

Expanding the Moroccan Storytelling Circle: Adaptations of Indigenous Moroccan Orality from
Paul Bowles' *Five Eyes* to Betsy Bolton's *Maghrebi Voices*

ABSTRACT: This essay examines the traces of indigenous Moroccan oral storytelling in various collections of translated work. By focusing on the variations of form across these collections, and highlighting the commonalities between these stories, this essay argues that traces of the oral tradition found in translations from Morocco are evidence to the survival of its storytelling roots, and that these adaptations create an opportunity for the growth of new spaces in the tradition. A key example is Paul Bowles' *Five Eyes*, a 1979 text adapted from the oral stories of illiterate Moroccans. Being both a set of performances adapted into writing, as well as a set of collaborative translations, *Five Eyes* moves between genres. This essay considers such movement through a background of cultural mediation, utilizing Homi Bhabha's concept of "third space". It also offers the analysis of a consistent literary style across texts originating in orality as well as in written form, by using Joseph Frank's now-classic framework of spatiality and temporality in narrative structure. Using *Five Eyes* to build a perspective towards the process of literary adaptations from oral traditions, this essay enters more recent Moroccan collections. Such narratives include Mohamed Said Raihani's "The Moroccan Dream" – a collection of contemporary written translations by Moroccan authors. This essay then enters the discussion of the *halqa* storytelling tradition in Morocco through Richard Hamilton's *The Last Storytellers*, to provide a comparison in style between legitimated and illiterate indigenous storytellers. These stories, though having diverged from a common heritage, show similar styles, structures and grammatical cues that originate in oral performance. Betsy Bolton's website, *Maghrebi Voices*, provides a contemporary endpoint, juxtaposing components that occur in each previous example, including recorded oral stories, written narratives, commentary and translated works, on an online platform.

Key Words: Morocco, Spatiality, Temporality, Narrative Genre, Paul Bowles, Adaptation, Language, World Literature, *Al-halqa*, Third Space, Digital

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The oral tradition in Morocco is one that infuses daily life, from the tradition of *al-halqa*, where professionals tell stories at city gates and market squares, to casual accounts shared at breakfast tables and friendly gatherings. Increasingly, it is important to think along indigenous oral traditions like the *halqa*, because it is a dwindling art. *Al-Halqa*, or “the gathering in the circle”, is a tradition that has been a ground for social commentary and for public entertainment that extends back to ninth-century Moroccan history (Amine & Carlson, 72).

Critics and practitioners of the *halqa* tradition often choose to discuss its social impacts over its literary contributions to Moroccan texts. Underlying such critical discussion is the need to preserve a dwindling, local practice. Despite their influence, the *halqa* circles of Moroccan are struggling. Journalistic accounts provided by Marlise Simons tell us that in 2006, only around eight storytellers were still practicing (Para. 5). By 2015, a film by Horia El Hadad shows a conversation between two storytellers, who conclude that they are the last (17:15-18:25). Yet, the movement of these stories into not only new voices, but new spaces, presents a point of hope. Indeed, the *halqa* continues to influence the contemporary style of Moroccan literature. Though the survival of the performance-based *halqa* practice is in peril, the means for its survival lie in the way that it has infiltrated other genres. This essay argues that the shifting form of storytelling

in Morocco does not destroy its storytelling roots. Instead, changes in the form of storytelling are creating new spaces to expand and preserve the Moroccan oral style.

Storytellers in Morocco use styles and structures that draw upon a mixed heritage, which draws upon both local oral performance and written texts, with Arabic and European roots. This alone would suggest that Homi Bhabha's well-known model of "third space" is suited to the task of analyzing Moroccan stories. Yet, the model of third space, which normally focuses on cultural mediation, provides a useful perspective towards the hybridization of textual form (36)¹. This essay adopts Bhabha's critical focus towards the nuances of cultural division, and the model's critique against authoritative traditions. Third space is used specifically in this essay to examine how movement between orality and written texts challenges the traditions of *halqa* and of Moroccan writing.

Yet, the space of storytelling encompasses more than hybridity. Contemporary Moroccan stories experiment with narrative forms and perspective, for which the modernist analytical framework is particularly useful. An early critical model from the modernist perspective is found in Joseph Frank's *Spatial Form in Modern Literature*, which provides a useful comparative tension to the effort of examining Moroccan text. The tension, between naturalistic and non-naturalistic literary structures, can be seen through the way that texts are put together in terms of time and space. Frank uses the model to examine protagonists in modernist texts, pointing out that they transcend the sequence of historical time by embodying historical prototypes: images, social roles,

¹ Additionally, Bhabha uses the concept to analyze the "enunciation of cultural difference" – easily surfacing in terms of discussions surrounding genre – as "[problematizing] the binary division of past and present, tradition and modernity, at the level of cultural representation and its authoritative address (35)."

and metaphors that call on “human continuity”² in such a way that they could appear anywhere in historical time without seeming out of place (650-653). Frank’s model of spatiality provides a way to examine the recurring images and style of Moroccan oral storytelling as it travels into written and digital forms. Though the model has fallen out of popular critical use, its focus on the ahistorical is invaluable towards the task of examining a tradition as long-lived as *al-halqa*.

Bhabha and Frank offer from their classic critical models a sense of spatiality that persists across the various translations and genres of Moroccan storytelling. To cohere their perspectives with the argument of the present paper, Mikhail Bahktin’s dialogism contributes a valuable notion: that the creation of new texts builds upon the presence of pre-existent work (p. 279-280). These older analytic frames provide leverage onto the mid-20th century move from oral to literary narratives in the Moroccan context, as well as onto more recent critical models of analysis that have built upon them. The ensuing model provides insights towards developing a discourse on the ongoing movement from oral and literary sources towards digitized text. As will become clear below, the present paper also integrates recent scholarly commentary and criticism on the Moroccan case.

As a set of case studies, this paper applies the above theory to a set of Moroccan story collections. Two of these are curated by journalist Richard Hamilton and scholar Betsy Bolton, both of whom follow in Bowles’ footsteps in their method and intent to collect stories. Hamilton’s *The Last Storytellers* provides a written collection that mirrors *Five Eyes*, but works directly with

² Frank derives this model from work done on the aesthetics of physical art, whereby the dimension of depth in the ‘plastic arts’ creates a multiplanar presentation – likewise, its absence creates an emphasis on a single visible plane. For Frank, presentation through depth creates a time-value by connecting things to events and the world; a presentation through the plane creates an opposite effect (649-653).

the *halqa*, whereas Bolton's *Maghrebi Dreams* is a digital collection that brings translations into play alongside original recordings. *Maghrebi Dreams* is the site of a prototypical third space – a hybridized genre – in action. Outside of collaborative translations, this essay also refers to narrative texts curated by Mohamed Said Raihani in “The Moroccan Dream”, a collection of English translations exclusively created by Moroccan authors. These stories, though not originating from oral performance, still bear resemblances to the style of stories from *Five Eyes*.

Hybridity, Performance and the Dialogism of *Five Eyes*:

To explore a hypothetical third space between Moroccan orality and writing, the logical starting point for an Anglophone reader is Paul Bowles. As a translator and editor, Bowles collaborated with Moroccan storytellers outside of the professional craft – men of low social status – including a fisherman, a bartender, and a waiter. Bowles started his work with these storytellers between the 1950s and 1970s as Moroccan independence began, and sought to preserve a cultural form that seemed to him “en voie de disparition” (“at risk of extinction”), as Bouchra Benlimlih puts it (45)³. Benlimlih also describes Bowles’ work as liberating towards traditional Moroccan storytelling, because it recognizes the impossibility of translating cultural contents with the purity of the original (49-50), and questions the assumption that there is authenticity or originality to be found in the form of any literary text. These qualities lend significance towards to the value of Bowles’ work with regards to genre.

³ Benlimlih’s work on Bowles is consolidated in her PhD thesis, *Inhabiting the Exotic*, which examines Bowles’ work as a set of liminal texts between America and Morocco, using post-colonial and Derridean perspectives. Benlimlih provides useful analyses towards several stories from *Five Eyes* left undiscussed within this paper.

Brian Edwards, a scholar who has written extensively on Bowles, observes that Paul Bowles' role in the body of work which includes *Five Eyes* "exceeded that of mere translator" (The Moroccan Paul Bowles, 196). To be sure, Bowles' involvement in this collection includes not only recording, transcription and translation, but also a large contribution in editorial work. Edwards goes on to note that "[Bowles'] collaboration has been controversial in Morocco, where it challenged the nationalists' ideas about standard Arabic, as well as those Francophone Maghrebi writers who critiqued the nationalists" – crucially, the Francophone author Tahar Ben Jelloun challenged such collaborative work as "a bastard literature" ("Sheltering Screens", 327). Although Ben Jelloun is an author with local clout, his concerns are those of a literary author located in both France and Morocco, and not those of an oral storyteller⁴. There is a parallel in Bowles – an author writing in English and whose audience is dispersed across America and Morocco. Yet, this controversy highlights the value of Paul Bowles' work as a mediator between genres and languages for the analysis of Moroccan "third space".

Bowles puts forth an argument at the fore of the collection that there is a style to the stories of *Five Eyes* which is the result of a "common cultural fund" (8), persisting while stories are written down, as well as translated to another language. To Bowles, style is therefore the site of a constant connection towards Moroccan heritage, and is the base on which language and genre build. Yet, language has been the basis of controversy surrounding Bowles' collaborative corpus and its claim towards a "common cultural fund". Salih Altoma, a scholar in the field of comparative literature, argues that a lack of linguistic competence with classical Arabic led to a distortion of the importance of Arabic in Bowles' translation work (156-158). In addition, Altoma points out that

⁴ Another critic of Bowles is Saleh Altoma, who writes of Bowles' method of secondhand translation, working with his collaborators in intermediary languages between English and *Darija* Arabic.

even Bowles' use of the Moroccan *Darija* dialect, in which the oral storytelling of the region takes place, was in question. Altoma describes that in translations made from the Moroccan vernacular, Bowles tended to have storytellers dictate their work in Spanish (158)⁵. Emerging from Altoma's critique is an implication that Bowles' task of working with local illiterate storytellers was not one of conscientious choice, but rather one borne from limits in his own expertise with the local languages. Further complicating the evaluation of Bowles' claim towards a commonality of Moroccan storytelling is a second level of controversy, given that his collaborative work is built with voices that lie outside of the formal practice of Moroccan storytelling.

On the level of tradition, the controversy lies with the breach of the *halqa* practice of public and theatrical marketplace storytelling. The *halqa* is an endangered practice, placed in a tension around survival and finding new voices. A journalistic account by Marlise Simons describes that only eight storytellers were still performing publicly in Marrakesh in 2006 (Para. 5). By 2015, a documentary by filmmaker Horia El Hadad shows a conversation between two storytellers seeing each other for the first time in four years, where the two conclude that they are the last active storytellers in Marrakesh (17:15-18:25). Yet, there are efforts made towards recording the stories of the dwindling tradition, which emerge in collections that provide a basis to evaluate the merits of Bowles' claim of a commonality in Moroccan storytelling.

Though *Five Eyes* is a text derived from uneducated storytellers, it shares qualities with the indigenous *halqa* tradition in that it emerges from the local language of Darija Arabic, and

⁵ Bowles' work was largely situated in the Moroccan city of Tangier, at the northern tip of the country. Though his collaborators had proficiency with Spanish because of their proximity to the North African coastline, they were not "Spanish Moroccans" located within the historical territory of the Spanish protectorate. More information at <https://sumadrid.es/el-protectorado-espanol-en-marruecos-1912-1956-2/>

from oral storytelling. Remembering that Bowles worked with his collaborators using Spanish as a mediating language, his claim that there is a “common cultural fund” and a resulting style in the stories of *Five Eyes* might be usefully examined through a consideration of third space. In this collection, third space takes the form of those traces of orality which have survived an adaptation into the short story genre and a translation into English. These traces surface in terms of repetition in narrative content, narrative cues, and words retained from the *Darija* dialect. Two stories from the collection provide clear evidence towards a Moroccan oral style⁶ - Abdelam Boulaich’s “Omar the Truckdriver” and Larbi Layachi’s “The Half Brothers”. Complicating the discussion is Mohamed Choukri’s “Bachir Alive and Dead”, a story originating as a written text which provides comparative points towards Boulaich and Layachi’s contributions⁷. Building upon the oral style of these texts is a sense of performativity – wherein they move past mere speech and become expressions of a Moroccan identity, or suggest gestures and actions through their words.

“Omar the Truckdriver” is a story that travels through the cities of Morocco, told by a narrator who accompanies his friend Omar in going on a journey to sell flowers. Along the way, the pair make and break a promise to help a fellow traveler reach their destination, fall victim to a false accusation that leaves Omar arrested, imprisoned, and tortured for a scam he did not commit, and find their enterprise an utter failure. When Omar is freed, his trauma leads him towards

⁶ Beyond these three stories, *Five Eyes* also offers “Men are Lucky”, a story originally written but which plays with the framing of its story by shifting the role of the narrator between characters and by hiding this shift through paragraph breaks and within dialogue sequences. As well, *Five Eyes* has several folkloric stories that can be usefully analyzed through Frank’s model of spatiality.

⁷ The Moroccan style surfaces through evidence of oral performance in these stories – yet, it is important to notice that there is a parallel written heritage in Morocco built by formally educated Moroccan writers who might work with European literary frameworks (Rountree, 400). Choukri is one of these educated writers.

erraticism, culminating in a driving accident where he kills a little girl and dies shortly after, his final words: “Ever since I was in jail in Rbat I’ve been sick.”

The narrator presents the story in recounting, through an observer’s position and with a direct form of description which suggests that the story is a matter of fact. An example of this lies in the accounting of Omar’s torture:

[...] And his wife was crying, and saying: What’s the matter with you? What has happened? And he told her the story. He told his wife how the police had taken him and beaten him and kept him for fourteen days with only bread and water, and then taken him to Agadir besides, when he had done nothing wrong. And when he first came out of the jail he had been so sick he was not able even to speak [...]
 [...] And he would only say: No!
 And the police would cry: You’re the man!
 And he would cry: I’m not! [...]
 [...] And now he was telling his wife everything, but his words were coming out dead, because he had no force left in him, and his head had no more sense in it. He was talking and laughing all by himself, then he cried for a while. We made him get into the truck and lie down... (Boulaich in Bowles, 50-51)

The account of torture incorporates a highly controlled narrative pace through the constant use of the word “and”, appearing more frequently to speed up during the account of torture, and less frequently to indicate the narrative dying down alongside Omar. Paragraph breaks and punctuation show for the reader interchanging moments of silence and noise. Both of these elements of oral style are further amplified by the method of telling – Boulaich is telling the story in the role of the story’s narrator, who in turn is merely remembering Omar’s own description. “Omar the Truckdriver” is a piece that relies as little as possible on exposition as possible: the reaction of

Omar's wife's is limited to a single line, and yet frames the entire sequence; the police only surface through their actions; and each description is directly linked to an action taken during the story.⁸

Both the grammatical components of style in this sequence, as well as the narrative structure of the story can be described as a constant cascade. The elements of oral performance here cannot surface through interaction and moments of interjection from the audience, as they do with traditional Moroccan story performances; there is no “instantaneous ‘reader response’ occurring during the act of creation and influencing [the story’s] outcome” (Patteson, 183) – because the text is written, its sequence and form are static, and cannot react to the reader. Put in written form, the text is separated from the movement and vocality of its original telling – its performative elements are limited to grammatical cues of silence and noise, and the pacing of the story through repetition and the momentum of conjunctions like “and”. Performativity in this piece surfaces by the pacing and the positioning of events in narrative structure.

Lindsey Moore complicates the idea of order in “Modernity at the Margins”, an article that deals with Bowles’ work as it moves through modernism and into an anticipation of post-colonialist thought. Moore points out that for the modernist reader, “the textual present is ‘experienced in a mode of anticipation’, yet is also a future past, hence the object of potential reinterpretation. (92)” The act of reading text creates simultaneous anticipation and experience, and yet it is also an act that can be repeated to make new interpretations while equipped with the knowledge of what follows.

⁸ An interesting subtext that extends throughout this story is derived through geography. Omar and the narrator travel from Tanja (Tangier) to El Araich, to Rbat (Rabat), to Dar el Beida (Casablanca) and then split up, with Omar sent to Agadir, and the narrator returning to Rabat, before the pair are reunited and make their way back to Tanja. Each city serves as a spatial and emotional anchor for the narrative as the sequence of events progresses.

Seen in “Omar the Truckdriver”, performativity is punctuated by references to time within the story, which play an explicit role along the way of Omar and the narrator’s journey through Morocco’s cities, and later through the description of Omar’s torture. Performativity is again demonstrated in relation to time during the concluding words:

...Now that [Omar] was dead, she waited three months, and then got married to a man who did nothing but drink. The man would not work. All he wanted was to drink wine and eat and sleep. Nothing else. And she forgot Omar and fell in love with this man. ...Six months I worked for her, and then she said she would have to sell my truck too. And she sold it, and gave the money to her husband ...When that money was gone too, the man divorced her and married another woman, and she was left in the street without a house, without trucks, without a husband, without anything. And then she remembered to think of Omar (52).

By organizing the story in chronological sequence, and placing it in the past, Boulaich creates a simulated effect of memory that makes it more coherent, giving purpose to ambiguities in the narration that surface through gaps in the retelling. With ambiguity in play, the story in fact invites the reader to interpret and frame the telling of the story. For example, the story makes no note of who the narrator is, beyond their status as an employee of Omar’s. The conditions of the storytelling experience are framed in the volume as a one-to-one recounting between Boulaich and Bowles, yet are not made explicit in the text itself. The wife is given no name – nor are the police, nor the replacement husband. The only specific identities in the story are assigned to Omar and the cities through which the narrative moves. The ambiguity within the text offers the function of generalizing the narrative for audiences – this contrasts a sense of reflexivity or improvisation embodied in oral performance. Yet, Boulaich’s story – and others in the collection - find a use for the form of written work. Placed in a durable state, performative ambiguity takes on the effect of creating a script within which reflexivity might arise. There is, in other words, a dialogical relationship between the written and the oral that takes place within “*Five Eyes*”. The term, derived from Mikhail Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination*, refers to the way in which a given statement is

continually a response to statements that precede it (p. 279-280). In the context of textual adaptation, a dialogic process or relationship means that though there is a written story adapted from an oral original, the existence of the written work does not destroy that of the oral story.

Therese de Vet observes the effect of dialogism in the adaptation of written poetic narratives towards live performance (162). De Vet, using the case study of Balinese orality, highlights a very useful framework on the interactions between orality and literacy – in her examination, both oral and written sources come together in storytelling, linked deeply by memory and adaptability (162-164). De Vet goes on to generalize from the Balinese poet a sense of the performer in any literate society, who sources material from both from written text and from oral accounts, hybridizing knowledge derived from this variety in their own improvised performances (160). Beyond what de Vet describes, the existence of Moroccan collections like *Five Eyes* suggest an inverse interaction to the above – improvised stories can be recorded and adapted into written form, entering long-term cultural memory and thereby exerting a more lasting influence on the dialogic interactions, in the Bahktinian sense, within the culture at large. By having a frame of opposition, the examination of oral and written texts gains the possibility of a comparative scale rather than an analytical binary. This hybridity of genre mirrors the hybridity of cultures described by Bhabha's "third space", and becomes useful when further examining written texts from Morocco. Benlimlih notes of Bowles' work that both the activity of translation and the oral story exist simultaneously (77) - *Five Eyes* is useful in this dynamic because the translated dialogical product, the oral story, and the process of translation between the two have each left distinct traces in a now uniform narrative form. Having undergone a process of mediation while showing its effects, *Five Eyes* is in its dialogic effect a textual third space.

Larbi Layachi's "The Half-Brothers" is a personal account that offers further breadth to the hybridity in *Five Eyes*. Layachi takes on the role of narrator directly, as he tells of his experience growing up. Yet, using phrases such as "let us say" (repeated fifteen times throughout the story), and constant descriptions of personal actions, the narrative is made indeterminate and generalizable. The phrase "let us say" suggests a hypothetical situation – an indeterminacy of memory, which in the case of orality seems to invite the audience in the formation of the story, and is used to move the narrative between scenes while flattening the specificity of the narration. This appears most prominently during the introduction, as Layachi sets up the story:

I was about ten years old, and I lived with my mother and her husband in a little house in the dunes near the tobacco factory.

Let us say that one day I had been pulling in the fishermen's nets for them all day long. In the afternoon when my work was finished I came home and found my young brother back from school.

Ah, Mohamed! Has vacation begun? Or not yet?

No. Tomorrow's the last day of school.

Now you'll be able to go to the beach with me and swim every day.

Yes, he said. That will be good.

Come on, I told him. We'll go to the beach now and see if we meet somebody who has a ball.

Let us say that we went to the beach, and there were no other boys there at all. It was almost sunset. Just a few fishermen sitting on the sand and leaning against the boats, talking. (55)

Layachi's introduction, as with the passages of "Omar the Truckdriver", uses flat diction to create an effect of direct observation that flattens spatiality through the effect of generalization – there is a beach, there are boats, and there are fishermen, and yet it does not matter which beach, which boats, and which fishermen. There is also a consistent and very tightly controlled sequence of descriptions and interactions in this passage (and throughout the entire story). Yet, The phrase "let us say" breaks this control at times to create an effect of ambiguity and unreality in Layachi's story. There is a tension between concrete description and unreliable storytelling that, taken into

Joseph Frank's model, plays between time and space. Each scene is connected by an indeterminate jump in time – yet within each scene, time is explicitly used as a measure movement.

Benlimlih notes that the stories of *Five Eyes* “go beyond the very structure that contains them, connecting the temporal and the timeless, the oral and the written, the Moroccan and American (70)”. Benlimlih's observation on “connecting the temporal and the timeless” offers a twist to Joseph Frank's consideration of the tension between naturalistic and non-naturalistic aesthetics in the sphere of literature (645). To Frank, the description of events and actions in concrete, naturalized terms lends itself towards increased temporality and a decreased spatiality. In these two stories from *Five Eyes*, both Boulaich and Layachi seem at first to prioritize the creation of “depth”⁹, in the terms of Frank's model. Recalling that this sense of depth is linked to the presentation of events as linked to distinct moments in time, it is curious to observe that these stories employ plain language to appeal across historical contexts. These stories bring traces of their origin in oral telling, focused on chronological organization, into written form, which eschews the limitations of historical location. Yet, the stories' entrance into written form does not erase their original oral forms. In this way, the stories weave together elements from both sides of Frank's model. Though Frank's model is constructed as an opposition, it becomes here a tension of style. This tension becomes highly relevant in bringing the two storytellers' techniques and constructions into dialogue with written Moroccan stories.

The Motif of Montage:

⁹ When considering orality alongside the concept of temporality for Frank's model, depth becomes implicated with memory, in terms of the narrative organization and its relation to chronological sequence.

Approaching this tension from the opposite side, Mohamed Choukri provides a story in *Five Eyes* which begins in the written form. Thus, the inherent dialogism of adapting orality into writing is absent from his storytelling. Choukri's "Bachir Alive and Dead" is also a text that in terms of Frank's model of spatiality eschews depth almost entirely. Choukri makes use of the non-structure of montage, whereby moments are disconnected from one another and only linked by textual sequence, to create a seemingly coherent whole. This is evident from the onset of the story, as Choukri opens with a fragmented scene, written as though in the middle of a storytelling session:

He took out a handful of tobacco and began to roll it in a piece of torn lottery ticket. Why especially a lottery ticket? asked Badri.

That's the way he does it since he lost all his money, said Baba Jilali. He thinks a lottery ticket is worth a dollar, or a hundred pesetas, or a thousand francs, or a guinea. When he was young he sold a piece of land to the British Consul. His father had left him a lot of land, and part of it was the graveyard... (79)

Where Layachi and Boulaich create a consistent narrator by assuming the storyteller's voice in their tellings, Choukri instead writes in the third person, exiting from Baba Jilali's narration at times to shift the frame of storytelling. By changing storytelling voices, Choukri creates interruptions in narrative flow, and complicates the narrative structure of the story. Above this sense of shifting voice, the story of "Bachir Alive and Dead" is still framed within a conversation between two characters – Baba Jitali and Badri. The moments in which Choukri blends between third person exposition and the direct, punctuated voice of Baba Jilali serve to highlight interruptions in this conversation:

But listen! You know Mohamed, and you know he's a serious man. Mohamed told me he saw him with his girl, kissing her on the beach. And Mohamed says she's not human. She's a djinniya, and she comes out of the ocean every day to meet him. You see!

...There was a small commotion in the street in front of Bachir. Baba Jitali stopped speaking... (80-81)

As the narration moves away from being spoken directly by Baba Jitali, he and Badri observe as the elderly Bachir grabs a young man and bites his leg. This effect of third person narrative distance is something that at first minimizes the presence of the author or narrator – this sets Choukri's narrative apart from the earlier stories in its structure. Yet, Choukri is playing with the form of narrative voice. By moving back and forth from a disembodied voice and Baba Jilali, and using these shifts as narrative transitions, Choukri appears to be writing against the oral storytelling script. Instead of repetition, he has variation; instead of words signaling a shift in scene, he places a simple line break. The inconsistency of voice continues throughout the narrative:

If you had seen [Bachir] laughing without being able to hear him, with the plate glass window in between, you would have thought of a fish breathing in water.

And then, Baba Jilali?...

...Badri could see Bachir seated on top of a gravestone, [a] cat lying near his feet.

The small grave was not yet completely dug, and a shovel lay nearby... At length he stood up. Turning his back on the crowd, he began to urinate on top of the graves.

Hey, Bachir! What are you doing? cried one. There was a murmur among the people. Then silence.

Should we stop him?

No. Let him do what he likes now. We're witnesses of it all.

He's crazy. You can't put blame on a man who's out of his mind. (84)

This passage also brings out a curious challenge to the performative script – where a storyteller might act out the voices of Baba Jilali and of Badri, the indeterminate moment of silence, as well as the anonymized voices of the crowd present a moment that speaks against a storytelling performance with a single narrator. By scattering the recounting of the story amidst many entities, Choukri creates a montage of dialogues and scenes. The effect of montage correlates directly to Frank's framework of atemporal and highly spatial naturalist form – which becomes even more apparent as the story moves onwards, with the story's final sequence beginning with:

A sunny day. In the streets men awaken as if they had been asleep all winter. The swallows swooping in the sky make the golden day even clearer. The men rub themselves: bats outside of the cave. They talk happily and point at the sun. The myths of memory yawn in their minds. They speak of the day as if they had never seen another like it. (84)

Through this kind of narrative montage, Choukri does something that is intuitively foreign to oral storytelling. Where the other stories in the collection feature linear narrative movements, Choukri's narrative follows a more ambiguous sequence and lapses through time haphazardly. The phenomenon of juxtaposition that creates this effect is one that Frank found compelling to observe in terms of how it works against the formation of a "historical imagination". He elaborates that with an atemporal, or mythical imagination, the events and actions of a given moment become "eternal prototypes", expressed appropriately through spatial form (653). Choukri depends largely on figurative statements to describe the world – phrasing like "[Bachir's] owl eyes"; "if you had seen him...you would have thought of a fish breathing in water"; and "men awaken as if they had been asleep all winter" offer conceptual scripts for the audience through common imagery, reinforcing the sense of engaging a mythical imagination. Choukri's figurative language has the same effect as the flattened diction and performative ambiguities of the oral stories in *Five Eyes*. These generalized images perform invitations towards audiences to draw upon their own imaginations.

To Frank, the use of figures and metaphors, like the use of performative ambiguity, calls out to a timeless sense of the world and a presentation thus of spatial plane rather than temporal depth. Yet, as Choukri's story takes place within the sequence of a conversation, it is inherently tied to a chronological sequence and its moments. Though Choukri seems to hide the dimension of depth – the dimension of distinction between narrative past and present – it is implicitly expressed through the organization of the conversation between Baba Jilali and Badri. This story – derived and translated from an original text in writing – mirrors the blending between oral and written that is observable in Layachi and Boulaich. As a literary storyteller, Choukri uses elements unique to writing, including montage and figurative moments that demand re-reading, to create a

style that would be impossible in oral performance. Yet, his stories still seem to function on principles shared with the oral stories in *Five Eyes*.

Legitimation and Collaboration Beyond Bowles

It is vital to recognize that despite the differences between stories within *Five Eyes*, they are still unified by not only an effort towards generalization and a shared heritage, but also by the collaborative work between Bowles and the respective authors of each narrative. This collaboration has sparked controversies: Richard Patteson notes of Bowles' work that "while the storyteller's imagination is beyond doubt the conceptual source of the story, the absence of a written text of the storyteller's precise words enhances, to say the least, the authority of the translator (182)." Because of his status and history as an established author in his own right, Bowles' role as collaborator extends beyond translation into the roles of editor and fellow storyteller.

Because of this collaborative approach, there are elements of reflexivity encoded into *Five Eyes*. Patteson, writing of Bowles' translations at large, goes on to describe how Bowles had described his collaborating storytellers as "elaborating on or emphasizing [certain elements]" in response to his positive reactions. Patteon describes this process as "instantaneous reader response", and notes that it is a process that "has no precedent in the translation of written texts, which are fixed in print before the translator reads them, or in the transcription of traditional oral folk tales, which lacks the dimension of collaboration between teller and writer. (182)". The moment of 'fixing' text is where *Five Eyes* becomes important as a crossroads of not only language and cultures, but also practices and genres.

Because it creates a hybridized possibility, *Five Eyes* is a product that comes into conflict with cultural authority. Thus, it serves an interesting role in the fostering and legitimation of new

voices and techniques. Brian Edwards notes that the critiques and character attacks against Bowles in reaction to his work were indicative that he did in fact have a Moroccan audience – and that the efforts that Bowles went towards in seeking non-professional storytellers allowed for a largely unheard illiterate voice to surface into Moroccan literary norms. Edwards uses the example of the storyteller Mohamed Mrabet, whose narratives are critical of both his own culture and that of the west (The Moroccan Paul Bowles, 195; 207), as an example of this surfacing voice.

In other traditions, the voice of the uneducated or illiterate storyteller has run into significant barriers. Julia Wright discusses poets in the English tradition who, despite being widely read, were excluded from the formal process of developing the genre of poetry. She attributes this exclusion to the work of critics, who work towards defining which texts fit into and are excluded from the legitimate discussion of genre. Importantly, Wright notes that these critics encouraged a conformity of texts to their idea of the poetic tradition (350-352). Conversely, the earlier-mentioned example of Bali features an emphasis on the importance of informal storytellers in the development of poetic traditions (de Vet, 160-161). In the Moroccan context, however, the precarious situation of *al-halqa* means that rather than becoming more elite and distanced from uneducated and even illiterate storytellers, it is a tradition that is opening to new voices.

However, critics strike out at these new voices – as with the example of Ben Jelloun against Bowles and his collaborators. Wright notes that the critic's role often silences or suppresses cultural voices – and for those that are heard against the odds, it silences their distinctiveness (357). Yet, as critics and audiences alike are paying attention to illiterate, as well as otherwise

illegitimated storytellers in Morocco¹⁰, the possibility for new voices to be heard is increasing while retaining the qualities that make them different - indicating a possibility for shifts in the more formal practices in Morocco such as *al-halqa*.

Connecting Bowles to *Al-halqa*

Khalid Amine describes *halqa*, where a ‘*hlaiqi*’, or storyteller, tells stories designed to incorporate and call out to the audience – as a practice that blends improvisation and reactivity (53-55). Amine goes on to describe it as a liminal and carnivalesque¹¹ practice, “between high and low mass culture, [the] sacred and profane, literacy and orality”. Beyond being a public and theatrical storytelling practice traditionally centered around marketplaces, *al-halqa* is also a practice deeply rooted in Moroccan culture and history.¹² Amine also describes it as combining myth and history through the sources it draws upon, including *A Thousand and One Nights*, *Sirat bani hilal*, the *Quran*, and the *Sunna*, while varying in form from storytelling alone to acting and dancing performances – Amine establishes a case that the *halqa* performance is at its heart already a space of hybridity, staged and that its entrance into stage performance has amplified this quality (55). This places the concept of *halqa* storytelling in a useful position at which to examine it as a mediating space between genres, and between languages. *Halqa* also has an intricate relation to architecture. Amine describes its traditional space as staged near city gates, reflecting inwards from the periphery of city borders as though through a “carnavalesque mirror” that circulates drama

¹⁰ The phenomenon of delegitimizing storytellers is one that troubles not only Bowles’ collaborators, but also other groups of otherwise delegitimized storytellers – the most prominent example of which are women wishing to participate in the *halqa* circle, traditionally restricted to men.

¹¹ Amine employs Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the carnivalesque – which refers in a shorthand manner to a sense of how spectacles of celebration create moments where everyday hierarchies collide with the free expression of liberated human interactions. The concept is found in Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*.

¹² It is useful here to note that the tradition of *halqa* is ever-shrinking due to economic pressures both as storytellers find new genres to work with, and as older storytellers die out without finding apprentices. More of this context is discussed later.

and information (56-57). The *al-halqa* tradition's proximity to borders and its state as an at-times reflective performance provides further reasons towards explaining the entrance of newer voices into Moroccan orality.

The context of the *halqa* is thus such that a single story cannot be wholly representative of the history of the tradition – let alone in written form, translated into English. Yet, Richard Hamilton provides a useful set of stories in *The Last Storytellers*, told by the ever-shrinking pool of contemporary representatives of the practice. One such story, “The Red Lantern”, by Moulay Mohamed El Jabri, features useful similarities to the stories of *Five Eyes*, despite its origin in the professional circle. The story begins much like any other:

A long time ago, in Marrakech, there lived a poor, lowly, sweet seller called Kadour. He was not a very successful sweet seller, and with each passing day he lost money and became poorer. Finally, the time came when he could not even afford to buy the honey he needed to make his sweets. But he was too ashamed to take up begging. ‘I shall leave Marrakech,’ he said to himself, ‘and cross the Atlas Mountains. Perhaps I shall have better luck in another place.’ (31)

The story is told with a third person narrative voice, observing from a distance. Rather than personal memory, the account is one of cultural memory – it calls out to the imagined life of a Moroccan in distant times. There are also several nuances to the original performance that did not make it to the text – Hamilton mentions in his foreword that in Marrakesh, stories traditionally begin with a prayer to the patron saint of the city (23-24). Additionally, the transition between one story to the next is the space for a pause where money is asked for in a comedic way that blends into the story (Amine, 58). These foregrounding elements of *halqa* performance notwithstanding, the translation here is interesting in its similarity in diction to Bowles’ translations of Boulaich and Layachi. As with other translations from oral stories, it seems that figurative language is made absent to create enduring contents which match the longevity of their media. As well, between many lines are short repetitions that regulate the pacing and rhythm of the story – for example:

“there lived a poor, lowly, sweet seller [...] He was not a very successful sweet seller [...] he lost money and became poorer (31).”

The story moves on as Kadour travels out of Marrakech, carrying his only possession – a lantern from his home city, made of tin and red glass. As he travels, he stumbles upon a city that none in Marrakech had ever seen before. Quickly, his dialect – strange to local ears – attracts the attention of a local pasha, or governor, and he becomes a guest amidst huge amounts of wealth. His stay is described as follows:

For three days, as required by the Koran, the Pasha showered Kadour with great kindness and hospitality. But after three of the most amazing days of his life, the time came for the sweet seller to leave. He was very troubled. He could not leave such a kind host without making him a present, and the only thing he had to give in return was his little lantern made of tin and red glass. Still, he hoped the Pasha would see that this was all he owned and accept the gift in the spirit it was intended. (32)

El Jabri offers a tightly paced story, without any tangents from the sequence of narration. As his story is placed into written English, it retains subtle references to Moroccan culture through wording – through mention of the Koran and of the title of Pasha. As well, the passage holds further repetitions in relation to details such as the length of the stay being three days, and on the need to present a gift. El Jabri uses repetition to create focus on particular details, bearing in mind that the original telling cannot be reread as with a written form – on top of this, repetition is again a component of the rhythm of performance. Continuing with the story, the Pasha’s reaction to the gift of the lantern is, rather ironic, as El Jabri describes:

[...] Now, in this city there was no glass. No one had ever heard of glass there [...] To see the light of a candle shining through red glass was a miraculous sight to the Pasha [...] So how could he give this stranger a fitting return for his present? The Pasha thought for a while before deciding the only thing to do was to give almost all that he had. (32)

The repetition of the narrative is central to its central irony; in repeating Kadour’s struggle through the Pasha’s, El Jabri weaves rhythm, focus, and irony into his narrative. The aesthetic is

deceptively simple. As per the model provided by Joseph Frank, the narrative appears to be connected by a temporal structure, featuring events in chronological narrative sequence without images that jump in, as seen with montage.¹³ To Frank, this would indicate that the text reflects a naturalistic, objective and historical tendency – however, it is clear that the narrative is presented as the story of characters in the distant past, and though their fictiveness is not made explicit, it is suggested by the ambiguity of the story and its narrator’s voice. “The Red Lantern” corresponds interestingly to the stories by Boulaich and Layachi in *Five Eyes* – these are oral narratives, translated into English and written from recordings, which follow a sequence organized chronologically because they are told as though remembered from the past – yet, they differ in terms of imaginative frameworks. Where Boulaich and Layachi hint towards personal experience, or assume the first person, El Jabri takes the third person and describes a distant account.

These storytellers share a language and heritage, but differ in terms of their legitimation in their home culture. Correspondingly, both translators – Bowles and Hamilton – employ the use of recording devices and collaboration with local *Darija* speakers, but differ in terms of their method. Where Bowles worked directly with his storytellers, Hamilton relied upon a single guide who accompanied him to the *halqa* and provided translations that were instantaneous and yet secondhand (Hamilton, VI). Though the tradition of *al-halqa* is one that is precarious in its ever-dwindling pool of practitioners, efforts towards its survival, as well as its influence on storytelling beyond the practice itself has sparked the entrance of new voices into the Moroccan cultural landscape. The common element of the *Darija* language across these voices and the *halqa*, as well

¹³ Expand?

as the “common cultural fund” that manifests in and beyond *Five Eyes* through a style which blends temporal depth and the spatial plane, are elements that call upon a shared indigenous heritage.

“The Moroccan Dream” in Writing:

This heritage surfaces even in Moroccan texts originating from writing. The 2007 collection, “The Moroccan Dream”, curated by Mohamed Said Raihani, offers a useful counterpart to indigenous oral narratives, as a set of translations from written origins. The sourcing of these texts from writing means that they do not exist in the indigenous *Darija* vernacular in many oral stories, originating instead from formal Arabic. Additionally, the collection is translated by a Moroccan writer and scholar who is fluent in English, and is thus a collaboration derived purely from Moroccan voices. Despite differences in form, the texts of “The Moroccan Dream” bear striking similarities towards stories both from *Five Eyes* and *The Last Storytellers*. The similarity is partially due to the final product of each collection being a set of texts framed as short stories – yet, it is also due to storytelling tropes that establish a pattern from indigenous oral texts to these written stories.

Examples from the collection, such as Zahra Ramji’s “Dreams”, feature both elements of framing narratives, as well as performative cues that signal towards orality. These structural components, observable in writing, reflect and hybridize the oral storytelling heritage of Morocco.

“Dreams” begins as though in a conversation to the reader:

...On Sunday, our breakfast is luxurious compared to the other days of the week. We take our time to enjoy the various sorts of drink and food. We have serious discussions, share funny jokes... and share fresh dreams. It is as if we avenge ourselves of the remaining days of the week when we had to drink a cup of coffee and milk and swallow a slice of cake and run off to our days... It is really as if we avenge that loneliness which every one of us feels when having breakfast a few moments before going out to work... (Para. 1)

Ramji emulates an oral narrative in this introduction, through repetitions between lines, a straightforward level of diction, and ellipses that mark pauses in thought. As she mentions the sharing of dreams, she is setting the stage for different voices in the narrative, including short scenes narrated by her son, by the maid of the household, by her unborn daughter, and finally by herself. Each of these scenes is presented in first person, and framed by the setting of the entire text at the breakfast table. Ramji closes her narration by describing her son's efforts to narrate his dreams: "Although his attempts fail (sometimes out of sympathy I ask him to narrate his dreams to me before sleeping) no one can make him change his mind on Sunday (Para. 2)" Ramji's aside, signaled in writing through brackets, offers a more conversational tone as she closes out the framing of the narratives to follow. Her introduction also presents the story as a collection in itself – weaving disparate scenes into a coherent montage. The narrative presented as her son's follows after, describing a scene from the classroom:

...The [French language] teacher went to the classroom bookcase and took out a set of books that he distributed to us. He read the title of the book: "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" by J.K. Rowling. He read the opening to the story and we took turns reading aloud...

The Arabic language teacher came in after the break... she distributed to us small beautiful books on which were written in golden letters:

"An Anthology of Modern Humanist Poetry"

She started to read the poems in a sweet, gentle voice, a voice as delicious as the rose honey that you buy for us, Mother.

...We ran out to the courtyard which in my dream had turned into Cabo Negro Beach with its gentle golden sands and pure blue waters and thousands of beautiful fishes... (Para. 8-12)

The passage above shows elements that surface in other Moroccan storytelling examples. As with the examples of Boulaich, Layachi and Choukri in *Five Eyes*, Ramji carefully presents the entire story as though a one-way dialogue – as a story told by the narrator. As a story that mimics orality in its premise, "Dreams" is yet another Moroccan text that connects between the planar spatiality of events juxtaposed together and the chronological depth of a storytelling or narrative voice. It is

another dialogic text, reacting in writing to the oral performances of Moroccan culture, despite never having existed as an oral performance itself.

Ramji's son directly addresses her during the recounting of his dream – this address is something that calls out to the audience in a second-hand manner, and simultaneously reinforces the framing narrative of stories being shared at the dinner table. This scene emulates as well the repetition found in oral narrations in both *Five Eyes* and in “The Red Lantern”, especially as Ramji's son uses phrasing like “without question and without knowing the reason”; “a sweet gentle voice, a voice as delicious as the rose honey”; and “we were lost in the magic of her voice, of the images and of the word!” (Para.7; 10; 11). In conjunction with the inflections created with exclamations and with the momentum created by repetitions of phrasing, the story builds on its sense of conversation. The passage from Ramji's “Dreams” also moves quickly through three different scenes – the Harry Potter reading, the reading of the poetry anthology, and the shift to the beach. This quick movement reflects the style of montage that infuses Choukri's “Bachir Alive and Dead”, but is made, ironically, more coherent by the motif of dreams, and the framing narrative of a breakfast chat around dreams. The sequence of Ramji's narration takes place in an implicit temporal order, while reflecting hints towards a mythicized imagination through the way in which the story transitions from one voice to another, as well as in its inherent disjunction with the natural world.

Such a disjunction is quite apparent as the story moves into the second of the series of dreams at the table. Each voice in “Dreams” ends with a description of awakening, followed by the header of the next section as with the following:

III) The dream of my daughter who is not born yet:
 ... I tried to hear my mother's heart beats.... when I felt myself swept out in the torrential water, and then I felt your soft touch on my face, Mother, and I woke up to your sweet voice saying: «Good morning, my little bird! » (Para. 15)

By using headers to introduce voices rather than an exit out into the framing story and a following re-entry into subsequent sub-narratives, Ramji heightens the sense of juxtaposed images in the overall text. The idea of a planar and spatial construct arises here as well, through the figurative nature of the voice at hand. The construction of figurative voice builds on the use of figurative language in Frank's model of spatiality. The presentation of the second dream is one that is purely hypothetical because it claims a voice that cannot speak, and yet is one that calls out to a universal human experience – that of birth. Further reinforcing a sense of planar organization is how the story is separated and placed together by disjointed dreams, connected only by a presumed discussion at a dining table and by the constructed form of the written text.

By narrating from a perspective which has no communicative presence outside of the imagination, Ramji explicitly breaks away from naturalist description beyond even her initial thematic of dreams. "Dreams" presents an interesting intersection of structure and imaginative contents in the overarching context of Moroccan storytelling. Ramji continues her sequence with two more samples, "The maid's dream" and "The dream of the mother", which each offer further first-person conversational sequences, and finally ends on a concluding note that calls out to the reader:

I do not know much about the interpretation of dreams...

Later, when I fell on better references on the subject, my dreams had already boycotted my nights or rather refused to reveal themselves to me in the morning. So books were of no use.

So, please, is there anyone to interpret these dreams for me? (Para. 30-32)

Ramji breaches the frame of her story, exiting from the sharing of dreams at breakfast into a larger invitation to interpret, or (re)read them. "Dreams" creates an emulation of orality that is embedded in its structured montage. It hints at orality through punctuated inflections, a tightened and conversational level of diction, and using repeated and cyclical phrases which build upon that

diction. Yet, the montage of “Dreams” creates breaks in voice and narrative cohesion which contrast directly to the cascading momentum found in examples from both the *halqa* and from Bowles’ collaborations. “Dreams” represents another variation on the Moroccan style that informs each prior text discussed in this essay, and thus provides continuity towards the idea of a “common Moroccan style” from the hands of Moroccans themselves, without mediators from other cultures providing input through translation.

The work of self-translation continues with another story from “The Moroccan Dream”. Fatima Bouziane’s “Normal” uses a blending of written montage and orality to frame its narrative sequence. The story is organized by a snapshot sequence of a relationship through scene headings: “An Exceptional Day”; “An Explosive Day”; “The Day of Emptiness”; and “A Normal Day” – which are then followed by an excerpted poem. The narration begins abruptly:

An Exceptional Day:

I stare at him while he is talking. It seems to me that today I am hearing with my eyes. If eyes do communicate, what can prevent them from hearing such an exceptional man’s words?

His small, almond-like mobile phone fully captivates my attention, so does his portable computer as small as my handbag, his sun-glasses which change colour with the intensity of the light. Wonderful accessories which heighten his exceptionality! (Para. 1-2)

The introductory moment is written in the style of present-tense observation, though inflected heavily by tone. The voice of the narrator conveys a sense of obsessive focus by employing repetition and by weaving observation and imagination in this passage. Yet, though the passage implies a conversational tone, the use of present tense and abrupt entry into the narration challenge the possibility of this text as a performed story. There is in fact an introspective voice throughout the narrative, especially in the following passage:

...I was wrong to have loved literature [...] I will learn his modern vocabulary: Software, Google, Messenger... the words feel strange on my tongue but I swear to cut it off if it does not learn them. I whisper them quietly, whenever I hear him utter these words, in an

attempt to learn them by heart: Software, Google, Web, Microsoft...
I tell him: "I have an e-mail address". (Para. 7)

Along with the ellipses that inflect the tone of this passage, Bouziane's narrator also makes personal and declarative statements. By explicitly describing intent here, the narrator makes explicit her own interiority and embeds it into the structure of the builds on the sense of obsessive focus that arises in the introductory passage. Alongside the ellipses, this narrative action juxtaposes a scenario of total focus with a form that seems to have none. This culminates in the statement: "I am a contemporary girl. I am born not before today. From now on there will be no place for the word "before" (Para. 9)." By this point, the narrator speaks towards her intent to discard the past, while in structure, the story has entirely avoided the past tense.

Yet, between each scene of the story, described as "days", there are repeated elements that reflect on one another. "An Explosive Day" begins, "I had just sipped my coffee when he tells me his astrological sign. I burst out laughing, spraying black coffee on the white tablecloth. How can a man, any man, be a Virgo?!" (Para. 13); this is contrasted later with "The Day of Emptiness", which begins with, "I drink my bitter coffee. There are no sugar lumps left on the table, and the chair across from me is empty. I feel empty also. Nature fears emptiness: that is right. I am thinking about "Virgo". He cannot be a Virgo!" (Para. 20). The narrator tells her story episodically, and creates cohesion between each point by recalling the previous episodes, despite her explicit statement against the past. The effect is a performative tension between the contents of the story and its structure. Though the narrator presents the action of declaring against "before" – which has connotations both of memory and of the past tense in written narration, the form of the story and the use of repetitions subvert her expressed intent. This tension culminates in Bouziane's narrator directly addressing the man (and the reader): "I know that you do not like such dry, short, cold stories. I understand that but I cannot create hot stories for you. You see, being here is different

from being there. What I have told you I consider top secret. Please, don't laugh. Don't. Believe me. (Para. 15)" The break from the preceding narrative structure blends a moment of self-reflection for the narrator and a moment of direct address towards the reader. It shifts the structure of the entire narrative from a present-tense account of first-person observation into a performative theatrical apostrophe; an open address to an absent other. As further breaches in form occur, further reflection surfaces as well through the past tense and through questions:

- Silence is golden, chatter is tin.
- Transparency is a crime.
- Ambiguous is life.

Where have I read or heard that? In a book? In a story? Is it advice from a mother to her daughter? From women talking in a public bath?

There is wisdom everywhere, why was I so heedless of it? (Para. 24)

The focus of Bouziane's narrative shifts from observing to questioning, and in doing so the form of the story follows suit. There are breaches into the story of a performative structure that emulates orality, including the passage musing on "modern language", and with the questioning reflection above, which break apart the written narration of "Normal". This sense of a collapsing written form is maximized as the text concludes through a poetic sequence:

...Now that we are acquainted, what can be the next stage? I will put it openly, without hesitation, and I will wait for one day, one month, one year

Open doors

Open windows

...

Closed doors

Closed windows

...

And I,

Behind the sun,

Behind the moon,

Am waiting*¹⁴ (Para. 24) /

¹⁴ Bouziane cites these lines from the poem "Waiting", from Saleh Harbi's collection of poems, "I See Women Watering Corpses".

The use of the poem at the end, along with the direct address that precludes it, present a final twist in the form of Bouziane's story. These elements show a hybridization between various genres of storytelling. By considering the way in which "Normal" ends, as well as into the introductory framing of "Dreams" and the intertextual references that infuse each text, the diverse roots of the Moroccan corpus surface. It is no coincidence that these stories both experiment deeply with form and structure, as both Ramji and Bouziane reflect through writing on the linguistic and cultural roots that infuse their imaginations. For Ramji, the dream of her son is infused with thoughts about the hybridized language and literary heritages of Morocco, while Bouziane fights with a tension between the allure of modernity and the comfort of literary tradition. Still, both authors present a sense of reflexivity, shared with examples of Moroccan orality, in their stories in the frames of their narratives and in writing out performance.

As a collection that works from the written form to recall elements of oral performance, "The Moroccan Dream" fulfills a dialogic process parallel to that of Bowles' *Five Eyes*. In addition, the text, as an independently Moroccan product which calls upon the country's oral storytelling heritage, provides a way out of critiques leveraged against Bowles. "The Moroccan Dream" is a collection built through the work of Moroccans proficient with formal Arabic and English, and is a collection produced exclusively by insiders to the culture, to be read by Anglophone readers. "The Moroccan Dream" represents a movement towards a third space of storytelling from Moroccan literary storytellers.

Technology, Preservation, Hybridity

The discussion of intertextuality and the blending of genres in Morocco cannot be separated from a discussion of new media forms and the technologies that enable them. Audiovisual media

and their globalized pressures have created concerns around the ongoing survival of storytelling tradition in Morocco - as the very space of storytelling dwindles. Juan Goytisolo, a multilingual Spanish author, an individual working towards the preservation of indigenous traditions like the *halqa* across the world, and an inhabitant of Morocco, writes in “Jemaa-el-Fna, patrimoine oral de l’humanité” that “[The era of the archpriest of Hita] is but a vague memory for countries technologically advanced and morally empty. The grip of cybernetics and the audiovisual disnify childhood and atrophy imaginative capacities” (Goytisolo, Para. 2, my translation). Likewise, Richard Hamilton foregrounds his translated collection by stating that “practically every café has a television... no one tells any stories. They can’t because the television is going. No one thinks of stories. If the eye is going to be occupied by a flickering image, the brain does not feel a lack... It’s done away with the oral tradition of storytelling. (13-14)” Concerns around the creative imagination form a compelling case for the preservation of oral traditions – especially those like the *halqa* of Marrakesh, which to Goytisolo is the last city preserving a defunct oral heritage considered by many a “third world contempt” and which struggles in the face of technological progress (Para. 2).

Al-halqa, as a representation of Moroccan storytelling, is a stage for mediation not only in concerns of social intersections and of moral education – but also of genres. In its circles, oration comes together with gesture, adapted from written works and older stories alike. Yet its weakness lies in its immediacy – until recently, those far from Marrakesh would not have been able to experience *halqa* stories save as adaptations, perhaps translations as well – and in the passing on of storytellers themselves; an often circulated saying in Morocco is that when a storyteller dies, a library burns (Hamilton, Foreword; El Hadad, 10:00). The context of the *halqa* involves an ever-

dwindling number of storytellers. Though new apprentices are being trained, only two fully trained and practicing storytellers remained in Marrakesh in 2015 (El Hadad, 17:15-18:25).

Efforts are being put forth by individuals such as Richard Hamilton and Betsy Bolton to preserve the stories of currently active storytellers. This effort works towards the resurgence of the tradition, but pales in significance in contrast to the need for new voices to enter the practice. Bowles and Hamilton work with stories in the *Darija* dialect and subsequently translate them through secondhand language expertise (Benlimlih, 81; Hamilton, V). Other attempts towards the preservation of *halqa* stories have made use of new media technology and its possibilities, as with a UNESCO initiative which looked to record and upload stories. Yet the project, attempting to reach a global audience, has been slowed to a halt by bureaucracy (Simons, Para. 22; Hamilton, 26).

So far, Bolton's *Maghrebi Voices*, the digital product of a Fulbright fellowship, seems to be one of the more successful preservation efforts. The site incorporates not only written adaptations of stories from *halqa* storytelling, but also recordings of storytelling sessions from new apprentices¹⁵, as well as stories from informal storytellers in the spirit of Paul Bowles' collaborative work, and a series of written stories from Morocco. By juxtaposing each of these genres in a single collection, Bolton has created a prototype for cultural survival in a new environment through her project, as well as the space for new hybridity and commentary to emerge. For example, where other collections tend to provide the commentary of the editor or translator, Bolton's site features interviews with the storytellers that work with her. Because of

¹⁵ Same apprentices as in El Hadad

this space for commentary, the site also features certain aspects of *al-halqa* inaccessible in many other documents.

Bolton's site, as well as a 2015 short documentary, "A Marrakesh Tale", by Horia El Hadad, tell the story of Hajj Ahmed Ezzarghani and his efforts to train new apprentices in a new environment, blending the intent to preserve past knowledge and to use new techniques. Ezzarghani, one of two active storytellers in Marrakesh, plies his trade in the new space of the Café Clock Marrakesh. He states, "These days I teach university students, both boys and girls. I teach them stories which they translate to English to perform in front of a mixed audience of locals and foreigners (El Hadad, 3:00-4:00)". These students, Ezzarghani's new apprentices, appear in both El Hadad's documentary, and on interviews in *Maghrebi Voices*, providing commentary on the process of adapting the *halqa* practice to a newer context. These adaptations include the very inclusion of women, as *Halqa* as public storytelling has long been an exclusively male tradition, contrasted to a parallel, private tradition of storytelling between mothers and children. (Bolton, "Moroccan Storytelling, Para. 1"). The gendered aspect of the *halqa* extends beyond performance as well: the norms of the *halqa* include that "women are not supposed to stop and listen to wild or bawdy tales. (Simons, Para 10)." Gender is one traditional boundary amongst several that is shifting with concerns towards preservation, however, as the first female apprentices begin entering the trade. The space of *halqa* is also changing, as Ezzarghani speaks of how he and his apprentices have relocated their storytelling practice to the Café Clock in Marrakesh (19:40).

Betsy Bolton's interviews with the group provide further insights into the shifts redefining *halqa*, with apprentices Sara Mouhi, Malika Ben Allal, and Jawad el Bied. El Bied explains how the group tell stories interchangeably between the *Darija* dialect and English blending humour between the languages. Ben Allal tells of how Ezzarghani teaches his students stories from books

and past *halqa* sessions alike, and how they work together to find new avenues in which to share their trade. Throughout these changes, Mouhi states that locals still see their stories as Moroccan at heart (2:20) – perhaps because of the hybridities and shifts that lie at the heart of Moroccan culture. The interview also provides details on the practice: el Bied speaks of how in spite of having prepared and rehearsed stories, *halqa* sessions can include “[making] characters out of the audience”, and weaving the choices and intents of the audience into the outcomes of each narrative (3:30-5:30). One of el Bied’s stories – “Three Wisdoms” – is recorded on Bolton’s website. The introduction to the story is transcribed here:

This story is about an orphan whose father died and left him with his mother. She raised him, and he grew up to be a strong man. Unfortunately, he grew up to be lazy, and a naïve person. One day – his mother is always shouting at him, telling him to do something with his life, so he went to the store, and she gave him one dirham, and he went to the store to buy a cow. Well, he, in front of the gaze of the souf, he found an old man, and he sold him some wisdom. The wisdom says – always be merciful to the weak, and the second meant never miss good times, even if they will cut your head after that. The third week, Jafar went to the souk, but he did not find the old man, so he dragged the cow with him to the slaughterhouse... (0:00 – 1:20, “Three Wisdoms”)

El Bied demonstrates in orality a repetition and rhythm in structure that appears with the stories that Bowles adapted – there are between each line either conjunctive or repeated words. The story is told in the third person, and el Bied relies on a chronological sequence to organize its narrative. What cannot be conveyed are the variations in his pauses between each line, the differing voices used to perform each character, and the expressions and gestures used to emphasize details like Jafar’s characteristics, as well as the lines given to the old wise man. These are recorded in the video, and discarded when adapted into the written word.

Yet, having a written text on hand allows for close analysis of the choices el Bied makes in his words, and in terms of noticing patterns. Having the oral performance as a video compliments, and does not replace this possibility, just as having a written adaptation

compliments, and does not replace an original live performance. As archival materials, they lack the improvisation and immediacy of live storytelling, and yet they provide what an audience member would have seen at the time. As Moroccan storytelling, as informal stories told by illiterate storytellers, as rehearsed and polished performances from the *halqa*, or as written narratives from plurilingual authors, finds its way into new techniques in performance and in recording, it builds further upon the foundation of indigenous traditions.

Conclusion

With apprentice storytellers having performances recorded, hosted online and in English, efforts to preserve the *halqa* tradition digitally have a precedent to examine. Tracing the work of cultural collaborators like Paul Bowles and Richard Hamilton, Moroccan orality has entered the Moroccan written archive through collections of translations and adaptations. In collections like “The Moroccan Dream”, oral style, through rhythms, repetitions, and narrative organization have permeated Moroccan writing in the short story form. “The Moroccan Dream”, as a digital archive, shows that there is an interest in further expanding the reach of these collections, and the use of video in *Maghrebi Voices* demonstrates that it is possible to blend this reach with a reintegration of oral tropes of gesture and performance.

Bowles’ original collection, *Five Eyes*, marks a point in which the Moroccan storytelling practice inadvertently enters a position between orality and written text, and moves from *Darija* Arabic to the English language. This movement towards a third space in form is emulated by Hamilton’s *The Last Storytellers*, though with the storytellers of the *halqa* circle in place of the illiterate collaborators who worked with Bowles. Mirroring the movement towards a hybridized genre is Raihani’s “The Moroccan Dream”, which as a written collection translated from formal

Arabic calls out to the style and elements of oral stories in Morocco. Finally, the idea of a third space in the form of Moroccan stories becomes fully apparent in Bolton's *Maghrebi Voices*.

With the examination of Moroccan genres blending as though in a third space, the continual movement of stories between various platforms becomes an interesting phenomenon that seems to foreshadow a resurgence for *al-halqa* and traditions like it. Alongside the training of new apprentices, the digital landscape that they have begun using can provide new possibilities towards live performance. As more storytellers are trained in the practice, this will undoubtedly become an area for further thought.

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