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***Alienation in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*
(1954)***

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Dedication

To:

My dear parents, who encourage, support me and offer me a decent life

My family and my two brothers, especially my cousin Zazi

My dear Slimane, the gift of life

My best friends Nawel and Nadine

Sara

To:

*All my family, mainly my parents who have provided me with
Moral support and encouragement.*

My exceptional husband Adel and my family in law

My dear sister Nabila

My best friend Sara

Nawel

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Abstract

The present dissertation attempts to study the issue of alienation in Paul Bowles's The Spider's House (1954). Our aim is to make a psychological study of the novel focusing mainly on the feeling of the characters that is for our best knowledge; no work has ventured to make a study. In doing so, we have followed the IMRAD method, and we have put light on Melvin Seeman's theory On the Meaning of Alienation (1959). The focus is mainly on his six variants of alienation that any alienated subject may experience: Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness, Self-Estrangement, Social Isolation and Cultural Estrangement. Bowles presents his characters struggling with the surrounding conditions from different sides including the cultural, social, political and even the religious ones. He also reveals the impact of these interrelated factors on their psychological state. By approaching Seeman's theoretical concepts to Paul Bowles novel, we find that though Bowles's characters endure the same state of being which alienation, this feeling is takes various forms in the same way Melvin Seeman categorizes his six variants of alienation on his mentioned work.

Key words: *Alienation, Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness, Self-Estrangement, Social Isolation, Cultural Estrangement.*

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I. Introduction

The present dissertation attempts to study the issue of ‘Alienation’ in Paul Bowles’s *The Spider’s House* which is one of the great novels he wrote during his travel in Tangier in the summer of 1954. Paul Frederic Bowles is an American travel writer who visited so many Eastern countries, and his writings are almost about North African lands mainly Morocco. His well-known novels *The Sheltering Sky* (1949), *Let It Come Down* (1952) and *The Spider’s House* (1954) were written during his travels. Bowles thinks that whenever the spirit sets, the physical surroundings are inspiring for writing. Thus, travel writing can be considered as a flourishing and highly valued fictional field.¹

Back to our theme, ‘Alienation’ is a universal issue; one cannot provide a single definition to this concept for its vastness and complexity. Its meaning differs from one critic to another and from one context to another. For instance, Karl Marx links it to social classes and capitalism², while Erich Fromm relates it to the self³. In addition, the use of this concept differs from one field to another such as psychology, sociology and religion.

The word ‘alienation’ is originated from the Latin ‘*alienatio*’ which is taken from the Latin verb ‘*alienare*’, that means ‘to take away’ or ‘remove’⁴. Historically speaking, it has been said that Adam had protested of loneliness and asked God for a partner; it is clearly shown that loneliness makes man stranger to his surroundings⁵. Alienation, then, is referred to as isolation, loss and estrangement⁶. Thus, one may just say that ‘alienation’ is a human condition and nobody can remain all his life unaffected in one way or another. This is what Paul Bowles develops in his third novel *The Spider’s House* (1954) through the characters who are alienated from their families, society, religion and culture.

▪ Review of the Literature

Consulting many reviews of Paul Bowles *The Spider's House* (1954), we noticed that it has received a large bulk of criticism from different perspectives, mainly the religious, the cultural, the social, the historical and the political ones.

To start with, Zoubida Hamdaoui, in her doctoral thesis *Themes and Story-Telling Strategies in Paul Bowles's North African Fiction* (2013) studies *The Spider's House* from different perspectives. Concerning religion; Hamdaoui starts her analysis of *The Spider's House* by linking the title of the novel to the Quranic text of Surat Al Ankabut. She claims that Bowles wanted to show through the title how Fez becomes culturally and spiritually weak like a spider's house due to the political events and the destruction of Fez by the French colonizer.⁷

Moreover, Hamdaoui deals also with the American character, Stenham. According to her, Stenham has prejudged Moroccans and has mixed religion with politics, when he says, "When I first came here, it was a pure country [...] Now it's finished everything. Even religion"⁸. Hamdaoui rejects this way of reasoning and claims that his view is limited and superficial; she explains that the Moroccan people are still clinging to their religion, in spite of all the calls to prohibit the religious rituals mainly the celebration of Aid El Kabir by the Istiqlal party.

Concerning culture, Hamdaoui also claims that no one can have a full knowledge of any given foreign culture. Despite of efforts that Stenham makes to acquire as much as possible of Moroccan culture, his gains remain very limited. For her, this hypothesis may be considered logical in relation to Paul Bowles's works in general, and *The Spider's House* in particular⁹. She adds that Stenham provides a fascinating image of Morocco, its land as well as its people, but he is still unfamiliar

with their culture. This is shown when he stays with his Moroccan friends, and he cannot understand neither their proverbs nor their old sayings.¹⁰

From the political perspective, in his book entitled, *Colonial Affairs: Bowles, Burroughs and Chester Write Tangier* (2002), Greg Mullin studies some authors who wrote on Tangier including Paul Bowles. Mullin acknowledges that Stenham feels nostalgic to the pre-colonial period ,since life there was calm and people lived quietly, that is why he claims that Stenham has “a severe case of colonial nostalgia”¹¹. For Mullin, the French colonialism has only brought trouble to Morocco, mainly Fez. He worries about the French modernization that will bring hunger for people and destroy them. Stenham says: “the world was beautiful and life was eternal and it was not necessary to think further than that”.¹²

Assila Bouachrine, in her doctoral thesis in philosophy *A Mystic Quest in the Sheltering Country: an Investigation into Paul Bowles’s Literary Image of Morocco* (2014) studies Paul Bowles’s *The Spider’s House* from a cultural perspective. Bouachrine refers to the issue of the cultural misunderstanding between the natives and the outsiders (westerners), and she links this problem to the lack of communication. According to her, the characters of the novel are isolated from each other, and there is no interaction between them and they do not comprehend each other. As a result, the Moroccans become separated from the westerners .¹³

Younes Riani El Assaad, in his article “*The Spider’s House: Paul Bowles and the Question of Moroccan Independence*” (2014) relies on a book entitled *Paul Bowles – The New Generation: Do You Bowles?* to criticize Bowles’s work from a historical perspective. El Assaad argues that Bowles has criticized the Istiqlal party rather than the French colonial system because the Istiqlal was purely Moroccan. For El Assaad, it is the native’s duty to protect their land and people without any interest¹⁴. As Paul Bowles puts in

the preface to his novel: “Ingenuously I had imagined that after the independence, the old manner of life would be resumed and the country return to being more or less what it had been before the French presence.”¹⁵ Bowles also wonders why Morocco is still a primitive land, and at the same time he relates this to the persistence of the French influence even after the independence.

Finally, in her book *Paul Bowles – The New Generation: Do You Bowles? Selected Essays and Criticism* (2014), Anabela Duatre deals with the main theme of Bowles’s novel. She asserts that it is a political book. Bowles includes all the political events occurred in Morocco especially in Fez¹⁶. This is openly claimed by Bowles in his preface: “Thus, whether I liked it or not, when I had finished, I found that I had written a ‘political’ book which deplored the attitudes of both the French and the Moroccans”¹⁷. Duatre highlights that he could not avoid writing about politics, although his attention was to write about the traditional patterns of Fez.¹⁸

▪ Issue and Working Hypotheses

From the above review of literature, it is clear that many studies have been devoted to Paul Bowles’s *The Spider’s House*, and most of these critics contributed to a better understanding of the novel. However, to our best knowledge, we think that no work has ventured so far to explore the psychological state of the characters and undertake a study on the issue of alienation in Paul Bowles’s *The Spider’s House* (1954). Therefore, our intention is to make a psychological study of the novel focusing mainly on the feelings of the characters trying to show how each is alienated either in terms of family, society, and politics and even religion.

In order to achieve our purpose, we will rely on Melvin Seeman’s “Variants of Alienation” as they are reconsidered by Hamid Sarfraz in his article “Alienation: A

Theoretical Overview” (1997). We have opted for this theory because it is recent and the elements introduced in it correspond to our objective in the sense that most Bowles’s characters, are alienated, but the ways each character is estranged are different.

Our research work will follow the IMRAD methodological guidelines. We will divide it into four sections: the introduction, the Methods and Materials where both an overview of Melvin Seeman’s theory and a summary of Paul Bowles’s novel will be provided. The Results section will expose the reached findings. In the Discussion section, we will approach Seeman’s variants of alienation to Paul Bowles’s; namely novel: ‘Powerlessness’, ‘Normlessness’, ‘Meaninglessness’, ‘Self-Estrangement’, ‘Social Isolation’ and ‘Cultural Estrangement’. Finally, we will provide a conclusion which will sum up the general ideas developed in the research work.

End notes

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⁶*Ibid*, 43

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¹³Assila,Bouachrine. *A Mystic Quest in The Sheltering Country: An Investigation intoPaul. Bowles Literary Image OF Morocco* (PhD thesis, London Metropolitan University, 2014), 147

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II. Method and Materials

1. Method

Our research is about alienation in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House* (1954). To achieve our goal, an appeal is made to the American psychologist Melvin Seeman's theory "Variants of Alienation" included in Hamid Sarfraz's article "Alienation: A Theoretical Overview" (1997). According to him, this concept has known an evolution through time in different contexts.

Alienation is interpreted by many theorists, each one has contributed to the expansion of this concept . George Wihelm Friederich Hegel is much influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's discussion of alienation as an abandonment of personal rights, liberty, powers and control¹. He initialized the notion of alienation by using two distinct German words: *Entausserung* (abandonment) and *Entfremdung* (alienation)² . Hegel divides the concept of 'Alienation' into two types: while the first form is not desirable and imposed , because it is not an act of willfulness of the individual; the second is desirable , because it is the individual who transfers his rights to another person.³

Creativity and productivity at work are the primary characteristics of human nature, a theory that aims to strengthen the essence of humanity. Karl Marx shows a great interest in this theory "For Marx, man's essential characteristics are those of individuality, sociality and sensuousness"⁴. In fact , Marxian notion of alienation gathers different aspects as man's lack of control and possession over his work .⁵

Emile Durkheim, who is a French sociologist and commonly cited as the principal architect of modern social science, elaborates the concept of 'Alienation' by bringing another perception to it . He introduces a process where the social norms may be present, but the individual is unable to achieve a specific goal. This is what Durkheim calls 'Anomie'⁶, which is a condition of instability resulting from the breakdown of standards and values or lack of

purpose which necessarily results in a feeling of alienation. Enlarging this point Durkheim says:

Man's characteristic privilege is that the bond he accepts is not physical but moral; that is, social...But when the society is disturbed by some painful crises or by beneficent but abrupt transition, it is momentarily incapable of exercising this influence⁷.

Though all these theoretical ideas mentioned by these theorists are useful, and constitute reinforcing tools for our work, our focus in this research, however, is on the six variants of alienation brought by the American psychologist Melvin Seeman. He is well known for studying social isolation, and views that; since alienation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, the need has long been sought to reveal its diverse meaning. To accomplish this need, Seeman proposed six major variants. These variants include Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness, Social Isolation, Self-Estrangement and Cultural Estrangement.⁸

a) Powerlessness

The meaning of this conception may differ from one theorist to another. For Marx, it is a 'lack of control'; when individuals are socially alienated, they believe that what happens in their lives is outside of their control and that what they do ultimately does not matter. People believe they are powerless to shape their life course. Seeman regards it as the anticipation maintained by the individual that his behavior cannot determine the outcomes he sought. Powerlessness is also a state of feeling that one is incapable of dealing with problems that arise or to control events and their consequences due to the deficiency of autonomy. Seeman considers 'Powerlessness' as a socio-psychological circumstance that needs to be analyzed, followed and controlled.⁹

b) Normlessness

This variant of alienation is derived from Durkheim's conception of 'anomie'.¹⁰ The latter refers to the position of the ineffectiveness of social norms that control individual behavior. This leads to the individual's feeling of disconnection from his society due to his inability to see these norms and values in it. This causes the feeling of isolation and detachment from others. It also creates a lack of purpose and engenders hopelessness, so the society becomes unstable and develops a state of normlessness. Seeman assumes that the anomic situation may lead to a low predictability in behavior (meaninglessness) as well as the belief in luck instead of actions (powerlessness)¹⁰

c) Meaninglessness

This form of alienation refers to the feeling of uncertainty in individual beliefs and to the difficulty to understand his surrounding. Dwight G. Dean accentuates "the very events upon which life and happiness are known to stand"¹¹. In the state of meaninglessness, one's ability to divine the social situations remains limited. In fact, the individual cannot set his goals confidently, not because of the difficulty to attain them but rather, because he suffers from the lack of goal clarity (unorganized aim) and low hope for obtaining satisfactory future results. In other words, meaninglessness occurs when a person cannot derive meaning from the tasks he or she is engaged in, or he/she cannot have the same normative meaning that others derive from it.¹²

d) Self-Estrangement

According to many sociologists, like Melvin Seeman, 'Self-estrangement' means being alienated from the self and considering it as a stranger. In other words, this means to become self-alienated. According to the same theorist, a person becomes self-estranged in the case he is engaged in a task or an activity without having neither a recompense nor a positive

return inside him. For instance, the individual feels alienated in his work by not feeling like he has meaning to it; therefore, he loses his sense of self at the work place. It may also be the inability to identify where one's true interests lie. 'Self-Estrangement' may also occur when a person abandons his own interests and desires in order to satisfy other's imposed demands; what makes this person dependent on a given behavior and act only for its effects on other.¹³

e) Social Isolation

This term refers to the virtual absence of interaction with others. The individual feels unable to share his ideas, norms and goals with other members in his society due to his inefficiency. In this case, he may control his behavior by determining his specific norms. Having a personal and a specific behavior makes the individual different from others. He feels as if he is separated from his environment; furthermore, it is a state of complete lack of contact between an individual and society, and the inability to interact with the world, due to his meaningless social relationships with other people.¹⁴

f) Cultural Estrangement

Contrary to 'powerlessness', 'self-estrangement', and 'normlessness' which convey a negative judgment of the self, this final variant of alienation represents a positive and confident state of the self, since the individual who is experiencing a cultural estrangement evaluates his ability of understanding things surrounding him. According to Seeman, 'Cultural Estrangement' is 'the individual's rejection of, or sense of removal from, dominant social values'. In other words, it may refer to someone who considers himself very different from those of the people around him in term of reasoning some matters, thinking and reflections, thus, his incompatible ideas make him unable to take part in the life of the community. The individual considers his culture as superior comparing to others, so his level of superiority does not allow him to be in interaction with other members in his society¹⁵

Throughout this overview on Seeman's theoretical concepts of alienation, we have noticed that these forms of alienation fit to our topic which is “*Alienation in Paul Bowles The Spider's House*”, since Bowles’s characters witness the feeling of alienation in different ways due to different situations and reasons.

2. Materials

a) The Biography of Paul Bowles

Paul Frederic Bowles (1910- 1999) is a musician and an American expatriate author. His literary products range in the different countries he sojourned in different periods of time. He left the United States in the 1940s and buried himself in the culture of North Africa. He lived in Tangier (Morocco) for over fifty years until his death. His works are Moroccan in themes, characters and settings¹⁶. Bowles admired Morocco, and he was fascinated by both its land and its people. However, he could not acquire its whole culture due to many factors: his being a westerner, his stereotyped ideas about the country and the misleading of the people he was in touch with. This is clearly appeared in most of his works, mainly *The Spider's House* (1954)¹⁷. The theme of alienation in this work, was not by coincidence, but by the harsh childhood Bowles went through and the suffering he experienced because of his father. "He imposed him a military discipline like taking 'cold showers every morning'¹⁸; his father was dominating person and he shared a strained relationship with him that makes from Bowles alienated and influenced his writings. In *The Spider's House*, Amar, the protagonist was the character who best embodies the life of Bowles in relation to his father. In fact, there is a parallel between Bowles's and Amar's childhood.

b) The Summary of the Novel

The Spider's House (1954) is a skillfully written novel; it discusses the struggle of both the natives and the westerners in a destroyed society. The title of this novel comes from the Quranic verse which states: "The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she takes the unto herself a house. And lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew".¹⁹ That is to say, the spider's house is weak, and can be destroyed easily. The ones who take allies other than God are living in a spider's web, since only God can really protect them.

In the preface of his novel , Bowles mentions that he wanted to describe Fez as it was at the moment of writing about it, but the political conditions have obliged him to write something different: “I soon saw that I was going to have to write , not about the traditional pattern of life in Fez , but about its dissolution.”²⁰Both the French government’s efforts to strengthen its colonial authority in Morocco, and the Istiqlal Party’s opposite attitudes, which fights both to resume the old values of Morocco and to adopt French modernity, are the two outstanding factors that shaped the whole content of the novel.

Bowles used two main characters: Amar, a fifteen-year-old Arab boy and an illiterate son of a cherif, who grows up with strict Islamic rules and represents the Moroccan culture, and Stenham, the exiled American writer, who spends several years in Morocco. He dislikes French colonialism, and prefers the continuation of traditional life of Fez.

The novel consists of four books: *‘The Master of Wisdom’*, *‘Sins are Finished’*, *‘The Hour of the Swallows’* and *‘The Ascending Stairways’*. Books one and two are almost concerned with Amar and his wisdom ‘El baraka’, left by his grandfather. It is also about his family and his father’s severity, in addition to his experiences through the various situations that he endures in his environment, like his meeting with Moulay Ali and his fighting with Mohammed Lalami. In the third and the fourth books, a connection is created between Amar, Stenham and Lee, an American journalist. Amar begins to introduce his culture and rituals to both westerners. An evident relationship between Amar and Stenham is established because Stenham is more curious to know everything about the local Moroccan culture that he admires, and Amar who is rejected by his own people because of his young age and lack of experience.

Stenham is cautious while establishing his social relationships; he does not fully trust all the people around him. He finds himself in a critical state, in which he must make a choice between his grown friendship with Amar through whom he sees the persistent old patterns of

Fez, and his love relationship with Lee. At last , Stenham chooses to follow Lee and abandons Fez because he knows that the recovery of Fez remains impossible. Both of them left Amar in an extremely dangerous position, neither able to return to the hotel nor to join the rest of his family in Meknes.

c) The Historical Background of the Novel

Morocco, like most African countries, had a complicated and sometimes turbulent history. Many Moroccans hoped that foreign powers would leave Morocco to enjoy their independence, but this was far from the reality of what happened later .The Sultan Mohammed V had ruled Morocco as wisely as possible during the World WarII. However, once hostilities were over, the French tried to tighten control and reign the government in Morocco. Then the Istiqlal (Nationalist) Party was created. The Sultan was forced to push against them in public to appease the French and to support them in private. In January 1944, the Moroccan Istiqlal Party issued a statement calling for full independence, national reunification, and a democratic rule. This statement had been confirmed and supported by the Sultan before introducing it to the French resident general, who replied that no basic change in the protectorate status was being considered. The protectorate differs from a colony, for instance Morocco is a protectorate, its own state was merely protected by a large country which is France. It governs itself internally, while the foreign power controls its external relations; whereas Algeria as a colony, is part of a larger country governed by the same country. It is governed internally and externally by a foreign power. In practice, the boundary is often blurred, and depend on the different reasons for a country or a territory to become a protectorate or a colony. The harder the French pushed back, the more the Moroccan people supported the Sultan.²¹

In December 1952, a disobedience broke out in Casablanca over the killing of a Tunisian worker's leader. This event marked a turning point in the relationship between

Moroccan political parties and French authorities.²² By 1953, the French had pushed Sultan Mohammed V into exile in Madagascar. Mohammed V's deposition angered not only the nationalists but also all those who realized the Sultan as a correct leader by escaping violence in Morocco, and the French government brought Mohammed V back to Morocco²³. This event is referred to in the novel when Bowles says:

Is this year to go off to Mecca, when that filthy carrion of a dog they gave us is still sitting there on the Sultan's throne? No, I swear if I had power I'd shut the doors of every mosque in the country until we get our Sultan back. And if that doesn't bring him, you know what will. Amar did indeed know. The man meant jihad²⁴

In the late 1955, Mohammed V succeeded in negotiating a progressive recuperation of Moroccan independence within a framework of French-Moroccan independence. In February 1956, Morocco obtained limited local government. Many negotiations asked for a total independence in the French-Moroccan convention signed on March 2, 1956 and on April 7th, 1956, France abandoned its protectorate over Morocco.²⁵

The withdrawal of French colonizers in 1956 left Moroccans with self and identical dilemma: either to follow the colonial culture or hold on the values, principles and the culture left by the ancestors in the city. Nonetheless, there was no escape from the French influence that Moroccans rely on as a means of modernization to improve their society. This is exactly what Paul Bowles refers to in the preface of his novel when he said: "when the French was no longer able to keep the governmental vehicle on the road, she abandoned it, leaving the motor running. The Moroccans climbed in and drove off in the same direction, but even with greater speed".²⁶ Before the French colonization to Morocco, the Moroccan people followed a religious educational system and students used to attend Quranic primary and secondary schools (msid and madrasa). Classical Arabic was the dominant language of religion, literature, history and science. After the establishment of French colonies in Morocco from 1912 to 1956, Morocco became under the French rule that sought to destroy the Moroccan identity by replacing the Arabic language by the French, and establishing several schools

based on the French tongue. In this way, the French colonizer has succeeded in imposing his power and has raised his status in Morocco.²⁷

Since 1912, Morocco had been occupied jointly by the Spanish and the French that ruled as two colonial powers, and aimed to establish their own modern cities adjacent to those of the native population and to impose their own values and rules upon them; thus, to forge a new life for Moroccan people. Therefore, with Moroccan independence in 1956, the Moroccan society underwent several changes in terms of culture, society and religion. There was a collapse of the traditional life of the native inhabitants of Morocco, and the French colonial rule caused the disintegration of Muslim culture and values. There was even a loss of religious beliefs and social norms. Everything has changed, and the overwhelmed by the French lifestyle. This is well pictured in the novel when Bowles said: “Amar stood for a while watching, and thought, “It was a pure country, there was music and dancing and magic every day in the street. Now its finished. Everything, even religion.”²⁸

Under these conditions, the Moroccans lived in a state of confusion and disorder that led to their alienation in their own lands. This state of strangeness is well- illustrated in Paul Bowles’s *The Spider’s House*.

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¹⁵*Ibid*, 56

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- ¹⁹Suret Al Ankabut, Quran, 41:396
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- ²⁵Library of Congress-Federal Research Division. "Country Profile: Morocco" 2006, 4.
- ²⁶Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York: Happer Perennial, 1954, ix
- ²⁷Marouane Zakhir and Jason L.O'Brien. "French Neo-Colonial Influence on Moroccan Language Education Policy: a Study of Current Status of Standard Arabic in Science Disciplines." *Lang Policy* no.16 (2017): 39-58. Accessed February 2, 2016.
- ²⁸Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York: Happer Perennial, 1954,187.

II. Results

Throughout our research we tried to read Paul Bowles's novel in the light of Melvin Seeman's theoretical principles of alienation. By doing so, we have reached the following results: in the first part, entitled 'Powerlessness', we have studied the characters of the novel in terms of familial and political alienation. Thus, we have deduced that Amar's family is powerless. They live in hard and unstable area. We have found that Amar receives bad treatment from both his father and brother. As a result, he becomes powerless. Halima is also powerless, because she is completely isolated from the external world and feels unable to change her situation. In terms of politics, we have referred to the French colonizer who dominates the native people, imposes his new system, and obliges them to apply its rules. Thus, they become inactive, limited, and powerless.

The second part demonstrates the 'Normlessness' element in the religious, social and political spheres. We have concluded that the forgotten norms, the abandonment of the Islamic religious principles by the Istiqlal Party and Moulay Ali, and the broken patterns in Fez, made from Amar and the natives normless individuals.

The third part deals with 'Meaninglessness', which is shown mainly through Stenham, Amar, and Si Driss. We draw into conclusion that these characters feel a sort of meaninglessness because of their misunderstanding of the events around them.

Concerning 'Self-Estrangement', we have noticed that it is related to the characters who are suffering from self dissatisfaction, and this is shown mainly through Stenham and Amar. While the former, who is a foreigner, fails to integrate in the Moroccan society despite his efforts, the latter feels disconnected from his own society, and falls into a state of estrangement.

In the fifth part, we have concluded that both Amar and Si Driss experience 'Social Isolation'. They are no longer able to share their minds with other members in their

surrounding environment due to the turbulent familial and social conditions. Our findings end with the last part entitled ‘Cultural Estrangement’. Through our research, we have found that cultural invasion as well as the cultural differentiation within the same society affects the common life of the characters who found themselves culturally alienated.

IV. Discussion

▪ Reading Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House* in the Light of Melvin Seeman's Theory.

In this part, we are going to deal with the subject of alienation in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House* (1954) in the light of Melvin Seeman's theory of Alienation. Our study will cover all of the familial, political, social, religious and cultural sides with much focus on Seeman's six variants of alienation: Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness, Self-Estrangement, Social Isolation and Cultural Estrangement. We are going to demonstrate how these elements are displayed mainly through characterization, and its impact on their psychological state.

1) Powerlessness

According to Seeman, Powerlessness is the feeling that one is incapable of dealing with problems that arise, and the way the external world (society) forces the inner side of individual to experience this state of being powerless.¹ Then, Powerlessness in Bowles's novel is shown at two levels: the familial and the political. Most often, the characters feel alienated, isolated from the external world, and are unable to produce efforts to change their situations. In other words, they witness a sort of paralysis.

a) Familial Powerlessness

Through the reading of Paul Bowles's novel, we have noticed that Amar's family is powerless; they represent the situation of unrest "a disturbed or uneasy state"². Although they receive energy from the past by remembering how the life was before the Sultan's exile, they can do nothing when feeling resentment towards people. They are neither capable to resist nor to find solutions for their troubles. They are neither united nor powerful to overcome "the military blockade"³. In a word, they become hopeless. Amar, the protagonist of the novel, is also a powerless character. He lives a hard childhood and he suffers from estrangement, due

to the bad treatment he receives from both his father Si Driss and his brother Mustapha. This is well shown in the quotation below, which demonstrates into which extent Amar feels powerless in front of Mustapha:

At the same time he knew that he would never lift a finger against Mustapha, any more than Mustapha himself had done against him. It had to be done some other way. Allah had decreed that Mustapha should be born first. Therefore it was Mustapha's duty vis-à-vis his brother to compensate for that superiority with extra kindness. Mustapha had never understood that; on the contrary, he had used his position tyrannically, always to extort farther offerings. Injustice could be redeemed only by successful retaliation⁴.

Bowles deals with father and son conflicts⁵, this is shown through Amar's experiencing powerlessness in front of his father: "With astonishing force the old man pushed him down onto mattress, and ripping the belt from the trousers, began to flail him with the buckle end"⁶. He does not enjoy his life, because of his family's harsh poverty "Everything is bad. We're suffering more than we've ever suffered. And it is written that we must suffer still more."⁷, his isolation is further intensified. Amar's psychological state becomes so complicated and complex, he even wishes death "I hope I kill you!" His father screamed. "I hope he does, Amar thought"⁸. From this quotation, it is clear that Amar is unable to face his father, he lives in a daily fear to be beaten, and he is powerless in front of him: "Amar merely looked into his father's eyes, his mouth open. There were thundered things to say; there was nothing to say. He felt as if he had been turned to stone"⁹. In this case, Si Driss does not assume his status efficiently, due to his son's powerlessness.

Powerlessness in Bowles's novel may be also related to gender through the female character 'Halima', Amar's sister. The latter lives in a condemning environment and she is put into a closed space. She is considered as an object in her family, and she is helpless about things she cannot really change. In this context, Alison Jaggar claims that "in contemporary society, women are alienated in all aspects in their lives."¹⁰ Halima is a product of her Islamic's environment, where the father occupies the 'legal' position of the 'tutor'. She can

not rebel against her immediate environment. She is obliged to survive under the conditions that her father and her society have chosen to her. This is well portrayed by Bowles through Si Driss's refusal of the two offers of marriage that are made to her. This is in addition to the fact that she is not allowed to go out even to the shop next door.¹¹ Si Driss's family suffers from a feeling of weakness; they are unable to change the hard financial situation during the French colonial period. Like Amar who has no power in front of his violent father, then Halima is an alienated daughter who has not the right to share her views even in personal and serious matters like marriage.

b) Political Powerlessness

After discussing powerlessness at the level of the family, this part will be devoted to alienation at the political side. This will be done by showing how the political events in Morocco affect the characters in the novel so that most of them reach the state of powerlessness to face some situations. The way they fall into isolation and the feeling of estrangement in their own native land will be also revealed.

Morocco, mainly Fez, became "a transformative space"¹² after the French occupation; it shifted from a historical to an extremely politicized area. It became a western city after losing its originality. France came to Morocco as a dominant power that proved its superiority and created a sense of inferiority among the native people by forcing them to apply the new political system. By doing this, they were limiting and shaping the Moroccan history. In fact, they wanted the Moroccan society to embrace to French values. The natives were unable to practice their daily life activities. They were limited in specific areas; men and women were humiliated. They were living in fears, and they were unable to ask for their rights or claim their needs. They became discontented and inactive people. They had no power to react against the colonizers. For instance, when the Arab boys Amar and Mohammed Lalami rented

a bicycle, the Frenchman controlled them carefully, they could not react because the argument will lead to the police station.

In the Ville Nouvelle the Frenchman who rented bicycles inspected their cartes d'identité with prolonged care before he let them ride off [...] The Frenchman, who came in while we were waiting, you noticed he let him take the bicycle and didn't even ask to see his card¹³.

This situation brings pain and suffering, and produces a sense of confinement and failure, defeat and helplessness to Moroccans who are emotionally paralyzed. They do not feel secure; they sense that they are alienated from their space therefore, from their identity. The Muslims do not have political awareness or any resistant processes; they are ignorant people that are easily manipulated, this is a part of a colonial strategy to limit the access of instruction to the natives in order to monitor these populations ; they also lack unity to resist the colonial power. This is the contrary for the French who are well organized, and know how to achieve their goals.

“Use your head”, said the old man. “The friends of freedom don't want the festival, and they'll stop it anyway, all by themselves. Don't you think the French know that? But the French can't afford to let them stop it. Then everyone would know how strong the Istiqlal is. If someone is going to do something, the French have to be the ones to do it. They want just what the Istiqlal wants, but they want the credit. They have to make it look as though they were the ones who did it. They're all working together against us¹⁴.

Amar was watching with crossed hands how the French use their power to suppress the Moroccan people in all domains, and how his native people are tantalized, alienated and killed by them: “The great ambition of every Frenchman in Morocco was to kill as many Moslems as possible.”¹⁵He is disappointed from not being able to do something and solve such situations. So he just thinks that the French aim is to eliminate his race.

End notes

1. Hamid, Sarfraz. "Alienation: A Theoretical Overview" Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research 12, Nos. 1-2 (1997), 51.
2. Merriam Webster s.v. "unrest," accessed July 06, 2018, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>
3. Gul, Kocsoy. "The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's The Spider's House" ,Researcher: Social Science Studies 6, no.3 (2018): 108
4. Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York :Happer Perennial, 1954 ,136
5. Assila, Bouachrine. *A Mystic Quest In the Sheltering Country : An Investigation. into Paul. Bowles Literary Image OF Morocco* (PhD thesis, London Metropolitan University, 2014), 126.
6. Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House* .New York : Happer Perennial, 1954, 24.
7. *Ibid*, 27.
8. *Ibid*, 25.
9. *Ibid*, 24.
10. Alison M, Jaggar. *Feminist Politics And Human Nature*. Rowman & Little field ,United States of America :1983 ,308.
11. Paul ,Bowles.*The Spider's House* .New York :Happer Perennial, 1954 ,34.
12. Gul, Kocsoy. "The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's The Spider's House" ,Researcher: Social Science Studies 6, no.3 (2018): 101.
13. Paul ,Bowles.*The Spider's House* .New York :Happer Perennial, 1954,61
14. *Ibid*, 120
15. *Ibid*, 90.

2) Normlessness

This part is about Normlessness in Paul Bowles's novel, which is mainly experienced from the religious, the political and the social spheres. According to Melvin Seeman, 'Normlessness' is the individual's feeling of disconnection from his society because he no longer sees the norms and values in it¹⁶. We attempt to show the ways French colonialism destroys the norms and the values that are the essential pillars on which the Moslem's life is based.

a) Religious Normlessness:

Religion acts as a glue binding people together with common beliefs, practices and rituals. Being far from religion is being a stranger in the society, since it is an important element in the Moslems identity. This is the case of people moving away from religion and abandon their norms. Fez during the French colonialism, became like a spider's house which is "fragile, insecure and weak."¹⁷ This is revealed in the epigraph of the novel which is extracted from the Quran: "The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she takes unto herself a house, and lo !The frailest of all houses is the spider's house if they but knew"¹⁸. Through this verse, Bowles means that people who take other protectors than God are living in a spider web, which is weak. Living without religion and norms is like living without protection. After being colonized by the French, life in Morocco became overturned and unrestful; everything changed. People lost their faith in God, and they no longer believe in the norms that control their behaviors. The French rule has corrupted everything in Fez by trying to install a society with purely western values. Before the French colonizer entered Morocco, life there was stable and quiet, and people were practicing religion freely. Religion used to be a core part of their identity that it added meaning to their lives:

When I first came here it was a pure country. There was music and dancing and magic everyday in the streets. Now it's finished, everything. Even the religion. In a few more years the whole country will be like all the other Moslem countries, just a huge European slum, full of poverty and hatred. What the French have made of Morocco maybe depressing, yes, but what it was before, never!¹⁹.

The American tourist 'Stenham', who was fascinated by the Moroccan culture, tells these words. He expresses his regret for what the French did, and how the natives changed.

The Nationalist Party or the Istiqlal Party was a political group that represents the Moroccans in the conflict against the French colonizer. It is the first group that adopts the western modernity, which is rejected by the native Moslems²⁰“The Nationalists are not interested in ridding Morocco of all traces of European civilization and restoring it to its pre-colonial state; on the contrary, their aim is to make it even more ‘European’ than the French had made it”²¹. The members of this party pretended to be Moslems and enemies of the French; however, they do not follow the Islamic rules nor do they pray. This is to prove that they are far from the real Moroccan cultural and religious norms. They also prevent the sacrifice of sheep, which is the most important and sacred Sunnah in Aid el Kebir. They even threaten every one who wants to buy it “Of course, who forbade us buying a sheep, threatened to kill us if we did? The Wattanine. The friends of Si Allal, the Istiqlal, whatever you want to call them.”²² This shows the extent to which the Istiqlal Party has moved away from their religion. “In five years the children of Fez will be saying: ‘Aid el Kebir ? What’s the Aid el Kebir ?’ No one will remember it. This is the end of Islam. Bismil’lah rahman errahim.”²³ Stopping the sacrifice is not their real concern; their aim is to create disorder and anxiety among people.

‘Normlessness’ is also shown through native Moroccans who are in a state of isolation and detachment from the Istiqlal Party. They do not trust them after seeing their anti religious acts, since this party works for its own interests. In fact, they no longer see the original norms

in them; as a result, the natives withdrew themselves from the Istiqlal Party's attitudes and principles.

Moulay Ali, another character presented in Paul Bowles's novel, is said to be the leader of the Moslem revolt (the Istiqlal), whom Amar encounters. "But he was frightened : he had never before met a Moslem like this, one whose intentions were so difficult to guess that he might as well have a Nazarene"²⁴. Thus, Amar is ambivalent on whether Moulay Ali is a French or an Arab man. He uses true Arabic like an imam or an aallam, but in his suit he looks completely like a Frenchman.

Moulay Ali is supposed to be a practicing Moslem, but throughout the whole reading of the book one may notice that it is not the case. He is completely removed from religion, and no longer practised religious norms. The French culture has influenced him; it made of him another person, a Nazarene.

Maybe you'd like a drink'. 'Amar was thirsty, and so he said: Yes. One of the boys jumped up and stepped to the other end of the room, returning with a tall bottle and several very small glasses. Amar looked suspiciously' [...] this was not at all what Amar wanted.²⁵

Amar is shocked; he does not expect them to bring him alcohol instead of water. He realizes that Moulay Ali is a non- Moslem who acts like an outsider. He adopts the western lifestyle; he drinks alcohol and ignores all the traditional patterns of Fez. Like the Istiqlal Party Moulay Ali is certainly against the French, but not in order to defend the Moslem traditions. His purpose is rather to serve his personal interests and to take the power for himself²⁶. Amar's doubt in Moulay Ali is the same doubt of the natives. So, 'Normlessness' is shown here from the fact that Amar does not like the way Moulay Ali acts, nor is he pleased by his strong objection and disrespect for the assets in which they grew up.

b) Social Normlessness

Amar sees the disintegration of his society every time, the strange thing that angers him more is seeing the humiliation of Moslems who are exalting the Western lifestyle. Amar is annoyed by the blindness of his people to the cultural policy of the colonizers who corrupt them. He is convinced that the Muslim community will be gradually destroyed:

All of them were crudely caricatured scenes of life among Moslems: schoolmaster, ruler in hand, presiding over a class of small boys, a fallah plowing, a drunk being ordered out of the bar. This last he considered a gross insult to his people. The scenes, which delighted the women so much that they could scarcely move away from them, were those showing Moslem females. One was a domestic drama, in which the wife sat with a mirror in one hand and a whip in the other; her husband was on his knees scrubbing the floor²⁷.

Amar blames his people when he sees that the French are so pleased by the fact that Moroccans follow and imitate them blindly: "Is it my fault, Mohamed Lalami had said, if the people of Morocco are donkeys? There he was right."²⁸ He is shocked by the Moslem women, and how they dare to reject their traditional habits and follow those of the western women. This makes it easier to the French to manipulate them. Amar knew that the French have come there with their ideology to turn them into dolls²⁹. There was a spectacle and Amar was watching the Arab women and he is disappointed by the way they are acting.

Amar stood for a while watching, and thought: 'This is the way the Nazarenes corrupt our women, by teaching them how whores behave' He wants to say it aloud, but the prospect of having so many women turn and stare at him intimidated him, and he strode out into the street with as intense an expression of disgust on his face as he could muster³⁰.

From the quotation above, we may clearly notice that the education that Omar received, his religious beliefs, and the moral values on which he based, do not allow him to accept the new alien norms within his conservative society.

End notes

- ¹⁶ Hamid, Sarfraz. "Alienation: A Theoretical Overview" *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research* 12, Nos. 1-2 (1997), 52.
- ¹⁷ Gul, Kocsoy. "The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*", *Researcher: Social Science Studies* 6, no.3 (2018): 101
- ¹⁸ Suret Al Ankabut, Quran, 41:396
- ¹⁹ Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York :Happer Perennial, 1954 , 187
- ²⁰ Gul, Kocsoy. "The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*", *Researcher: Social Science Studies* 6, no.3 (2018): 106
- ²¹ Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York :Happer Perennial, 1954 , x
- ²² *Ibid*, 120
- ²³ *Ibid*, 121
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, 75
- ²⁵ *Ibid*, 77
- ²⁶ Tuğba, Akman Kaplan. *Self-Colonization and Decolonization in The Works of Yaşar Kemal and Paul Bowles*. (PhD thesis , Fatih University, Institute of Social Sciences, Departement of Comparative Literature, 2015) , 208.
- ²⁷ Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York :Happer Perennial, 1954 , 97
- ²⁸ *Ibid*, 98
- ²⁹ Gul, Kocsoy. The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*, "Researcher: Social Science Studies 6, no.3 (2018):108
- ³⁰ Paul, Bowles. *The Spider's House*. New York :Happer Perennial, 1954, 97

3) Meaninglessness

Amar, Si Driss, and Stenham are the main characters who represent the state of meaninglessness that is viewed by Seeman as the inability to understand one's complex environment and goals.³¹ Our focus on these characters is to show the uncertainty of their beliefs and their failure to understand the events around them in political, cultural, and religious sides.

a) Political Meaningless

Morocco in 1954 knew many conflicting currents and many political events caused by the French colonization. Thus, the country became a center of doubt, uncertainty, and lack of confidence between people.

If someone is born and raised in a given social, cultural and religious context and he/she moves to another different context, he/she would find it difficult to adopt in that foreign place. In the introduction of *The Spider's House* (1954), Paul Bowles makes reference to the story of 'The Eye' he said: "Ten or twelve years ago there came to live in Tangier a man who would have done better to stay away."³² This may refer to Stenham the American expatriate writer who settled in Morocco in order to discover this land that is alien to the western travelers who escape from all what is American mainly after the World Wars. When he came to Fez, he found himself in a new location that reversed all his expectations. There was a political tension there especially after the Sultan's disposition by the French. In that foreign country, Stenham finds the city empty with no patterns, its people are living without clear and precise objectives. They are purposeless, and imitating the French rules is all what they can do. Stenham is separated not only from his past, but also from his native land. He is living a new life in an unknown environment which is completely different from that of his homeland. He is unable to understand the events around him nor to adapt to such hard conditions; it is impossible for him even to find an effective way to change them. The

unfamiliar environment, the deteriorating political and security conditions make of Stenham a meaningless person. This leads to his feeling of alienation and this is what contributes to the increase of the feeling of estrangement.

b) Cultural Meaninglessness

In addition to the political events that obstructs Stenham's comprehension of the Moroccan environment, the cultural aspect has also its effects on him. His knowledge of the Moroccan culture remains limited. This is because of his miscomprehension of the native language, which is an essential means by which someone acquires a foreign culture. This makes his connection with people rather difficult. "His being a Westerner and an outsider to the country impedes him from getting the whole meaning and blocks the channels to mutual cultural comprehension³³". Stenham is in a state of meaninglessness mainly when he is at Si Jaafar's house, his native friend in Fez. There, he is unable to follow or to understand their jokes, he can not catch up the real meaning behind their words, nor is he able to understand the old sayings.

You follow this?" "yes," Stenham said uncertainly; he is expecting some further clue which might connect all the parts.[....] But it was really only flattery , not sincere , you understand?" By now Stenham understood absolutely nothing of the story, but he smiled and nodded his head.³⁴

This quotation then shows how the misunderstanding of the Arabic language prevents Stenham to practice his ordinary social life. Thus, he feels himself as a meaningless individual.

As far as Amar is concerned, according to the author, he is an intelligent young boy. Although he is not educated , he interferes in social , religion , cultural and political matters and all what concerns his country mainly his city Fez.³⁵ Even if Amar thinks seriously of all the changes happening in his country , in some cases he can no longer understand what is occurring around him , and how his cultural and religious norms are destroyed. This is revealed in the novel when Bowles says:

What puzzled him was why they did not do their kissing and love-making in the brothels. The girls obviously worked as prostitutes; otherwise they would not be out walking with boys. Why then did they leave the brothels and carry on their work in the open air, like animals?’’³⁶

Amar, then, is perplexed and uncertain, he does not find a logical answer to his questions.

Therefore, we may say that like Stenham, Amar is also a meaningless character.

c) Religious Meaninglessness

Religion is one of the most important elements that Bowles refers to in order to reveal the state of meaninglessness in his novel. Stenham again feels meaningless, once he watches how the Muslims act. He is surprised by their behavior, which does not conform to their religious principles. He does not realize why Moroccans surrender to this extraneous culture and neglect their Islamic rules and principles. He can not even understand why they become so, how they get to indifference, he is confused by their contradictory beliefs:

Stenham has always taken it for granted that the dichotomy of beliefs and the behavior was the cornerstone of the Moslem world. It was too deep to be called hypocrisy; it was merely custom. They said something and did something else. They affirm their adherence to Islam in formulated phrases but they behave as though they believed something quite different [...] and to him it was eternal contradiction that made them Moslems. ³⁷

Si Driss , Amar’s father, is a believer and a practising religious man who is very severe with his children, and he never forgives their religious sins. Si Driss’s family, like almost all Moroccan families, is growing up in a conservative and close atmosphere where religion was the motor of their progress in all matters of life ; thus, they found themselves meaningless in a society where all the religious patterns are broken.

End notes

³¹ Hamid, Sarfraz. “ Alienation: A Theoretical Overview” Pakistan Journal of Psychological Reaserch12,Nos. 1-2 (1997) ,53

³²Paul , Bowles.*The Spider’s House* . New York : Happer Perennial, 1954 , Introduction.

³³Zoubida, Hamdaoui, *Themes and Story-telling Strategies in Paul Bowles’s North-African Fiction*. (PhD thesis, Granada University, 2013), 78.

³⁴Paul , Bowles.*The Spider’s House* . New York : Happer Perennial,1954 ,222.

³⁵*Ibid*,xv.

³⁶*Ibid*,89.

³⁷*Ibid*,336.

4) Self-Estrangement

According to the theorist Melvin Seeman, a person becomes self-estranged in a society, mainly when he is less than what he supposed to be. The social life requires a person to submit a set of activities, and he should follow them, but sometimes the result is the opposite. In fact, the individual cannot achieve the activity in which he is engaged, especially when the circumstances in the society are different, so this leads to an alien self³⁸.

A person, who is strange in a society, is exposed to experience the state of being self-estranged. That is to say, the individual outside his community finds himself in a new environment which does not fit his ancient habits in his homeland. He faces a new way of life with particular social norms, rituals, and traditions. In order to be part of this new society, the individual should practise and participate in its cultural tasks; but in the case of failure, he becomes self-estranged. This is the case for Stenham, who comes to Morocco as an expatriate writer. Unfortunately, he encounters many obstacles that complicate his way of living in another land. The big barrier that faces him is his access to language which is a very important factor for both communication and integration. Religion, however, is not the same, and the mentality of the Moroccan people and their behavior differ from the westerners. The activity of every tourist while arriving to a foreign country is to master all the basic and essential norms. Stenham feels lost and stressed; therefore, it is necessary to put himself on local tasks. Stenham begins to interact with the natives and stays as long as possible with them, trying to know more about Islam and to discover the land. “ I’ve watched them for years. ”³⁹ He makes new Moroccan friends like Amar by whom he gets knowledge in all aspects of life. In spite of the remarkable efforts that Stenham makes to be one of the Moroccan citizens, he finally fails. His knowledge remains limited, and he is still considered as a stranger; he cannot act like a native. He fails to achieve his task in this new land; as a result, Stenham becomes a self-estranged person.

‘Self-Estrangement’ combines all the rest of the elements introduced in Melvin Seeman’s theory, since it deals with the internal side of the individual. In fact, if someone is self estranged, he is also socially estranged; thus, he feels powerless and meaningless.

Amar is the character who represents most the state of Self- Estrangement. He has a dissatisfying life, he is alienated from all sides: “And since he felt a great disappointment in the direction his short life had taken, he knew the dissatisfaction was there”⁴⁰. The events that take place in his surroundings are completely different from his aspirations. He feels as if his life becomes miserable: “The world was a beautiful place, with all animals and birds that moved, and its flowers and fruit trees that Allah had generously provided, [...] It was always other people who made his life unhappy.”⁴¹ There was no self-satisfaction neither in his family nor in his society. He is self estranged in his familial environment, so he feels less valorous comparing to what he supposed to be, mainly through his relation with his father: “But it left a bitter flavor in the center of his being, something that made him feel just a little farther away and lonelier than before.”⁴²

Amar’s self-estrangement is always shown through his miscomprehension for Moulay Ali, the Istiqlal Party, the natives and even the foreigners. He feels lost and estranged since he cannot understand neither their attitudes nor behaviors. On the one hand, Moulay Ali and the Istiqlal Party pretend to be Moslems, but they prefer to adopt the French civilization; on the other hand, the natives do no longer hold their norms. Therefore, the foreigners are benefiting from the collapse of the Moroccan culture.

In time of crisis, nationalism is always triumphant if Amar finds a solid, conservative, and protective Istiqlal Party that refuses all form of assimilation and westernization, he will not be alienated / self-estranged .Istiqlal favors French civilization to traditional Moroccan culture, so self-estrangement is the result.

End notes

³⁸ Hamid, Sarfraz. “ Alienation: A Theoretical Overview” Pakistan Journal of Psychological Reaserch12,Nos. 1-2 (1997) ,54.

³⁹Paul ,Bowles. *The Spider’s House* . New York : Happer Perennial, 1954, 251.

⁴⁰*Ibid*, 15.

⁴¹*Ibid*, 16.

⁴²*Ibid*, 16.

5) Social Isolation

According to Seeman, 'Social Isolation' is a term which refers to the virtual absence of interaction with others. The individual feels unable to share his ideas, norms and goals with other members in his society, then he develops norms of his own to guide his behavior. Having a personal and a specific behavior makes the individual separated from the society and its normative system.⁴³In this part then we suggest a presentation of characters in Paul Bowles's work who are socially isolated due to many social factors.

The individual is an integral part in society. There is a close and reciprocal interaction between society and the individual, and each is influenced by the other. This idea is well established in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*, where we notice that some characters are affected by social isolation due to the state of the country during the French domination in Morocco. The French behavior and attitudes do not correspond to the Arab's, and since the French authority has more superiority on society (Fez), the natives feel themselves strangers in their own land, the fact that pushes them to isolate themselves from their society. This is what happens for Si Driss, Amar, and even the American tourist Stenham.

Si Driss is a religious man, he is a (fqih), and his elders are known as descendents of the Prophet, who are 'The Chorfa'⁴⁴. Since he grows up in a religious environment, his ideas, attitudes and behavior are all inspired from religion. He has a much-respected position, but since the arrival of the French soldiers many years ago, he has never gone outside the walls of the Medina.

Even since he could remember, the schedule of his father's life has been the same, had consisted of the five trips a day he made to the mosque, together with the hours he spent in conversation at the shops of friends en route to and from the mosque. Outside of that there was nothing.⁴⁵

From this quotation, it is clear that Si Driss is not someone who likes going outside to interact with others because his behavior and theirs are not the same. His position about the French behavior is clear when he says: "I want you to know that I have been there many times. I

have seen their Christian filth and shame. It can never be for us. I swear they're worse than Jews"⁴⁶. He dislikes not only the way the French act, but he also has a sense of disgust and hatred over the Moslems, the Islislal Party, and the other natives who removed from their norms and principles.

You know what *politique* is? It is the French word for a lie. *Kdoub! Politique!* When you hear the French say: our *politique*, you know they mean: our lies. And when you hear the Moslems, the Friends of Independence, say: our *politique*, you know they mean: our lies. All lies are sins. And so, which displeases Allah more, a lie told by a Nazarene, who doesn't know the true faith from the false, or a lie told by a Moslem, who does?⁴⁷

The specific behavior of Si Driss makes him different from others. His views about the world are limited only to religion, and when he sees his immediate environment in Morocco, he prefers to stay away rather than frequent those who are lost and gone with the French rules. That's why we can consider him as being socially isolated.

In *The Spider's House*, Bowles makes it clear from the beginning that his characters, especially the Moroccans, do not share and tell what is really in their minds. The Moslems are afraid to talk openly about what is in their heart either good or bad; since no one trusts the other, people do not want to show their real interests. Amar is one of those Moroccans who can not reveal what he truly feels and thinks, neither to his family nor to his friends because of his specific behavior and his way of considering things. He is not sure that they will support him, but he always expects their objection to what he has in mind. His behavior and the environment in which he grows up makes from Amar a different boy who can develop norms of his own to guide his behavior

As the years had passed, Amar had made new friends like himself, boys of families so poor that there had never been any question of their going to school. When he met his childhood friends now and talked to them, it seemed to him that they had grown to be like old men , and he did not enjoy being with them"⁴⁸.

Amar cannot accompany them because he thinks that as an illiterate he can not have the same norms and attitudes with his friends who are intellectuals. The inability to interact with his friends is well described in another quotation:

Ahead of him on the other side of the valley was Djebel Zalagh. It had always looked to him like a king in his robes, sitting on his throne. Amar has mentioned this to several of his friends, but none of them had understood. Without even looking up at the mountain they had said 'you're dizzy,' or 'In your head,' or 'In the dark,' or had merely laughed⁴⁹.

So, they cannot share what Amar really wants them to know. In fact, one cannot speak about society without referring to family as an important unit in any social group. Amar within his family is not that boy who tells his parents about his mind, but he is very secretive, especially with his father. This is due to the latter's severity, and their different ways of reasoning:

When his father went out into the street he had only the mosque, the written word unchanging beneficence, but it was in some way wrinkled and dried up. Whereas when Amar stepped out the door there was the whole vast earth waiting, the live, mysterious earth, that belonged to no one else, and where anything at all might happen.⁵⁰

Amar and his father are belonging to two different generations worlds, His own conception of the world is so different from that of his father. His way of seeing things does not allows him to agree with his father and having this difference creates a kind of divergence between them: "But suppose the world changes? Amar had thought. Then what would you know? However, he was careful not to let his father guess what he is thinking. He never spoke with the old man save when he was bidden"⁵¹

In addition to his hiding what is in his mind, he is also an introvert. This is well referred in the novel when Si Driss has beaten Amar , then this last suffers from the pain, but once Mustapha comes to see him , Amar knows that he comes only to mock him ,so he decides to hide his pain:

A few minutes later Mustapha appeared frowning in the doorway, obviously having been sent by his father to inquire after Amar's health .The first instant upon seeing him, Amar had been about to say something bitter; then a strange calm took possession of him, and he found himself saying in the most benign accents: 'ah, khai, chkhbarek ?It's several days since I've seen you. How is everything? Mustapha seemed bewildered; inexpressively he murmured a perfunctory phrase of greeting, turned and went downstairs⁵²

Through this quotation, one can easily notice the tension that exists between Amar and his brother Mustapha due to the bad treatment of the latter to him. Therefore, this negative feelings towards Mustapha grows. Amar sees in his brother the inappropriate person to share his feelings or dairy with that is why he prefers to hide his sentiments.

End notes

⁴³Hamid, Sarfraz. “ Alienation: A Theoretical Overview” Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research 12, Nos. 1-2 (1997) ,55

⁴⁴Paul ,Bowles. *The Spider’s House* . New York : Happer Perennial,1954,19

⁴⁵*Ibid*, 19

⁴⁶*Ibid*, 27

⁴⁷*Ibid*, 28

⁴⁸*Ibid*, 19

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 17

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 29

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 18

⁵²*Ibid.*, 30

6) Cultural Estrangement

It is noticeable that North African culture is one of the subjects that inspire Paul Bowles, a fact that manifests in most of his writings. This is due to his admiration mainly for the Moroccan culture. Therefore, he does not hesitate to write about its magnificence and beauty. In *The Spider's House* (1954), Bowles focuses on the cultural perspective in interesting ways. Thus, in this part, we intend to analyze the last element of Seeman's theory, which is 'Cultural Estrangement' in relation to the characters of the novel. We will also note the gap in understanding the cultural differentiation between the indigenous people and the Westerns residing in Morocco.

The Spider's House (1954) is a novel which covers the Western and the North African cultures. Bowles introduces western characters who settle in Morocco and live with the native people ; each side has its own culture and customs, and in fact, this cultural diversity may create many psychological and social struggles like cultural estrangement. As it is referred to the novel:

On his left stood a middle-aged woman, flashing an entire mouthful of gold teeth at the public as she smiled, crying into her microphone in voice of iron : "*Entrez, messieurs-dames ! Le spectacle va commencer!*" The friend also had drifted here, and now stood next to Amar "Hada el bourdel," he shouted him ; Amar nodded sagely.[...] he was much astonished to see several Jewish women among those buying entrance tickets.⁵³

Cultural Estrangement is one of the heaviest results of cultural invasion; it is a kind of alienation that affects the psychological state of people. Moreover, it reflects negatively their personal relationships and their lives in society. Thus in *The Spider's House*, Bowles includes different examples that show the cultural and mutual misunderstandings between characters. This is noticed in the different parts of the novel, and it is represented mainly through the Western characters like Stenham. This is in addition to the political party El Istiqlal.

People from different nations may have constructive relationships that help them to discover others' cultures and civilizations that should be accepted and respected for a better understanding for each others customs and beliefs. This is not the case in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House* (1954). Lee, the American journalist in Morocco, despises the Arab culture and she considers it as primitive, rudimentary, not modern and not suitable for the contemporary era⁵⁴. She sees that Western culture is the appropriate, and it must circulate throughout the entire Arab world, especially in Morocco. Although Lee is widely fascinated by the land, for her the people need guidance and help to be modernized to become like westerners. Thus, she feels herself superior comparing to the natives who are retarded people:

For her the Moroccans were backward onlookers standing on sidelines of the parade of progress; they must be exhorted to join, if necessary pulled by force into the march. Hers was the attitude of the missionary, but whereas missionary offered a complete if unusable code of thought and behavior, the modernizer offered nothing at all, save a place in the ranks. And the Moslems, who with their blind intuitive wisdom had triumphantly withstood the missionaries' cajoleries, now were going to be duped into joining the senseless march of universal brotherhood.⁵⁵

In fact, Lee wants the Moroccan culture to be smashed relying on the French colonizer. From the above quotation, we notice that Lee wants strongly that the Moroccan culture becomes purely French, since she feels culturally alienated within the Moroccan Moslem society. She feels lost while living in a new area with different customs, traditions and norms. So, she is not able to integrate in the Arab Moslem society. She feels more distanced from the natives and prefers to be closer to the westerns, mainly the French.

Language is one of the most important symbols that reflect the identity and the culture of the individual. Moss, the American tourist in Morocco, also underestimates the value of the Arabic language used by the natives, and she describes it as a dead language which is useless

and sterile. She describes it as being an “accursed dead language”⁵⁶. Her mockery of the Arabic language is a proof of her arrogance towards Moroccan civilization.

Stenham, the American writer, is another character who is characterized by a high feeling of notability. He wants to integrate in the Moroccan society but without friction with its people, and he always considers himself as an outsider. Campbell Neil says that: “Stenham wants to be part of Morocco but without involvement. He wants everything to suit his demand. He sits between two worlds without making a choice, but he expects the benefits of both to be his if he desires them.”⁵⁷ This again reflects another feeling towards culture, since he is not ready neither to imitate nor to assimilate the Arab customs and beliefs:

The Arab boy was sipping his tea with the customary Moslem noisiness. Stenham, in good spirits, did not mind his presence; he was a bit of native decoration. He would not have objected even if the boy had begun to make the loud belches that polite Moroccans make when they wish to show their appreciation of what have eaten or drunk.⁵⁸

”

In the final scene, Stenham and Lee have left Amar alone⁵⁹. They do not want to help him in his difficult moments, Stenham’s and Lee’s humanity is put aside, and all their thoughts are resumed on being superior to Amar. Their relationship is transformed to that of superior and inferior. For Stenham, Amar looks like an object and not like a human who needs consideration. In addition, Stenham shares the same opinion with Lee who thinks that the local culture needs to be converted into something new.

Unfortunately even the political party El Istiqlal that is supposed to be with the natives, to protect them, to defend their rights, and to get the power order to bring back independence for the Moroccans turns its back on its people. It drops its cultural norms as well as religious norms; it rather prefers to adopt the French culture that is imposed by the colonizer. It betrays the trust of the native ideas of freedom and return to traditions by creating a sense of inferiority. The members of the Istiqlal Party who pretend to be nationalists embrace Western hybridization and modernity that Moslems oppose. In fact, the members of Istiqlal Party from

a culturally isolated group. They consider themselves as superior than the natives, and they only seek their own interests.⁶⁰

It is clear that social values are the foundation of any society, and in the case these values are absent, this will lead to the collapse of the society. It is also important to say that individual's habits are profoundly affected by these values. Paul Bowles in his novel makes reference to the moral decay and the destruction of cultural norms in Morocco. He describes Fez which is a symbol of nationalism as a morally devastated city because of political conflicts and colonialism, which sought to sabotage the Moslem Moroccan identity by rejecting the common values of Moroccans.

To sum up, we may say that 'Cultural Estrangement' is not only a matter of superiority and highness but also a break with popular cultural norms and the refusal of mutual culture. It is also a deterioration of personal and social values that create difference in the society, the fact that affects the relationships between people and makes them alienated.

End notes

⁵³Paul ,Bowles. *The Spider's House* . New York : Happer Perennial, 1954, preface

⁵⁴Zoubida, Hamdaoui, *Themes and Story-telling Strategies in Paul Bowle's North-African Fiction*.(PhD thesis, Granada University, 2013), 74.

⁵⁵Paul ,Bowles. *The Spider's House* . New York : Happer Perennial, 1954, 252

⁵⁶*Ibid*,294

⁵⁷ Campbell, Neil. *The Unified Scream : The Disintegration of the Self and Society in the Works of Paul Bowles*.(PhD thesis , University of Aberystwyth) ,215

⁵⁸Paul ,Bowles.*The Spider's House* . New York :Happer Perennial, 1954,249

⁵⁹Zoubida, Hamdaoui, *Themes and Story-telling Strategies in Paul Bowles's North-African Fiction*. (PhD thesis, Granada University, 2013),76

⁶⁰Gul, Kocsoy.“The Representation of Unrest in the Politicized Space: Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House*” ,Researcher: Social Science Studies 6, no.3 (2018): 106

V. Conclusion

This research paper has examined the theme of alienation in Paul Bowles's *The Spider's House* (1954) by making a reference to Melvin Seeman's theory of alienation as presented in Hamid Sarfraz's "Alienation: A Theoretical Overview" (1997). Alienation is linked to man's existence, and it troubles individuals in a way or another either inside themselves or within their surroundings. This issue has inspired many writers like Paul Frederic Bowles who used to explore the psyche of his characters in most of his writings.

In our work, we have used *The Spider's House's* context as a mirror to show the troubled social, political, cultural and religious conditions in Morocco during French colonialism. We have recognized that the historical events occurred in Morocco during 1954 were the turning point of Moroccans life, who became miserable, since the land was transformed into a politicized area with new political strategies. In fact, the French colonialism, the exile of the Sultan Mohammed V and the Istiqlal abandonment for its own people were the major reasons that led Morocco to witness radical changes mainly in its cultural and religious norms, the pillars upon which the Moroccans depended.

In our work, we have emphasized on the impact of the French colonialism on the Moroccan people, and the way it affects their psychologies and draws them into a state of alienation. We have illustrated how the characters experience the state of disillusionment, disappointment and estrangement in a disturbed environment. The deteriorating conditions of Morocco in 1954 did not affect only its citizens but also the westerners who came to live there. This is well portrayed through Bowles's western character Stenham who, despite his being a foreigner, can not escape the alienating conditions that surround him and finds himself under the same condition as the natives.

The framework of our research did not permit us to deal with all the issues of the novel. We hope this research work is helpful for a better understanding of the theme of alienation

Moreover, we believe that *The Spider's House* (1954) is still rich with research topics and may open a new gap for further discussions, and much can be written on the issues like colonialism and race.

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