

Spring 2005

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*Tingis* is a quarterly magazine that highlights the cultural concerns, ideas, and issues of Moroccans, friends of Morocco, and all those who have some interest in Morocco or in the larger Arab, Muslim, and Mediterranean worlds. The focus could be on religion, culture, gender, Africa, the Berber heritage, the Jewish legacy, Moroccan art and literature, film, music, but also on the United States and the rest of the Americas, Western and Asian cultures, and, more generally, on all issues of interest to the Moroccan and world communities.

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Magazine cover: The main street in the ruined Roman city of Volubilis, Decumanus Maximus, leading to Tangier Gate.

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# The Enigma of Cultures

By  
Anouar Majid

Last February, I gave a talk at the Mohammed V University in Rabat about the quest for freedom in the American tradition and was stunned by the response of the audience. There were quite a few Americans, including U.S. officials from the embassy, a senior writer from the American magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, and, of course, many Moroccan students and several colleagues. My talk was mostly a run-of-the-mill account of the powerful but multidimensional concept of freedom in American history; but no sooner was I done than Moroccan students—some veiled, others not—immediately questioned America's legacy of expanding public freedoms by citing U.S. military interventions in the Arab world and the superpower's possession of nuclear weapons. U.S. foreign policy was not part of my presentation, but many in the audience were simply more interested in unfolding current events and the hot and bloody conflicts in the Middle East.

It seems fitting that a shopping center, the new emblem of present-day globalization and one of the main subjects in Hassan's article, is designed to commemorate the journey of the most famous Arab traveler.

What saved the day was the outspoken participation of the mostly American women in the room. They debated their Muslim peers openly and frankly without giving up their right to differ from the policies of their own government. The American women defined their hard won (albeit still incomplete) liberties with passion, and even then, just when the lines of the debate were coalescing into an American and Muslim side, an African-American woman would complicate the American position, while a Muslim student would agree that several American freedoms are lacking in Muslim societies. These unpredictable interventions gave the debate a healthy intellectual texture, proving, to anyone who cared to find out, that simplistic journalistic headlines and rigid ideological positions don't do justice to a complex world of cultures, where people are more eager to find out about, and deal with, the Other—that infamous ogre that haunts our imagination—than we are led to believe. As members of the audience debated one another, I wished someone could have filmed the proceedings and sent the tape or CD around the world to show that a real dialogue of civilizations is quite possible and is, in fact, happening right here and now.

I also thought a great deal about the articles in this issue as I traveled around Morocco. Walking around the ocean in Tangier, watching the tantalizing seductive shape of Spain on the horizon, or visiting some of Tangier's legendary but somewhat dilapidated hotels, like the Continental and the Minzah, I was reminded why the city attracted a discriminating international set in times past and continues to do so today. An air of freedom and laissez-faire are simply engraved into the city's DNA, while the two oceans that wash on Tangier's shores remind its inhabitants of the existence of worlds beyond. No wonder Ibn Battuta, the subject of Wail Hassan's essay, embarked on his *rihla* to Mecca and the Orient, in gen-

In many ways, Bowles is the mirror image of Ibn Battuta who left his native land to discover new cultures.



Rif lady in Tetouan, monotype, by Tania Beaumont



Spain viewed from Tangier

Tangier, too, was home to Paul Bowles, the enigmatic American writer whose life continues to intrigue scholars in Morocco, the United States, and other parts of the world.

eral, and later to Africa, from this ancient place. His influence continues to radiate across the globe, with conferences commemorating his 700th birthday organized in California last December, and a shopping mall bearing the Moroccan's name and designed to reflect the architectural legacies of the cultures he discovered being set up in the United Arab Emirates. It seems fitting that a shopping center, the new emblem of present-day globalization and one of the main subjects in Hassan's article, is designed to commemorate the journey of the most famous Arab traveler.

Tangier, too, was home to Paul Bowles, the enigmatic American writer whose life continues to intrigue scholars in Morocco, the United States, and other parts of the world. Brian Edwards, who has thought a great deal about Bowles and his Moroccan literary partners, tells us why the American expatriate is an important cultural figure. In many ways, Bowles is the mirror image of Ibn Battuta who left his native land to discover new cultures. One scholar left Tangier for the Orient, the other left the West for Tangier; and yet neither, if one were to believe the latest accounts regarding the medieval wanderer, is buried in the city. (Ibn Battuta's shrine is still in Tangier, but only God knows where his remains are.) Edwards deals deftly with the innuendoes swirling around Bowles's life and oeuvre, and that's a major achievement.

In a world that refuses to transcend the binary of West and Islam, Bowles can easily come across as an Orientalist, one of the many Westerners who run away from their cold and loveless social habitats for warmth and human interaction in Muslim lands, not to mention better living standards; but Edwards shows us that Bowles's worlds were inextricably woven together in one seamless whole, neither part could have meaning without the rest. That Bowles was ultimately buried in the United States is a powerful testimony to the power of one's native culture.

In any case, the law, philosophy, and literature are all in the business of elucidating this impossibly manichean human condition.

Julian Davis Mortenson reflects on ethnic cleansing and genocide in this part of the world from the perspective of a legal expert, while, ironically, David Smith, in the last article of this issue, looks at war from an evolutionary perspective.

Yet when what is native turns into a vicious form of nativism all hell breaks loose as the world is thrown into mayhem, cruelty, violence, and bloodshed. The case of Darfur is one example, although not the only one. Julian Davis Mortenson reflects on ethnic cleansing and genocide in this part of the world from the perspective of a legal expert, while, ironically, David Smith, in the last article of this issue, looks at war from an evolutionary perspective. The legal scholar sees hope in the instruments of justice (if only major powers like the United States were to give international legal bodies more support), while the philosopher doesn't see much of a way out

of our human predicament. To read Mortenson and Smith's article back to back is a chilling experience because both remind us of the ingrained darkness that refuses to see the light of day. In any case, the law, philosophy, and literature are all in the business of elucidating this impossibly manichean human condition.

This is not the place for an editor to add his views on such weighty matters, but one could certainly marvel at the serendipitous forces that have brought the work of such outstanding scholars and experts in one single issue of *Tingis*. All four authors—Hassan, Edwards, Mortenson, and Smith—are highly inspirational and inspiring people; they cast their views broadly across the scope of human histories and cultures to enlighten us and make us think twice, thrice, or perhaps endlessly, about topics that have preoccupied many people and generations. I am just delighted to offer such a wealth of knowledge to our readers. I hope it will help melt their winter blues (even as it perplexes their thoughts and enriches their minds), as it welcomes them into yet another spring, and prepares them for a season of hope—at least in the power of the human mind to take stock of itself.

*editor@tingismagazine.com*



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# Ibn Battuta at 700: Tangier's Witness to 14th Century Globalization

By

Wail S. Hassan



View of Fez, where Ibn Battuta told his story.

It is a common perception that the collapse of communism ushered in the era of globalization, a stage in world history marked by the worldwide spread of capitalism and Western, particularly U.S. culture. Some have seen this as a salutary development, and one scholar in the early 1990s went so far as to suggest that we are at the “end of history,” by which he meant that the world had reached the fullest stage of development in which liberal democracy and consumer culture will prevail throughout the world, a capitalist utopia. A less optimistic view held that the end of the Cold War will lead instead to a so-called “clash of civilizations,” a period of renewed conflict in which the West will now face two rivals, Islamic and “Confucian” civilizations. Those who accept that theory have seen confirmation of it in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and China’s rapid economic growth.

tions with a global reach before the age of European colonial empires. For thousands of years global trade flourished in the ancient and medieval world, notably along the Old Silk Road that connected China to India, central Asia, Persia, Mesopotamia, the eastern Mediterranean, and Egypt. As its name suggests, the Silk Road was a trading route, but it was also a major

“I have indeed—praise be to God—attained my desire in this world, which was to travel through the earth, and I have attained therein what none other has attained to my knowledge.”

*Ibn Battuta*

However, from a broader historical perspective one can quickly see how naïve both theories are. Their shortsightedness is the result not only of their openly partisan and triumphalist advocacy of U.S. geopolitical dominance, but also their limited historical perspective. Over five millennia of recorded history witnessed the rise of many civiliza-

venue for cultural commerce that facilitated the spread of scientific, philosophical, and religious ideas in all directions along its path. Such influences eventually spread to Europe and to east, north, and West Africa. Buddhism traveled from India to China, and from there to Korea and Japan. Ancient Mesopotamian and eastern Mediterranean civilizations left their imprint on the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in the form of codes of law, ritual practices, and creation, fertility, and flood myths. Greco-Roman culture spread throughout the same region, so that the New Testament was first written in Greek, a cosmopolitan language in the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Common Era, and an Algerian native who wrote in Latin, the lingua franca of the medieval period, and who came to be known as St. Augustine helped found Christian theology by reconciling Christian doctrine with Greek philosophy. A major civilization with a universalist culture flourished from the 7<sup>th</sup> century onward when Islam spread from Arabia to the Fertile Crescent, then westward across north Africa to the Atlantic coast, west Africa, and Spain, as well as eastward to Persia, central and southeast Asia, eventually reaching China.

Historically, then, globalization is not a new phenomenon. Nor have cultural, civilizational, or religious differences alone brought about political conflict, although in many cases the pursuit of political and economic interests justified itself by appealing to religion. The Crusades are just one example. Yet even while causing cataclysmic destruction and bloodshed, military campaigns of the medieval period such as the Crusades and the Mongolian conquests of central, eastern and western

Ibn Battuta's journey lasted twenty-nine years, during which he performed the pilgrimage rites several times, visited the equivalent of over forty modern states, and covered the distance of approximately 75,000 miles, by far the longest journey undertaken by one man before the invention of the steam engine.

Asia nonetheless intensified trade, brought populations into contact as never before, and in the case of the Mongols, who eventually converted to the faith of the more advanced cultures they had conquered, helped spread Islam throughout central Asia and northern China. Even before the age of telecommunications, jet travel, and the Internet, the world had already been globalized.

The life and times of Ibn Battuta (1304-1368 C.E.), the great explorer and scholar from Tangier, is but one illustration of that. The 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, which has just passed, is a good occasion to reflect on his legacy and what it may mean for us today. He was born Mohammed ibn Abdellah al-Lawati at-Tanji ibn Battuta to an elite family of theologians and legal scholars. Following in the family tradition, he studied Islamic law, and as was customary at the time for someone with his career path, he left Tangier in 1325, at the age of twenty-one, on a pilgrimage to Mecca and to visit eminent scholars. His contemporary the great sociologist and historian Ibn Khaldun explains in his *Muqaddimah* that such travel was customary for someone with Ibn Battuta's ambition: "a scholar's education is greatly improved by traveling in quest of knowledge and meeting the authoritative teachers of his time."

Ibn Battuta's journey lasted twenty-nine years, during which he performed the pilgrimage rites several times, visited the equivalent of over forty modern states, and covered the distance of approximately 75,000 miles, by far the longest journey undertaken by one man before the invention of the steam engine. Vowing never to travel by the same road twice, Ibn Battuta visited Tunisia, Egypt, Somalia, Tanzania, Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, Persia, the central Asian steppes, India, Ceylon, China, then Spain, Timbuktu and Mali, before finally settling in

Morocco. Upon his return, the Moroccan Sultan Abu 'Inan charged an accomplished man of letters called Ibn Juzayy with writing down Ibn Battuta's narrative of his by then famous travels. The resulting work, *Tuhfat al-nudhdhar fi ghara'ib al-amsar wa 'aja'ib al-asfar*, known in English as *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, was completed in 1357 and has since then been recognized

not only as a highly enjoyable travelogue but also as a rare eye-witness account of all parts of the Islamic world and many adjacent territories in Asia, Europe, and Africa. In fact, it is the only eyewitness account from that period of the great Mali empire in west Africa, the coastal cities of Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Dar al-Salam in east Africa, and the Asian steppes known as the Golden Horde. Ibn Juzayy concludes the book with this assessment, which historians have since confirmed: "It is plain to any man of intelligence that this shaykh is the traveler of the age: and if one were to say 'the traveler *par excellence* of this our Muslim community' he would be guilty of no exaggeration." Ibn Battuta's own evaluation of his journey is similar, but it also expresses his pride and contentment at a life well spent: "I have indeed—praise be to God—attained my desire in this world, which was to travel through the earth, and I have attained therein what none other has attained to my knowledge."

Ross E. Dunn, who wrote a valuable study of Ibn Battuta's *Travels* entitled *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century*, explains that Ibn Battuta's travels under the Pax Mongolica followed four related trajectories: "First, he was a pilgrim, joining the march of pious believers to the spiritual shrines of Mecca and Medina at least four times in his career.

Second, he was a devotee of Sufism, or mystical Islam, traveling as thousands did, to the hermitages and lodges of venerable holy men to receive their blessing and wisdom. Third, he was a juridical scholar, seeking knowledge and erudite company in the great cities of the Islamic heartland. And finally he was a member of the literate, mobile, world-minded elite, an educated adventurer, as it were, looking for hospitality, honors, and profitable employment in the more newly established centers of Islamic civilization in the further



Street in kasbah of Tangier.

The culture of travel and ethos of hospitality that prevailed in the Islamic world could support a lifestyle of wandering and exploration that was difficult to sustain in other parts of the world.



Bay of Tangier and Spain on horizon.

As the sacred language of Islam, Arabic was known in the educated circles of scholars, men of letters, theologians, and royal courts, the milestones along Ibn Battuta's travels.

regions of Asia and Africa. In any of these roles, however, he regarded himself as a citizen, not of a country called Morocco, but of Dar al-Islam [literally, the House of Islam, or the Islamic world], to whose universalist spiritual, moral, and social values he was loyal above any other allegiance. His life and career exemplify a remarkable fact of Afro-Eurasian history in the later middle Period, that, as Marshall Hodgson writes, Islam 'came closer than any other medieval society to establishing a common world order of social and even cultural standards.'

Despite immense geographical, ethnic, and cultural heterogeneity and political fragmentation, this "common world order" of Islam during the 14<sup>th</sup> century is what made Ibn Battuta's extensive and lengthy travels possible. The situation was very different for Marco Polo (1254-1324), to whom Ibn Battuta has often been compared, and who died one year before Ibn Battuta began his travels. Polo's famous journey to China began in 1271 when at the age of seventeen he accompanied his father and uncle, Venetian merchants, to Kublai Khan's cap-

ital Shan-tu. Young Marco became a favorite of the Mongol emperor and spent seventeen years in his court, traveling through China in his service. Eventually the emperor sent the Polos on a diplomatic mission to Persia, from where they returned to Venice in 1295. Without Kublai Khan's sponsorship, arguably Marco Polo's travels would have been considerably shorter, and perhaps his narrative less influential.

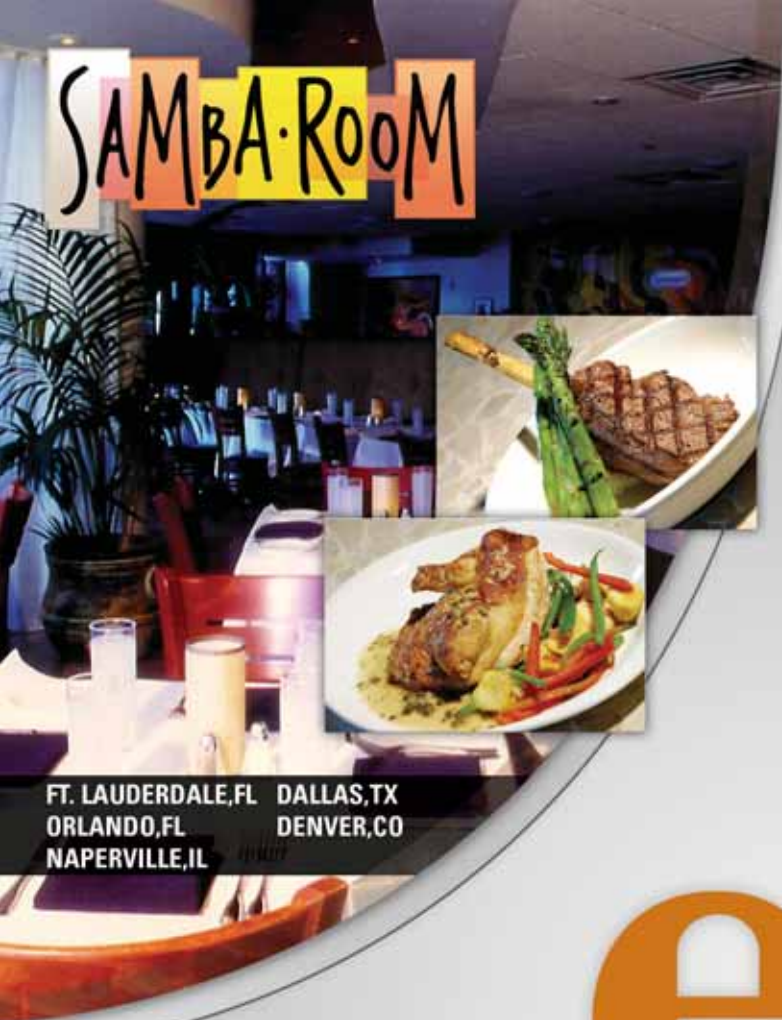
Ibn Battuta covered a far greater region for a longer period of time without the need for a single sponsor, although he did depend on the bounty of the many governors and kings whom he visited. By the same token, it was very difficult for Ibn Battuta to travel extensively outside the Islamic world, for example in Christian Europe (he only visited Constantinople where he met the Byzantine emperor), China (except its northern parts where he could meet Chinese Muslims), Russia, or central and southern Africa. The culture of travel and ethos of hospitality that prevailed in the Islamic world could support a lifestyle of wandering and exploration that was difficult to sustain in other parts of the world. As his translator into English, H.A.R. Gibb, writes, "the duty laid upon every Muslim of visiting Mecca at least once in his [or her] lifetime, so long as it lies within his [or her] power to do so, has been in all ages a stimulus to travel, far greater in degree than the stimulus of Christian pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. At the same time it created the organization necessary to enable Muslims of every class from every country to carry out this obligation."

Needless to say, before the age of jet travel, pilgrimage always necessarily involved passage through many countries, cities, and towns that lay between the pilgrim's homeland and the holy places, and required extensive interaction among the inhabitants of different parts of the Islamic world. Thus, as Gibb writes, "the pilgrim on his journey traveled in a caravan whose numbers swelled at every stage. He found all arrangements made for his marches and his halts, and if the road lay through dangerous country, his caravan was protected by an escort of soldiers. In all large centers as well as many intermediate stations were rest houses and hospices where he was hospitably welcomed and entertained out of endowments created by generations of benefactors. When such was the lot of every pilgrim, the theologian received still greater consideration. His brethren in every town received him as one of themselves, furnished his wants, and recommended him to those at the next station. Under these circumstances the brotherhood of Islam, which knows no difference of race or birth, showed at its best, and provided an incentive to travel unknown in any other age or community."

Ibn Battuta also witnessed the beginning of the decline of other parts of the Islamic world.

In addition to making a life of travel conceivable for someone like Ibn Battuta, the prevailing socio-cultural conditions in the fourteenth century fostered a sense of connectedness between the various corners of the Islamic world that is astonishing from our standpoint today. For example, he reports that when he reached Egypt, "one of the learned men of Alexandria ... said to me, 'I see that you are fond of traveling through foreign lands.' I replied, 'Yes I am,' (though I had as yet no thought of going to such distant lands as India or China). Then he said, 'You must certainly visit my brother Farid al-Din in India, and my brother Rukn ad-Din in Sind, and my brother Burhan ad-Din in China, and when you find them give them greeting from me.' I was amazed at his prediction, and the idea of going to these countries having been cast into my mind, my journeys never ceased

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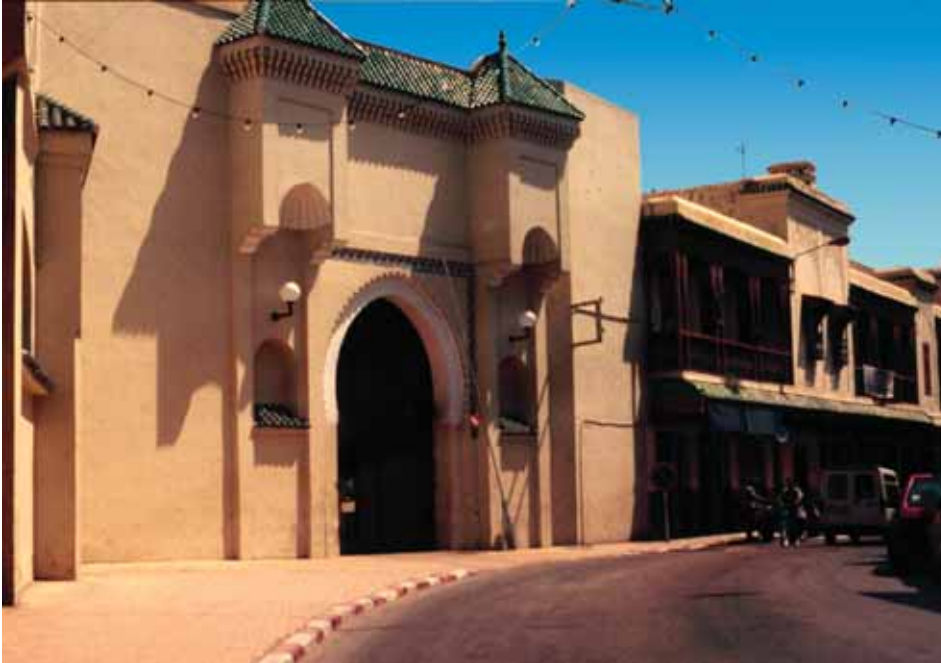


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until I had met these three that he named and conveyed his greeting to them." When he reached China nearly a quarter century later, he met another Moroccan from Ceuta, some forty miles from Ibn Battuta's hometown of Tangier, who had settled and prospered in China, and whose brother Ibn Battuta later on met in sub-Saharan Africa. It took months at that time to travel by caravan and ship from one end of the known world to the other, yet global trade and global culture shrank those distances, so that globetrotters could expect to cross paths much as they do today in major airports worldwide.

Another aspect of fourteenth century culture that greatly aided Ibn Battuta was the status of the Arabic language as a *lingua franca* throughout the Islamic world, including regions where it was not a native language, such as in east and west Africa, Turkey, Persia, and India. As the sacred language of Islam, Arabic was known in the educated circles of scholars, men of letters, theologians, and royal courts, the milestones along Ibn Battuta's travels. In fact, his prestige seemed to increase in the outlying and new regions of the Islamic world in south and east Asia, where Arab jurists and theologians like him were

sought after by kings to fill lucrative posts. It is, in fact, possible that Ibn Battuta set his eyes on such a post in India from a very early stage in his travels, and that, as the Moroccan critic Abdelfattah Kilto argues, Ibn Battuta throughout his journey oscillates between the glamorous life of a high government official and that of the detached Sufi ascetic. Thus once in India, he was appointed *qadi* (judge) of Delhi by the Sultan Muhammad Tughluq, and remained in that post for seven years. When he fell out of the Sultan's favor, Ibn Battuta gave up his worldly possessions and became an ascetic, until the Sultan called him back to his service and sent him on a diplomatic mission to China. Shipwrecked, he continued his travels rather than return to Delhi, and gained employment as *qadi* in the Maldive Islands. Wherever he went, he could count on generous gifts from the kings and princes he visited and who valued him equally for his Arab background and religious training as for his steadily rising fame as a great traveler.

As he observed the spread of Islam in Asia, Ibn Battuta also witnessed the beginning of the decline of other parts of the Islamic world. The great Mongol states that incor-

porated much of west, central, and south Asia began to crumble in the few decades after his travels, and much of Spain was lost over the course of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. In fact, Muslim Spain was in so precarious a position in Ibn Battuta's day that he considered joining the jihad during his short voyage to Granada. Another catastrophic event that occurred toward the end of Ibn Battuta's travels was the bubonic plague known as the Black Death, which spread along the same trade routes that transmitted goods and ideas, ravaging the population and the economy of much of the Middle East and North Africa. Ibn Battuta escaped the epidemic, but his mother died in it shortly before his return to Morocco.

By the sixteenth century, the Ottomans had extended their vast and long lasting, though briefly thriving, empire to eastern Europe, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and much of North Africa; unlike many of their predecessors, they were largely indifferent to the arts and sciences, and soon their governance fell prey to corruption and mismanagement, all with devastating cultural and political effects on the Arab lands they ruled. Meanwhile, European intellectuals were turning their attention to the Arab contributions over the preceding six centuries in philosophy, physics, mathematics, medicine, astronomy, geography, and chemistry. Through the commentaries of men like Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Maimonides, and Ibn Rushd (Averroës), Europeans rediscovered Greek learning, thereby launching Europe's Renaissance. Ironically, it was at that same moment that Muslims and Jews were being forcibly converted to Christianity, burned alive, or expelled from Spain. 1492 saw both the fall of Granada, the last Muslim city-state in al-Andalus, and Columbus's voyage of discovery, which heralded the age of European empires.

Despite today's divisive and ideologically driven rhetoric of crusades and clashes of civilizations, these "interesting times" (the old Chinese euphemism for periods of political turmoil that well-wishers hoped their friends and loved ones would be spared) may turn out to be another period of great cultural ferment that advances

Perhaps it is not too optimistic to say that the current crisis presents us with a unique opportunity to question common stereotypes and misconceptions of others, and to interrogate unfounded assumptions that pass for self-evident truths.

## Nostalgia for an idealized past combined with total rejection of the present are the core elements of fundamentalist ideology of whatever stripe.

human civilization—but only if we are able to resist the current climate of hostility and fear, which risks causing even greater devastation and loss of life around the world than we have seen since the start of the new millennium. Fundamentalist extremism is neither inherent in, nor is it confined to, Islam, as Islamophobes would have it, but the symptom of a particularly aggressive and implacable form of globalization that is driven by capitalism and whose rhetoric hijacks universal ideals of liberty and democracy to further economic and political exploitation. It is not cultural, religious, or civilizational differences that are responsible for the conflicts of the contemporary world, but rather political ideologies that appeal to Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism, and that function much like religious dogma. This neither implies that 14<sup>th</sup> century Islam represented an ideal society, nor that contemporary global culture is irredeemably corrupt. Nostalgia for an idealized past combined with total rejection of the present are the core elements of fundamentalist ideology of whatever stripe. Rather, the point is to discern the basic humanistic

and humanitarian values common to every great civilization, and to work to promote them along non-sectarian lines. Perhaps it is not too optimistic to say that the current crisis presents us with a unique opportunity to question common stereotypes and misconceptions of others, and to interrogate unfounded assumptions that pass for self-evident truths. For example, there is now in the U.S. an unprecedented interest in understanding Islam and the Arab world, just as in the Arab world the Internet and satellite media are breaking the hold of totalitarian regimes upon populations whose demands for reform and democracy are increasingly difficult to ignore. And while the demonization, harassment, and persecution of Muslims and Arabs have reached new heights in the U.S., so have also the sympathy, support, and solidarity of large numbers of Americans. One recent and very public example was U.S. Senator from Illinois Barack Obama's bold declaration at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, "If there's an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process, that threatens my civil lib-

erties. It is that fundamental belief ... I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper that makes this country work. ... E pluribus unum. Out of many, one."

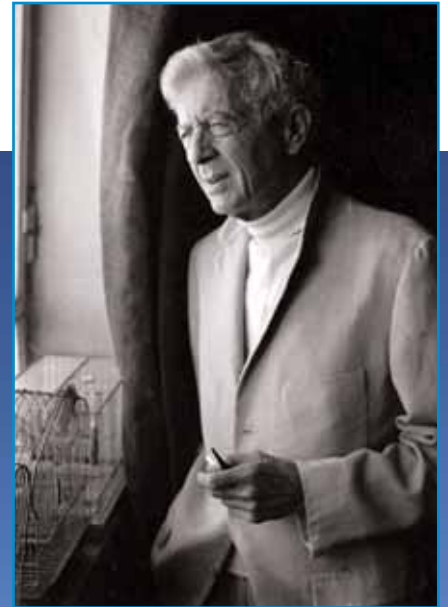
In other words, we are now faced with a choice: either to allow "the clash of civilizations" to become a self-fulfilling prophecy or to seize the opportunity, together with people of good conscience whatever their background, to educate ourselves and our families, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and fellow human beings about, and work to promote, the deeply humanistic values that have prevailed in every period in which human civilization advanced.

*Wail S. Hassan is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the author of Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction.* Ibn Battuta



# The Worlds of Paul Bowles

By  
Brian T. Edwards



Bowles himself had played a large part in teaching Americans how to think about Morocco. Americans tended to gravitate to the sinister side of that work.

I had read of Bowles's hospitalization on the CNN website on his way to my office. Even though I had seen Bowles recently in Tangier and had noticed a marked decline in his health, I was still startled.

There in a sterile office tower in northern Indiana, the student's report was incongruous with the image I held of Bowles lying in bed in his cluttered apartment, musty *hanbels* shutting out the intense Moroccan sun. But there was something more: that report of such an intimate event in Tangier might be circulating on the Internet seemed incontrovertible proof that a different era had arrived, one within which Paul Bowles, America's most famous literary expatriate since Gertrude Stein, would necessarily have some different meaning.

Bowles was not yet understandable within the world of the World Wide Web, even though word of his hospitalization spread rapidly via that digital network. The Atlantic crossings one associated with

The Paul Bowles residency Continental Hotel, Tangier, Morocco.  
Above: Undated portrait of Paul Bowles. Paul Bowles Papers, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Del.

**O**n the first Sunday in November 1999, Paul Bowles was admitted to the Italian Hospital in Tangier. It was local news—though the writer and composer was born in New York, he had been living in Tangier for more than half a century—

but the occurrence rapidly made the international airwaves.

Across the ocean and half a continent away at the University of Notre Dame, where I was teaching at the time, a student told me what had happened. The student

The very themes that drew many American readers to Bowles's work—especially magic, danger, and the primitive—were the themes that frustrated Moroccans, who apparently saw in Bowles's attention a devaluing of the Moroccan nationalist project.

Bowles were by steamship, not on fiber optic cable, and measured in weeks with two dozen suitcases in tow. Only grudgingly did he even travel by air, as he was forced to do for his exceedingly rare trips away from Morocco in his final years. Despite remarkable changes in the way the planet was organized during the 1980s and '90s, on his death Bowles still seemed to belong to the past and a different way of imagining the world. Perhaps it was because of those changes that so many held on to an older image, now in need of revision.

By 1999, Morocco was well into the digital age. Young Moroccans congregated in cybercafés to “surf the net” and to communicate with peers around the world in digital parlors called chatrooms. Several years earlier, fax machines and satellite television had become ubiquitous in Morocco and showed the ways in which new technologies could bridge national boundaries (there are still fewer restrictions on what Moroccan *parabols* will pick up from what U.S. satellites deliver). And by Bowles's death, cellular telephones, perhaps the most profoundly disorienting technology of the digital revolution, one that fundamentally altered the sense of being in the world, had already made major inroads in Morocco.

Bowles wasn't emailing his friends, to be sure, but he did have a television and VCR in his bedroom during the '90s and a fax machine that was in active use. During one of my last visits to him, I noticed a telephone on the floor next to his bed. I almost didn't see it, though, because I had read so often about the day in the 1970s he pulled it out of the wall—an integral part of the legend surrounding the “romantic savage,” as one of his biographers called him. I asked him about the phone. He merely shrugged. Who was he to upset the myth?

After a week and a half in the Italian Hospital, Bowles died. On the other side of the Atlantic, the legend of his voluntary exile in a mysterious foreign land dominated the obituaries, which stressed his

departure, his distance from the center of it all, and exaggerated the exoticism of the place that had captivated him for so long. The major American papers saw in Bowles's long residence in Morocco a renunciation of something about the U.S. and implicitly criticized him for staying away for so long, as if in a prolonged adolescence.

For most Americans thinking about Bowles meant thinking about Morocco. In his new book, *Paul Bowles, Magic & Morocco*, Allen Hibbard writes that for many in the West, Morocco and the name Paul Bowles are inseparable. Bowles himself had played a large part in teaching Americans how to think about Morocco. Americans tended to gravitate to the sinister side of that work. In the lead of his full-page obituary for the *New York Times*, Mel Gussow wrote that Bowles's work “evoked a world of dark Moroccan streets and scorching deserts, a haze of hashish and drug-induced visions.” Even for those who hadn't read his books, Bowles was a touchstone for American presence in North Africa, and the point of reference for so many travel accounts and magazine pieces about the country. During his life, and then after it was over, the ways in which Bowles's life in Morocco was portrayed by journalists, interviewers, travel writers, and biographers inadvertently framed the way many Americans who didn't otherwise think about Morocco thought about Morocco. And Americans writing about Bowles tended to filter out the signs of what had changed in Morocco, and what

had changed in Bowles's own career. To claim that he wasn't living in the present suggested that Morocco was not living in the present either.

This operated of course in both directions. For many Moroccans, Paul Bowles was a controversial figure. As a literary author with worldwide fame, Bowles's interest in and devoted representation of folk culture, Berber musical forms, and the underbelly of Moroccan society troubled many Moroccan intellectuals. The very themes that drew many American readers to Bowles's work—especially magic, danger, and the primitive—were the themes that frustrated Moroccans, who apparently saw in Bowles's attention a devaluing of the Moroccan nationalist project. In Abdallah Laroui's major work, *Contemporary Arab Ideology*, published in 1967, for example, the Moroccan historian and philosopher criticized Bowles for seizing on “empty time, the degree zero of existence” and finding it in the “absolute silence of the Sahara desert.” “He forgets,” wrote Laroui, “that the silence exists only for the former New Yorker or Londoner.”

The Paul Bowles legend, in its American incarnation, seemed to require that the distant land be cut off from America, and by implication from modernity: a primitive place. Gussow wrote that Bowles “retreated to Tangier and became a collector of Arabian stories and songs, and moved farther away from the worlds of publishing and society toward an unknown destination.” Without that distance, both geographic and temporal, the legend couldn't hold up. Gussow's mistaken reference to “Arabian stories” (when he means Arabic-language, or Arab) is a slip that sends him back to the time of the Arabian Nights. It follows that Gussow and the other American obituaries said next to nothing about contemporary Moroccan history itself, despite the importance of it to the Bowles legend. During the fifty years Bowles had lived there, and the nearly seven decades since he had first visited, Tangier and greater Morocco changed as least as much as the rest of the world, if not considerably more so. Tangier had

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grown from a zone the size of a large town, administered by a group of European nations, to a sprawling city of a million or more pertaining to independent Morocco. Bowles's relationship to Morocco and Moroccans and to his literary career itself changed markedly in response to the changes in his adopted place.

On his death, Moroccan media covered Bowles's passing actively and with a variety of opinions, from those that followed Laroui's lead, to more appreciative responses that saw in his career something of Tangier's own fusion of languages and peoples. Many papers put the story on their front page, and the Moroccan media response to Bowles's death was more varied, more interesting, than that which appeared in the U.S. media. As the most famous American living in the country, as well as someone who had popularized Morocco among Americans, Bowles's work and the end of his life did not seem unimportant events, relegated only to the literary supplement.

Still, no mention of the intense and varied Moroccan response to the American author made it into the American press. (In October 2000, I did publish an essay in the online culture magazine *FEED* that said as much and sampled some Moroccan reactions.) Then, after the multiple tragedies of September 11, 2001, American writers lamented Bowles's absence, but for mostly retrograde reasons, clinging to his tales of horror and misinterpreting his work as signaling the impossibility of Americans understanding the "Muslim mind." The artistic collaborations and the conversation with Moroccans that Bowles had been engaged in for decades were forgotten in preference for the old tales of shock and awe.

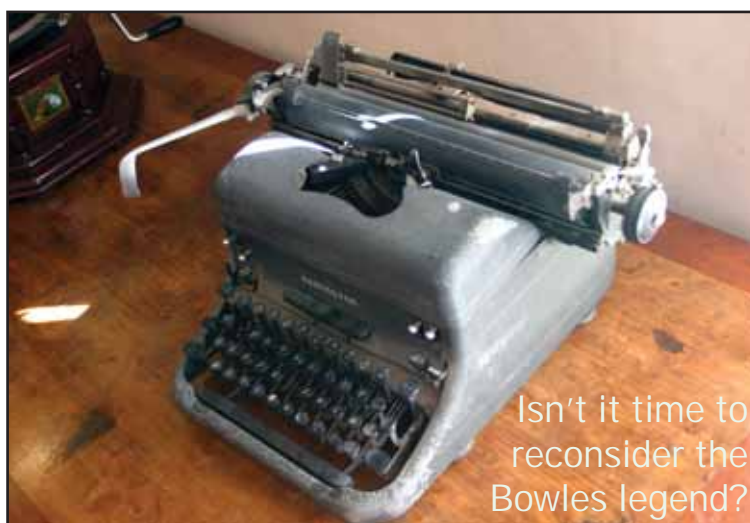
Isn't it time to reconsider the Bowles legend?

### Spider's Web

When Anouar Majid invited me to write a profile of Paul Bowles for *Tingis*, I was struck by the intriguing challenge of simul-

taneously addressing readers in both Morocco and the United States on the topic of a man who had such different meanings in those two contexts.

So I begin with my sense of the disconnect between the Tangier in which Bowles died (a modern and vibrant city) and the Tangier with which Americans tended to associate him (a primitive and decadent wasteland). To be sure, there are many aspects of contemporary Tangier and like most cities of a million or more residents, it has its sinister side. The Internet has not pervaded every aspect of life in Tangier



The Paul Bowles' type-writer, Continental Hotel, Tangier, Morocco

and there are many who are not "connected" to the World Wide Web, and there may be some residents who have neither cell phone nor *parabol*. If I claim that Morocco had entered the digital age during Bowles's final years, however, my point is less to claim a digital Bowles than to reassert the Moroccan present.

As a port city and one of the key crossings of the globe, Tangier has never been disconnected from transnational flows of people, cultures and goods. It is one of the earliest of cosmopolitan cities, and remains deeply so. Tanjawi must be the most linguistically gifted people on earth, and it is common for residents to speak three, four or five languages with real fluency, and to switch rapidly between them. I recall the linguistic thrill of living in Tangier in the mid-1990s, and the roller coaster ride of conversation with friends.

My Tanjawi friends had gone to the Spanish Colegio, the American School of Tangier, the Lycée Regnault, or some combination of these. Some had gone on to study at Al Akhawayn University (run in English), others to the state university in Tetouan. Moroccan Arabic, French, Spanish, and English were all in use—on occasion all in the same *sentence*. What's more several spoke Tamazight (Berber) with their parents, and one or two picked up German on the side.

Paul Bowles was in this sense very much a Tanjawi. He published translations from French, Spanish, Moroccan Arabic, and from modern standard Arabic (in the last case with help from the author he was translating). These projects offer keys to understanding something at the center of Bowles's literary project: trying to connect with others, even when it is nearly impossible to do so. For Bowles, the difficulty of communicating had less to do with language or nationality and more to do with existential space between individuals and between the individual and the world itself. But he never ceased trying. He could move between languages easily and produced nearly twenty books in translation—really in collaboration—with Mohammed Mrabet, Mohamed Choukri, Ahmed Yacoubi, and Larbi Layachi. This is the Bowles that we might lament today, an American who worked with Arabs as equals, and who listened to their speech without trying to dictate the conversation.

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When Bernardo Bertolucci made the film version of Bowles's first novel, four decades after its publication, he painted Bowles's tale of marital, psychological, and physical demise on a broad and visually sumptuous canvas.

Americans, that is those whom Mexicans call *estadounidenses*, are a mostly monolingual people. There are obvious exceptions: Latinos and the many diasporas that find themselves in the U.S. Perhaps the exceptions are the rule. In any case, the Bowles legend in America—that he had drifted off to an “unknown destination”—was propagated and maintained by the Anglophone crowd. If you don't understand what people are saying, you tend not to pay much attention to what is being said, or to let the imagination run wild. Among foreigners who come to Tangier, there is a long history of the latter.

For outsiders, one of the thrills of Tangier is how quickly on crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, on “setting foot on Africa,” foreignness makes itself visible. When Mark Twain visited in 1867, he found it “thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign—foreign from top to bottom—foreign from centre to circumference—foreign inside and outside and all around—nothing anywhere about it to dilute its foreignness—nothing to remind us of any other people or any other land under the sun.” Bowles followed in the footsteps of that tradition: he first went to Tangier, in 1931, on the suggestion of Gertrude Stein, as he liked to remind visitors. And Stein, when she arrived in Tangier with Alice Toklas in 1912, came with her friend Henri Matisse's suggestion for a hotel. Matisse, himself, had in many ways been chasing Delacroix's Morocco, flashes of light and shadow amid staged fantasies of Oriental exotica. And by their own accounts, all three—Stein, Matisse, and Delacroix—never ventured much beyond the limited framework of their own preconceptions. Stein and Toklas strolled Tangier with their official guide, “a Mohammedan whose name was Mohammed,” according to Toklas, and Matisse would reflect that much of what he saw was already familiar: “I found the landscapes of Morocco just as they had been described in the paintings of Delacroix and in Pierre Loti's novels.” Looking to capture on canvas something ineffable about Moroccan femininity, Matisse hired a prostitute to come to his

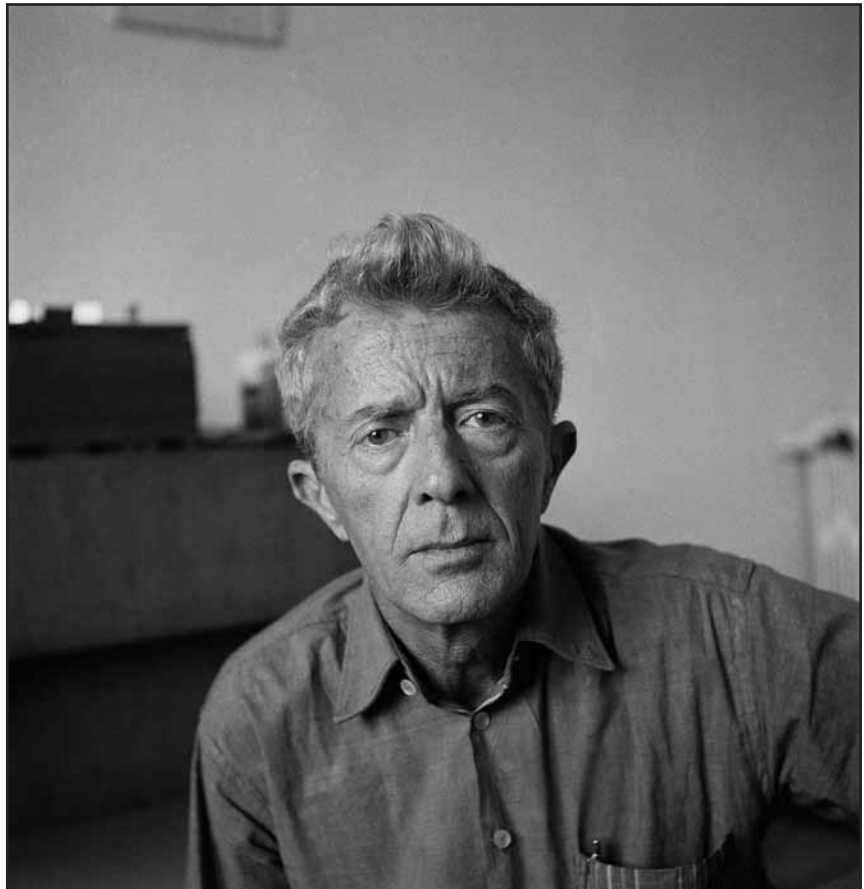
hotel and pose. He preferred not to leave the confines of the luxurious Hotel Villa de France.

Given the European style of much of Tangier's urban design and architecture, and the architectural and cultural affinities with Andalucian Spain to the north, I dare say that the immediate frisson of difference is provoked by the outward signs of Islam: the visibility of covered women, the minarets of Moroccan mosques, and the hauntingly beautiful and audibly inescapable calls to prayer by Tangier's *muezzins*. Based on the evidence of photographs and paintings over the centuries and to the present, it's the first in that list that is most immediately thrilling, ironically enough. What is it in the *haik* and *litham* that the foreigner finds so captivat-

ing? The Algerian poet and critic Malek Alloula has come up with a compelling interpretation: in the blankness of cloth, the Westerner sees his own ability not to comprehend, and is titillated by the experience of being shut out.

Closed out, as if from a forbidden place, many see mystery and the imagination runs rampant. This was the Tangier that Paul Bowles saw when he visited in August 1931. “If I said that Tangier struck me as a dream city,” he described it later, “I should mean it in the strict sense.” He wrote these words in his memoir *Without Stopping*, written in the early 1970s as his wife languished in a sanatorium across the Strait of Gibraltar in Málaga. It's a nostalgic book, not surprisingly, but one which hides its feelings and barely mentions Jane Bowles or what she was suffering at the time, a writer of genius reduced to mute silence. After a decade-long decline, she died in 1973.

Jane Bowles was not only perhaps one of the two or three most original and chal-



Paul Bowles © Shepard Sherbell/CORBIS

I've long thought it was Bertolucci's private tribute to The Sheik and Lawrence of Arabia, two pinnacles of filmmaking that saw the romance of desert sands.

linging American writers of the 20th century, but she was also a writer who had explored intensely the impossibility of communication across the space separating individuals. She was, not incidentally, Paul's equal as a linguist—Mohammed Mrabet and Mohamed Choukri both told me that she was superior in Moroccan Arabic to him—though she never produced her own translations.

Paul Bowles's memoir has deceived his biographers, several of whom rely on it as factual, and admit as much, without considering its literary debts. It is better appreciated in the context of its two major influences: Gertrude Stein's hoax of an autobiography, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), part self-publicity and part love letter to her partner Alice, and a book that by the way includes a paragraph about Paul Bowles himself, then a "young man who first made Gertrude Stein's acquaintance by writing engaging letters from America." Stein went on, in her own ventriloquism of Toklas's voice, to describe the young Bowles: "Gertrude Stein says of him that he is delightful and sensible in summer but neither delightful nor sensible in the winter." And the second influence is *Life with a Few Holes*, the life story by Larbi Layachi that Paul Bowles had translated and published in 1964. In both, there is much more than meets the eye, and the tale of a life conceals much more than it reveals. By the time he wrote *Without Stopping*, Bowles had learned from Layachi something of a trickster discourse; it is perhaps Bowles's most African book. He gave his publishers what they thought they wanted (lots of names of famous Europeans and Americans he had known) and saved the rest for himself. Alone among those who set out to write Bowles's biography, Millicent Dillon recognized the mystery he held so deep. She did not fail to heed it. The book Dillon wrote, called

*You Are Not I*, a brilliant anti-biography, is the most perceptive and courageous portrait I have read of the man.

### Doors of Perception

I once remarked to Bowles that he seemed to have organized the way in which many Americans made sense of what they saw around them in Morocco. "Your books have led generations of people here," I told him in 1996. That he knew from the stream of uninvited guests who had been knocking on his door for years. This was February, though, and there weren't many, so we had time to pursue the conversation.



Portrait of Paul Bowles, ca. 1985. Paul Bowles Papers, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Del.

I told Bowles how I would occasionally be with American friends in Morocco, friends who had more than passing familiarity with Morocco, spoke Arabic, had spent a year or more in the country working or researching. "And we'll walk around, and all of a sudden they'll turn to me and say, 'This is right out of Paul Bowles.'" Bowles laughed. "Are they blaming you for that? Or are they blaming Tangier for that?"

I told him it was usually an expression of excitement, that they'd found something really intriguing, a real and full experience. And I mentioned that more than once I had heard friends recount an experience in Morocco and say, as means of explanation, "Well, it was totally Sheltering Sky!" Then Bowles really laughed. Because the grammar of the sentence was odd, he checked it: "It - was - Sheltering - Sky?" I confirmed the usage. He considered for a moment, evidently pleased, then asked: "Are they thinking of the book, or the film, I wonder."

When Bernardo Bertolucci made the film version of Bowles's first novel, four decades after its publication, he painted Bowles's tale of marital, psychological, and physical demise on a broad and visually sumptuous canvas. Though Bowles's 1949 novel was set in Algeria, the Italian director shot largely in Morocco, with Tangier standing in for Oran and, according to Bowles, imported Sicilian flies standing in for Saharan ones when the latter did not "behave." Bertolucci's complaint about Moroccan flies is similar to the image of the subjugated Maghrebis that emerges from the film, a film that edits out Bowles's more subtle questions about the contemporary political situation of colonial Algeria after WWII. Bertolucci does incorporate dialogue from the novel relatively accurately, so that which is edited out is most revealing.

One of the more intriguing passages from the novel is completely gone: in it, Port, the American protagonist, discusses the theft of his passport with a French colonial officer named Lieutenant d'Armagnac. The scene is right out of Poe, one of Bowles's favorite authors, in its drawing room ratiocination, two gentlemen solving a mystery by logic in the confines of a small room. Come to think of it, it's not

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The Paul Bowles Room at the Continental Hotel, Tangier, Morocco

unlike my own relationship with Bowles himself during the last five years of his life. Long, intricate, gentele conversations in a stuffy room. In the scene, the differences between French attitudes toward colonized Algerians and American ones is brought out, and Bowles's critique of both positions makes clear that he was able to see the serious shortcomings of both positions. But Bertolucci edits this scene out. There's very little politics in his film at all, and in any case, a drawing room scene doesn't work within in his own larger creative decision. Bertolucci recasts *The Sheltering Sky* as an epic. But why?

The key may be found in the long, mostly wordless sequence that comprises the last forty minutes of the film, wherein the female protagonist Kit reacts to the death of her husband Port in an isolated French garrison in the Sahara by hitching a ride with a passing caravan. The sequence, shot on location and stunningly beautiful, depicts a passionate affair between Kit and a Berber tradesman named Belqassim. And though the affair takes place in the novel, here it evokes desert romances more than psychological exploration. And I've long thought it was Bertolucci's private tribute to *The Sheik* and *Lawrence of Arabia*, two pinnacles of filmmaking that saw the romance of desert sands. The silence of the desert could be both a tribute to *The Sheik*, a silent picture, and also a reflection on Bowles's sense of the

desert's silence, expressed in his travel essay "Baptism of Solitude" (which Laroui responds to in the quote above). But it also firmly places Bowles's novel in a tradition of "Orientalism," that mingles the representation of exotic otherness and the political domination of colonial holdings. There are other ways of understanding the novel.

Recasting the novel as an epic romance with an exotic backdrop, Bertolucci also removed Bowles's interest in politics and some of the more innovative aspects of his technique. *The Sheltering Sky* is a compelling book, with lots of directions that run out of it, possibilities that he develops in his later work. One of those most important, I think (and argue in *Morocco Bound*, my forthcoming book, which dedicates a chapter to Paul Bowles's work), is a line that brings out the Arabic that

If the Bowles room in the American Legation freezes that moment in time, there are also living responses to Bowles elsewhere in Morocco that are more important for the future

Bowles was just beginning to learn and which would profoundly reorient his own career.

Though he had written tales as a boy and published poetry in a major Paris literary review as a teenager, Paul Bowles first gained fame as a composer. In particular, he was known for his incidental music for the stage, collaborating with Tennessee Williams, Orson Welles, Salvador Dalí, and others. Musical composition perhaps always involves collaboration, but Bowles was especially collaborative, bringing together the arts in his compositions, including an opera, a Spanish *zarzuela* and art songs that set words by Gertrude Stein, Jane Bowles, Federico García Lorca and others to music. So successful a composer was he that, for a while, he gave up his ambitions as a writer, or put them on hold. Not until meeting Jane Auer, in 1937, whom he would marry the following year, and with whom he would carry on one of the more idiosyncratic of intimacies, did his literary impulse find its own route. When Jane Bowles asked Paul to read the manuscript of a novel she called "Three Serious Ladies," he plunged into the work and made intensive suggestions for revision. (When she published the book, in 1943, it was called *Two Serious Ladies*, and followed Paul's suggestion to excise a major section and one of the title characters.) Paul later remarked that the experience working with Jane's manuscript affected him profoundly and encouraged him to return to his own writing. It's perhaps not a surprise that there seems to be an intense conversation running through the works of Paul and Jane Bowles, despite their different tone and subjects. Millicent Dillon, in the introduction to her *Portable Paul and Jane Bowles*, hears "alternating voices" in the work that "seem to resonate, picking up aspects of themes and turns of phrase that double back upon one another." That Dillon is compelled to use a metaphor from musical composition to explain this literary and personal relationship is not, of course, incidental, although in *You Are Not I* she expresses frustration trying to reconcile the aspects of Paul Bowles's career: "I am left with the writing and the music as two separate rooms." The key to understanding Bowles's careers as composer and as writer, it seems to me, revolves precisely around the question of collaboration. And it's in Dillon's own figure for his and Jane's long literary conversation.

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Collaboration certainly animated Bowles's work with Ahmed Yacoubi, Larbi Layachi and Mohammed Mrabet, Moroccan authors whom Bowles translated. There it reminds us of another musical figure for cooperation across divides: counterpoint. The compositional practice of counterpoint is a rich metaphor for bridging cultural impasses, one that inspired the late Edward Said's brilliant concept of contrapuntal reading and Said's own late project with Daniel Barenboim of bringing together young Israeli and Palestinian musicians. Despite their richness, both conceptually and in practice, the translations are often put to the side of Bowles's career, as if secondary. Bowles himself was a bit modest about them, and misled critics by claiming not to put too much stock in them. But the truth is that once Bowles started working with Moroccan authors, they took up a large part of his time. These books represent a major portion of his output in the last phase of his career. And these books themselves are more than translations, as translations are usually understood. Bowles did not read written Arabic and these authors (with the exception of Choukri) did not write Arabic; they could only author fictions orally in Moroccan Arabic, which is a spoken, not a written language. Yacoubi, Layachi and Mrabet each "told" their stories, novels, and memoirs to Bowles, using a combination of Moroccan Arabic and Spanish, and Bowles then translated the tales into English. There are no originals to compare to the translations; the books appeared first in English. They are best understood as collaborations, since Bowles's presence was necessary not only as translator but also as instigator and editor and audience.

Bowles had the longest professional relationship with Mohammed Mrabet. From 1967 to 1993, Mrabet and Bowles published a dozen books together.

Compelling narratives marked by Mrabet's distinct voice. Or is it Bowles's narrative voice portraying Mrabet's voice? Impossible to say, since we read Mrabet's tales in Bowles's rendering. (Soon we will read them in Abdelaziz Jadir's translation into modern standard Arabic, but then again, Mrabet's voice will be at a remove.)

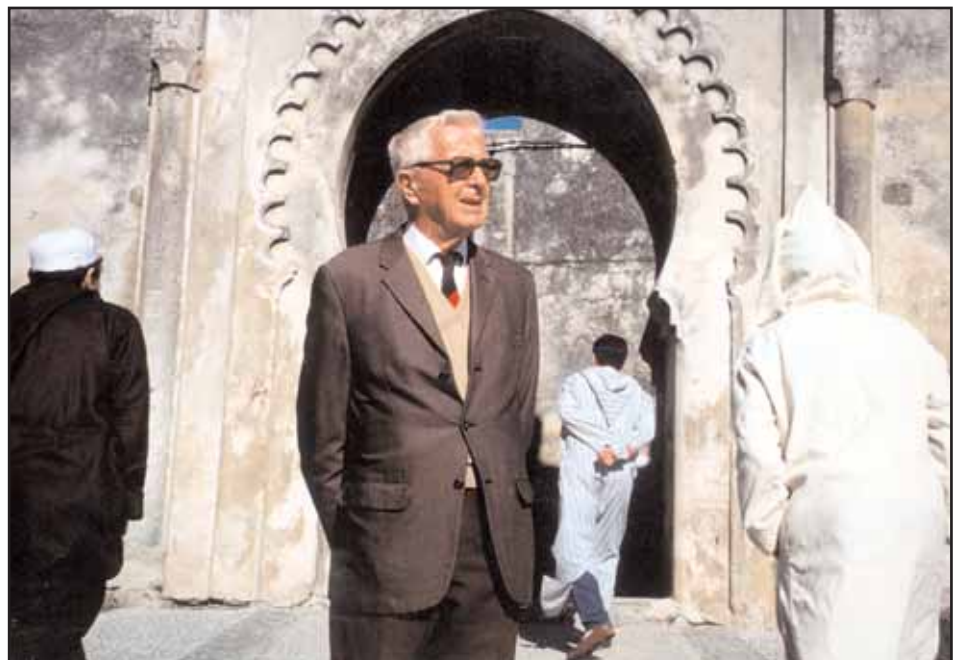
Moroccan and American responses to Bowles diverged especially clearly on the subject of these collaborations. In the *NY Times*, Mel Gussow suggested that Bowles became "a collector of Arabian stories and songs," as if they were curiosities brought back from the Saudi desert. The *Maghreb Arabe Presse*, however, credited Bowles with bringing attention to the works of several "Moroccan writers." Other Moroccan obituaries credited Bowles for founding a movement called *al-adab at-Tanji*, a compelling phrase I translate as "Tangerian literature." This is far from the Bowles of American legend, and it's the account of the author I think most accurately reflects the last phase of his career. Indeed, it's one that is also most useful for the future.

#### New Guide Books

Paul Bowles knew that he had become a site to be seen: "in Tangier you have to see Paul Bowles and the Caves of Hercules," went the travelers' advice in the '90s. Indeed if you look at the *Rough Guide*, from the early 1990s (anyway, the last time

My hope is that the dialogue Bowles engaged in with his Moroccan collaborators, however we critics end up making sense of it, will animate scholars on both sides of the ocean and inspire a similarly productive conversation of Americans and Moroccans.

I bought one), there he is both in the Contexts section as part of the required reading and mentioned in the Tangier chapter as one of the living features of the city. The faux guides of Tangier used to offer to bring young vagabonds up to Bowles's apartment for a few dirhams. What an intriguing reversal of fortunes. In 1996, Bowles told me that more than sixty years earlier, in the early 1930s, he had gone to check out Biskra, Algeria, expressly because he had read about it in Robert Hichens's 1904 blockbuster *The Garden of Allah*. "I found a copy of it somewhere and read it," Bowles said. "Then I went to check it out in Biskra, and it was something else. I don't know when the novel was supposed to have taken place, but it must have been a good while before I visit-



Paul Bowles outside the Kasbah gate, Tangier, ca. 1990. Paul Bowles Papers, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Del.

ed the town. Because it sounded—in the book—it sounded like an authentic village, but when I was there it wasn't at all. It was completely touristic. Hoked-up."

Bowles recalled young Algerian women costumed in traditional garb paid to walk back and forth through the village carrying water jugs. All because of the novel and the people it had drawn there. "Hichens could have been made the mayor of Biskra," Bowles chuckled. I've never seen mention of Bowles's trip in Hichens's footsteps before. And though he talked about it at length on this one occasion, he never brought it up again. I wonder if Bowles was a bit uncomfortable about it because it gives a different sense of the "authenticity" of his encounter with Algeria and Morocco back in the 1930s.

Whatever the case, there's little doubt that many Americans were drawn to Morocco in much the same way, but this time following in Bowles's footsteps. There's even a book, for which he contributed the foreword, organized on literary trips "following the footsteps of fame."

What sort of footsteps will readers of Bowles's work follow in the 21st century?

I remember meeting a young American dandy in Fez in the summer of 1994 who was indignant that he hadn't been admitted into Bowles's apartment in Tangier when he had knocked repeatedly. (Little did he know that Bowles was then recuperating from a femoral bypass surgery.) The young man mispronounced Bowles's name "bowels." I asked him, innocently enough, if he had read Bowles's novels. "No," the American said, "but I wanted him to sign my books."

Bowles's responsibility for the misperceptions must be kept in check. Many people who criticize him or who follow in his footsteps have read the barest portion of his work. Bowles of course has much to do with the legend. There was a tendency to take him a bit too much at his word and to allow oneself to be persuaded by some of his stage managing. The first thing one noticed on entering his apartment, as so many portraitists wrote, was the stack of weathered old suitcases, left as if he were about to head off again to the Sahara. They never would have held, of course, had he tried to use them again. The suit-

cases look the same today in the Bowles Room at the Tangier American Legation Museum, which acquired some of them before his death. It's fun to look at the old steamer tags pasted on the cases in a palimpsest of place names and transit companies.

If the Bowles room in the American Legation freezes that moment in time, there are also living responses to Bowles elsewhere in Morocco that are more important for the future—namely, the interest in him and his work by another generation of Moroccan readers, critics and students. Several critical works on Bowles—essays and a couple of monographs—have been published in Morocco, in French, Arabic and English, and students have written Ph.D. theses on Bowles's work. Abdelaziz Jadir in Tangier has translated Bowles into Arabic and also is translating Mrabet's works into modern standard Arabic. Khalid Bekkaoui and Sadik Rddad, directors of the Moroccan Cultural Studies Center at Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdallah University in Fez, organized a conference in March 2004 called "Mrabet/Bowles: Literary and Cultural Encounters" (the proceedings will be published soon) and are engaged in a project of rereleasing Mrabet's work with Paul Bowles in a series of books published in English.

At the conferences and in the classrooms, there are of course diverse opinions about the meanings of Bowles's work in Morocco. And that is the most promising development itself. Bowles's work may live on in new form and be recoded in its new setting and for new times. All literature that is remembered after the death of its author has such afterlives. That's exactly as it should be. My hope is that the dialogue Bowles engaged in with his Moroccan collaborators, however we critics end up making sense of it, will animate scholars on both sides of the ocean and inspire a similarly productive conversation of Americans and Moroccans.

*Brian T. Edwards is an assistant professor of English and comparative literary studies at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. His book Morocco Bound: Disorienting America's Maghreb from Casablanca to the Marrakech Express will be published in September by Duke University Press.*

# Freedom & Orthodoxy

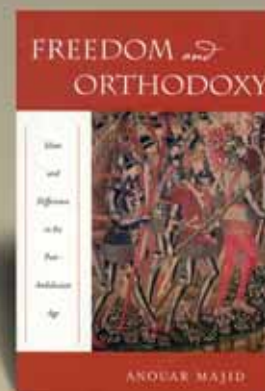
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Publisher: Stanford University Press

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Author of *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*.



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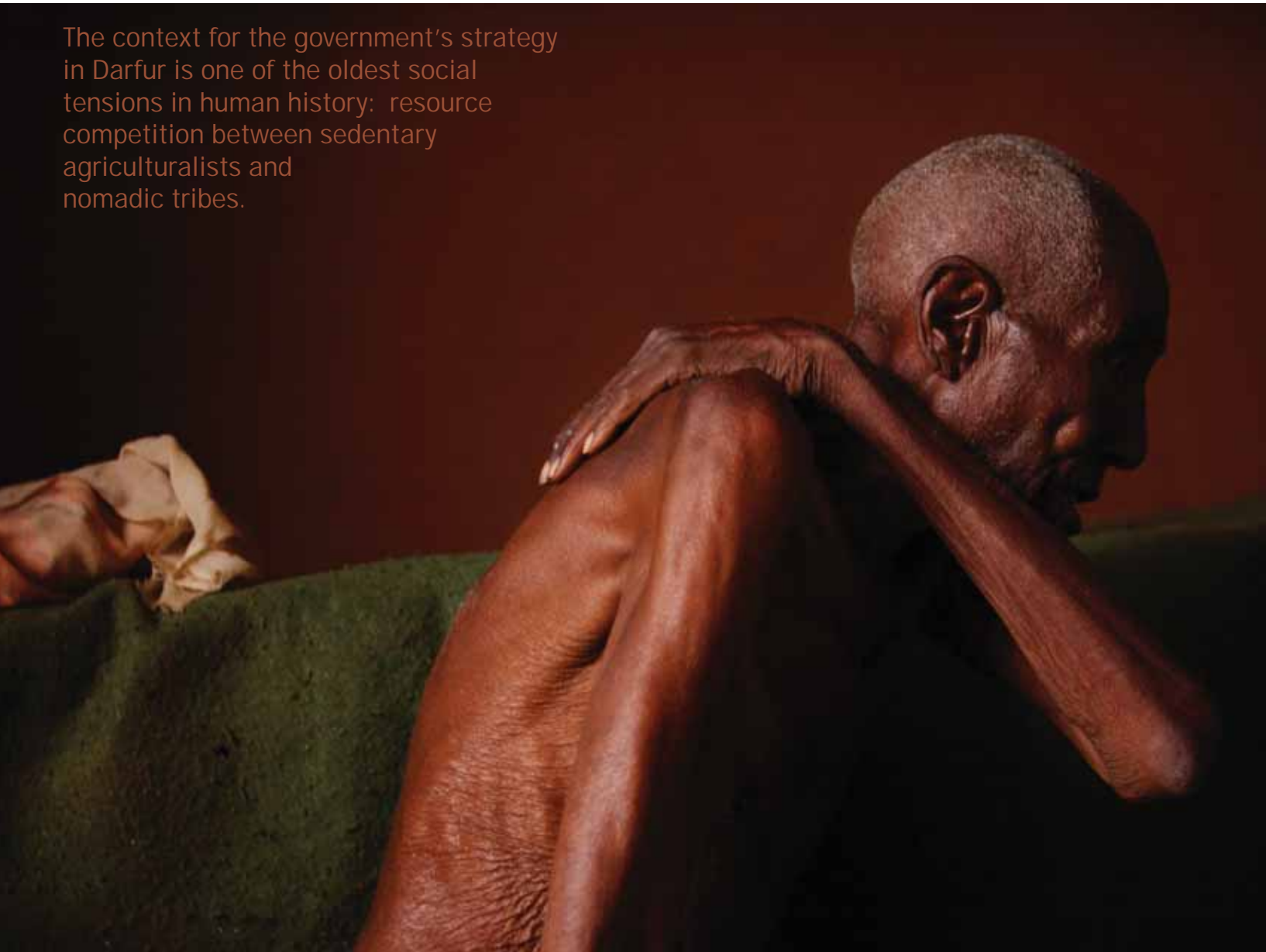
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# War Crimes in Northern Africa

By  
*Julian Davis Mortenson*

The context for the government's strategy in Darfur is one of the oldest social tensions in human history: resource competition between sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic tribes.



Abu Hamid Omar, 85, burned and branded in the attack, is the only surviving male in a section of his village in the city of Sayah. © Benjamin Lowy/CORBIS

**L**ess than ten years after the Rwandan genocide and the international community's latest "never again," war crimes have once more been committed on a massive scale, this

time during the ongoing civil war in the Darfur region of Sudan. The report of the United Nation's Darfur Commission, made available to the public in early February, largely confirmed the worst of the press reports about the conflict. The numbers

are staggering. Before fighting erupted in Darfur, the area's population was estimated at 6.3 million. Today, almost two million of them are refugees, forced to flee their homes in the face of predations by paramilitary forces and the swirling civil

war. At least six hundred villages—and perhaps as many as 2,000, if reported Sudanese police estimates are accurate—have been completely destroyed, many burned to the ground or demolished along with crops, trees, wells, hospitals, schools, police stations, water pumps, and even the basic tools of food preparation that make life in the region possible. The number of civilian deaths in the past two years is estimated at somewhere between 70,000 and 400,000, depending on the source. For anyone familiar with the war crimes cases from Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the litany of atrocities committed in Darfur is a profoundly disheartening echo of those two conflicts.

What response from the international community would best further the interests of justice and inhibit such devastation in the future? Countries throughout Africa have a particular stake in this question as they continue to evolve beyond the legacy of colonial oppression. As African nations become increasingly important participants in the international community, they should push for collective protection of their populations from an internal politics of criminality that has flourished in so many of the continent's conflicts, whether north, central, or south. To that end, this article will explore three questions. What exactly has happened in Darfur? Do the Sudanese atrocities fit the requirements for legal action by the international community? And, leaving aside the question of forcible intervention for the time being, what are the practical options for collective judicial action in response to everything that has come before?

### Rebellion in Darfur

The conflict in Darfur, which is located in the western region of the largest country in Africa, should not be confused with the separate and much older rebellion in southern Sudan, which dates back to the 1960s and was brought to an apparent conclusion by the January 2005 peace agreement between the government and the principal southern rebels. The southern conflict was wrapped up with issues of religion: the South is predominantly Christian and animist, and one of the southern rebels' major grievances had been the central government's nationwide imposition of sharia law. The Darfur rebellion, by contrast, arose far more recently—

in 2002, with major open hostilities breaking out in early 2003—and the great majority of people on both sides of the conflict are Muslim. Rather than religion, the main issues for the Darfurian rebels are what they see as the political and economic marginalization of Darfur, which in their minds has been left intentionally underdeveloped by the handful of northern tribes that have dominated the Sudanese government since the 1950s.

Despite the theoretically region-wide appeal of the rebels' program, however, tribal identity *within* Darfur is actually the key to understanding the subsequent conflict and, especially, the resulting atrocities. In the early days of the rebellion, the rebels scored a string of rapid and rather startling successes, forcing government forces in Darfur essentially to abandon the rural areas entirely. Largely because the conflict in the south was still ongoing, the government simply did not have the forces necessary to reckon with the military threat presented by Darfurian rebel groups. Hamstrung by this lack of resources, the government made a calculated decision to capitalize on the history of tribal tensions in the region in order to suppress the western rebels. Since the western rebel movement is overwhelmingly made up of people from only three tribes—the Zaghawa, the Fur, and the Massalit—the government found a remarkable degree of success in its efforts to play tribal groups against one another.

The context for the government's strategy in Darfur is one of the oldest social tensions in human history: resource competition between sedentary agriculturalists and nomadic tribes. Tribal tensions along these lines have long existed in Darfur. They became particularly intense in the 1980s as the region suffered under desertification and years of bad drought; armed conflict between sedentary "African" tribes and "Arab" nomads over access to water sources and grazing lands continued sporadically through the 1990s. (It's worth adding a caveat to these categorizations. The Darfur Commission found that there is little ethnic, racial or physical distinction between members of the government-allied militias and the tribes associated with the Darfur rebels, and noted that both the rebel coalition and the anti-rebel militias include many members from tribes that "ought" to belong to the other side.

Nonetheless, there is a wide and well-entrenched perception in Sudan that the rebels and their population base are "African" or "black" and that the anti-rebel militias are "Arab," and that is how the combatants frequently describe themselves. As a social construct, this dichotomy has tremendous rhetorical power in the region. Like the Darfur Commission, I will use this established dichotomy as a convenient shorthand for rebel-allied tribes and government-allied tribes, respectively.)

### A Systematic Program of Atrocities

By mid-2003, government officials in Sudan—including the Sudanese President himself—was calling for assistance from rival tribes in Darfur, and particularly from nomadic Arabs, in suppressing the rebellion. They got all they asked for, and more. The paramilitary groups and tribal forces that arose from this collaboration have come collectively to be called the Janjaweed (an Arabic colloquialism meaning "a man (or devil) on a horse")—a term that has long been used in the Sudan to describe mounted bandits of any sort. The Darfur Commission's findings regarding the actions of the Janjaweed and government forces were clear: over the past two years, they have cooperated in a massive and coordinated campaign of attacks on the civilian population in Darfur, directed almost without exception at the three sedentary tribes from which the Darfur rebels draw their main strength. The

The paramilitary groups and tribal forces that arose from this collaboration have come collectively to be called the Janjaweed (an Arabic colloquialism meaning "a man (or devil) on a horse")—a term that has long been used in the Sudan to describe mounted bandits of any sort.

Commission's report details mass executions, systematic destruction of villages and the basic means of sustaining an agricultural lifestyle, midnight kidnappings, roundups of prominent tribal intellectuals and other leaders, torture in detention centers, harassment and bloody attacks on refugee camps, systematic use of rape as a tool of terror, rampant pillaging, and an unmistakable, concerted effort to terrorize an entire population of people into permanently abandoning their traditional homelands.

The Commission found that government forces have supported the Janjaweed in almost every imaginable way: supplying them with weapons, ammunition and supplies; sending government ground troops to stand by as support for the Janjaweed during their attacks; providing air support and even running advance bombing raids to strike panic into African villages prior to a main assault by the Janjaweed; preventing the police from investigating or even registering complaints brought against the anti-rebel militias; and at least sometimes directly participating in the destruction and mayhem. Indeed, some Sudanese government authorities have acknowledged their support for these attacks on villages and civilians with startling openness. The Minister of Defense, for example, indicated to the Darfur Commission that he considered the presence of a single rebel anywhere in a village sufficient to make the entire village a legitimate military target.

The United States, however, opposes the International Criminal Court, partly on the ground that it could theoretically be used to bring unfounded and politically motivated prosecutions against members of the United States military for their actions overseas.

The Darfur Commission concluded that these activities were a systematic, consciously formulated effort to drive large portions of the pro-rebel tribes permanently. The government got what it wanted by striking a major blow at the rebels' support base. The Arab tribes got what they wanted by clearing out land and securing access to scarce resources for themselves; indeed, the Darfur Commission noted that Arab tribes have already begun to take over the land evacuated by the fleeing Africans. Much press attention focused on the fact that the U.N. Commission did not find a conscious government-wide policy of genocide—a crime which essentially requires, under international law, the intent to physically destroy the targeted group within a defined geographic area. In the words of the Commission, however, its conclusion that there was no central genocidal policy “should not be taken as in any way detracting from, or belittling, the gravity of the crimes perpetrated in that region. Depending on the circumstances, such international offences as crimes against humanity or large scale war crimes may be no less serious and heinous than genocide. This is exactly what happened in Darfur, where massive atrocities were perpetrated on a very large scale, and have so far gone unpunished.”

### No Impunity for War Criminals

The real question facing the international community is how to deal with the Darfur Commission's findings. For its part, the Commission identified “ten (10) high-ranking central Government officials, seventeen (17) Government officials operating at the local level in Darfur, fourteen (14) members of the Janjaweed, as well as seven (7) members of the different rebel groups and three (3) officers of a foreign army” against whom there was sufficiently compelling evidence to justify an official criminal investigation. (Despite the identification of some rebel suspects, the Commission never wavered from its conclusion that the Sudanese government and the Janjaweed were responsible for the overwhelming majority of murders and other war crimes committed in the region.) The Commission also recommended a thorough investigation of the Sudanese army and intelligence services and compiled a list of numerous other Janjaweed perpetrators identified by at least one eye-

Like the statute governing the ICC, the Yugoslavia Tribunal's statute sets forth a series of prohibited crimes, such as extermination, enslavement, deportation, torture, persecution on political, racial, or religious grounds, and genocide.

witness as participants or leaders in an attack. All of these names are currently under seal.

Two basic options for dealing with these findings have emerged. The Darfur Commission recommended that the U.N. Security Council refer the cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC). That court, which sits in The Hague, was established in the late 1990s as a permanent institution with responsibility for investigating, prosecuting, trying, and punishing the most serious offenses of international criminal law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, among many others, therefore believes that the ICC is the “logical place” for prosecuting the Darfur war crimes; in the words of Britain's ambassador to the U.N., the case is “tailor-made for the ICC” given the entire purpose of that institution. Most members of the United Nations Security Council support this approach. The United States, however, opposes the International Criminal Court, partly on the ground that it could theoretically be used to bring unfounded and politically motivated prosecutions against members of the United States military for their actions overseas. The United States therefore contends that jurisdiction over the Darfur atrocities should be conferred on a new ad hoc tribunal that would be located in Tanzania, at the headquarters of the existing Rwanda Tribunal (which has jurisdiction over atrocities committed during the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in that country), and would be run by the African Union and the United Nations.

### The Emerging Consensus for Institutionalizing International Justice

The striking thing about the discussion in the wake of the Darfur Commission report is not the disagreement about the specific mechanism that should be used to bring suspected war criminals to justice. Rather, it is the general agreement—indeed, expectation—that some sort of international tribunal must tackle these cases. This is not actually an obvious conclusion: consider the many atrocities committed in the twentieth century that yielded no international efforts at judicial punishment of any sort. The truth is that the past decade has seen a major shift in the international paradigm for enforcement of humanitarian norms. With the establishment of the Yugoslavia Tribunal and the Rwanda Tribunal and the increasingly everyday nature of their work as institutional norms have set in and procedural wrinkles have been ironed out, it is more routinely expected that, in the normal course of business, the punishment of heinous war crimes is an appropriate concern of the international community.

The theory behind these courts is three-fold. First, to bring justice to the perpetrators of horrific crimes. Second, to make the point that there is no such thing as impunity on the international level. (It was certainly the explicit hope of the Darfur Commission that formal prosecutions of suspected Sudanese war criminals would function as a significant deterrent to the commission of war crimes in future conflicts.) Last, to help advance the cause of reconciliation in the affected regions by bringing at least some sense of closure. While this last purpose may be more aspirational than practical, at least in the short run, the first two objectives should be achievable.

The Appeals Chamber's verdict is final, and if a defendant's conviction is upheld, he is sent to one of the countries (including Norway, Finland, and Spain) that have agreed to house convicts.



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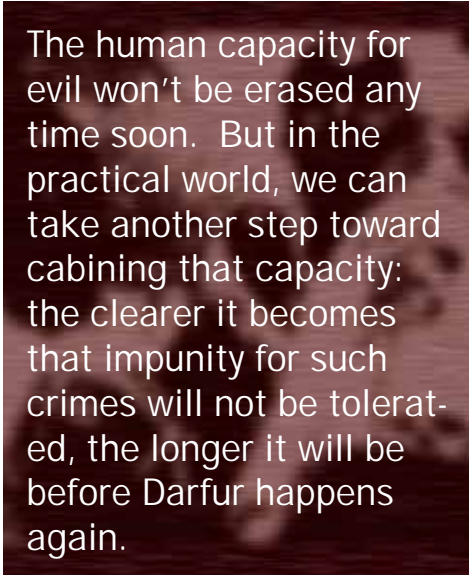
### What Would the Trials Look Like?

What, exactly, would it mean for an international tribunal to prosecute the Darfur war crimes? Perhaps the best way to imagine what the investigations and potential trials would look like, whichever institution ends up taking charge of them, is to consider the experience of one of the currently active ad hoc tribunals: the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Located in The Hague—not far, in fact, from the International Criminal Court—the Yugoslavia Tribunal was established by the Security Council to prosecute the war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed in the wake of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia. The Security Council created the Tribunal pursuant to its authority under the United Nations Charter to take measures to secure peace throughout the world. In this way, the Tribunal serves the same purpose as a UN peacekeeping force—it is simply another means for the Security Council to exert its executive power to deal with trouble spots around the globe.

Like the statute governing the ICC, the Yugoslavia Tribunal's statute sets forth a series of prohibited crimes, such as extermination, enslavement, deportation, torture, persecution on political, racial, or religious grounds, and genocide. Interpreting the statute, however, requires the Tribunal's judges to rely on many sources of law outside the written statute, which does not itself define any of these crimes in much detail. This review of external precedents is also critical in order to make sure that the Tribunal's statute does not violate the bar on *ex post facto* punishment by criminalizing actions that were not illegal at the time they were committed. So, for example, the Tribunal's courts frequently refer to international treaties like the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (which govern the behaviour of hostile parties during wartime) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. They also examine the decisions of previous international criminal tribunals, such as the Nuremberg Commission that prosecuted Nazi war crimes after World War II. Along with the Rwanda Tribunal, the Yugoslavia Tribunal has relied on these various legal sources to build up a substantial body of law clarifying the nuances of international crimes like genocide, extermination, and persecu-

tion; these accumulated judgments will inevitably have a significant effect on the Darfur cases, wherever they are tried.

As a procedural matter, defendants at the Yugoslavia Tribunal are tried by a Trial Chamber—made up of three judges from among the Tribunal's eighteen trial judges—who hear evidence from both the prosecution and the defense before rendering their verdict. The critical difference from domestic prosecutions in the United States is that there are no juries: the panel of three judges makes all determinations of guilt or innocence. Whoever loses at the trial level can then call on the Appeals Chamber to overturn or modify the Trial Chamber's verdict; in fact, if the defendant is convicted on some counts but acquitted on others, both the prosecution and the defendant can appeal (and often do). The Appeals Chamber's verdict is final, and if a defendant's conviction is upheld, he is sent to one of the countries (including Norway, Finland, and Spain) that have agreed to house convicts.



The human capacity for evil won't be erased any time soon. But in the practical world, we can take another step toward cabining that capacity: the clearer it becomes that impunity for such crimes will not be tolerated, the longer it will be before Darfur happens again.

### Likely Challenges for Darfur Prosecutions

The Yugoslavia Tribunal has faced a variety of challenges that are certain to arise in the Darfur context. There is an often-delicate balancing act between the need to mete out real punishments to convicted war criminals and the moral imperative to afford defendants the full procedural protections necessary to safeguard their human rights. To a substantial degree, the

Yugoslavia Tribunal has been successful in walking this line. It has come down with fully justifiable severity on some defendants convicted of the most serious crimes, such as Goran Jelusic, who was sentenced to forty years for the part he played in torturing and executing prisoners as detention camps and in waging war on the Bosnian Muslim population of Brcko. But even where doing so has endangered the prosecution of defendants excoriated in the press as war criminals, both the Trial Chambers and the Appeals Chamber have been willing to emphasize the sanctity of procedural protections for defendants before the Tribunal, refusing to admit statements when an interviewee was not properly informed of his rights before being interviewed, setting limits on arrest and seizure practices, and requiring the prosecution to give highly fact-specific notice to indicted defendants of the charges they are facing. Perhaps most important, the Tribunal has shown itself ready to acquit defendants where the Prosecution has failed to provide sufficient proof of guilt. It will be critical for the court responsible for the Darfur war crimes to find this same balance: issuing appropriately severe punishments to defendants convicted of war crimes while respecting defendants' procedural rights and the presumption of innocence, so as to minimize the chance that any innocent defendant will ever be convicted.

In addition to the need to secure its own legitimacy by displaying demonstrable judicial integrity, the Darfur war crimes courts will face the eminently practical consideration of securing the cooperation of nation states where suspected war criminals are to be found. Several indicted suspects are still at large in the former Yugoslavia, for example, and it is often suggested that they are only able to avoid being brought before the Yugoslavia Tribunal because of a calculated refusal by their governments to make any real effort to capture them. This may prove to be a particularly difficult issue with Sudan, which has stated unequivocally that it will not surrender any of its citizens to a Darfur war crimes court. Of course, national positions on subjects like this have a way of changing over time. Croatia, for example, has recently made assurances that it will capture Ante Gotovina, one of the Yugoslavia Tribunal's most wanted war crimes suspects, in the near future; it is



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widely thought in international circles that pressure relating to Croatia's desire to join the European Union will be a significant factor in securing Gotovina's capture, assuming that it comes to pass. Sudan could presumably, over time, be susceptible to the same kind of diplomatic pressures.

Given the new assumptions of international justice, it is both realistic and legitimate to expect that the international community will eventually bring to justice the most culpable perpetrators of crimes against humanity in Darfur. This is a tremendously positive shift in baseline expectations. The human capacity for evil won't be erased any time soon. But in the practical world, we can take another step toward cabining that capacity: the clearer it becomes that impunity for such crimes will not be tolerated, the longer it will be before Darfur happens again.

*Julian Davis Mortenson is an Associate Legal Officer in the Office of the President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The views expressed in this article are attributable to the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yugoslavia Tribunal or the United Nations.*



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# Where War Lives

By  
David Smith

*Man's destructive hand spares nothing that lives; he kills to feed himself, he kills to clothe himself, he kills to adorn himself, he kills to attack, he kills to defend himself, he kills to instruct himself, he kills to amuse himself, he kills for the sake of killing.*

Josef de Maistre

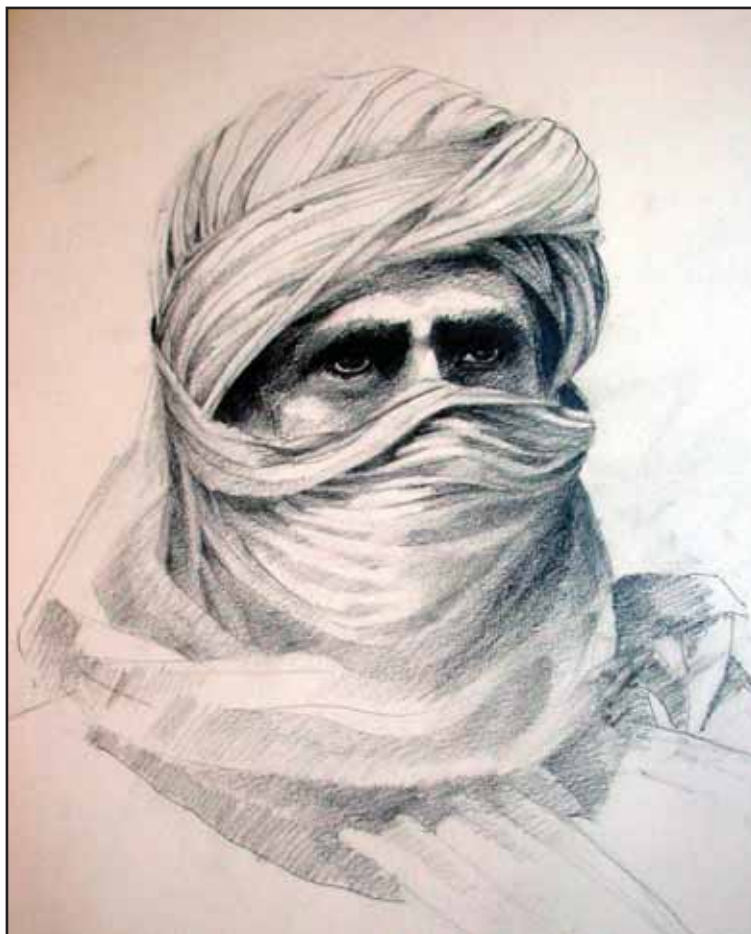
**T**his is a story about war. It is not an ennobling story of heroes inspired by the love of country or the glory of God. It is a darker and more realistic tale about why war refuses to go away. The reason is easy to understand although difficult to swallow. The ancient Roman poet Plautus expressed it most succinctly: "*Homo homini lupus*" (Man is a wolf to man). War will not go away because it is deeply imbedded in our evolved design.

Most of us regard war as an aberration, a social disease, a blot on the omnibenevolent landscape of human nature. We suppose ourselves to pursue it only reluctantly, inspired by lofty moral convictions, to protect ourselves, to liberate a people or to fulfill God's holy purpose. These fine sentiments are dangerously misleading—misleading because they are products of self-deception, and dangerous because unless we are able to confront the stark realities of human nature, stripped of comforting and self-serving illusions, we will have no hope of waking from the recurring nightmare of war.

It is reassuring to demonize killers, doing all that we can to exclude them from the ranks of "normal" human beings. We make them "other" to shield ourselves from an

awareness of our common humanity. Primo Levi said of his Nazi captors that "they were average human beings, averagely intelligent, averagely wicked; save for exceptions, they were not monsters, they had our faces." War wears a human face; it is as basic to our humanity as the ability to speak and walk on two legs. To understand war is to understand ourselves.

War wears a human face; it is as basic to our humanity as the ability to speak and walk on two legs. To understand war is to understand ourselves.



Bandit, monotype, by Tania Beaumont.

Mark Twain once remarked that human beings are the only animal that marches off to exterminate their own kind and "in the intervals between campaigns. . . washes the blood off his hands and works for 'the universal brotherhood of man'—with his mouth." Twain was right: our attitude towards war is outrageously dishonest. Although most of us publicly claim to be faithfully married to the ideal of peace, we are entangled in a clandestine affair with violence.

Our relationship with the act of killing is best approached through the writings of men who have experienced combat first hand, and who are reflective, analytical and honest enough to present an unembellished account of their experiences. Philosopher J. Glenn Grey, author of *The Warriors*, a savagely insightful memoir of his experiences World War II, describes "the satisfaction that men experience when they are possessed by the lust

to destroy and to kill their kind.” “Thousands of youths who never suspected the presence of such an impulse in themselves,” he writes, “have learned in military life the mad excitement of destroying. . . the delight in destruction slumbering in most of us.” Many similar passages from the letters and autobiographical accounts of soldiers appear in Joanna Bourke’s chilling book *An Intimate History of Killing*. One of these was by Henri de Man, who fought in World War I and later became leader of the Belgian Socialist Party. De Man thought that he was immune to what he described as the “intoxication” of slaughter until he secured a direct hit on an enemy position and saw bodies or parts of bodies go up in the air, and heard the desperate yelling of the wounded. He experienced such intense pleasure at this “ecstatic moment” that he wept with delight. In other accounts, the pleasures of war are unmistakably erotic. Vietnam veteran Philip Caputo writes of an “ache as profound as the ache of orgasm,” and war correspondent Chris Hedges points out in his powerful, dark book *War is a Force that Gives us Meaning* that “the seductiveness of violence . . . the god-like empowerment over other human lives and the drug of war combine, like the ecstasy of erotic love, to let our senses command our bodies. Killing unleashes within us dark undercurrents that see us desecrate and whip ourselves into greater orgies of destruction.”

## Those who do not bloody their own hands may participate in warfare vicariously.

Those who do not bloody their own hands may participate in warfare vicariously. From the *Illiad* to *Star Wars*, non-combatants have, throughout history, savored bloodshed at one remove. When not fighting, or enjoying literary or cinematic depictions of battle, we are often absorbed in the symbolic battles of spectator sports, political debates, or intellectual sword-play.

There are two strands of evidence pointing to the idea that the inclination to war is

built into human nature. The first is its sheer prevalence. Statistics on the frequency of war are as grim as they are unequivocal. Practically all human societies engage in serious organized combat, with tremendous loss of life. Approximately 25 million lives were lost in wars during the last thirty-five years alone. There were 150 wars, coups *d'état* and revolutions between the end of World War II and 1980, with an average of twelve simultaneous acts of war per year, and only 26 days of peace during the entire period. A look at forty-one modern nation-states between 1800 and 1945 reveals an average of 1.4 conflagrations per generation and 18.5 years of war per generation. Russia and the United Kingdom are at the top of the list with 3.6 and 5.9 wars per generation (and 49.3 and 48.3 years of armed conflict per century respectively), followed by France, Spain, Turkey, and Italy. The world spends vastly more on war each year than it does on the alleviation of poverty and disease.

Warfare is not, as some would have it, an artifact of “civilization.” Tribal warfare is even more frequent, and also more lethal relative to the size of the populations involved, than the military adventures of modern nation-states. Anthropologist Keith Otterbein, an authority on the origins of war, reports that an astonishing 90% of the societies surveyed in the ethnographic literature engaged in warfare either continuously or frequently. Other studies reveal comparably disquieting numbers: over 60% of societies engage in armed conflict at least once a year, a little over 18% once every five years, about 7% once per generation, and only 13.8% rarely or never. Contrary to the romantic imagination of modern-day proponents of the noble, truly pacifistic societies are extremely rare. The few *bona fide* examples often have extremely high homicide rates, have been so decimated by disease or genocide that they live far below the carrying capacity of their environments, or live in circumstances that preclude territorial conflict (for example, isolation from other populations). War was at least as common in the ancient world as it is today. When the first cities sprang up approximately 10,000 years ago, their builders took great pains to insure that they were protected against predations by neighbors. Jericho, one of the earliest examples, was surrounded by earthwork embankments and was girt about with protective walls over six feet thick

and approximately twenty-five feet high. The buildings of the city of Çatal Höyük in modern Turkey were all interconnected with windowless outer walls facing the outside world as a fortification. Not long after Jericho and Çatal Höyük, earthwork fortifications began to appear all over Europe and the Middle East. Excavations routinely discover them to be littered with human bones and stone projectile points.

What about genocide, arguably the most horrendous and absolute form of warfare? Although we profess to abhor it, genocide is celebrated in our cultural and religious traditions. The *Holy Bible* details how the theocratic Hebrew tribes, under the leadership of Joshua, exterminated the entire population of the land of Canaan: “Joshua struck all the land. . . He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded.” This Biblical story was later invoked by the Spanish conquistadors and the American colonists to justify the slaughter of the indigenous peoples of North America. Sadly, we do not have to dig deep into the bloody soil of history, or revert to quasi-mythological religious narratives, to unearth examples of wholesale ethnically motivated slaughter. A *partial* list of the genocidal campaigns waged in just the last one hundred years includes the ten million residents of the Congo Free State killed by the Belgians between 1877 and 1908; the sixty-five thousand Namibian Herero killed by the Germans between 1904 and 1907; the one and a half million Armenian Christians killed by Muslim Turks in 1915-16; the five million Ukrainians killed in 1931-32 by the Soviet Union’s perpetration of famine; the three hundred thousand Chinese residents of the city of Nanking killed by the Japanese in 1937; the eleven million Jews, Roma, Poles, homosexuals and others killed by the Germans during the 1940s; over two hundred fifty thousand Muslims, Serbian Orthodox Christians, Roma and others during killed by the Roman Catholic Ustaša regime in Croatia between 1941 and 1945; more than two hundred thousand Muslims killed by the French in the 1954-62 war for Algerian independence; twenty percent of the population of Cambodia killed by the Khmer Rouge during the 1970s; two hundred thousand Muslims killed by Serbian Orthodox Christians in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the 1990s; close to one million Hutus killed



The cannon-balls, Essaouira, Morocco.

by the Tutsi majority in Rwanda in 1994; two hundred thousand Roman Catholics in East Timor killed by the Muslim Indonesian occupation force between 1975 and 1999; an undetermined number of Muslims killed by Serbian Orthodox Christians during the 1990s; and an undetermined number black Sudanese killed by the government of Sudan, which is ongoing at the time of writing.

The second reason to think that the disposition for war is intrinsic to human nature comes from observations of our closest living relatives, the chimpanzees (*Pan paniscus*). Around six million years ago our lin-

eage and that of the chimpanzees branched off in separate directions. In other words, it was a mere six million years ago ("mere" in the context of the vastness of evolutionary time) that human beings and chimpanzees had a common ancestor. Although we have not yet discovered any skeletal remains, we can nevertheless draw some conclusions about this creature's behavior by looking for family resemblances between human beings and chimpanzees. Features shared by humans and chimps were also, in all likelihood, possessed by their common ancestor, and are obviously innate and genetically based.

Practically all human societies engage in serious organized combat, with tremendous loss of life.

Tribal warfare is even more frequent, and also more lethal relative to the size of the populations involved, than the military adventures of modern nation-states.

Prior to the early 1970s, chimpanzees were regarded as peaceful animals. However, in 1974 a team of scientists in Tanzania witnessed the first of a number of incidents that led them to revise their views. They watched as a group of male chimpanzees ambushed and brutally killed a member of

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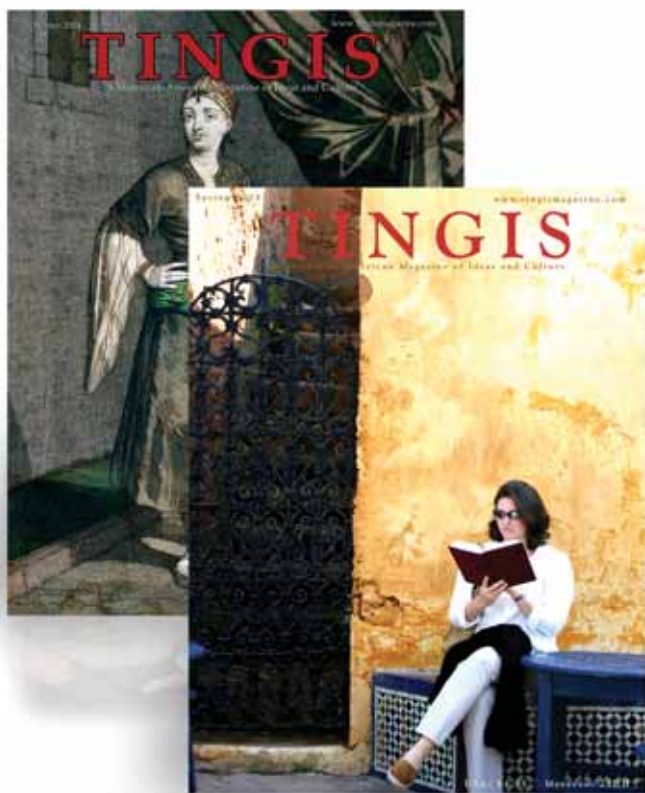
neighboring troop. It eventually became clear that bands consisting of six to twelve males regularly patrol the borders of their territories and raid the territories of neighboring troops. They stalk, viciously attack and frequently kill any strangers (members of alien communities) that they encounter on these missions. The attackers hoot, drum and scream as they lacerate their victims' flesh with their teeth, beat them with makeshift clubs, stamp on them, smash their bones and sometimes even rip off their testicles. Veteran primatologist Richard Wrangham and science-writer Dale Peterson inform us in their book *Demonic Males* that "based on chimpanzees alert, enthusiastic behavior, these raids are exciting events for them. And the mayhem visited on their victims looks a

world apart from the occasional violence that erupts during a squabble between members of the same community. During these raids on other communities, the attackers do as they do while hunting. . . except that the target 'prey' is a member of their own species. And their assaults. . . are marked by a gratuitous cruelty-tearing off pieces of skin, for example, twisting limbs until they break, or drinking a victim's blood—reminiscent of acts that among humans are unspeakable crimes during peacetime and atrocities during war."

The chimpanzees' excitement and elation brings to mind the behavior of human males intoxicated by the narcotic of war. Of course, these bloody clashes are very

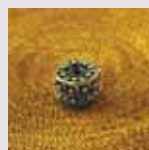
different from the elaborate apparatus of large-scale warfare, but they are not all that different from the raids undertaken by contemporary hunter-gatherers like the Yanomami of the Amazon basin and, by extrapolation, by our stone-age ancestors. Both human beings and chimpanzees are killer apes, xenophobic purveyors of organized violence against members of their own species. Both possess the aggressive instincts of their common ancestor.

So far, I have written about *men* at war. But what about the role of women? The issue is complicated by the fact that men have made strenuous efforts to exclude women from combat. Notwithstanding many examples of outstanding female war-



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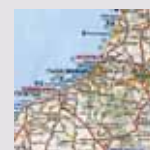
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Both human beings and chimpanzees are killer apes, xenophobic purveyors of organized violence against members of their own species. Both possess the aggressive instincts of their common ancestor.



The cannons of Essaouira, Morocco.

riors from ancient times to the present, historically and cross-culturally it is men that do the bulk of the fighting. The same pattern is found in chimpanzees, which suggests that it is deeply rooted in our nature. Many women, from both feminist and conservative camps, have argued that women are inherently more peaceful than men. This stereotype is at best a half-truth. There is ample evidence that although women are less prone to physical violence than men, they are masters of verbal aggression, destroying one another's reputations as deftly as men destroy one another's bodies. Perhaps, then, women contribute to warfare in ways that are less obvious but no less significant than the blood-letting of their male counterparts.

Generally, both human and chimpanzee females appear to prefer high-status males to their lower ranking brethren, and in the tribal societies in which human nature was forged, nothing confers status as effectively as military prowess. Power, as the saying goes, is the ultimate aphrodisiac. It is hardly surprising, then, studies of hunter-

gatherer societies show that the most successful warriors have significantly more sexual opportunities than their more peaceful peers (a pattern, by the way, which has been also shown to apply to inner city gang members). Sexual opportunity thus becomes an added incentive for warfare. "The erotic in war is like the rush of battle. . .," writes Chris Hedges. "Men endowed with little more than the power to kill are lionized and desired." If, over the vast sweep of history and prehistory, those men with the power to kill, the

"heroes" of their communities, were also the preferred sexual partners, then these men must have been able to proliferate their warlike genes far more aggressively than their peers. These powerful men were also likely to possess resources sufficient to maintain more than one mate, which further skewed the gene pool in their direction (consider Morocco's own Moulay Ismail "the bloody," who is said to have sired over 800 children on his 500 wives and concubines). Although the *Bible* instructs us that the meek will inher-

it the earth, raw biological reality points in quite a different direction: men are attack dogs, and women are their breeders. This idea, which biologists call "sexual selection," is beautifully, if perhaps unwittingly, illustrated by a First World War cartoon that appeared on the front page of the *Women's Journal* showing a suffragette holding a baby standing next to a fully armed male soldier. The soldier says "Women can't bear arms," but the suffragette replies "No! Women bear armies."

Why do women bear armies rather than just bearing violent males? Why is it that men engage in violence *collectively* rather than individually? What is it that separates warriors from murderers? Ultimately, and with cruel irony, the reason why human beings engage in war is intimately bound up with a characteristic that we tout as a virtue. War is made possible by our extraordinary capacity for cooperation. As the biologist Robert Bigelow memorably put it in the opening paragraph of *The Dawn Warriors*, a pioneering book on the evolutionary origins of war: "A

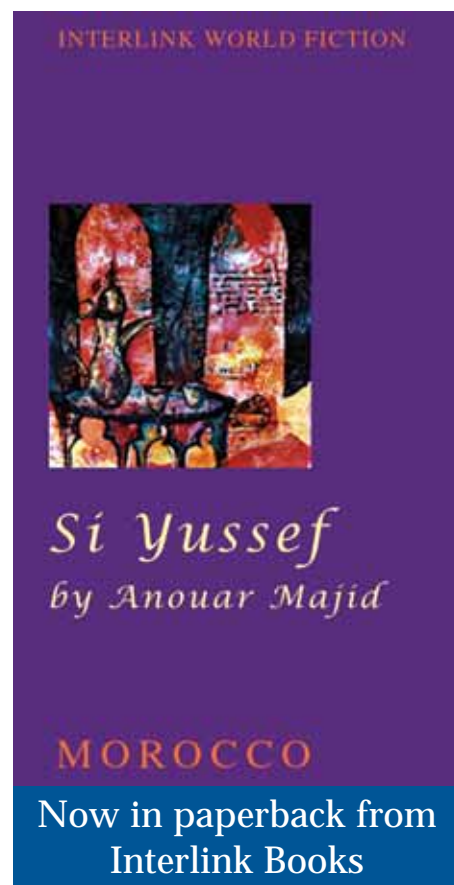
Generally, both human and chimpanzee females appear to prefer high-status males to their lower ranking brethren, and in the tribal societies in which human nature was forged, nothing confers status as effectively as military prowess.

Hydrogen bomb is an example of mankind's enormous capacity for friendly cooperation. Its construction requires an intricate network of human teams, all working with single-minded devotion toward a common goal. Let us pause and savor the glow of self-congratulation we deserve for belonging to such an intelligent and sociable species. Without this high level of co-operation no hydrogen bomb could be built. But without an equally high potential for ferocity, no hydrogen

bomb *would* be built. . . . We are without doubt the most co-operative and the most ferocious animals that have ever inhabited the earth."

The very characteristics that enhanced the success of our ancestors in their struggle against the hostile forces of nature have boomeranged on their descendants. It is thanks to our knack for cooperation, our altruistic readiness to sacrifice our lives for a "higher" cause, that we now hover on the verge of obliterating ourselves. Much remains to be said about how we came to be in this desperate position, but that is another story. . .

*David L. Smith is a professor of philosophy and a widely published author. His latest book, Why We Lie, has received international attention. Smith is also the co-founder and director of the Institute for Cognitive Science and Evolutionary Psychology at the University of New England. This article is part of his book-in-progress on war.*



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