a loss of self" (Sawyer-Laucanno 1989: 14). Paradoxically, Bowles's greatest defence, weapon and

triumph against his father came from his ability to control and guard his natural desires, deriving pleasure from the suppression of pleasure. In Adair's text Paul makes himself insensitive and in his intimate relationships exploits this insensitivity, that sensitiveness that he had denied and destroyed (Bataille 1987 [1957]: 173).

Adair writes that "Paul had built himself a cage, a cage to save himself from love" (Adair 2004: 30). However, he seems to invite or even provoke those close to him to challenge his emotional and psychic boundaries. "*I push and push and push him, to measure his response*" (136), claims Jane. Adair creates a conversation between Jane's consciousness and Paul's through following this insight into Jane's thoughts by Paul's admission that "*somehow I like this violence. The violation of my space so that I cannot write. The violence in those around me. The violence that I think I can put into words*" (137). It is a violation of the safe boundaries of the ego that Paul seeks. Explaining this strange desire for self-violation, MacKendrick reveals that the "secret of Sadistic apathy is that it also engenders intensity, that it is of indifference that its violent lechery is born and likewise its still more violent pleasure (1999: 82). Bataille quotes Blanchot, who recognises that in the sadist "apathy is metamorphosed into pleasures a thousand times more wonderful than those that their weaknesses procured them" (1987 [1957]: 173).

Presenting an alternative vision of a meaningful intimate relationship, Paul subverts our common distinction between cruelty and love. Despite the assumption by biographers and critics that Paul does not possess the capacity for emotion, it is perhaps truer to say that his pragmatic notion of love is completely counter to our conventional, if somewhat romantic, understandings of love.

Paul asks: "What is cruelty? [...] How does it manifest itself in these types of love? Is it the cruelty of arbitrariness, or the cruelty of insecurity, or the cruelty of a deliberate exercise of indiscernible power?" (2004: 133). Through the discursive lens of sadomasochistic intimacy, the erotic scene enacted between Paul and Belquassim, and Paul's view of "cruelty" as a "type of love" (133), attests to the indissoluble connection between violence and intimacy. The key word in assuming this contentious position is evident in Paul's reference to an "*indiscernible* power" (own emphasis, 2004: 133). This is an imperceptible, polymorphous, Foucauldian bio-power, that can be equated with Freudian polymorphous perversity in these unconventional love affairs.

It is the very nature of these economies of love and intimacy that they remain indiscernible, even incomprehensible. It is the ordinariness of human interrelationships which is precisely so complex and impossible to define. "The quotidian", according to Blanchot, is "that which is most difficult to uncover. ... It does not let itself be grasped. It escapes" (in Shaviro 1990: 112). Adair captures the transitory, elusive quality of human interrelationships, the intensity which is always haunted by the finite and discontinuous nature of life. In terms of expressing Blanchot's quotidian, Belquassim shares a close intimacy with Paul's wife, Jane, brushing her hair and sharing in everyday intimacies of gossip and chit-chat; they make each other coffee and socialise together with Paul at the bar (Adair 2004: 19). A sense of the intensity, symbiosis and cohesion of this love triangle is evoked when Belquassim says, "they only ever went to the bar in the Hotel Mirador together, the three of them" (19). Yet it is a relationship fraught with jealousy over each other, and the common awareness of the contingent and ephemeral quality of life and

love. Belquassim "knew he had to [love Jane] because if he did not his love for Paul could no longer exist, it could never be sustained" (46). Likewise, Paul and Jane are each other's "harbour" (46), and counter to his seeming independence, he can only "experience life through her, feel her feelings" (21). Jane speaks of the "*incomprehensible closeness that* [they] *have, it is not a logical closeness*" (89); despite the fact that they no longer "*have sex anymore*" they still share the intimacy of "[s]*kin on skin*" (25).

It is this invasion of his space that Paul seeks, which Jane provides in her psychological, intellectual and physical need for his presence and involvement, but which is viscerally fulfilled in his libidinous relationship with Belquassim. Although the power dynamics might suggest that Paul holds dominion over Belquassim, it becomes apparent that Paul needs him not only for his words or guidance around the city, but also for that invasion of his physical space. Throughout the narrative Paul seeks Belquassim's physical proximity, either through embracing him or penetrating him sexually. The crucible of Paul's intimacy is "*to go on touching* [Belquassim's] *skin*" (23), to "guide himself into Belquassim [till he] gasps" (29). This desire for intense, "penetrative" intimacy reaches its zenith in this final erotic scene which defies "any ordinary understanding of the economies and sources of either power or joy" (MacKendrick 1999: 93). Our conventional perceptions of sexual intimacy permit

> little place for a notion of masochistic power or for a positive understanding of sadistic strength (sadism is generally conceded to be powerful but dismissed as hostile and immoral). The claim that these are real and powerful pleasures makes still less sense given the fact that one hears not infrequently, still, that such acts are precisely as they appear at the outsider's first glance to be: forms of disempowerment (masochism or submission) and oppression (sadism or dominance), whether they are voluntary, involuntary, or the product of false consciousness. (93)

Remaining fully conscious of these critiques of sadomasochism, and that the pleasures of this relationship exist in its performative boundary-play, Bataille admits that to "admire Sade is to diminish the force of his ideas" (1987 [1957]: 179), and Blanchot attests that to say, "I like Sade, is to have no relation at all to Sade. Sade cannot be liked, no one can stand him" (1995 [1980]: 45). MacKendrick notes that the intensity and seduction of control evident in the sadist are evinced in de Sade's writings through his focus on detail, description and clarity. There is a repetitiveness in this certain precision which heightens the erotic intensity. The "exactness of similarity, the minute detail that pushed each perversion further – and highlight[s] the violence", says MacKendrick, is "all the more shocking in that it is never *out of control*" (1999: 47). It is possible to detect this same style in Adair's writing in the following erotic scene between Belquassim and Paul. To judiciously appreciate the author's attention to each movement, touch, word, and setting, including the mindfulness of the background music of Miles Davis and the dim lighting, it is necessary to provide a lengthy extract. It is through Sadean repetition, clarity and detail that Adair visually, in the hyperreal, ultra-sensual mode of a thriller, evokes the explosive final moment. From the moment Paul lights the hashish stick the signifiers of impending violence are already alluded to. His movements are slow and deliberate, building suspense and evoking the taste of blood as he cuts his tongue on the paper.

> He rolled a hash stick leisurely, as if he felt relaxed, but his hands shook as he crushed the thick, sticky, black paste into the tobacco. He rolled the hashish and tobacco into the paper that he held between his thumb and forefinger, bent down and licked the sides of the paper. It cut a small line on his tongue and the blood made a pink stain on the thin white cigarette. He lit the hash stick and drew on it.
>
> [...]

> "Turn around", Paul said. He said it quietly, it was not a command, but rather a yearning plea, a yearning for closeness and flesh. Paul moved his hand down Belquassim's naked skin, softly touching the thin column of bones that filleted his back; he brought his other hand to his mouth and took another long drag on the hashish. His hands moved gently. For a moment the caress stopped [...]. "It's possible then that I am the cruel one." There was a perfect balance between gentleness and violence in the voice. It was then that Belquassim felt the fire of hashish burn into his shoulder. His shoulder blades convulsed. He looked down and saw the skin bubbling up like animal fat in a pan when a woman is cooking meat. Paul pushed the lighted coal harder into him. With the pain of the burn he felt Paul thrust inside him. Instinctively he tried to pull away, but he could not move. Their sweat mingled, and the pain shrugged its way across his shoulder, then it was gone. In his body was a strange and particular delight. (Adair 2004: 132-4)

In the congruence of pain and pleasure, the focus shifts from the sadist to the masochist. The mood of "strange and particular delight" (134) moves the triumphant moment to the masochist who in overcoming the seductive and destructive power of Thanatos "[assents] to life up to the point of death" (Bataille 1987 [1957]: 11). The scar becomes a source of masochistic power, affirming the transcendence over Thanatos, and making the dream a physical reality as Belquassim touches the spot where he was burnt. The focaliser's burn invokes Blanchot's metaphor that "the quick of life would be the burn of a wound – a hurt so lively, a flame so avid that it is not content to live and be present, but consumes all that is present till presence is precisely what is exempt from the present " (1995 [1980]: 51). Like the hungry flame that consumes till it burns to the quick, Belquassim embraces a life which burns so fiercely that it threatens to self-extinguish. For the masochist the scar comes to signify a defiance against the boundaries between life and death. In physical mutilations of masochism the body becomes the archive of transgression and the evidence of overreaching the limit. "The spot where I have earlier known ecstasy, memory bewitched by physical sensations, [...] together [these sensations] have an evocative power greater than the voluntary repetition of a describable movement of the mind"

(Bataille 1988 [1954]: 60). Concomitantly, memory, an aspect of the intellect associated with the distant past, becomes visceral in the *here and now* for the focaliser, and the reader.

Belquassim's delight in the literal and figurative moment of rupture of skin and of self produces a sense of the sublime. Papayanis sees the sublime as disrupting the "veil of custom", and opening a "subversive but contained space for redescriptions" (2005: 119). Re-description and re-inscription are the art of Adair's text, suggesting new counter-experiences and pleasures. Thus in terms of masochistic power, the sublime "as a kind of terror … crushes us into admiring submission; it thus resembles a coercive rather than a consensual power, engaging our respect but not, as with beauty, our love" (Terry Eagleton in Papayanis 2005: 119).

The *Flâneur* of the Dream Space

Bataille's phrase, "*memory bewitched by physical sensations*" (1988 [1954]: 60), presents an apt descriptor of the relationship between time and intimacy in *In Tangier*. The interconnections between time, place and intimacy require a return to a modern literary figure with a similarly melancholic outlook as Bowles: Walter Benjamin. Benjamin, perhaps the most quoted writer on the *flâneur* (the figure personified by Charles Baudelaire), "spun much of his own sensibility out of his phantasmagorical, shrewd, subtle relation to cities" (Sontag 1979: 9). Waiting for someone in a café in Paris, Benjamin relates how he "[drew] a diagram of his life: it was like a labyrinth, in which each important relationship figures as 'an entrance to the maze'" (10). Similarly, in *In*

Tangier it is the relationships between the central characters that provide the route into the exegesis of the narrative.

It is the eye of the *flâneur* (or rather the feminine *flâneuse*) that guides us into the text, not first and foremost Bowles but, interestingly, Adair. Bringing this key observer and occupier of the spaces of modernity into the postmodern text, it is Adair who sits in the café (a typical locus of the *flâneur* along with the bar and other public spaces), gazing out over the Straits of Gibraltar. Abandoned by her travelling companions, she is "free to daydream, observe, ponder, cruise" in the city (9). Meanwhile her companions, in typically tourist mode, are in a hurry to see as many sites as possible before they "move on" (2004: Preface). In addition to being like the *flâneur*, Adair is also like the tourist in that she has a home to return to, a destination and has "[paid] for [her] freedom; the right to disregard native concerns and feelings" (Bauman 1994 [1993]: 241) as she tries to "flick" (Adair 2004: Preface) away the local hustlers like flies.

Zymunt Bauman explores Charles Baudelaire's notion of the *flâneur* and his ability to capture and reinterpret the lives of the strangers around him whilst continually remaining distant. In Adair's text Paul attests to his ability "*to stand outside the circle, never moving inside. In this way I can capture the feelings of others*" (20). Similarly, "[t]he stranger who appears in the *flâneur*'s play is but the *sight* of the stranger; he is what the *flâneur* sees, and no more than that – an eye impression, detached from the body, the identity, the biography of the person who 'gave' that impression" (Bauman 1994 [1993]: 172-73). So too with Adair, who is interested only in the *sight* of the old man pointed out by a young Moroccan hustler as Bowles (a figure who had become an icon in Tangier's cityscape).

She is not interested in meeting Bowles and confirming his identity. Instead, in expressing the uncertainty and angst which are part of the postmodern experience (and which interestingly also characterise the figure of the *flâneur* as embodied by Baudelaire and Benjamin), the vision of the *flâneuse*/daydreamer is far more concerned with "inventing stories. Imagining lives. That is, [...] *flâneuring*" (Jokinen & Veijola 2000 [1997]: 28).

Whilst the *flâneur* may be a useful metaphor for Paul's experience in public city spaces, it is perhaps more apposite to apply Bauman's "postmodern nomad" figure of the "vagabond" in exploring the nature of Paul's relationships to space and to the Other in wilderness spaces such as the desert, mountains and islands which he traverses in the novel. According to Bauman, the vagabond is "a pilgrim without a destination; a nomad without an itinerary. The vagabond journeys through an unstructured space; like a wanderer in the desert, who knows only of such trails as are marked with his own footprints, and blown off again by the wind the moment he passes" (1994 [1993]: 240).

Bauman distinguishes the vagabond from the tourist, in that the latter has the "right to spin their own web of meanings, they obtain in commercial transaction" (241). This comparison is significant in terms of Paul's marked self-identification as a "traveller" as opposed to a tourist. The reference to Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas and their "sight-seeing" of the tomb of the Moulay Idriss raises questions surrounding the morality (or lack thereof) of the tourist whose "[f]reedom from moral duty has been paid for in advance" (242), and who, through photography, aims to capture a "staged authenticity" (Crawshaw and Urry 2000 [1997]: 178). Through re-inscribing these characters and

events from a modern era, Adair addresses postmodern issues central to contemporary South African life and experience.

Lahouchine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell's recent book, *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the Late 19th Century to the Present,* draws attention to the effect of tourism (particularly sex-tourism or the marketing of Cape Town as a "homotopia") on local identity construction (2005: 5-7). It should be noted that the public gay scene in South Africa is still predominantly seen as white, middle-class, urban and male (Hoad et al. 2005: 205). The lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities still remain marginalised. Indeed, recent publications, such as *Sex & Politics in South Africa* (Hoad et al. 2005), still reflect the binary thinking of heterosexual/homosexual present in mainstream society's discourse on sexuality. Despite raising the issue of "how to mobilise the state and various other representative forms of collectivity and power in the interest of *diversely desiring bodies*" (own emphasis, 23), the realm of diverse desires or counterpleasures remains subterranean in a South African society where "interstitial sexuality" receives "scant attention" (Stobie 2004: 35). A chasm remains between the discourse of constitutional freedoms and the real world indicators of continued conservatism and homophobia (Hoad et. al 2005: 199). If "African leaders [...] have characterised homosexuality as 'unnatural', 'unAfrican' and a Western import" (23), what space does this leave for a discussion on bisexuality, polyamory, sadomasochism and other counterpleasures?

The dream space of Adair's text is distinguished by its infinite openness, an openness simultaneously filled with risks and possibilities. In writing of an expatriate eroticism, Adair explores the taboo domain of non(re)productive sexualities. "Abandoned" by her

companions, she is left open to the risk and danger of the oriental city, but also open to the "wild abandon" of her imagination. And so too Belquassim, the product of this imaginative abandon, is like his creator, the daydreamer/watcher, seduced by the perilous limitlessness of Bowles's dream city:

> He could remember the incipient stages of the writers' and artists' movement. He had seen the quixotic idealism of the transient residents, their decadence; their drugs and their loves grow up around him. How he loved that life. He loved the lack of morality, *he loved the abandonment and he loved to watch.* He had watched from the sidelines mostly, or at least until he had met Paul. He saw how people reached out and took whatever they could to pleasure themselves. *He loved being an object of that love and that pleasure.* (Own emphasis, Adair 2004: 5)

This is a world of decadence, drugs, promiscuity, amorality and abandon, a place "resistant to the hegemonies of order and control [that] subvert the constraints of structure" (Papayanis 2005: 144). "Open and porous" (Massey 1994: 5), the topography and spirit of the dream city constantly present the temptation to overstep the bounds; surrounded by the seductive vastness of desert and ocean, it is characterised by a "mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond'" (5). The image of this labyrinthine dream space "pass[es] into flesh and blood in the *flâneur*" (Jokinen & Veijola 2000 [1997]: 28), embodied to varying degrees by Bowles, Adair and Belquassim, whose *Wanderlust* brings them to the limits of the city, and the self. Attracted to the "city's dark corners, to chance encounters to confront the unexpected, to engage in a kind of counter-tourism that involves a poetic confrontation with the 'dark corners'" (Crawshaw & Urry 2000 [1997]: 179), the *flâneur* faces the absolute Other, and challenges the boundaries of the self. Bakhtin's observation of the relationship between self and Other explicates the transgressive intimacies explored in Adair's text as Bowles, the author and Belquassim

figuratively stare out into the beyond through each other's eyes. Like the Interzone, owned by everyone and no-one, Bakhtin writes that "a person has no sovereign internal territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of an other with the eyes of another*" (in Papayanis 2005: 144).

Chapter Three

Wild, Wanton, Wicked Women – Adair's Representation of Female Characters

"Was Cherifa so evil? I wonder. Was Jane[12] so angry?"(Levin 2004). Having read and re-read Adair's text, I find myself echoing these same questions raised by Adam Levin in his review of the novel. As affirmed by the reviews (Dunton 2004; Kossick 2004; Levin 2004; Ussher 2004), Adair foregrounds Jane as wild and wanton through her compulsive drinking, promiscuity and ill-health, which are compounded by her recklessness and immoderate lifestyle. While this representation may be valid, I believe these aspects are over-emphasised, re-inscribing Jane in a legend of self-destruction. In contrast, in the characterisation of Paul it is not his personal shortcomings that are foregrounded, but rather, his intellect. Moreover, Cherifa remains silenced and othered, while her counterpart, Belquassim, is given the privileged position of focaliser. Adair fails to nuance the perpetually anthologised idea of Cherifa as a "witch possessed of true, malevolent power" (Finlayson 1992: 141). Dangerous, driven by greed and possessing magical powers, Cherifa becomes a symbolic entity, a malign force, not the subject of a fraught socio-cultural context, but the archetypal "wicked witch" of Adair's tale.

[12] This serves as a reminder that the "fictional" representation of Jane Bowles will be referred to by the first name only (Jane) and the "actual" Jane Bowles, as evinced in biographical commentaries and her own writings, will be referred to in full as Jane Bowles or the surname Bowles. It is of some significance that Cherifa is only ever referred to by her first name in Adair's text and in biographical and critical material. While Millicent Dillon (Jane Bowles's biographer), refers to Paul Bowles's Moroccan lovers and friends by their first names and surnames, she makes no mention of Cherifa's surname. This discrepancy reflects not only on a racial, but also a gendered practice of othering. In addition, it makes it difficult to distinguish between the fictional and historical figure in this chapter. Although Adair's representation largely perpetuates the myths surrounding depictions of Cherifa and there are often elisions between fictional character and historical figure, I attempt to make these differences obvious. These distinctions should be evident in the context of the discussion, as well as in the references made to either Adair's text or other biographical material.

The male characters are the more favourable (and favoured) characters. Despite a widely held belief that Paul Bowles was asexual (Levin 2004; Sawyer-Lauçanno 1989), Adair boldly explores the counterpleasures of sadomasochism through her characterisation of Paul and Belquassim. It is the sight of what Adair imagines to be "the famous American writer, [...] Paul Bowles" that inspires the telling of this tale (2004: Preface). He is the adventurous Odysseus out on journeys into the desert or mountains, or off to his private island, whilst Jane, like the mythic Penelope, is constantly depicted waiting for his return.[13] Reaffirming Paul's status as not only the legendary adventurer, but also as the archetypal artist-hero (in the invocation of Cervantes's novel), Belquassim re-inscribes the narrative of "Don Quixote, the knight errant, the adventurer" and the "faithful and foolish Sancho Panza, who loved his master more than he loved himself" (3) in his conceptualisation of his relationship with Paul. Paul is decisive, autonomous, unemotional and productive – masculine personality traits that most societies value above the "weak" feminine characteristics which typify Jane: needy, emotional, "flighty" (7) and indecisive. Furthermore, Paul has structural prominence. This is evident at the outset in Belquassim's obvious partiality toward Paul as his lover and mentor. In addition, "Paul's narration occupies some 50% more space than Jane's" (Stobie 2006: 9).

I find it troubling that Adair is not as inventive in her re-creation of female characters as she is with the male characters. In fact, the female characters and their intimate sexual relationships are pathologised and presented as deviant or self-destructive, offering, in comparison, little space for the exploration of the sexual and other intimacies between

[13] In terms of this allusion to Penelope it is worth noting that one of Bowles's "therapies" whilst being psychiatrically hospitalised was weaving (Dillon 1988: 294). It is also interesting that Belquassim's recollection of his mother has her weaving carpets (Adair 2004: 18).

women. By moving between intertextual references, it is possible to read beyond the boundaries of the narrative itself, into the paratextual question of the identity of the white woman writer (both the avant-garde modernist, Bowles, and the postmodern South African first-time novelist, Adair). Bowles, like Sylvia Plath and many other experimental women writers of the mid-twentieth century, has been (and continues to be) overwritten, painted into myths of madness, self-destruction and the jealous wife in an artistic marriage (Skerl 1999). Christine Jeff's recent film, *Sylvia* (2003), exemplifies the enduring ideological force of this narrative. Jennie Skerl provides a brief summary of this narrative as it is constructed in the telling of Jane Bowles's life story. There is a striking similarity between this summary and the narrative that Adair weaves. In fact, it could serve as a synopsis of the novel:

> In this story Jane Bowles is to blame for wasting or losing her talent to a disordered bohemian lifestyle which she foolishly chose to lead; this lifestyle caused her to isolate herself from a congenial New York milieu by moving to Tangier, destroy her health through drinking, give over her autonomy to an evil Moroccan lover who subjected her to magic spells and poisonous potions, and finally succumb to an incapacitating madness. In this narrative she literally became "the madwoman in the attic" (*pace* Gilbert and Gubar) by choosing the unfeminine career of bohemian genius and was accordingly punished by madness and death.
>
> Thus, the end of Bowles's life is the ultimate meaning of the work and the career, and her final illness is read backward into her early work. (Skerl 1999: 266)

This begs the impossible question of authorial intention: why perpetuate the presentation of such an impossible space for the woman artist, the bisexual woman and the silenced "other" woman in a South African context which offers multiple possibilities for women and their sexualities? Why, in turn, should Jane's Moroccan lover, Cherifa, remain even more radically overwritten, silenced and othered in a socio-cultural and historical moment

which offers black women, in particular, opportunities to redress past silences? The anthology *Women Writing Africa: The Southern Region* (Daymond et al. 2003) provides an exemplar of a "cultural reconstruction that aims to restore African women's voices to the public sphere" (xviii), and an attempt to begin to "redress what is generally recognized as an imbalance in literary and historical anthologies and accounts, given that male writers and performers have been more widely published than women and that historical agency is generally taken to be male" (1).

Why does Adair's re-imagining founder in making a radical break from historical myths of wantonness and wickedness? Through problematising these stereotyped characterisations, it is possible to explore what a resistant reading of the text reveals about these wild and wicked women and their intimate relationships. The complexity of Jane and Cherifa's gendered positions encourages an eclectic approach. As such, this chapter utilises a range of theorists of gender: the socio-historical and textual approach of 'Anglo-American' theorists like Elaine Showalter; the psychoanalytic and linguistic perspective of 'French' thinkers such as Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray; the postcolonial criticism of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak; as well as anthropological studies that explore the interstices of race and gender.

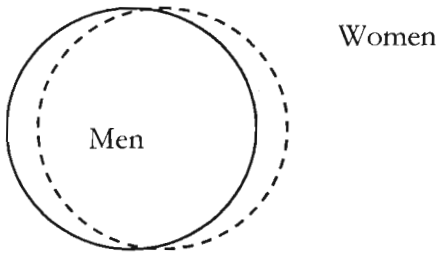
In particular, Elaine Showalter's conceptualisation of the "wild zone" (1989 [1981]: 471) and madness as a "female malady" (1987 [1985]: 3-4) relates to my title motif of "wild, wanton, wicked women." A clarification of Showalter's terminology follows, as well as a necessary qualification of the anomalously negative presentation of Jane's fragmentation and undecidability in the context of the postmodern text. With these theoretical markers in

mind, this chapter is divided into four sections. First, in "Mapping of the Modernist Battle Ground", the obstacles faced by Jane Bowles as a mid-twentieth-century experimental woman writer are contextualised. Then, in "The War of the Wild, Wanton Woman Writer", a textual analysis of the literary "battle of the sexes" in the relationship between Jane and Paul is explored. In the light of Adair's re-inscription of the legend of the artist-hero as a *male* quest narrative, Jane's "Wantonness, or Reckless Intimacy as Existential Quest" is discussed. Subsequently, the negative depiction of Jane as "The Wild Bisexual" is critiqued. Finally, the chapter shifts to an analysis and critique of the representation of Cherifa, in "Cherifa: the Wicked Witch." While Spivak's comments on the subaltern woman have been mentioned in previous chapters, and will be discussed further in this chapter, the cultural studies perspective of Dorothy Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy (2001) in *"Wicked" Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa* assists in situating Cherifa's "wickedness." Hodgson and McCurdy note that wickedness "is a discourse of primarily masculine power that seeks to control or oppress women by stigmatizing certain actions, whether normative or unconventional" (5). Furthermore "many women are labeled 'wicked' because they disrupt the web of social relationships that define and depend on them as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and lovers. Often these women challenge normative expectations of 'respectability'" (6).

The Wild Zone

Both Jane and Cherifa fall into what Edwin Ardener calls the "wild zone." Ardener suggests that in androcentric models of history and culture women "constitute a *muted group*, the boundaries of whose culture and reality overlap, but are not wholly contained by, the *dominant (male) group*" (Showalter 1989 [1981]: 471). This relationship is

depicted as two intersecting circles with the male sphere almost totally eclipsing the female sphere, reflecting the dominance of male discourse. It follows, then, that "language [as we know it] is the language of the dominant order, and women, if they speak at all, must speak through it" (471). The "wild zone" (indicated by the shaded section) is the crescent that remains outside the dominant male boundary.



(In Showalter: 1989 [1981]: 471)

While both spatially and experientially men and women have zones inaccessible to each other, the "wild zone", as Showalter points out, "metaphysically, or in terms of consciousness [...] has no corresponding male space since all male consciousness is within the circle of the dominant structure and thus accessible to or structured by language" (472). Since discourse is historically phallocentric, "women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it [...]. But men do not know what is in the wild" (472).

It is necessary to divert, briefly, from this explanation to note how Ardener's diagram resembles an image of the waning moon viewed by Jane. While Adair challenges heteronormativity, her characterisations (and structural oppositions of Jane/Paul,

Cherifa/Belquassim) tend to depend upon binary oppositions which are *centred*, governed and organised according to masculine/phallic privilege: Jane becomes the moon to Paul's sun and Cherifa becomes the night to Belquassim's day. Jane is cast in Paul's shadow, a transitory reflection finally eclipsed by her death at the end of the novel. Adair associates Jane (and arguably also Cherifa) with the transition to new moon and a symbolic final slip into obscurity. Jane's personification of the moon suggests her identification with its shift into total shadow; all that is left is a brilliant silver sliver:

> *And then I saw the moon. It was a thin sliver of silver in the sky, riding up and over the harbour and the lighted ships that are moored there. It was as thin as a woman's wrist. But then as I looked harder I could see its whole shape, its full size. The glazed edges of the whole enveloped the bright silver sliver. It was a new moon, but it was engulfed by the old. It could not escape what it was, its shadow will always be there.* (2004: 71)

Metaphorically, the shadow that the moon cannot "*escape*" represents the inescapable dominant masculine discourse. Jane and Cherifa must speak through the constructed myths and legends of this dominant discourse. The "wild zone" (indicated by the shaded section) is the crescent that remains outside the dominant male boundary. The bright silver sliver of the waning crescent, like the "wild zone", is a reminder of the silenced feminine potential that lies outside Adair's stereotyped depictions. To speak to the measures of silencing in the representations of Jane and Cherifa, it is necessary to take up Showalter's suggestion that this wild zone or "female space" presents the opportunity for addressing a "genuinely women-centered criticism [...] whose shared project is to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak" (1989 [1981]: 472).

The Woman Writer and the Female Malady

In order to make the "invisible visible" and the "silent speak" (472), it is necessary to foreground the social order that informs the subordinated position of women characters in Adair's text. Showalter's "wild zone" is positive in its political imperative to explore "female space" and feminine discourse, and calls for a deconstruction of the hierarchical juxtapositions of male and female characters in *In Tangier.* It is interesting, in this regard, that Jane and Cherifa together, to varying degrees, encapsulate the multiple unproductive denotations of what it means to be wild, wicked and wanton – to be amoral, tempestuous, sexually licentious, mad, angry, undomesticated, dangerous and unpredictable – while Paul and his protégé, Belquassim, stand for all the antonyms of wildness. Paul is urbane, stable, disciplined, "sane", the voice of reason. Belquassim, the domesticated focaliser, introduces his narrative with the precept that "everything that he knew had come from Paul: the world, music, poetry, philosophy, love" (Adair 2004: 2). The assumed democracy of this polyvocal text is complicated by the fact that our perspectives and judgements as readers are directed by the highly subjective position of Paul's catamite and acolyte. Precedence is given to Paul's identity as a writer, "but it is really Jane's private life that most engages interest" (Ussher 2004). Ann Ussher's naïve statement points to the continuation of the modernist tendency to subordinate or eclipse the woman writer in the literary avant-garde couple (Friedman & Fuchs: 1989: 18), elaborated on further in this chapter.

Christine Brooke-Rose notes that "traditionally, men belong to groups, to society (the matrix, the canon). Women belong to men" (1989: 66). A discussion of both Jane and Cherifa cannot escape a comparison with their male counterparts, while a discussion of

the male characters can be held almost entirely independently. Adair fails to offer equal textual, psychic or imaginative space to the position of women. In this I implicitly state my own subjective interest in women, as a woman: "I am speaking of woman's place, *from* woman's place, if she takes (a) place" (Cixous 1989 [1981]: 481).

The project of establishing women's place, not merely a personal project, is founded upon the interests of not rendering invisible the woman experimental writer. Belonging to a second generation of women modernists (born after 1900 and writing between 1930 and 1960), including the likes of Djuna Barnes, Jean Rhys and H.D., Jane Bowles in her work "satirizes" and even "attacks" the notion that woman belongs to man, "reflecting a radical disengagement from patriarchal modes" (Friedman & Fuchs 1989: 7).

Adair invokes the character Mrs Copperfield, from Jane Bowles's novel, *Two Serious Ladies,* and eliding fact and fiction, has Jane reiterate the words: "I am going to pieces" (2004: 64). Going to pieces is read into Adair's characterisation of Jane as a sign of her instability, psychic fragmentation, wantonness and wildness. In Adair's depiction, Jane is *torn* between her bisexual desires (for Paul, for Cherifa, and for other women), her need to write and her inability to write, and "*between extravagant happiness and numb despair*" (24). Like Mrs Copperfield's hysteria, Jane's mutability, indecision, wilfulness and selfishness are read as madness. In *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture 1830-1980*, Elaine Showalter draws attention to "a cultural tradition that represents 'woman' *as* madness" based less upon statistical information than the gendered division of discourse (1987 [1985]: 4). This play of opposites has become innate to our understanding of the world and is exemplified in Hélène Cixous's list of the "eternal-

natural" (1994: 38) constructs of Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Heart, Man/Woman. "Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organised" (1994: 37). Within this system women "are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind. [...] Thus madness, even when experienced by men, is metaphorically and symbolically represented as feminine: a female malady" (Showalter 1987 [1985]: 3-4).

Millicent Dillon notes that Bowles was diagnosed with schizophrenia some time after her stroke in 1957 (1988 [1981]: 418). Although schizophrenia is not specifically mentioned in Adair's text, Showalter's descriptive and metaphorical use of terms such as hysteria and schizophrenia present useful tools in an exploration of Adair's representation of Jane's ambivalence and irrationality. It is my intention to use the terms hysteria and schizophrenia loosely, not as distinct and separate pathologies (as would be determined by the American Psychological Association), but as socio-cultural markers of a mythology of female madness. The very notion of going to pieces or coming undone fits the popular denotation of "schizophrenia" as a "split mind" (Showalter 1987 [1985]: 203). Defined around the turn of the century by Emil Kraeplin and Eugen Bleuler, schizophrenia replaced hysteria as the female malady of the twentieth century (203). Thus, the "schizophrenic woman [became] as central a cultural figure for the twentieth century as the hysteric was for the nineteenth" (204). Not surprisingly, modernist literary movements "appropriated the schizophrenic woman as [a] symbol of linguistic, religious, and sexual breakdown and rebellion" (204). Adair's characterisation highlights the potency of myths of madness, the controversy of diagnostic criteria, and the socio-historical associations

between women and madness. Schizophrenic symptoms such as passivity, ambivalence and fragmentation become tropes in Jane's characterisation. Given the vagaries of these diagnostic criteria, any odd or culturally inappropriate behaviour might have led to institutionalisation. Parallels between these symptoms and the characterisation of Jane are consonant with Showalter's observation that "schizophrenia is the perfect literary metaphor for the female condition, expressive of women's lack of confidence, dependency on external, often masculine, definitions of self, split between the body as sexual object and the mind as subject, and vulnerability to conflicting social messages about femininity and maturity" (213).

Fragmentation: Modernity/Postmodernity

This distinction between Jane's instability and ambivalence and Paul's stability is highlighted in the constant contradictions in Jane's speech as well as her awareness of the polarity of their *Weltanschauungs*. Despite Adair's representation of postmodern indeterminacy, contradiction, and plurality in Jane's dictum, "[i]*deas change and truths change*" (Adair 2004: 50), as opposed to Paul's belief in a "*fixed truth, a fixed value because he values nothing*" (50), her portrayal of Jane's instability is negative. In the novel, Jane is literally obsessed with obsession ("*Obsession, obsessive. It's a feeling that so attracts me*") (50), and is depicted as constantly "*vacillating*" (24) between emotional states.

This can be explored in terms of the intertextual allusions to the fraught and fragmented nature of Bowles's writing and her inability to establish a stable identity as a woman writer. Peter Barry simplifies the distinction between modernity and postmodernity by

saying that the former laments fragmentation whilst the latter embraces it (1995: 84). Considering the number of postmodern theorists who engage with the condition of identity with varying degrees of optimism about 'fragmentation,' 'fluidity' and 'decentring' (Benwell & Stokoe 2006: 22), it is perhaps an anomaly that Adair presents fragmentation negatively in her characterisation of Jane. In this sense, Adair focuses on the more pessimistic aspects of the loss of the Cartesian, rational, unified notion of identity. Adair's characterisation of Jane reflects the vexed position of postmodern identity, rather than a more positive stance, which I believe is evident in Jane's own writings, particularly her novel *Two Serious Ladies.* In *Discourse and Identity*, Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stokoe highlight the distinction between these two positions:

> As a late-modernity 'pessimist', Bauman (2004: 32) uses the term 'liquid modernity' to refer to a 'world in which everything is elusive' and identities are 'the more acute, the most deeply felt and the most troublesome incarnations of *ambivalence*'. Further accounts embody a more positive stance towards modernity, and reveal an interest in people's abilities to accommodate these new demands and exploit their creative potential. (2006: 22-3)

Mapping The Modernist Battle Ground

Jane Bowles's *oeuvre* might be considered thin in comparison to her husband, Paul's, consisting of a novel, *Two Serious Ladies* (1943); a novella, "Camp Cataract" (1949); a play, "In the Summer House" (1947); a puppet play, "A Quarrelling Pair" (1966); and a number of short stories. However, this collection does attest, in her experimentation with a range of genres, to her "commitment to originality" (Skerl 1999: 264). Yet, as Adair's novel suggests, her genius was always overshadowed by Paul's. His first novel, *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), was a selection of the Book of the Month Club and was on the *New*

York Times bestseller list for several weeks (Hofmann 2000: vii-viii). Conversely, most critics found Bowles's novel "incomprehensible", and those who saw her genius "were often people she knew from the salon world of art and literature and music" (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 111).[14] Not only did she not receive popular support, but her family, her husband's family, and her lesbian lover, Helvetia (to whom the book was dedicated, along with her husband and her mother), disapproved of the book being too "obviously lesbian" (111). Although Bowles published her novel in 1943, before her husband received acclaim for his first novel in 1949, her aunts told her that the "only decent writing in the whole book" was probably written by her husband (111).

Considering the conservative societal norms of a world caught between two world wars, and despite the concomitant ruptures to the sovereignty of Western patriarchal heterosexism, Bowles's writing was clearly before its time, and severely misunderstood. Over half a century later it is generally recognised that Bowles was a trail-blazer in her own right. Her innovations and experiments with subject matter (notably "queer" subjectivities (Knopf 1996: 148),[15] which her husband did not broach as overtly) as well as the conventions of the novel flag the postmodernist aspects of her work, which, arguably, exceed her husband's anti-modernist experiments. Whilst Paul Bowles's characters are driven by some force beyond their control – trapped in a seemingly inescapable linear trajectory toward their physical or psychological destruction, Jane

[14] Among her admirers were Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote (Garber 1995: 407). Capote described Bowles as a "genius imp" (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 286) and as having "a wit, an eccentric wisdom no child, not the strangest wunderkind, ever possessed" (Capote 2003 [1966]: v). Capote wrote the introduction to *The Collected Works of Jane Bowles* (1966).

[15] Knopf notes that although the reclamation of the term "queer" as an "inclusive and positive way to describe one's sexual subjectivity is a relatively contemporary practice, Bowles hints at a similar meaning" (1996: 148). In this project I employ queer theory to explore the bisexual subjectitivies inscribed in both Adair's novel as well as Jane Bowles's novel, *Two Serious Ladies*.

Bowles's narratives are characterised by "sudden shifts. Plot, instead of being an enveloping form, seems to be at the mercy of the tyrannical impulses" of her female characters (Dillon 1989: 141). Furthermore, in *Two Serious Ladies*, "the power of the authorial voice is not a stable one" – it is "imposed, shared, abdicated, inflated then deflated" (141). In her questioning of a unified authorial consciousness Bowles's novel anticipates Roland Barthes's famous essay on "The Death of the Author" (1977 [1968]). It is worth noting that in her critique Dillon does not interpret this as an expression of "the subject in process" (Kristeva 1984: 2), but rather reflects pessimistically on this indeterminacy as an indicator of Bowles's eventual psychic disintegration. Both Bowleses' narratives are open-ended; however, in Paul Bowles's work the collapse of the familiar, conventional structures that define Western experience is accompanied by a sense of nihilism and existential angst, and reflects more negatively on the fragmentation of the world. Conversely, in *Two Serious Ladies* disintegration is disturbingly embraced and filled with wry humour. Mrs Copperfield is exhilarated at falling to pieces, perceiving this fragmentation as an "escape from the claustrophobic embrace of fixed systems of belief" (Barry 1995: 84).

Remembering that women were largely excluded from the defiant homosocial Beat counter-culture, Jesse Matz speaks of the discontent mid-century women writers felt in relation to "the roles open to women and with the effects of sexist ideologies upon their states of mind" (2004: 112). For many of these writers "experimental forms of literature become means of freedom and sources of redemptive psychic strength" (112). Arguably, in Bowles's novel there is a "new, self-conscious use for the fragments into which life's aspects have been broken" (113). As Matz suggests, this reconfiguring of fragmentation

perceives fragments as "lenses, diverse ways of seeing what now fractures the modern world. The break is caused less by chaos than by *reflexivity* – the self-conscious dismantling of the parts of the book, the deliberate self-scrutiny of the workings of different ideological views" (113). Having said this, I would be hesitant to label Bowles's work postmodern; however, her structure, style and thematics certainly gesture toward or anticipate the postmodern re-invigoration of the modern novel. In the introductory chapter to *Breaking the Sequence: Women's Experimental Fiction*, Ellen Friedman and Miriam Fuchs acknowledge Bowles's self-conscious, subtle parody of the traditional novel structure in *Two Serious Ladies* (1989: 21). In a chapter in the same volume Dillon comments on Bowles's fragmentary style. However, I find Dillon's chapter problematic in that, despite admitting a slight change in perspective from her biography, she still fails to fully recognise or acknowledge Bowles's experimental artistry:

> The cast of her mind and feelings was expressing its intention in this form – through fragmentation and repetition – but she took the result to be only failure. If it is true that her work was psychically blocked, it is also true that had she been able to view this fragmentation as a valid expression of her own narrative vision, the fragmentation could have led her to further development. (Dillon 1989: 140)

Does Dillon really deviate from her initial stance? There are too many conditional phrases in Dillon's vision of Bowles's success as a writer. She seems to be saying that if Jane had only embraced a fragmentary style, then she would have fulfilled her potential as a writer, suggesting that her slim *oeuvre* is insufficient evidence of her genius. Largely, Dillon still reads Jane's final illness backward into her work, presenting Jane as truly tortured and incapacitated by her inner psychic fragmentation. Ignoring the bold, exhilarating sense of transgression in Mrs Copperfield's exclamation of going to pieces, Dillon offers a

decidedly gloomy reading of this episode. Decontextualising the idea of going to pieces from its meaning within the narrative as a whole, she goes as far as to say: "Everything is breaking into pieces, an experience terrible for anyone, but for Jane Bowles one with particular *predictive meaning*" (own emphasis, 146). I would argue instead that the effect of *Two Serious Ladies* on the reader is liberatory. Christine Brooke-Rose comments on a predominantly modernist perception that "women cannot be 'great' artists of 'genius' or even serious 'creators' with a possible posterity. As men can" (1989: 62). Moreover, women are accused of being able to "only write disguised autobiography" (62).

Bowles may have drawn on her own experience in her writing, as many writers do; however, Skerl warns against the propensity to rely on the "concept of female artistic incapacity and tendency to madness" as the "controlling construct for reading the works autobiographically" (1999: 266). If one reads outside the legends of self-destruction and madness, it is possible to acknowledge Jane Bowles's status as an experimental writer in her insistence on innovation. Brooke-Rose notes that experimental writing "insists on the link between innovation and a completely different way of looking, which is after all another way of defining genius" (1989: 64). Indeed, experimentation with new forms produces new ways of looking, "produces, in fact, the very story (or 'reality' or 'truth') that it is supposed to re-produce, or, to put it in deconstructive terms, repeats the absent story" (64).

Evoking pity for the woman writer, I believe, detracts from her agency and potency in creating new modes of thinking and being. In contrast to Dillon's decidedly negative forecast, which implicitly elides the future of the author with the meaning of the novel,

Friedman and Fuchs are optimistic and affirmative in perceiving what Bowles achieves through her fiction. They read Mrs Copperfield's going to pieces as a "forward direction [for Bowles and for feminine narrative, generally]. It negates confirmation of the phallogocentric order and ideals, thus making way for an alternate fictional space" (1989: 20). This is a rather surprising disjunction, considering Friedman and Fuchs are *introducing* Dillon's chapter. Admittedly, the editors claim to "have not sought to impose [their] perspectives" on the authors who have contributed to the volume (xii). Nevertheless, Dillon's biography and more recent essay leave one with an overwhelming sense of tragedy and loss regarding Jane's life and work (for her life and work are inseparable in Dillon's view).

Undoubtedly, as Skerl suggests, "the pull of the myth is strong" (1999: 268). According to the legend of self-destruction, Bowles's "writer's block [is a result of her] fear of merging with the irrationality of the creative process; her odd characters were versions of herself and her incipient insanity, and the unconventional structures and style of her writings were not purposefully crafted but were products of her own mental disorganization" (266). In line with this legend, Dillon attributes the fragmented structure and style of her writing to the fragmented "cast of her mind and feelings" which Jane unfortunately never perceived as a "valid" mode of expression (1989: 140). Skerl challenges this view of Bowles's "writer's block" as a chronic illness, or the catalyst to her psychological breakdown (or *vice versa*), or even, according to Dillon (and subsequently Adair), the cause of her stroke. Instead Skerl foregrounds that Jane was a "slow, laborious, perfectionistic writer who set high standards for herself" (1999: 264). To be fair, any criticisms laid against Dillon should be qualified by an acknowledgment of

her single-handed attempt to revive the image of Jane Bowles in the literary (and public) imaginary. In addition, her status as biographer should not necessarily be confused with that of literary critic.

Indeed, Knopf and Skerl are amongst the few who have critiqued the myths of madness and self-destruction that are read into Bowles's work. One cannot ignore Adair's obvious partiality, as the figure of Paul in the Preface provides her muse. Furthermore, the socio-historical gender bias which favoured the masculine "contribut[ed] to the invisibility of women in the experimentalist tradition" (Friedman & Fuchs 1989: 9). "The neglect of women innovators is partially a legacy of modernism as interpreted through its male critics" with the groundbreaking works of modernist writers such as Virginia Woolf and Gertrude Stein "commonly described as having been second, if not secondary, to Joyce and Proust" (5). Another significant factor is that most women writers of the time were known by their relationships with prominent male literary figures. Thus, they have been remembered (and continue to be remembered), not by their works, but by their association with these "greats", and hence are eclipsed by them. Friedman and Fuchs underscore the disjunction in focus between male and female experimentalist writers:

> For many, Jane was the seriously troubled wife of her more famous husband, Paul Bowles, also an experimental writer. [Anaïs] Nin's reputation rests on her erotica, diaries, and relationship with Henry Miller, and [Jean] Rhys's affair with Ford Madox Ford has so far sustained a place for her in histories of modernism. [T.S.] Eliot's marital problems, [Ezra] Pound's dandyism and fascism, [Ernest] Hemingway's women, [William] Faulkner's alcoholism, and [James] Joyce's jealousy are well known, but interest in these writers' lives is inspired by interest in their works. (18)

Whereas interest in the male author's work exceeds interest in his life, the opposite is true for women experimental writers.

This brings me to my more central concern: Dillon's assertion that it was Paul Bowles who brought coherency to his wife's "inchoate sections" and that it is primarily due to him that the novel "is a remarkable organic whole, pulsating with its contained shifts" (1989: 142). This resonates with snide remarks passed by Bowles's patriarchal aunts (1988 [1981]: 111). In marriages between artists there is generally a symbiotic system of exchange. Yet, in regard to Paul and Jane Bowles, the implication is that it was generally the former assisting the latter, and receiving more recognition. Establishing and owning one's own voice is in many instances not an easy task, when one is constantly defined in terms of one's relationships with others.

Where Dillon fails to adequately contextualize Bowles's feelings of inadequacy, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar accede that women writers of the early and mid-twentieth century were involved in a veritable "battle of the sexes" for literary primacy (1988: 236). The increasing prominence of women in the literary marketplace fuelled male misogyny. Women writers entering the male domain confronted not only the scorn of the "men's club" (156), but also felt the lack of a similar support structure. Elaine Showalter, referring to Gilbert and Gubar's earlier work, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, notes that "the nature and 'difference' of women's writing lies in its troubled and even tormented relationship to female identity; the woman writer experiences her own gender as a painful obstacle or even a debilitating inadequacy" (1989 [1981]: 468). The difficulties and anxieties Jane felt, read in light of the socio-historical environment of the modernist

twentieth-century woman writer, are not a sign of her imminent madness or psychic instability as the legend of self-destruction suggests. In a letter to Libby Holman, Jane writes:

> The more I get in to it, which isn't very far in pages but quite a bit further in thinking and consecutive work the more frightened I become at the isolated position I feel myself in vis-à-vis of all the writers whom I consider to be of any serious mind. [...] I am [a] serious [writer] but I am isolated and my experience is probably not of interest at this point to anyone [...]. [Y]ou immediately receive recognition because *what you write is in true relation to yourself which is always recognizable to the world outside. With me who knows?* [...]As I move along into this writing I think the part I mind the most is this doubt about my entire experience. (Own emphasis, Dillon 1988 [1981]: 141)

Bowles's lack of recognition, her alienation, and her inability to relate or identify her experience with any other experience, result in her feelings of lacking validity and authenticity. Very early in her narrative of Bowles's life, Dillon suggests a pattern of tragedy which somehow predicated her psychological, physical and intellectual vulnerability and instability. It is Dillon's authorial voice, not Bowles's or any of her friends', that invokes the prophet of doom:

> A sense of her own history began to coalesce. First there had been the legendary fall as a baby, caused by the nurse who had dropped her and injured her leg. Then her father had died. Then had come the fall from the horse, and she'd been left with a wound that would not heal. But with that tubercular wound came a sense of heightened experience, as she felt it herself and as she read of it in the work of other writers. (26)

Dillon concludes this list of tragedies by stating that "she was on a knife edge, in precarious balance between opposing forces within herself" (26).[16] The reader is already aware that Bowles died a tragic death and Dillon tries in the early stages of her narrative to rationalise this. It is highly probable that she is foregrounding the story she intends telling in an attempt to make Bowles's life "coalesce." To be sure, if anyone were to list all the accidents and ailments in his or her life, these would paint a gloomy picture.

In a world of hierarchical oppositions which equate masculinity with superiority and femininity with inferiority, and are so endemic that they are assumed "eternal-natural" (Cixous 1994: 39), it follows that a culture and language that is defined in relation to the penis should result in a feeling of "awful tragedy" (Rose 1991: 116) if one is born without this indicator of *author*ity. This relationship between subjectivity and authority is central to the feminist argument that "[w]omen feel rejected from language" because it fails to describe their experience (Kristeva 1995: 213). This does not imply that women cannot write, but that in a patriarchal society the path toward establishing an autonomous feminine voice is often a conflicted one. Bowles's torment in trying to write suggests a need to "renovate the entire process of verbal symbolization", a process that has "historically subordinated women" (Gilbert & Gubar 1988: 236). In Adair's text language, the power of words and literary history belong to men. Paul writes and records stories and Belquassim constantly makes references to the "masters" of the canon from Cervantes (Adair 2004: 3) and Dante (152), to Keats, Shelley and Byron (139). Gertrude

[16] It is possibly coincidental, and yet of some significance, that Cherifa is described in the biography as "exactly like a knife" (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 250). Even more surprising is Adair's adoption of a very similar metaphor, considering she claims to have "never laid eyes on any kind of biographies on either of them" (Levin 2004: n.p.). Adair's depiction of Cherifa as "penetrat[ing] Jane's body [like] a knife through her thin chest" (2004: 8), and Jane's later disclosure that "[w]*hen she touches me it is as if she is putting a knife through my body*" (50), are apparently random.

Stein, although given narrative space, is *Paul*'s close friend and mentor; she has been described as a male impersonator as well as "a Founding Father of her century" by Virgil Thomson (Gilbert & Gubar 1988: 188-89). It is no wonder that Jane feels that her possession of language has been usurped. The voices of the women in Monique Wittig's *The Guérillères* speak to Jane's feelings of frustration and disempowerment in being unable to write in a diegesis which re-inscribes a history of masculine *authority*:

> Masters, they have exercised their rights as masters. They write, of their authority to accord names, that it goes back so far that the origin of language itself may be considered an act of authority emanating from those who dominate. [...] The women say, so doing the men have bawled shouted with all their might to reduce you to silence. The women say, the language you speak poisons your glottis tongue palate lips. They say, the language you speak is made up of words that are killing you. They say, the language you speak is made up of signs that rightly speaking designate what men have appropriated. (1972 [1969]: 123)

Wittig follows this bleak picture by suggesting the possibility for women's own "inventions" in language to "overthrow" an essentially masculine discourse (123). Consequently, while in Bowles's own writing her experiments reveal an attempt to break from the "continuation of their [master] discourse" (123), Adair's novel presents a less optimistic feminine future. The image of "going to pieces" becomes a leitmotif in Adair's characterisation of Jane. Adair turns this extract from Bowles's fictional creation into an autobiographical self-fulfilling prophecy by having Jane echo, "that's how I want to feel [...]. I have gone to pieces" (2004: 64). However, there is no exhilaration in Jane's reiteration of Mrs Copperfield's words; she is aware of her own fragility and weakness, and filled with self-doubt. Adair has Jane paint a decidedly bleak and self-deprecating picture when she denies in herself what she lauds in Mrs Copperfield:

> I don't know if I have that certain amount of daring yet. I tell people that I have it and maybe they believe me, I don't know. Maybe because of what I do, like walking alone in the *souks*, loving Cherifa, drinking, makes them think that I have that daring. And I don't have authority, Paul has that. And I don't feel the happiness, just little bits of it now and again. [...] And then when they tell me that I must be crazy, lonely or sad, for a minute I think that I am, and then I really go to pieces. (64)

Despite stylistically celebrating the fragmentary in her polyphonic pastiche, the South African author, it would seem, would have the reader lament the fragmentation Bowles experimented with in her writing by projecting the same idea of fragmentation onto her emotionally, psychically and sexually. Whilst the elision of the actual Jane Bowles with her fictional creation, Mrs Copperfield, is problematic (at least in Adair's re-inscription of the legend of self-destruction), I believe a re-reading of Bowles's novel reveals her intrepid experimentation with female identities and sexualities. The play of love triangles certainly reinforces a bisexual reading of the text, despite the common critical tendency to classify Miss Goering as a promiscuous spinster and Mrs Copperfield as a heterosexual woman turned lesbian (Knopf 1996: 147). Certainly it is notable that Bowles dedicates her book to "Paul, Mother and Helvetia", the key bonding or intimate relationships in her life. This significantly also highlights the author's own attempt to negotiate the intimate relationships (and gender positions) in her life and the different modes of loving: as a wife in a heterosexual marriage (albeit an unconventional and open one), as a daughter, and as a lover in a lesbian relationship. In contradistinction, Adair pathologises the women in her novel as wild, wicked and wanton.

The War of the Wild Wanton Woman Writer

In one of the incidents preceding Jane's death the image of "going to pieces" returns in an altered form. In a moment of wild rage she throws a glass against the ceiling in envy and frustration, causing it to shatter into many sparkling shards on the floor:

> "I can't do it, I can't do it any more! Why are you forcing me? You know that I can't do it." Jane's rage filled the house.
>
> "I'm not forcing you", Paul said, speaking slowly and with infinite care, "I'm just trying to encourage you to use your talent, and it's a real talent no matter how you denigrate it."
>
> Jane picked up the glass that was on the table next to her and threw it up against the low ceiling. The glass shattered, the liquid dripped downwards to the floor, opaque in the dim light. "You make me feel so impotent. Day after day you sit there and I hear the sounds of your fingers on the keyboard of that dilapidated typewriter of yours. And then what happens? You publish a book that people love. And what do I do? I sit and listen to your fingers while mine stay immobile." She turned and said bitterly, "You weren't supposed to be a writer, I am the writer." (2004: 126)

This scene brings to a head the repressed jealousies beneath the seemingly harmonious co-existence between Jane, Paul and Belquassim. Jane sees herself shadowed by Paul's literary success, and shattering the glass comes to signify Jane's mental and physical disintegration, her symbolic *breakdown*. Jane's anger is treated as irrational, crazy and a sign of her unreasonable jealousy. Her experience cannot be accommodated, neither by Paul nor Belquassim, whose judgements direct the reader in a similar response. Gilbert and Gubar comment on the "contradiction between aggression and femininity" which resulted in constructing "the emblematic figure of an enraged but tormented madwoman in order simultaneously to repress and express their feelings of anger" (1988: 67). Although the authors note that turn-of-the-century modernist and postmodernist women

writers have been able to "legitimize and rationalize the complaints of the madwoman" (67), there is no space in Adair's text for legitimising Jane's wild rage.

Wittig's lyrical evocation of a literal battle of the sexes over language corresponds with Jane's choice of the word "war" in describing the nature of her *mêlée* with Paul. She falls at Paul's knees, begging for his forgiveness. In despair she says, "I can't produce anything that makes you think that I am worth anything. I can't fight this war any more. I can't do it any more" (2004: 127). "Neither can I", Paul counters as he "push[es] her aside" and leaves the room (127). In "Castration or Decapitation?" Hélène Cixous suggests that the battle of the sexes is founded in the very fundamental signification of language and culture into a masculine/feminine divide, which is spelt out in the relations of the "couple":

> This opposition to woman cuts endlessly across all oppositions that order culture. [...] Man/Woman automatically means great/small, superior/inferior ... means high or low, means Nature/History, means transformation/inertia. [...] It always works this way and the opposition is founded in the *couple.* A couple posed in opposition, in tension, in conflict ... a couple engaged in a kind of war in which death is always at work. (1989 [1981]: 482)

It is interesting how these divisions are almost literally read into Adair's characterisation of Jane and Paul. Indeed, Adair adeptly accentuates this tension and conflict in the jealousy and dependency of this love-hate relationship. Undoubtedly this battle scene indicates, more than any other passage in the novel, the intense intimacy between hostile parties in the act of war (and love). This is unlike, for example, Ted Hughes's poems which highlight a sexual/literary battle in a marriage between two equally powerful forces. On the one hand, his poem "Lovesong" speaks of love as warfare where both

parties are victors, where "His words were occupying armies" and "Her laughs were an assassin's attempts" (quoted in Gilbert & Gubar 1988: 3). As a proviso to these seemingly egalitarian relations, Hughes's poem may reveal an attempt at self-exoneration. Indeed, it is necessary to mention the socio-cultural and personal factors that contribute to a less fair presentation of events.[17] Plath's poems address the difficulty of establishing a voice that is not silenced or subordinated by masculine language. In "Daddy" the speaker has to "kill" the patriarchal ideal she has tried to aspire to. She refers not only to her father, but her husband when she claims, "I've killed one man, I've killed two – / The vampire who drank my blood for a year, / Seven years" (Plath 1988 [1965]: 50). Through creating her own anti-patriarchal mythology in *Ariel*, Plath challenges masculine authority. Yet, in Adair's text Jane still seeks Paul's validation. She says, "I can't produce anything that makes you think that I am worth anything" (2004: 127). In Adair's text, it is Paul who appears the victor and Jane who surrenders. It is Jane who seeks pardon and Paul who can choose to deny it. Belquassim realises that he "could never elicit" such a "powerful" response from Paul and for this he cannot forgive her (130). The lingering mood Jane leaves in the room even changes the air for Belquassim, turning exotic aromas into "only an evil dark smell" (129). Finally, Jane permits Paul's appropriation of language as if it is a zero-sum game in their relationship, and internalises the illegitimacy of her anger:

> *I can be cruel when I feel that I am in danger, and I was so cruel. And it is such irrational cruelty because it does not change anything, it just destroys* [...]. *And then my anger, it's anger because I feel abandoned, but it is also anger, irrational and immature anger, that his books are doing so well. I am the writer, I write with feeling, I put everything that I have done or felt or thought into my stories, and I can no longer do it. Maybe because I have no feeling left without him.* (135)

[17] Hughes has been accused of concealing the truth about Plath's life and work and has admitted that while arranging *Ariel* for publication, he "not only omitted 'one or two of the more openly vicious' poems, but 'would have cut out others if I'd thought they would ever be decoded'" (Kendall 2001: 89).

Adair reinforces the unproductive irrationality of Jane's anger. Given the gendered associations between women and irrationality, Brooke-Rose notes how historically women's "madness" has not been viewed as a sign of their creativity. Only men can possess the "divine madness of the poet, and *do* something rational with it" (1989: 61). Woman's madness comes "from the devil, she is a witch, or its modern equivalent, a hysteric" (61). Besides alluding to the wickedness of her irrational behaviour, Jane assumes that her ability to write is dependent upon her relationship with Paul. While earlier in the novel, Paul, not dissimilarly, admits that he "*experiences life through her*" (Adair 2004: 21), it is clear that her dependency on him is so dire that it is presumed by the reader to trigger her panic attack and stroke.

In the chapter following Jane's frustrated rage, Paul appears emotionally detached and wonders if he has any feeling left for Jane. Seeking a space equal to his psychic and emotional isolation, Paul departs for an island off Casablanca with Belquassim. During their absence Jane experiences what seems to be a migraine turned anxiety attack (cementing the idea of her mental instability) (149). This vivid depiction of Jane's psychic anguish narrated in the first-person switches to Belquassim's free indirect narration of the sudden news of Jane's "stroke" (158). Adair leaves the details of this unexpected affliction shrouded in mystery, compacting what was in reality sixteen years (from 1957 to her death in 1973) of mental and physical degeneration, depression, shock therapy, seizures, psychiatric hospitalisation, aphasia, partial and then total blindness and even schizophrenia (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 286-96; 418) into four pages which end in the anti-climactic non-event of her death. As Belquassim stares at her reflection in the windowpane he sees the "deadness of her eyes", and as he is unable to "see the Jane he

knew any more", she is reduced to "only a reflection" (Adair 2004: 129). Jane is reduced to a non-entity. She is silenced through her illness and in her final moments in the narrative is offered no space for interiority. Described as "the best way to undermine the mind of a writer" (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 291), the stroke affected the part of Bowles's brain that was associated with language, specifically the ability to read and write (311). This silence signifies a metaphorical "decapitation", to borrow Cixous's term. Because woman does not experience lack, due to her not possessing the organ which would make her aspire to phallic power, her behaviour cannot be controlled by the threat of castration. Instead, this "economy motivated by fear and loss finds its corrective in appropriation. In decapitating woman, man appropriates her head; deprived of both her intellect and her voice, woman falls silent" (Con Davis & Schleifer 1989: 479). It would seem that the stroke has provided the solution to Jane's outbursts. Paul may grieve this loss, but the pessimistic undertow of Jane's fate in Adair's novel leaves the trace of a subtext, that Paul needs to control Jane in order to maintain structural superiority in the text. For Freud and Lacan, woman is said to be "outside the Symbolic, that is outside language, the place of the Law" (Cixous 1989 [1981]: 483). Consequently, as Cixous notes, women do not fear castration; it is the duty of the man to make his woman aware of lack (483):

> "[W]ithout me you wouldn't exist, I'll show you." Without him she'd remain in a state of distressing and distressed undifferentiation, unbordered, unorganized, "unpoliced" by the phallus … incoherent, chaotic, and embedded in the Imaginary in her ignorance of the Law of the Signifier. Without him she would in all probability not be contained by the threat of death, might even, perhaps, believe herself, eternal, immortal. (Cixous 1989 [1981]: 484)

Sitting next to Jane in hospital Paul "gave Jane *his* words" (own emphasis, Adair 2004: 158), and as his fingers that "feel only a pen" (149) move over her body it is as if she has

been *overwritten.* Paul says in an earlier section, "*I order fragments, then make them cohere, and they flow.* [...] *Control. I don't think about it often because I am in control*" (52). The comparative chaos and incoherence of Jane's life and Paul's resulting distress are central elements in Adair's characterisation of the couple. Under Paul's fingers she is neither the subject of her own speech and writing nor of her own body.

Given the possibilities of invention provided by the postmodern novel, in which fiction supplants history (Matz 2004: 137), why does Adair deny Jane the opportunity to reveal her thoughts, as incoherent as they may have been, at this crucial moment? Third-person narration distances the reader from Jane, making it impossible to participate in or identify with Jane's experience. It is the cause of much consternation for *this* reader that even these final sensations are mediated through Paul. Her experience remains irrevocably "outside knowledge" (Cixous 1989 [1981]: 486). Cixous articulates this disturbing silence left by Jane's sudden erasure:

> Silence: silence is the mark of hysteria. The great hysterics have lost speech, they are aphonic, and at times have lost more than speech: they are pushed to the point of choking, nothing gets through. They are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn't heard because it's the body that talks, and man doesn't hear the body. In the end, the woman pushed to hysteria is the woman who disturbs and is nothing but disturbance. (486)

However, in Adair's text Jane's body does not talk. Elaine Showalter points to the task of women writers. Quoting Annie Leclerc, she calls for the invention of "a language that [...] does not leave speechless", and perhaps more poignantly, referring to Chantal Chawaf, linking "biofeminism and linguism", speaks of a feminine practice of writing

that will "distintellectualize writing" through "reconnect[ing] the book with the body and with pleasure" (1989 [1981]:465).

Wantonness, or Reckless Intimacy as Existential Quest

In Tangier creates an inflated juxtaposition of Paul's prolific writing with Jane's writer's block. In the novel Paul describes Jane's failure to produce as a wanton "denigration" of her talent (Adair 2004: 126). Paul is productive and mobile. Jane is unproductive and immobile. Caught in the "metaphors that organize culture, [...] man is obviously the active, the upright, the productive ... and besides, that's how it happens in History", notes Cixous (1989 [1981]: 482). Underscoring this precept is Jean-Paul Sartre's existential philosophy, which Paul espouses and elaborates on in the novel. Adair includes an intertextual reference to Paul Bowles's translation of Sartre's play, *No Exit*, and imagines his internalisation of the playwright/philosopher's insights. Paul believes in a "*world of nothing, the existentialist world where choice is the only explanation for men's actions. Actions, the only indication that there is less than nothing*" (Adair 2004: 61). According to Sartre we are "fully, painfully free" to make ourselves who we are; however, the freedom in taking total responsibility for one's existence is also accompanied by the dread of knowing that there is nothing to fall back on (in Matz 2004: 114). Failing to "bear this responsibility is to live in bad faith – to be *inauthentic*" (114). The existentialist paradigm constructed in Adair's novel renders Jane *inauthentic*. Existence is defined in terms of actions, and one's actions add value and worth to one's existence. Etymologically the word "authentic" is derived from the Greek *authentikos* meaning original or genuine, and *authentēs*, "one who does anything with his own hand" (Webster 1981: 67).

As if verifying his authenticity, Paul is constantly shown to be using his hands, either caressing, typing or writing. Most of the sections narrated by Paul self-reflexively explore the act of writing. Listening perpetually to the "sounds of [his] fingers on the keyboard" (Adair 2004: 126) causes Jane to finally explode with rage, and when he visits the island off Casablanca he "take[s] his typewriter up the hill to write" (139). At the very least Paul's desire to write becomes fetishised. Recording local stories and using the Maghreb and its people as his muse, Paul not only inscribes the landscape but also the colonial body. In one erotic love scene with Belquassim, he writes his name on the latter's body with semen, and in another he leaves his permanent mark by burning the skin between Belquassim's shoulders with the coal of his hashish stick. According to Gilbert and Gubar, "the text's author is a father, a progenitor, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (1979: 7). For Paul, the pen becomes an emblem of his right to write.

Whereas Paul does things with his hands, Jane has things done to her with other people's hands: Cherifa's "long dark fingers [...] penetrate Jane's body" (Adair 2004: 8), Natalie's "long fingers, with their short blunt fingernails that were tipped in purple [...] slowly [grasp], [twist] and [stroke her] dark nipples" (113), and finally Paul's fingers stroke her mute, blind and immobile body (161), like another pale blank page beneath his fingers. "All she [*can*] do [is] feel the touch of Paul's hands stroking her hair, her arms, and down her back" (own emphasis, 161). Paul is driven by a desire to write and Jane by a desire to *feel*; however, Adair's final attempt to convey the love and devotion which have previously been absent in Paul's relationship with Jane comes at a high price: the negation of Jane's voice and agency.

"To exist authentically", writes Jesse Matz, "it is necessary to embark perpetually on existential quests – quests for meaning threatened always by the intrinsic absurdity of existence" (2004: 115). In Adair's novel it is only Paul who embarks on journeys; Jane remains at home, only venturing out to visit Cherifa or to go shopping in the Medina. Jennie Skerl deconstructs the assumption of the legend of the artist-hero as "a male quest narrative with women playing supporting roles as muses, mistresses, or wives" (1999: 263). Along with other feminist critics of modernism, she points out that "the avant-garde has been a male-dominated phenomenon which, for all its transgressions of bourgeois norms and revolutionary formal experiments, has subordinated women" (263). Yet this is not to say that Jane in her own life and in her writing did not venture out on "existential quests", although this is an aspect of Jane's creative self that I believe Adair does not fully explore.

Skerl notes of Bowles that "[t]hroughout her *oeuvre* she portrays female spiritual quests, [...] frequently analyzing the obstacles faced by women seeking autonomy in a male-defined world" (263). In a similar vein, Dillon suggests that *Two Serious Ladies* is an allegorical journey towards self-individuation in that Bowles's protagonist, Christina, was named after Christian from *Pilgrim's Progress* (1988 [1981]: 99). In my reading of *Two Serious Ladies* I perceive this path toward self-actualisation or spirituality as a trajectory toward, or a constant re-negotiation of, female subjectivity and sexuality. Mrs Copperfield is not as obsessed with sin and salvation as Miss Goering; as her counterpoint she experiences rather "the profound extension of mood and of psychological state, a dramatic liberation from existing conventions and constricting restraints" associated with

the exotic and sexual freedom (MacKenzie 1995: 209). Mrs Copperfield's encounter with Panama and the prostitute, Pacifica, allows her to explore and pursue her own subjectivity.

Unlike Adair's representation of Paul, whose existential journey is defined through "actions" (that is, sexually, through his transgression of boundaries in his sadomasochistic relationship with Belquassim and in his geographic crossing of frontiers), Jane's existential journey is pursued through her *feelings*, sensual experiences and through making herself vulnerable in risky intimate relationships. Adair characterises Cherifa as an evil sorceress and Natalie as a "sybarite [that] moves through women like a spirited stallion" (Adair 2004: 112). Taking risks can be both terrifying and liberating, as Mrs Copperfield finds. Leaving behind the safety provided by her husband and their hotel room to experience the danger and excitement of the world of the Panamanian prostitute, Pacifica, allows her to explore an intimacy and sexuality that would otherwise not be as accessible in a Western locus. Mrs Copperfield says to the "giant Negress" in the "lavender theatrical gauze": "I love to be free" (Bowles 2003 [1943]: 43). But this freedom exists alongside the fear and anxiety of stepping out on her own path. Daring to venture out into unknown territory both physically and psychically, Mrs Copperfield experiences the profound sense of exposure, susceptibility and anxiety present when transgressing boundaries. Miss Goering too, experiences this anxiety when she dreads having to leave her house on the island and take the ferryboat to the mainland to explore brief sexual affairs with strange men. "It is not for fun that I am going", says Miss Goering about her nocturnal journeys, "but because it is necessary to do so" (Bowles 2003 [1943]: 124).

The difference between the Bowleses' existential quests seems to reiterate the traditional gender hierarchy of the mind/body binary. Paul Bowles's journey is one of the creative mind (even his sadomasochistic sexual relations are psychological explorations of boundaries). Jane Bowles's journey, as expressed in her fiction, is an exploration of the female body, her own and those of others. By embracing the 'feminine' body, Bowles re-values the 'secondariness' associated with it. Belquassim snidely comments that "taking pleasure was the way in which [Jane] could become brave" (Adair 2004: 7). However, situating this comment within the context of Bowles's own writing, pleasure provides an alternative path to authority and authenticity, and in the process threatens the hierarchies of masculine authority and status. *In Tangier* excludes the possibility of a female artist-hero or genius: "women with their inferior strength and control can only be eccentrics or madwomen with flashes of insight" (Skerl 1999: 266). Reversing the negative pathology of "going to pieces", Mrs Copperfield's "madness" gives her agency and can be seen as a wilful denial and destruction of the gender roles she is expected to conform to. While Showalter warns against romanticising madness, she notes that "it is possible to see hysteria [...] as an unconscious form of feminist protest" (1987 [1985]: 5). In the representation of Jane in *In Tangier*, hysteria is not depicted as a valid form of protest as it is in Bowles's own writing. Through figuratively "coming undone", she can forge a new self outside social prescriptions of appropriate sexual and gender norms. This is a "*thing* [that she has] *wanted to do for years"* and it entitles her to "*authority [...] and a certain amount of daring, which, if you remember correctly, I never had before*" (Adair 2004: 64 and Bowles 2003 [1943]: 197). It may appear that Mrs Copperfield is falling apart; however, her experiments in breaking away from societal expectations are a sign of her

courage, or "daring." Angela Carter acknowledges that "[i]f you don't play by the rules but try to start a new game, you will not necessarily prosper, nor will the new game necessarily be an improvement on the old one. But this does not mean it is not worth trying" (1992 [1986]: xi). At least through a certain "bloodymindedness" you can "contrive to evade the victim's role" (xi).

The Wild Bisexual

Jane does not play by the rules, particularly in her intimate relationships with women. Although there are no heterosexual love scenes in Adair's text, Knopf notes that Bowles's "simultaneous interest in both men and women, on both a physical, emotional, and intellectual level, offers proof that she was indeed bisexual" (1996: 148).[18] Although Jane and Paul no longer have sex, they still live together and share moments of physical contact (Adair 2004: 25). While Bowles attempts to forge new liberatory paths for women through her exploration of intimate relationships that defy heteronormativity, in Adair's text Jane's sexuality is self-reflexively critiqued as wild, dangerous and self-destructive. The reader is made to believe that (along with her dependency on Paul) her wild and wanton lifestyle leads to her mental instability and eventual death. Her obstinate search for wild sexual pleasures detracts from her productivity and becomes an indictment of her character.

Jane has been described by Dillon as "on a knife edge, in precarious balance between opposing forces within herself" (1988 [1981]: 26). While Dillon sees this as an indicator

[18] Knopf notes that the Bowleses "did not lead separate sexual lives for the first two years of their marriage" (1996: 148). In addition Jane Bowles's "long-term relationships with women turned celibate after a period of sexual intimacy as well" (148).

of Jane's mental and emotional instability it is also possible to see this as connected to Adair's representation of Jane's wild and wanton bisexual desire. Both the words "wild" and "wanton" suggest licentious behaviour and a disregard for moral restraint. They are also markers of socially deviant behaviour. In "'That's Why She Is Bisexual': Contexts for Bisexual Visibility", Jo Eadie notes how the bisexual character is "pathologized [...] via her restlessness, intrusiveness and selfishness" (1997: 147). Her psychological abnormality is based on "a very conventional standard of mental health within popular psychology: commitment, unselfishness and what counselors like to call 'healthy boundaries' (a phrase which should alert any bisexual)" (147). This can be applied to Adair's representation of Jane, where "bisexuality is a *function* of her instability" (148). Eadie's explanation of the textual traits of the bisexual fit the depiction of Jane: "*restless*, because the bisexual is presumed faithless and fickle; *selfish*, because the bisexual is presumed a slave to their predatory appetite; and *intrusive* because the bisexual is unable to respect normal boundaries" (148).

It follows that Jane's relationships are inscribed in these terms. Her relationship with Cherifa is defined in terms of lust. She speaks of her obsession with Cherifa: "*My body lusts after Cherifa. It is a horrible word lust, it sounds so harsh, but I suppose lust is harsh. It knows no boundaries or rationality*" (Adair 2004: 50). In his first recollections of Jane and Paul, Belquassim describes Jane as "flighty" and as "defin[ing] herself in pleasure" (7). Juxtaposed with Paul's authenticity and authority, Jane is presented as inauthentic. Exposing the misrepresentations of bisexual identity, Mariam Fraser draws attention to the assumption that the "'bisexual' woman's sexuality *is* inauthentic, because she takes account only of her own pleasure" (1997: 41). Her relationships are thus based

on utility and pleasure, not "true friendships" (41). Jane professes to belong to a "*diaspora of choice*" (Adair 2004: 71). Whereas Paul believes that authenticity is associated with taking responsibility for one's life and making decisions, choice for Jane implies not having to decide. For Adair, Jane's bisexuality, unlike Paul's, is associated with her inability to make up her mind. Jane's wanton lifestyle is associated with the temptations of the city. Referring to Tangier's International Zone, Jane says: "*I love the city for its lack of morality*" (24). Pat Califia in *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*, suggests that "the city has become a sign of desire: promiscuity, perversity, prostitution, sex" (in Cocks & Houlbrook 2006: 133). The "association between sex and the city has become almost axiomatic" (133). Indeed it has become "a *sign* of desire: promiscuity, perversity, prostitution, sex" (own emphasis, 133). However, where it presents a space of sexual possibilities for Paul and Belquassim, for Jane it is place of peril and "dreadful delight" (133) because it leads to her dangerous liaison with Cherifa. The amorality and instability of urban culture "holds the constant threat of social disorganization and the collapse of the boundaries and constraints on which national [and individual] stability depend" (140). Notably, Paul and Belquassim's relationship escapes the licentiousness of city sex through their journeys out into the country.

Indeed, Belquassim's devotion and faithfulness to Paul are juxtaposed with Jane's promiscuity. Belquassim and Paul are always together, even when Paul shows an intellectual (and perhaps sexual) interest in another young Moroccan man. While there are many sexually erotic scenes between Paul and Belquassim, they are often depicted embracing or carressing each other after sex (Adair 2004: 29, 36, 38, 82). There are no equivalent moments of intimacy between Jane and her woman lovers. Unlike the love

scenes between Paul and Belquassim where the reader is on the inside, experiencing the thoughts, emotions and physical sensations of the focaliser, in the scene between Jane and Natalie the reader is on the outside participating in the objectifying male gaze. Significantly, this is the only love scene between women in Adair's novel. Moreover, it does not involve Jane and Cherifa, whose relationship historically and in Adair's novel is assumed to be of central importance in Jane's life, but Jane and the character Natalie, based on the Parisian patron of the arts.[19] The sex between the two women is presented as strange and other – outside male experience and therefore not quite "lovemaking":

> Sometimes they made love, for Belquassim could only call those slow sensuous caresses lovemaking, he could not think of another word for it. Natalie would undo the buttons on Jane's shirt and move her long fingers, with their short blunt fingernails that were tipped in purple, over Jane's small upright breasts. Her fingers would move for a long time, they never seemed to be in a hurry, slowly grasping, twisting and stroking the dark nipples. And Jane would arch her back, moving in towards Natalie's hands, wanting more of her touch. At other times, it was not lovemaking, not the slow gentle movement of fingers on the tips of a breast or between pulsating legs. At other times they seemed almost violent in the way they sought out each other's bodies. (Adair 2004: 113)

As the reader implicitly sees *with* the eyes of the focaliser, the reader's gaze becomes perversely voyeuristic. Even as a woman reader one remains on the outside. One wonders how Adair as a woman writer fails to balance the intensely personal nature of the male sex scenes with an equal attention to the intimacy of "lesbian" lovemaking. Neither Jane nor Natalie have been accorded the agency and subjectivity of first-person narration in the inscription of women's desire. Adair perpetuates a masculine discourse of female sexuality and desire in which "women, if they speak at all, must speak through"

[19] Natalie Barney was nicknamed *L'Amazone*, after the legendary race of female warriors from Greek mythology, the Amazons (Baker & Tropiano 2004: 17). A poet herself, Barney ran one of the two major artistic salons of the early twentieth-century (17). The other was run by Gertrude Stein (17).

(Showalter 1989 [1980]: 471). In "(Re)Writing the Body: The Politics and Poetics of Female Eroticism", Susan Rubin Suleiman asks:

> How is this view of the female body and its pleasure linked to language and writing? Putting it slightly differently, how can the recognition of a hitherto repressed female eroticism embody itself in texts that might be called "feminine?" Irigaray's claim is that the recognition of the specificity of female eroticism necessarily implies a recognition of the specificity of women's relation to language. In opposition to the logic of "phallic" discourse – characterized by linearity, self-possession, the affirmation of mastery, authority, and above all unity – feminine discourse must struggle to speak otherwise. (1986: 13)

While Adair's postmodern style is certainly not linear and does not assume the authority of third-person narration, she does not permit an empowered, authentic female voice to speak of woman's pleasure. Adair offers no space for Jane or her lover(s) to speak "otherwise."

Furthermore, Jane is portrayed as a child, lacking reason. Paul tries to warn Jane about Natalie's sexual aggression, calling her a "sybarite" and "spirited stallion" (Adair 2004: 112). "But, of course, this was only like giving Jane a chocolate and telling her not to eat it" (112). Relating Jane's sexual desire to a child's craving for chocolates suggests not only her immaturity but also her lack of restraint, her lack of moral compunction and her insatiable appetite. In "'Her Libido Flowed in Two Currents': Representations of Bisexuality in Psychoanalytic Case Studies", Phoebe Davidson notes how bisexuality is perceived as a sign of immaturity (1997: 71). From being polymorphously perverse, children are supposed, through various Oedipal processes, to develop appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour and in due course become heterosexual adults. "Thus

bisexuality is seen as an immature state, a point of departure rather than a destination point of a resolved conscious and integrated adult sexuality" (71).

While obsessed with Cherifa, Jane is constantly seen to be desiring other women, and having intermittant flings. Her deviance is presented as dangerous when someone warns a young Moroccan woman to "[k]eep away from her, she is mad and a drunk" (Adair 2004: 94). Showalter points out how "uncontrolled sexuality seemed the major, almost defining symptom of insanity in women" in nineteenth-century psychiatry (1987 [1985]: 74). Two centuries later Adair perpetuates this myth of nymphomania as a sign of mental instability. Psychologically oscillating between "bi-polar"[20] emotional states of extreme happiness and "numb despair" (Adair 2004: 24), Jane is similarly pathologised through her bisexuality. It is then fitting that the representation of Jane's sexuality in Adair's text should reflect "a slippage of meaning where the salient features of bisexuality are oscillations rather than seen as possible pluralities of desire co-existing simultaneously" (Davidson 1997: 67). Davidson observes how the descriptor of bisexuality as *oscillation* suggests a "sexuality which can be split, eg. Moving backwards and forwards from a heterosexual to homosexual object-choice and vice versa" (68). In the same essay she suggests that "on that very basic individual level, bisexuality *is* split" (own emphasis, 200-1), and Jane thus comes to *embody* this fractured subjectivity: physically, psychologically and sexually she is portrayed as "torn."

Marcy Jane Knopf's article elucidates a more positive engagement with bisexual themes in Bowles's own writing. Knopf interprets Mrs Copperfield's "going to pieces" as

[20] I use this term metaphorically to refer to the binary system of oppositions that is used to define Jane's character in Adair's novel.

exemplifying "the ways in which bisexuality is read [as] still a place in which it is difficult, yet somehow mandatory, to pass between heterosexual and lesbian relationships, between positions of marginal and dominant" (1996: 156-7). Neither Miss Goering nor Mrs Copperfield will commit to a single gender-object-choice and consequently feel psychically split between heterosexual and lesbian desires. Mrs Copperfield wants to be with Pacifica but we do not hear of her wanting to leave her husband, "this man whom she liked above all other people" (Bowles 2003 [1943]: 40). Miss Goering maintains her home with Miss Gamelon, Arnold, and for a while Arnold's father whilst taking trips into town to pursue other relationships. Jane is bold and transgressive in her subject matter. Truman Capote describes her "language and themes [as] sought after along tortured paths and in stony quarries: the never-realised relationships between her people, the mental and physical discomforts with which she surrounds and saturates them" (2003 [1966]: viii).

Despite the innovative and pioneering nature of Jane's work, as well as her enigmatic personality, the side of Jane presented by Adair is her dependency on Paul, her dangerous obsession with Cherifa, her promiscuity and her fear of being judged. She is constantly being accused of drinking too much, by Paul and Belquassim. Jane's unquenchable desire is projected into her unquenchable thirst for alcohol. She is also the only character whose eating habits are elaborated on when she is described as "ruthlessly eating [a] fig" (Adair 2004: 67), a fruit with distinctively sexual significance. Her bisexuality signifies an indiscriminate and excessive desire that has no respect for conventional social orders and boundaries (Eadie 1997: 148-151). As bisexuality connotes insatiability, it appears that there can be no moderation in Jane's life, just as there is none for Mrs Copperfield. "Unlimited desires are insatiable by definition and insatiability is rightly considered a sign

of morbidity" (Goodheart 1991: 8). According to this precept, Jane's insatiable appetite in Adair's text presupposes her death.

Cherifa: The Wicked Witch

At the same time, Adair also presents Jane's Moroccan lover, Cherifa, as the stereotypical wicked witch. Dorothy Hodgson states that

> women who defy [gender roles] by challenging patriarchal control of their sexuality, fertility, or autonomy disrupt the status quo and threaten patriarchal hegemony by exposing the possibility of alternative, non-normative meanings and practices. To defuse the subversive potential of these 'wicked' women, patriarchies must stigmatize the women's actions or persons as 'wicked' or morally corrupt. (2001: 149)

Thus, women who "do not fall under the direct 'control' of a man, or are economically successful, or childless, or without appropriate familial protection, or in competition for scarce resources, can all too easily become targets for gossip and jealousy" (Badoe 2005: 51). Cherifa does not depend on a man for her livelihood, for her emotional security, or for sexual pleasure. She has no children. Unlike Belquassim who stays at the house with Jane and Paul, Cherifa comes and goes as she likes and has her own home. Stobie notes that she "cannot be domesticated or appropriated": she "belongs in the market-place, where she fends for herself, and in her own domestic space, where she sets her own rules, and makes a home for a number of Moroccan women, who function as a harem" (2006: 18). She disrupts the expected gender norms of a conservative Islamic Morocco. This is evident not only in her gender-object-choice, but also in her ambiguous attire. "She would

cover herself with *djellaba* [an outer garment with a hood worn by men] and *haik* [traditionally worn by women]. At home, in the evenings, she would wear a white cotton shirt and faded blue jeans" (Adair 2004: 8). Her dress signifies her hybrid identity, troubling the binaries of West and East, masculine and feminine.

Marjorie Garber notes how "cross-dressing is clearly related to its status as a sign of the constructedness of gender categories" resulting in the tendency to "look *through*" or "*appropriate*" the cross-dresser for "political and critical aims" (1993 [1992]: 9). One wonders what critical or political aim the silencing and othering of Cherifa achieves. In the context of a global rise in religious and political fundamentalism, Cherifa clearly draws attention to the inability to accommodate difference. Yaba Badoe comments on the post 9/11 angst which interpellates the twenty-first century world-view (and in my view, also that of the South African woman writer):

> But at a time when London, the city in which I live, has experienced the trauma of a terrorist attack, and three Angolan refugees here have been convicted of child cruelty for torturing and threatening to kill a child in their care whom they believed was a witch, it's not surprising that British politicians are talking about "our" way of life being under threat. Barbarism, it seems, is snapping at our heels. The heart of darkness is encroaching on the capital city. At a time when the social consequences of globalisation are being felt by migrant and indigenous communities throughout the world, it seems pertinent to try and understand what it must be like to be made a scapegoat for social ills: in other words, what it means to be a "witch." (2005: 1)

To be a witch not only implies being a scapegoat but also indicates a bold transgression of societal norms – creating a space for change. Although Cherifa is silenced, it is impossible to look through her. She is both "overestimated" as well as "underestimated"

and introduces a crisis of representation into Adair's text. Her characterisation embodies Garber's notion of the "third":

> The "third" is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis – a crisis which is symptomatized by *both* the overestimation *and* the underestimation of cross-dressing. But what is crucial here – and I can hardly underscore this strongly enough – is that the "third term" is *not a term*. [...] The "third" is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge. (1993 [1992]: 11)

Arguably Adair does not fully exploit this space of possibility. Nevertheless, as Stobie notes, in her failure to "consolidate the imperialist self" Cherifa "occupies an unimaginable space, a space of surprise, fascination and speculation" (2006: 18). Yet her mystery creates a space of fear and unease. Paul and Belquassim "know" that she is "evil" and keep away from the spells she weaves around her (Adair 2004: 59-60). Conversely, Jane is drawn to the fear, regardless of the words of warning issued by Paul and Belquassim (51; 62; 67). In terms of the legend of self-destruction, Jane seduces danger. She loves "*the abandon of it all, the wildness, the danger. And Cherifa is dangerous*" (50-1). It is only if one reads against this menacing female sexuality that one can foresee a "space of possibility" (Garber 1993 [1992]: 11). "Such is the level of anxiety surrounding women's sexuality", notes Badoe, that "when it operates independently of male control, it becomes synonymous with dangerous, destructive forces" (2005: 31).

In the same way, Cherifa's physical appearance is conspicuously represented in terms of Manichean aesthetics, emphasizing the malevolence of her black body. In order to explain Jane's seemingly inexplicable death, Adair establishes early in the narrative a malignant force that ostensibly "poisons" and bewitches Jane. While Jane is certainly represented as

wicked in terms of her wanton and wild behaviour, her fragility and vulnerability are juxtaposed with Cherifa's strength and resistance. In the opening chapter Jane is constantly described as susceptible to outside forces. Her "soft, milky" skin breaks out in a rash from the heat (Adair 2004: 4). Her white skin is a sign of her vulnerability as Cherifa's dark skin is a sign of her strength:

> Cherifa, tall, heavy and dark. [...] Her long dark fingers that she used to sift the millet, the long dark fingers that took Jane in the night. Belquassim imagined how they penetrated Jane's body, a knife through her thin chest, a chest that would not be hard to pierce. Cherifa, an old woman now, still sat in the same place in the market, surrounded by young girls. Still sifting the millet with her fingers. Still using the same fingers in the black nights. Cherifa had wished that Jane would die, and that had come true. Was the die cast by her spells? (8)

Her black body is simultaneously sexualised and demonised. She becomes an iconic figure of all forms of deviance: sexual, social and metaphysical. Her lesbian relationship with Jane is a double taboo of race and sexuality. Dillon notes that there was "a long tradition of young Moroccan men entering into such exchanges with European men (1988 [1981]: 251); however, for "a Moroccan woman to enter into an arrangement with a European or American woman, as Cherifa did with Jane, was unusual, even unprecedented in Tangier" (251). Undoubtedly, "Cherifa was risking a great deal" (252).

Postcolonial theory "disrupts the structural relations of the binary system itself, revealing [its] fundamental contradictions [...]. In this way it uncovers the deep ambivalence of a structure of economic, cultural and political relations that can both debase and idealize, demonize and eroticize its subjects" (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 26). Highlighting the contradictions of this system of meaning in her description of Cherifa, Dillon unwittingly

decentres the assumed primacy allocated to Western authority, occupying a hybrid space in-between the binaries of West/East, coloniser/colonised. She is not just "wild", "fearful", "childlike" and "illiterate", but also "cunning", "tough", "powerful", and "intelligent":

> The combination in Cherifa of the wild and the cunning, the fearful and the tough, the powerful and the childlike, was very appealing to Jane. Though Cherifa was illiterate, she had a basic intelligence that was turned to survival and profit. She was devoted to her family, particularly to her sister and her sister's children, and her scheming was directed toward getting things for them more than for herself. [...] Like many other Moroccan peasant women of her time, she practiced magic. (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 249)

While Cherifa is generally viewed, even through Jane's eyes, as "dark", "wanton", "wild", and "dangerous" (Adair 2004: 50), there is one moment that disrupts this demonic depiction with the very understated inference of a devoted, and even romantic, Cherifa:

> *Cherifa gave me a perfume tonight. It is a fragrance that I do not know. The fragrance of a princess. [...] Sensuous. Was this perfume made especially for me I wonder? A gift for me. Cherifa ... she is a dreamy smell, sweet like a child's caresses, the erotic movement of the bow over the strings of the violin, rich and corrupt. I want her magic.*
>
> *I want her magic more than I want Paul's words. I want what her magic and what her perfume will do for me. I want it forever now.* (62-3)

However, in the context of the repeated image of Cherifa's magical powers stripping Jane of her agency, turning her into a zombie under the spell of "talismans made by sorcerers" (8), this perfume is clearly read as yet another instrument in her control of Jane.

Stobie notes that unlike her male counterpart, Belquassim, whose hybridity is "narrated from a position of interiority" and whose "character and opinions are developed over the course of the text", "Cherifa's hybridity is figured as a site of scandal and menace": "no sections of the text are mediated through her consciousness, and what representation there is is largely from a hostile perspective" (2006: 16). Cherifa is constructed as an evil woman and Adair does not deviate from the stories which involved "her use of poison, her use of magic, her greed for money, and her wild rages" (Dillon 1988 [1981]: 249). Despite the peculiarity of Paul and Belquassim's sadomasochistic love affair, the reader is made sensitive to the emotional complexity of this bond. While Adair has Paul say, "[t]*aking pleasure from the body is absurd*" (2004: 23), she succeeds in powerfully conveying an unspoken tenderness in Paul's relationship with Belquassim. Conversely, Jane's relationship with Cherifa is related in decidedly coarse, detached terms. Jane says of Cherifa: "*she never holds a person, she just fucks them. But even though I know that what I feel for her is only lust and passion, I want to be fucked by her*" (43). The possibility that Cherifa might have loved Jane is rejected in this narrative. Yet, in an interview with Dillon, the historical Cherifa's translator suggests love at first sight: "'That was the beginning of love. Cherifa didn't speak English and Jane didn't speak Arabic, but it was heart-to-heart together.' And Cherifa added that her years with Jane were her 'happiest years'" (1988 [1981]: 250).

So why is Cherifa characterised as a dark, wild, wanton woman? As Dillon herself admits: "It seemed almost easier to accept the vision of a mythical magic-making Cherifa than to try to account for the inconsistencies and changes" (251). Why does *In Tangier* fail to even speak to these inconsistencies? Stobie notes that Adair's "inability to give a

voice to Cherifa marks both a nagging, problematic absence in the novel, and an awareness of the impossibility of making a plausible imaginative leap into the psyche of the other woman" (2006: 19). Furthermore, in a personal communication Adair informed Stobie that "it is easier to give a male character a voice, as men have traditionally been given disproportionate space in narrative" (19). I would challenge this with Spivak's emphatic statement with which she concludes her essay on the subject of the historical silencing of the female subaltern: "The female intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish" (1993 [1988]: 104). Despite the impossibility of ever occupying the position of the subaltern, to fail to engage with this challenge or remain self-reflexively aware of one's own privileged position in relation to this silence, is to perpetuate a system of othering. Spivak states:

> [I]t is not easy to ask the question of the consciousness of the subaltern woman; it is thus all the more necessary to remind pragmatic radicals that such a question is not an idealist red herring. Though all feminist or anti-sexist projects cannot be reduced to this one, to ignore it is an unacknowledged political gesture that has a long history and collaborates with a masculine radicalism that renders the place of the investigator transparent. In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* unlearns female privilege. (104)

This compunction to speak to silences extends to all forms of othering. In the context of *In Tangier*, it is clear that Adair has failed to fully nuance the socio-political *milieu* that stereotypes women as wild, wicked and wanton according to their failure to conform to gender norms. Jane remains trapped within myths of madness, wanton denigration of her talent and wild bisexuality, while Cherifa remains the fearsome, yet unknowable, wicked witch. Both are eclipsed by a dominant male discourse. I have illuminated, at least partially, the feminine potential that lies outside these stereotyped depictions in the "wild

zone." In order to redress the imbalance in Adair's text it is necessary to return to the utopian ideals of *écriture feminine.* Hélène Cixous addresses woman's task in re-writing woman, and in so doing embracing and empowering otherness:

> Women have it in them to organize this regeneration, this vitalization of the other, of otherness in its entirety. They have it in them to affirm the difference, *their* difference, such that nothing can destroy that difference, rather that it might be affirmed, affirmed to the point of strangeness. So much so that when sexual difference, when the preservation or dissolution of sexual difference, is touched on, the whole problem of destroying the strange, destroying all the forms of racism, all the exclusions, all those instances of outlaw and genocide that recur through History, is also touched on. If women were to set themselves to transform History, it can safely be said that every aspect of History would be completely altered. Instead of being made by man, History's task would be to make woman, to produce her. And it's at this point that work by women themselves on women might be brought to play, which would benefit not only women but all humanity. (1989 [1981]: 487)

Conclusion

Arriving Backwards as We Voyage Forwards

> We arrive backwards even as we voyage forwards. This is the phenomenon of simultaneity in the imagination of times past and future, a future that renews time in its imaginary response to gestating resources in *the womb of the present and the past.* It is unlike the linear biases that prevail in conventional fiction.
>
> (Wilson Harris 1999 [1997]: 187)

Defying the linearity of history, *In Tangier* creates a space for dialogue between the present South African social text and the past text of the Bowleses' lives and fictions. As such the text explicates the "phenomenon of simultaneity in the imagination of times past and future" (187). Indeed, as Ndebele suggests, the past is "embedded in the present" and to neglect it would be to "postpone the future" (1994: 158). Harris's "womb" imagery reflects the burgeoning positive potential of these temporal connections. "To arrive in a tradition that appears to have died is complex renewal and revisionary momentum", claims Harris (187). As such, Adair's arrival in Tangier provides the catalyst not only for renewed scholarship on the Bowleses and their *oeuvres,* but also for revisions in contemporary views of how people choose to live their intimate lives. It is necessary, as Harris observes, to "arrive backwards as we voyage forwards" (187). Richard Werbner highlights the role of the palimpsestic text in negating, renegotiating and playfully compromising present authority (1996: 4). In this sense *In Tangier* challenges the discourse of heteronormativity. Through her re-inventions of the Bowleses' Interzone, Adair's transgressive expositions "*draw on the culturally nuanced resources of social memory for negation, for affirmation and for playful fun*" (own emphasis, 4). As "reconstructions of personal and collective identity" (4) are exercised within the space of

intimate relationships, intimacy is inseparable from systems of hegemony, and links the public and the private (Berlant 1998: 286). The recent Civil Union Act (Joint Working Group 2006) is but one example of how the choices of long-term intimate relationships become central to state policy. *In Tangier* unavoidably summons the paratextual imperative to "examine rearticulations of and changing discourses about public spaces (spaces of citizenship) and private spaces (spaces of intimacy)" (Bell 1995: 305). Changes to the traditionally heteronormative conceptualisation of marriage in our South African society illustrate how social institutions and norms are not natural, but constructed, and subject to change. How people choose to live their intimate lives is affected by and affects the rhetorics, laws, ethics, and ideologies of the hegemonic public sphere. In the same way, the re-imagining of intimacies in Adair's text urges a "rethinking" of how people choose to live and love.

Serving as a metaphorical bridge between seemingly disparate time-space dimensions, *In Tangier* challenges the authority of postcolonial visions in its shift from the conquest to the encounter (Massey 2005: 120). The encounter forms the very thematic fabric of the text, beginning with Adair's imaginative encounter with the figure of Paul Bowles in a café in Tangier, to the encounters between Belquassim, the Bowleses and the mysterious Cherifa. However, these encounters are inflected with the history of conquest, in terms of the way relationships are conceptualised and represented in the depiction of Cherifa as evil and other. Even Belquassim, labelled a "sell-out whore" (Adair 2004: 80), compromises his identity and history as a Moroccan through being assimilated into the bohemian lifestyle of the expatriates. As noted in Chapter One, *In Tangier* reflects on the forces of xenophobia and homophobia provoked by the threat of Western modernisation

and homogenisation. The voice of the anti-Western nationalist, in Adair's novel, reflects on similar fears felt in our own transitional democracy: "*They take our country. They take our culture. They take our women. And now they take our boys. They take what it means to be a man from this country*" (89).

Alongside these violent systems of domination and subordination, Adair's narrative also explores emancipatory encounters. Indeed, for Paul, Tangier is a veritable dream space for the fulfilment of his wildest desires: intimate, existential and creative. While Tangier presents the expatriate with the promise and potential of erotic counterpleasures, the risk and possibilities open to the expatriate are decidedly more material for the subject of colonial power, Belquassim (and his structural counterpart, Cherifa). The young Moroccan is seduced by the perilous limitlessness of Bowles's dream city, desiring to be an "*object of that love and that pleasure*" (Adair 2004: 5). Yet this affiliation between West and East necessarily invokes the hegemonic power and control of a dominant imperial culture (Ashcroft et al. 1998: 107).

In this postmodern utopia, the space Adair creates for the expression of diverse intimacies in her experiments with polyamory and sadomasochism, entering the taboo realm of non(re)productive sexualities, is complicated by tacit implications of othering, exoticism and Orientalism. H.G. Cocks and Matt Houlbrook comment on a pervasive academic fashion to devote attention to 'marginal' or 'dangerous' sexualities – an "obsession with transgression" (2006: 148). Similarly, "'Perversion is chic' in academic circles", claims Rita Felski (in Cocks & Houlbrook 2006: 148). However, as Berlant suggests, it is the nature of interpersonal relationships that they are often non-egalitarian. A resistant

reading of Adair's text exposes the less optimistic configurations of intimate relationships. Intimacy not only builds worlds and creates spaces, but also "usurps places meant for other kinds of relation" (Berlant 1998: 282). In empowering an alternative vision of pleasure and intimacy, another is disempowered. The complexities of power dynamics are evinced most markedly in the more favourable representation of the male characters than the female characters in *In Tangier*. Jane is largely overshadowed by Paul, and Cherifa takes on demonic proportions in the eyes of all the characters, although for Jane her "darkness" is enticing.

With regard to the representation of Cherifa, one may ask, as Easton asks of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, if it is still impossible to read beyond race (2006: 200). Mikki van Zyl notes that in Africa, "sexuality was placed into colonial Western discourse as deeply 'othered' [...] – at times exotic, fecund, wild, and above all 'uncivilized.' Dominant Western images of postcolonial Africa are still those of a 'lost' or 'dark' continent" (2005: 23). While our progressive constitution instructs reading beyond gender, the attachments to this conventional social division are perhaps already too entrenched. As a privileged white woman, Adair perpetuates Jane's subordination and othering while elaborating and reinvigorating her male characters. It would seem that Adair's text mirrors a South African social reality; that is, the gap between constitutional guarantees and the actual experiences of women in contemporary South Africa. In a *Mail & Guardian* article, Pumla Dineo Gqola claims that "public-sphere South African gender-talk" is still "very conservative" (2006: 37). Pointing to the "rape and other gender-based violence statistics, rampant sexual harassment, curative rapes, raging homophobia and the relentless circulation of misogynist imagery", she states that women are not empowered (37).

Furthermore, women's empowerment only applies to women while they are in "the official public space: in the workplace. A completely different set of rules governs the 'private' world" (37). Dineo Gqola comments on the recent acquittal of the rape trial involving the former vice-president, Jacob Zuma: "Gender-conservative men threaten and violently silence women who speak out in self-defence against a former vice-president that women's votes helped elect when he dares speak misogyny and about what women want when we dress a certain way, and choose to love women" (37). Indeed, like the unconventional female characters in Adair's text, the victim of a deeply patriarchal community has been depicted as wild, wanton and wicked.

That these systems of othering and oppression exist should not be surprising, considering "progressive human rights discourse is supported in reality by only a minority" (Van Zyl 2005: 31). What is surprising, then, is that Adair, a human rights lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand, should choose not to reverse these inconsistencies and silences, in view of the possibilities of reinvention offered by biographical fiction. If the author is no longer the centre of meaning and authority in a text, then these questions remain in the realm of the speculative. However, these tensions and contradictions suggest the constant struggle between *doxa* and *paradoxa* in the postmodern text: between a "dependence on established forms of representation" and "a radical questioning of the available forms of representation and thus the available modes of knowledge within culture" (Allen 2000: 190). The invention and re-imaging of Paul's counterpleasures mark the *paradoxa* of the text, while the relative failure in envisioning women freed from myths of madness or witchcraft implies the inescapable *doxa*. These dominant discourses call for problematising and de-naturalising. They identify the need for "asserting women's agency

in erotic sexuality, so it can be freed from its conflation with reproduction, and overturn 'cultural taboos and claims that define sexual pleasure and freedom as 'dangerous' and 'irresponsible'" (Van Zyl 2005: 32). The polemics of the French theorist, Cixous, "that work *by women* themselves *on women* might be brought to play" in the "regeneration" and "vitalization" of the other (1989 [1981]: 487), are still relevant today in a South African context.

Literature has a "profound and imaginative" bearing on society, observes Wilson Harris (1999 [1964]: 150). However, more than this, literature has the capacity, whether consciously or not, to disrupt established conventional ideas about gender and sexualities. As such, the ambivalent perspectives on intimacy Adair's novel sustains articulate "the ways the utopian, optimism-sustaining versions of intimacy meet the normative practices, fantasies, institutions, and ideologies that organize peoples worlds" (Berlant 1998: 282). Harris warns that "if tradition were dogma it would be entirely dormant and passive but since it is inherently active at all times, whether secretly or openly, it participates in the ground of living necessity by questioning and evaluating all assumptions of character and conceptions of place or destiny" (1999 [1964]: 150). This reflects on the repetitions of "tradition" in Adair's text and in the greater social text. According to the concept of the text as *ideologeme* both are imbricated in each other (Julia Kristeva 1980: 37). It follows, then, that the title *In Tangier* We *Killed the Blue Parrot* automatically infers a shared culpability in the death of the parrot; that is, the silencing of "wildness, difference and [feminine] creativity" (Stobie 2006: 20). The significance of the death of the parrot and the universal "we" are multivalent and extend beyond the boundaries of Adair's fictional world. The "we" implicates author, characters, reader and the social text; at once all are

travellers and explorers like the author, focaliser and historical character, sitting at the café looking into the beyond. Whilst raising contemporary issues surrounding sexual freedom, the ethics and aesthetics of sadomasochistic counterpleasures, and creating space for alternative patterns of intimacy, Adair's vision, like that of the *flâneur* (or feminine *flâneuse*) is limited. Indeed, as much as the postmodern author disrupts the social fabric into which she is woven, she is still intimately bound to the ideology and rhetoric of her specific context, with all its implicit partialities and prejudices:

> For, like the traveller whose gaze is oriented and limited, it makes no claim to authoritative completeness. It is, must be, like a journey, exploratory. [...] Certain figures of speech draw it on; to others, no doubt, it is deaf. Certain historical figures loom large; others remain beyond its horizon. But like a journey it opens up the possibility of going back, of turning a private passage into a road, a road reaching more places than the first traveller imagined. (Carter 1987: xxiii)

Paul Carter's comments in *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* are startlingly consonant with the thematic and stylistic concerns raised in Adair's text. Paul looms large in the foreground of the text; Jane is perhaps just on the horizon, while Cherifa remains beyond that elusive boundary. Through the polyphonic "conversations" that stylistically characterise this postmodern text, the reader enters the intimate spaces where the characters share their thoughts, fears and desires. Like a traveller through Adair's "not-now" imaginary, one is aware that where the author's gaze is limited, she more than compensates in achieving a narrative about something shared, an intimate (his)story. In what could be a self-reflexive commentary on the palimpsestic nature of her text, Adair has Paul consider:

> *People must not be visible when they are not there.* [...] *They can only be visible when they are gone, any trace – a cigarette, a work of fiction, a poem – must be removed, erased.*
>
> *And yet I write fiction. And when I die my books will remain, and if they are still read will people remember me. Or maybe they will not. Maybe they will just remember the people who are made by the words. They will not be my words. They will just be words. People's words.*
>
> [...] *Nothing lasts, but does it pass on?* (2004: 125)

Barbara Adair provides the answer to his question in the palimpsestic nature of her postmodern text, illustrating the dense cultural, social and textual interconnections of a place. In this sense, the Bowleses' words continue to pass on, opening metaphorical roads to "more places than the first traveller imagined" (Carter 1987: xxiii).

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