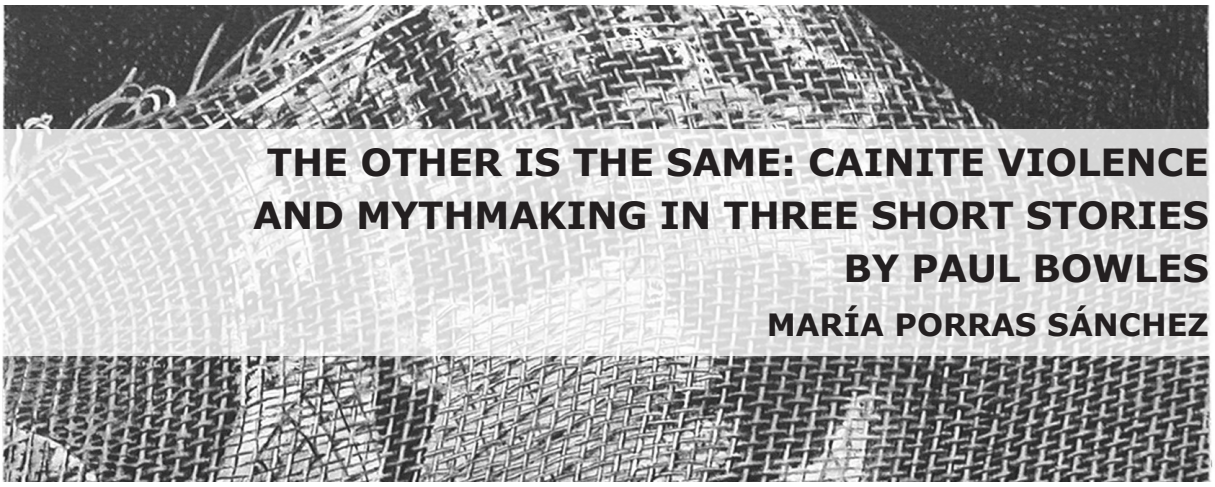

THE OTHER IS THE SAME: CAINITE VIOLENCE AND MYTHMAKING IN THREE SHORT STORIES BY PAUL BOWLES

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1. Introduction

Siblings are not recurrent figures in the fiction of Paul Bowles (1910-1999). An only child himself, most of Bowles' best-known protagonists are Westerners, outsiders losing themselves in an exotic *milieu*, loners such as Nelson Dyar, in the novel *Let It Come Down* (1952) or John Stenham in *The Spider's House* (1955), or strangled and childless couples, like Port and Kit Moresby in *The Sheltering Sky* (1949) and Taylor and Day Slade in *Up Above the World* (1966). Alienation, estrangement and nihilism are prevalent themes in Bowles' fiction, arising from the conflict between self and other through the ill-fated and frequently violent clash between West and East. Set in Morocco, Argelia and Central America, Bowles' novels do not dwell on family plots and genealogic dramas, but deal with lonely men and women escaping the coercive atmosphere of United States in the 1940s and 1950s only to learn that the exotic reality they cherish offers them nothing but emptiness and destruction.

However, there are three short stories belonging to different stages in Bowles' production – "You Are Not I" (1948), "The Successor" (1951) and "The Fqih" (1974) – whose plots involve clashing brothers and sisters while retaining the quintessential themes in Bowles' fiction. This article focuses in one aspect of the myth of Cain and Abel, the binary opposition between the stranger and the same, and the role violence plays in this context. It also contextualizes the use of myth and mythmaking within Bowles' narrative universe and examines how the US writer adopts and transforms the story of Cain and Abel. Later, I analyze how Cainite brothers and sisters in Bowles' short fiction are othered through violence. Instead of the Orientalist rheto-

ric of Westerners versus Orientals, Bowles addresses the Cain-Abel violent confrontation in terms of similarities, a them that mirrors the same dichotomic fears – Same versus Other – present in his novels.

2. The myth of Cain and Abel: violence and the same

The story of Cain and Abel has been defined as one of the defining myths of Western culture.[1] Quinones argues that its appeal is based on three thematic elements: the first murder, banishment and the first city.[2] However, the story is not exclusively "Western," since it is important for the three monotheistic religions. Apart from Genesis 4:1-16, it appears, with variations, in the Quran, as the story of Hābīl and Qābīl (Quran 5:27-31). It is a well-known story in Islamic culture in general and Moroccan culture in particular, since different versions of the myth also appear in Tuareg mythology.[3] Its intercultural quality and the presence of murder and banishment parallels Bowles' interest with foreign cultures, and his exploration of violence and exile in his fiction.

Theology has traditionally addressed the story through dualities, basing their interpretations "in the conspicuous polarities represented in the two brothers: herdsman and tiller of the soil, sacrificer of animal flesh and tither of plants, the old vs. the young, the heir vs. the disinherited, the obedient vs. the rebellious, and the manipulator of nature vs. the embracer of natural rhythms."[4] However, one dichotomy overshadows the rest since the first interpretations of the myth: the stranger versus the same.

According to González Holguín (2018), the oldest interpretations argued that divine behavior in the Cain and Abel story justified the portrayal of Cain as the stranger, the Other, and therefore accounted for the expulsion of those who did not fit in the primitive ethical community.[5]

1 Quinones, Ricardo J., *The Changes of Cain: Violence and the Lost Brother in Cain and Abel Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.

2 Quinones, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

3 Ayari Cozzo, Imen, *Two Questers in the Twentieth-century North Africa: Paul Bowles and Ibrahim Alkoni*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars, 2016, p. 124.

4 Doak, Robert, "Vagabondage in the Land of Nod: the Cain and Abel Myth in Western Fiction and Film," *Studies in Popular Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (October 2001), pp. 17-28, p. 17.

5 González Holguín, Julián Andrés, *Cain, Abel, and the Politics of*

Through his othering, Cain's evil nature has been used, in its different interpretations and appropriations, "in justifying the exclusion of the other."[6] As a dangerous member of the community, Cain had to be expelled from it and become an alien to his previous community.

This idea of Cain as the dangerous stranger is contradicted by Russell Jacoby in his study of the origins of violence through the lens of Cain and Abel myth. Jacoby believes that humans are not biologically designed for violence; rather ideology, religion, and fanaticism make them attack and kill. In *Bloodlust* (2011), Jacoby argues that violence in "its primal form, is fratricide."[7] Contrary to common belief, violence does not distinctly come from the outside:

The truth is more unsettling. It is not so much the unknown that threatens us but the known. We disdain and attack our brothers – our kin, our acquaintances, our neighbors – whom we know well, perhaps too well. We know their faults, their beliefs, their desires, and we distrust them because of that. The most common form of violence is violence between acquaintances or neighbors or kindred communities within nations – civil wars writ large and small. From assault to genocide, from assassination to massacre, violence usually emerges from inside the fold rather than out.[8]

Thus, the hated brother is demonized precisely in his affinity: the Other is our neighbor, our look-alike, the one who is us. The Other, in other words, is the Same. Bowles, as I argue in the following sections, aligns himself with this view of violence as a form of atavism that is latent in all humans. In his stories, this violence erupts without provocation and without justification, as a mechanism for othering the sibling. In fact, as we will see, his unlawful characters are never the older brothers or sisters, usually identified with the figure of Cain, but the Abels, the younger ones. They "other" their brothers and sisters to hide their resemblances, their evil nature, their sameness. Following Jacoby's reasoning, the distinction Cain/Abel is irrelevant: all humans have the potential to be equally cruel towards one another, especially if they are similar.

For Quinones, the myth of Cain and Abel, as a story of murder and jealousy, goes beyond sibling rivalry: "the

God: An Agambenian Reading of Genesis 4:1–16, Abingdon, Routledge, 2018, p. 4.

6 González Holguín, op. cit., p. 72.

7 Jacoby, Russell, *Bloodlust: On the Roots of Violence from Cain and Abel to the Present*, New York, Free Press, 2011, p. ix.

8 Jacoby, op. cit., p. ix.

Cain-Abel story represents a shattering reminder of the fragility of the human compact. In fact, the great purpose of the Cain-Abel story has always been – whatever its guise – to address a breach in existence, a fracture at the heart of things."[9] This breach points towards the inherent vulnerability of human lives, always at the brink of destruction while facing violence. Bowles' stories are a reminder of this fracture, how violence is just below the surface of the familiar and the same, ready to come out and wreak havoc.

3. Paul Bowles, myth and mythmaking[10]

Bowles' writings were mostly inspired by his numerous travels and by his experience living in Morocco, but also his readings were crucial in his training as a storyteller. Revealingly, many of these readings involved myths. In 1945, just before starting to write fiction, he declared that he had been reading "some ethnographic books"[11] with translated texts from the Tarahumaras,[12] a native people of northwestern Mexico, and the Arapesh, from Papua New Guinea. At the same time, he was translating myths for the magazine *View*:

> Little by little the desire came to me to invent my own myths, adopting the point of view of the primitive mind. The only way I could devise for simulating that state was the old Surrealist method of abandoning conscious control and writing whatever words came to the pen.[13]

This brief passage shows several ideas that proved to be key in the development of Bowles's writing method: first, his writing stems from an almost ethnographic interest for native peoples and their stories; second, there is a conscious effort to reproduce the point of view of the "primitive mind," by means of which the narrator adopts the position of the Other; lastly, there is an implicit interest in myth, primitiv-

9 Quinones, op. cit., pp. 3-4

10 This section has been adapted, with variations, from a section of my Ph. D. thesis, *Orientalisms: Exile, Alterity and Arabic Culture in the Writings of Paul Bowles.* Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2016, pp. 96-99.

11 Bowles, Paul, *Without Stopping: an Autobiography*, New York, Ecco Press, 1972, p. 261.

12 He was possibly referring to *The Tarahumaras* by Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), an ethnographic travel book published in English in 1945 based on a trip to Mexico in 1936, which included texts transcribed and translated by Artaud.

13 Bowles, *Without Stopping*, op. cit., p. 261.

ism, magic and the unconscious. These four elements are the symbolic pillars underlying most of his fictional works.

Unsurprisingly, Bowles' early prose writings were animal legends, which then became legends of animals disguised as "basic human beings."[14] It is the case of his first short story, "The Scorpion," published in *View* (issue 5) in 1945. Seeing the positive reaction, he "went on inventing myths."[15] According to Bowles, "the subject matter of the myths soon turned from 'primitive' to contemporary, but the objectives and behavior of the protagonists remained the same as in the beast legends."[16]

As Horkheimer and Adorno declare in *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1944): "myth is always obscure and luminous at once. It has always been distinguished by its familiarity and its exemption from the world of concepts."[17] In this sense, myth was a protonarrative in its origins: "Myth sought to report, to name, to tell of origins – but therefore also to narrate, record, explain."[18] By trying to make his own myths using automatic writing, Bowles was trying to go back to early protonarratives in which there was a representation of reality influenced by magic.

In *Mythologies* (1957), Roland Barthes argues that myth was a "type of speech," and therefore it is conveyed through discourse. He shares Horkheimer and Adorno's assumption that myth is a mode of signification, even though he was trying to offer a postmodern study of myth instead of a historic revision. Barthes defines myth as a "language-robbery," as it is always concerned with transforming a meaning into a form.[19] With his interest in creating new myths, Bowles also aimed at creating a new mode of signification taking as a model the "primitive mind," as informed and inspired by his ethnographic readings. But for him myth was also a way of bringing the unconscious into light, of transforming the unconscious material in order to reshape it into fiction, that is, an unconscious "robbery," in the Barthesian sense. According to Bowles, the antecedent of all of his writings was the unconscious, the only thing on

14 Bowles, *Without Stopping*, op. cit., p. 261.
15 Bowles, *Without Stopping*, op. cit., p. 262.
16 Bowles, *Without Stopping*, op. cit., p. 262.
17 Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, p. xvii.
18 Horkheimer and Adorno, op. cit., p. 4.
19 Barthes, Roland, *Mythologies*, trans. Jonathan Cape, London, Vintage, 2000, p. 131.

which an author could rely, "the integrity of unconscious," borrowing Gena Dagel Caponi's words.[20] The unconscious is the narrative force that brings together all the elements in Bowles' fiction: "The characters, the landscape, the climatic conditions, the human situation, the formal structure of the story or novel, all these elements are one. Since they are activated by other element of the synthetic cosmos, their own motivations are relatively unimportant."[21] In this sense, the author shows a fatalistic position that also finds its correlation in myths: characters are helpless pawns bound to lose themselves into this synthetic cosmos moved by the relentless force of the conflict against nature, their fellow human beings and themselves. As they depart their own culture, they are lured into the unknown only to march into a cosmos that unavoidably leads them to death or oblivion.

Therefore, it is the unconscious the force that rules the "synthetic cosmos" in which story, plot, characters, setting, structure, are all part of the same unity. His writing method offers another clue: even if it is neither entirely surrealist nor "organic," it is based on automatic writing. Bowles preferred to combine the free flow of consciousness with a conscious technique, and always claimed that he didn't know what was going to happen until the novel or the story were finished.[22]

For Karen Armstrong, the original reason for mythmaking is common to all cultures: "from the very beginning we invented stories that enabled us to place our lives in a larger setting, that revealed an underlying pattern, and gave us a sense that, against all the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and value."[23] To this anthropological reason for mythmaking Bowles opposed his own authorial mythmaking: he would place Western characters in a larger but alien setting that revealed their moral weaknesses and existential emptiness, revealing an "underlying pattern" through his the works of his own "synthetic cosmos." But, instead of the comforting and meaningful certainty provided by traditional myths, Bowles' stories provided precisely the contrary: uncertainty, nihilism and unrest.

20 Caponi, Gena Dagel (ed.), *Conversations with Paul Bowles*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi, 1993, p. 299.
21 Caponi, op. cit., p. 91.
22 Bowles, *Without Stopping*, op. cit., p. 275.
23 Armstrong, Karen, *A Short History of Myth*. Edinburgh, Canongate Books, 2005, p. 2.

4. Analysis of the short stories

As opposed to the traditional myth, all the offenders in the three short stories are younger siblings: technically, they are Abels who rebel against their older brothers, who are depicted as evil or, at least, threatening. Whether their fear is founded or unfounded, what is clear is that, by action or omission, they are the cause of their sibling's downfall, in which violence and ritual are central. In any case, none of these Cains is presented as righteous, so we cannot assume Bowles' is reversing the myth. The dichotomy is not righteous versus evil or obedient versus rebellious. These brothers and sisters are equally Cainite in their lack of fraternity. The mythic dimension of these stories highlights the Cain-Abel conflict through sameness as expressed by Jacoby.

Bowles claimed that the short story "You Are Not I" (1948) was a direct transcription from a dream.[24] A first-person narrator – an unusual choice in Bowles' fiction – tells the story of two sisters, the unnamed elder sister and younger Ethel, the narrator. After witnessing a train wreck, Ethel starts putting stones inside the mouth of the deceased travelers. This strange ritual is the first hint that she might be mentally unbalanced: "A man grabbed me by the shoulder and pulled at me. He looked angry. "'What are you doing?' he yelled. 'Are you crazy?' I began to cry and said she was my sister. She did look a little like her, and I sobbed and kept saying: 'She's dead. She's dead'."[25] Her reaction brings forward a sister that is not dead, she is not even at the accident site. Ethel is taken for a victim of the wreck in shock, since she repeats incessantly that her sister is dead. She is taken to her sister's house, who receives her with disbelief – "Are you *sure* she's all right?"[26] – and even fear: "She was afraid of me, and she wanted Mrs. Jelinek to come over."[27] As it turns out, Ethel has escaped the mental institution where she was interned using the wreck as distraction; when they return to pick her up, she shoves a stone into her sister's mouth: "Before either of them could stop me I reached out and stuffed the stone into her mouth. She screamed just before I touched her,

24 Caponi, op. cit., p. 12. "You Are Not I" was included in Bowles' first volume of short stories, *The Delicate Prey and Other Stories* (1950).
25 Bowles, Paul, *Collected Stories and Later Writings*, New York, The Library of America, 2002, pp. 152-153.
26 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 154.
27 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 155.

and just afterward her lips were bleeding."[28] That is literally "the turning point"[29] of the story: a radical exchange is made and Ethel's mind now inhabits her sister's body, whereas her sister's mind is now within Ethel's body, and as such, she is taken to the mental hospital: "The strange thing, now that I think about it, was that no one realized she was not I."[30] Ethel gets to live her sister's life, while her sister is confined to the hospital.

The metamorphosis takes ritualistic overtones: the act of putting stones inside the mouth of the deceased is some kind of burial ritual. Bowles even declared in an interview that, years after writing the story, he read about a similar custom in Melanesia: "one knows things without knowing it."[31] Ethel's incessant claim that her sister is dead followed by forcing a stone into her mouth becomes a symbolic killing: she is dead to Ethel so she treats her like a corpse. That symbolic killing, the "turning point," coincides with the metamorphosis between sisters. This act seals her within the body of the "crazy" sister, condemning her to be a "sane" intern in the mental institution. It is almost a death in life that she accepts tacitly:

> It's the middle of the afternoon and raining torrents. She is sitting on her bed (the very one I used to have) in the Home, writing all this down on paper. She never would have thought of doing that up until yesterday, but now she thinks she has become me, and so she does everything I used to do.[32]

Using the unconscious as a source of inspiration and paraethnographic elements, Bowles created his own contemporary myth including a ritual and a metamorphosis. However, there are multiple interpretations for this story. As Bowles revealed, it was a tale about schizophrenia.[33] From this perspective, the story wouldn't have two characters, but only one, Ethel, describing herself from two different perspectives. A clue is the title itself, repeated in the first lines of the story:

> You are not I. No one but me could possibly be. I know that, and I know where I have been and what I have done ever since yesterday when I walked out the gate during the train wreck.[34]

28 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 158.
29 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 158.
30 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 159.
31 Caponi, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
32 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 159.
33 Caponi, *op. cit.*, p. 196.
34 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 151.

Whether the metamorphosis is real or a product of Ethel's imagination, the rivalry, fear and violence is equally tangible.

"The Successor" (1951) is the story of two brothers, Ali and his unnamed older brother, who run a café together.[35] They is no affection between them, although the reasons for this estrangement remain obscure. What is implied is that Ali is jealous of his brother because, as the youngest, he is deprived of any inheritance and is bound to work for him:

> There was the overwhelming fact that his brother was older than he and therefore had inherited the café from their father. In the face of such crushing injustice there was nothing to be done. Nor was anything his brother had to say of interest to him. His brother was like the weather: one watched it and was a victim of its whims. It was written, but that did not mean it could not change.[36]

In this story, Ali tacitly accepts fatalism, as expressed through the formula "it was written." As the story unfolds, we can see that he would do nothing to harm his brother, but his inaction does not imply that he is harmless. He witness the conversation between his brother and a Belgian man, in which the brother complains about the girl he likes, Kinza: "*C'est une fille*. I give her everything. She always says no. I was thinking, if just once I could –".[37] The Belgian gives him some sleeping pills so he can assault Kinza without her consent, as the ellipsis in the previous quotation suggests. But Kinza dies of an overdose and the police track Ali's brother. When he claims that the drug was given to him by a stranger that tricked him into believing that she would only sleep, the policemen don't believe him:

"A Belgian, no less!" cried one with mock surprise. "He fell out of the sky like an angel, *bien sûr*, with the Veronal in one hand. But nobody saw him. Only you."

Ali caught his breath, sprang up. Then very slowly he lay down again, scarcely breathing now, still listening. "Nobody," said his brother, his voice very low. […]. "He said she'd just go to sleep"[38]

For the second time, Ali remains a silent witness to the whole scene. In his passivity, he causes his brother's down-

35 "The Successor" was published in the volume of short stories *The Time of Friendship* (1967). Nine of the stories were set in North Africa and two in Mexico.

36 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 311.

37 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 316.

38 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 317.

fall. And in his passivity, he also allows Kinza's murder, since he does nothing to alert her or to call the authorities. His tacit acceptance of fate is passive-aggressive, since he won't do anything to prevent the course of events even when he possesses the necessary knowledge to stop them. Following Ali's logic of things, the responsible is destiny, not him. The foreshadowing remark "It was written, but that did not mean it could not change"[39] proves his fatalism and absolves him of any responsibility. Once his brother is taken by the authorities, he is able to carry on with his life, now as the owner of the café, the successor by right, following the course of things: "For a while Ali lay very still. Then, being hungry, he went to the house and had his dinner."[40]

Fatalism can be expressed through different formulas: "it is written," the one used by Ali in "The Successor," is a frequent translation of the Moroccan expression *mektoub*. It is a formulaic way of accepting God's plan tacitly without any doubts which shows how the speaker embraces their destiny without hesitation. Bowles referred to its frequent use in Morocco and defined it as "the will of Allah […] The stone wall against which any argument inevitably crashes."[41] This perception was not exclusive of Bowles, since it was a cultural feature highlighted by different travel writers and typical of Orientalism, in the words of Edward Said, who noted that, in this discourse, Orientals are "imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism."[42]

In his third and last story involving siblings, "The Fqih" (1974), Bowles depicts the conflicted relationship of another pair of Moroccan brothers.[43] The older, Mohammed, is bitten by a stray dog. His unnamed younger brother, encouraged by some neighbors, turns to a local *fqih*, or holy man, who advises to lock Mohammed in a shed. Although the third-person narrator does not offer further explanation for this decision, for Mohammed seems perfectly healthy, we can infer that the *fqih*, the neighbors and the younger brother believe that the bite of the strange dog might infect Mohammed in a certain way, perhaps even turn him into a demon. After hitting Mohammed with a hammer, his brother locks him in a shed, feeding him through a window. His

39 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 311.
40 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 318.
41 Bowles, Paul, *Travels. Collected Writings 1950-1993*, New York, Ecco Press, 2010, p. 48.
42 Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin Books, 1978, p. 102.
43 "The Fqih" was part of the volume *Things Gone and Things Still Here* (1977), one of the seven short stories with a Moroccan setting.

mother tries to free him and convince the *fqih* to intercede, but she falls ill and Mohammed is kept prisoner in the shed for more than a month. When they finally meet the *fqih*, he assumes that the boy has already died:

> It was Allah's will that your son should die as he did, he told her.
> But he's not dead! she cried. And he shouldn't stay in there any longer.
> The fqih was astounded. Then he said: But let him out! Let him out! Allah has been merciful.[44]

Once free, the *fqih* advises Mohammed not to retaliate against his brother: "Allah has spared you. You must never mistreat your brother for having shut you away. He did it on my orders. The young man swore that never would he raise his hand against the boy."[45] However, the younger brother is still afraid: "I'm afraid of Mohammed.

The fqih was displeased. Your brother is older than you, he said. You heard him swear not to touch you".[46] The *fqih* relies in the atavic notion that an older brother would never go against a younger brother. But the younger brother, instead of following his advice, like he did when he locked Mohammed up in the shed, choses to flee home: "No one in the village ever heard of him again."[47] The curse put in Cain by God to become "a restless wanderer on the earth"[48] after murdering his brother takes another turn in Bowles' story. Mohammed's brother becomes a wanderer in fear of retaliation after beating and treating him like an animal. Just like he did when he had the chance, Mohammed could cause him harm if he is given the chance. His self-banishment reveals his acknowledgment of the evil sameness they share.

As I have argued above, Bowles' stories with Moroccan characters tend to recreate a "synthetic cosmos" that he found primitive and also mythic. This perception of Moroccan culture was based on his own observations living there for more than four decades, but also on his reading of *La Mentalité Primitive* (1922) by sociologist and anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. He had become very impressed by his works after reading them in Paris in 1931 or 1932.[49] For

44 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., pp. 452-453.
45 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 453.
46 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 453.
47 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 454.
48 *Genesis* 4:12.
49 Dillon, Millicent, *You Are Not I: A Portrait of Paul Bowles*, Berkeley, University if California Press, 1998, p. 173.

Lévy-Bruhl, "primitive" peoples do not share abstract thinking and reasoning with Westerners, but exhibit a "primitive mentality" which influences their behavior and sense of reality. Primitive mentality is essentially mystic and bound by means of a common force that Lévy-Bruhl called *participation mystique*. Through this mystic participation, human beings, divine creatures, spirits and invisible forces coexist and therefore influences "the whole method of thinking, feeling and acting" of primitives.[50] When Bowles was asked if he believed in supernatural phenomena, such as Moroccan *djnun* (genies), his frequent answer was that he believed "in the existence of them as projected by common belief."[51] That is, he believed in the mystic participation that made possible that the rest of the "primitive" community believed in them. In a similar way, Bowles doubted that Moroccans knew the difference between fantasy and fact[52] because they had not evolved in the same way as Westerners had, and had "whole sections missing in their 'psyche'."[53] In addition, the themes and the logic underneath some of Bowles's Moroccan stories correspond with Lévy-Bruhl's notions. The fatalistic passivity exhibited by the brothers in "The Fqih" and "The Successor" fits the logic of primitive mentality: they believe in a force beyond them, so they are not directly responsible for their own doings, they are simple tools in the hands of destiny.

Lévy-Bruhl's theories of the primitive mentality were refuted, among others, by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz, and was held responsible by postcolonial critics such as V. Y. Mudimbe for objectifying African peoples with his theories, drawn by proxy, by establishing the concept of a static and prehistoric tradition of Africa used by Belgian and French colonizers.[54] However, it would be simplistic to discard Bowles' works as racist. In his particular view, Moroccan might be primitives but he treasured this quality above Western modernization.[55] Rather that presenting Moroccans as readable objects of study, as a Western anthropologist, he created characters that answered to a recognizable logic, but this synthetic

50 Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien, *Primitive Mentality*, trans. Lilian A. Clare, New York: MacMillan, 1923, p. 431.
51 Caponi, op. cit., p. 17.
52 Caponi, op. cit., p. 199.
53 Caponi, op. cit., p. 130.
54 Mudimbe, V.Y., *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 190.
55 See, for instance, Caponi, *op. cit*., p. 160, p. 169.

cosmos was a fictional construct, not an attempt to recreate reality.

5. Conclusions

In most of Bowles' literary production, the conflict Same-Other usually stems from and emphasizes the differences between "modern/Western" and "primitive/Oriental" peoples. The three short stories studied in this article involve pairs of siblings from the same cultural background, but the conflict and the resulting violence erupts all the same. In these stories, the three younger siblings antagonize their elder without any particular justification. In fact, younger and older siblings resemble each other in their disregard for each other. The strategy followed by younger siblings to differentiate themselves from their older peers is othering them, treating them as their antagonists, but in fact this is just a way to hide their resemblance, that is, their evil nature. It seems from their actions – or inactions, as the case of the brother in "The Successor" – that they prefer to strike first to prevent the other sibling from harming them first. To other the brothers/sister, these younger siblings cancel them through violence, because they see themselves reflected in them; treating them as others, causing them harm, is a form of distancing themselves from them. Because they are too similar, their sameness remind them of their own faults. In order to distance themselves from this unflattering reality, they commit violent acts that break that bond.

The fracture between Other and Same is almost invisible in these stories: providing reasons for the antagonism would have make these tales less atavistic, less "mythic." The very reason for their antagonism is their sameness: they antagonize the other because the other is too similar and their sameness is frightening, they see the monster in themselves in the others. In a convoluted metaphor, Ethel in "You Are Not I" recreates this antagonism within herself: "It seemed to me that life outside was like life inside."[56]

In these and other stories, Bowles creates his own myths to explain certain behaviors, imitating what he believed was the "primitive" mind, as influenced by Lévy-Bruhl's theories. Myths reveal the author's interest in ethnography and the unconscious. His mythmaking strategy involves

56 Bowles, *Collected Stories*, op. cit., p. 153.

the introduction of rituals and metamorphoses, such as the ones in "You Are Not I," and the exploration of the effects of fatalism. Fatalism is presented as a direct and explicit influence in "The Successor." In "The Fqih" fatalism is indirect, and works via the *fqih*, who first decrees that Mohammed must be kept captive by Allah's will and then says that God is merciful when he does not die as a result of the time spent captivity and mistreatment. In both cases, as for Mohammed's brother, personal responsibility is avoided. In Bowles' fictional universe or synthetic cosmos, mystic participation is the projection of common belief, a recognizable logic that rules his characters. His interest for the primitive mentality becomes a mythologization strategy in his fiction which may result in the mythologizing a whole culture. But contrary to anthropology, Bowles was an Orientalist writer who presented his Moroccan characters as cultural riddles instead of readable objects of study. Violence is yet another pillar in Bowles' process of mythologization. Throughout his short story production, he constantly showed a gothic penchant for violence[57] that had ritualistic appearance. "You Are Not I" is a great example, since it involves the symbolic killing of the sister when Ethel thrusts a stone in her mouth before the metamorphosis takes place.

Bowles' mythmaking differs from the purpose of ancient myths. In Cain and Abel myth, as in many other myths, "mimetic conflicts lead to the sacrifice of a scapegoat, after which the scapegoat is often deified, because with the sacrifice the mimetic violence ends, albeit temporarily."[58] Cain's banishment turns him into a scapegoat by means of which he became the stranger, the Other. Bowles does not offer scapegoats, eliminating the possibility of a closure and a comforting instauration of a new a *statu quo*. Instead, he provides uncertainty and the sinister realization that all brothers and sisters, even if they try to act differently and distance themselves from each other, are in fact the same. The same ability to commit violence is present in all human beings, as the original myth of Cain and Abel suggests, but there's no scapegoat, no duality, no us versus them, just a collectivity embracing Cainite violence.

Besides, the role God plays in Cain and Abel myth is vacant in Bowles' stories: an atheist himself, Bowles showed

57 Hibbard, Allen, *Paul Bowles: A Study of the Short Fiction*, Twayne Publishers, Woodbridge, 1993, p. 12.

58 Duyndam, Joachim, "Girard and Levinas, Cain and Abel, Mimesis and the Face," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, Vol. 15/16 (2008-2009), pp. 237-248, p. 238.

a consistent pessimism throughout his fiction. For Moroccan author Mohamed Choukri: "Nihilism has taken root in him like the very marrow of his bones. Most of the characters in his novels and stories don't escape the deluge."[59] In fact, the supposed mediators of God's will, the *fqih* in "The Fqih" and fate in "The Successor," are used as an excuse by the offending brothers to act against their brothers' welfare. Applying the theory of mystic participation, Bowles would be depicting the effects of fatalism and religious belief on these men, instead of assigning God an active role.

Bowles suggests an unsettling truth in his fiction, the same unsettling truth provided by Jacoby in his study of violence: that fratricide as a form of violence is a metaphor of many forms of violence that involve sameness, not otherness. As these three short stories show, the constant feature in Bowles' writings is human inherent ability for violence, not the clash Same/Other. Violence supersedes the conflict between cultural backgrounds since it is inherent to all human beings. Bowles' reading of Cain and Abel myth is devastatingly pessimistic: there's no safe place for brotherly coexistence, nor even a scapegoat that allows for a return to a certain *statu quo*, only the nihilistic realization that the violence is the only thing that all human beings have in common, even brothers.

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59 Choukri, Mohamed, *Jean Genet, Tennessee Williams and Paul Bowles in Tangier*, trans. Gretchen Head and John Garrett, London, Telegram, 2009, p. 241.

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