



THE BODY IN REMEMBRANCE
DHIKR IN MOROCCAN SUFISM

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In “Interbeing,” Thich Nhat Hanh writes: “If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow: and without trees, we cannot make paper.” In much the same way, this work could not exist without the ideas and encouragement of many others: my friends in the field, advisers and readers, interpreters, fellow thesis writers and classmates, professors, family, friends, and teachers of new and old who have opened the paths before us. And many whose names remain unknown: the Boutchichiyya brothers and sisters, librarians, taxi drivers, *medina* dwellers, gas pumpers and paper printers, helpful strangers, and oh-so many more. Their words and their bodies move through each line of this work, dancing across the blurry boundaries between one work’s end and another’s beginning.

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at last, you will say
(maybe without speaking)

(there are mountains
inside your skull
garden and chaos, ocean
and hurricane; certain
corners of rooms, portraits
of great grandmothers, curtains
of a particular shade;
your deserts; your private
dinosaurs; the first
woman)

Margaret Atwood

a note on translation

The Arabic names and terms that appear in this thesis have been translated and transliterated in accordance with John Renard's work in *The A to Z of Sufism*. While names of cities appear in the Latinized spelling (e.g., "Tétouan" for *Ṭitwān*), Arabic words are accentuated in italics throughout, defined in-text, and assembled in Appendix A: Glossary. Exceptions include "Qur'an" and the names of institutions, individuals, and Sufi orders, such as Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute, Amina, and the Boutchichiyya Order respectively.

Ghassan, a Moroccan student from Al-Akawayn University in Ifrane, collaborated with me during my three-week research period in May of 2012 as an interpreter. Not only did he help in the logistical planning and actualization of this research, but he also created a truly remarkable interview space – one in which the participant could speak in his/her language of comfort (English, Arabic, and/or French). He frequently asked follow-up questions of his own, reading the words and bodies of our friends from the field in ways that were beyond my ability to do so. Ghassan was present during all of the interviews conducted in Arabic and/or French and, thus, only attended the interviews with men, most of whom spoke in Arabic/French. All of the women expressed their ability and desire to speak in English. For interviews in Arabic/French, Ghassan created transcriptions in English for each. Transcripts are assembled in Appendix B: Transcripts.

preface

The body in *dhikr* moves beyond the borders and boundaries of consciousness, of language, of dualistic thinking, of convention, twisting and turning, expressing, moving, telling, thinking, becoming, performing, and remembering – the body remembers itself to itself and its place in divinity and history. The bodies of this work are alive with agency, refusing silence and stillness. I have been blessed to learn from them and in learning, write and remember with them. This thesis is about the Ritual of Remembrance, or *dhikr*. It is about a small collection of Moroccans for whom Remembrance is life, for whom the body remembers, for whom the body is a critical site of spiritual life. Thus, the body in *dhikr* has to be about mysticism and asceticism, history and culture. And the ethnographic process has led me to realize that it is about so much more than all of this.

I have had the pleasure of learning from Morocco and her people on two occasions – first as a student abroad in the Fall of 2011 and then again for a few short weeks in May of 2012, during which time I focused on the great many questions of the body in *dhikr*. I have since returned more times than I could possibly remember – walking through the *medina*'s streets in slumber, rocking with the performers of *dhikr* in writing, feeling the same frustrated excitement of my interviews dance across my skin in transcription.

To write about the body, much less the body in Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, is, for me, about shifting registers, about opening to a great many possibilities. In writing, I am attempting to embody what Lena Hammergren calls “kinesthetic discourse,” which privileges the body as subject and author (54). I am trying to reach into memory in writing, and remember my own body and the bodies of my friends in the “field.” In remembering and in writing, I am clinging to the hope that the words and bodies of this piece, the embodied narrators, can and do flow freely within and beyond these margins. I fear, as Marta E. Savigliano, “bodies colonized by words, especially when conjured, dancing, from the past – since they cannot move/talk back” (199). Just so, this thesis “looms open” (Foster, xiii), reveling in beautiful uncertainty, in incompleteness.

STRUGGLING WITH AMINA

You can say that the body compels us. Postmodern performance of bodies; cross-discipline fascination with the body as discourse; theoretical de-stabilizations of the grounds and identities in which bodies have moved. Long absent from analysis, the body looms open – open to theorizing, historicizing, interpretation.

Susan Leigh Foster in *Corporealities*, xiii

We were sitting in the back corner of the office, knees touching and backs bent to fit into the small space. It was after three on Tuesday and as Amina was topping off our glasses with tea I remember watching as the day's fatigue crawled across her body. It seemed to begin in her right hand, her knuckles white in a tight grip around the silver handle. I imagined its spins and twirls as it moved through the tunnel of her sleeve and up her forearm, around the bend in her elbow, shooting beyond her shoulder only to be dispersed throughout her chest and into her toes. The music of liquid dropping into glass was only background noise to this dance. Her motions of lifting and pouring, lifting and pouring stretched slowly through time, drawn out by the awkwardness of a first meeting. I shifted in my seat, thinking that her voice sounded older on the phone. Based on the description given to me by Rachid, one of her male counterparts at the Boutchichiyya Order, I had assumed that her wisdom was a reflection of her years. And yet the face across from me could not have been carrying more than four decades.

The only daughter of a small working-class family, Amina's roots simultaneously derive from the *medina* itself and her family's long history with the Boutchichiyya Order. When she was young and the female gatherings were still infrequent and intimate, her mother

brought her to the Sufi lodge or *zāwiya* “just to be there.” Her schooling extended far beyond her classes in the French primary school to the ways of the *zāwiya* itself. Though she lacks an official title, Amina’s leadership in the Boutchichiyya community is both subtle and palpable, a quiet importance. One of her peers likened her role to the significance of the oldest child in the functioning of a family – fundamental and yet too often overlooked. It was this comment of praise and others that necessitated my meeting with Amina, for she was someone so clearly revered by those surrounding her.

Though Amina and I met with the intention of discussing *dhikr* and, quite specifically, the body in *dhikr*, only a small portion of our conversation was clearly dedicated to either topic. Even though I had entered the interview with a predetermined set of questions, I quickly found that they led to seemingly unrelated discussions that I had not anticipated. Instead of responding to my questions about the history and significance of movements in *dhikr* – both her own and those of her peers – Amina kept returning to Sufism broadly, and on a few occasions, the understandings and practices surrounding the body in this mystical tradition. She kept doubling back to “her great sadness” that other Muslims and “you”¹ do not understand the ways of Sufism, an ignorance that she associated with “your” obsessions with veils and saint worship. The narrow focus on female covering and saint traditions makes it impossible to engage with the beauty and depth of her faith, she said.

At first I was frustrated with these frequent digressions – often lasting for ten minutes at a time – and what seemed like an instinctive grouping of “you” and other Muslims. All at once, I seemed to represent this colossal Other – an Other who has, thus far, proven to be incapable of understanding; an Other so saturated in ignorance that it comes as no surprise that shrines continue to be burned and believers beaten. It is the “I,” the “you” that seems

¹ I interpreted her use of “you” to signify North Americans collectively, myself included.

unable to grasp the beautiful peace that is Sufism. I must be clear that I never felt unwelcome by Amina. If anything, her kindness overwhelmed me, constantly and without fail. And yet her criticisms stung in the way that only the truest truths can – sharply, deeply. Part of me expected to be lauded for my efforts here, given a valiant pat of the back and a nod of approval by those about whom I planned to write, those to whom I hoped to write. After all, I was intending to dive into, to crawl through a set of questions that have been largely unconsidered in previous scholarship. But then here was Amina, firmly stating the opposite. No. You do not understand. You cannot understand.

Amina’s dismissal continues to haunt me. In just one breath she rejected not only my efforts in this work but nearly all academic endeavors. And I am becoming more and more content with the truth of her statement. I am incapable of fully grasping Sufism and its dimensions because it is not something that is known to me in the “I’ve experienced this” kind of way. Amina later referred to this way of knowing as “tasting.” Sufism must be tasted, she said. For when is a berry’s sweetness so real, so true as when it breaks upon the tongue?

The vast majority of my informants were in agreement with Amina and the handful remaining did not share an opinion one way or the other – one even paraphrased the Iranian philosopher, Abū Hamid Al-Ghazali, in saying that “the distinctive aspect of mysticism is something that cannot be understood by study, but only by *dhawq* [tasting / immediate experience]... There is a big difference between knowing the meaning and the causes of health and satiety, and being healthy and satisfied” (qtd. in "Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali"). But then why do we ask? What do we hope to gain and to give in asking, in not-knowing?

As my conversation with Amina progressed, it seemed increasingly important to understand this “you” she was addressing – the “you” that was sitting directly across from her, the “you” that encompassed Americans and other Muslims. The “you” was distant and separate and yet, did not seem to be the source of resentment or anger. It just was. It is.

Amina seemed to speak to this “you” with both her words and her body, for she leaned into its use – shoulders followed by hips. It was clothed in her doubt in my ability not only to understand but also appreciate what she was saying about Sufism broadly and the body specifically. For how could I? How could “you?” From my position across from her, there was a driving sense that Amina was speaking to and through me to other Americans and Muslims and in doing so, setting a framework from which to talk about Sufism, the body, and *dhikr*. And here again is a foreshadowing – how many Americans have come before me, singing songs of understanding, and how many more will follow? How many other Muslims – to no avail? Herein lies the beauty of the body. Within corporeality there is commonality, and while I hardly believe that every person’s corporeal experience is the same, there is a magnificence in recognizing that there is something fundamentally human in being “of the flesh,” that so much of the human experience is an experience of and through and with and as body. It threads through us, connecting. Thus, even though I have not experienced the corporeality of *dhikr* in an authentically Sufi way as a believer, I did experience it as body. Herein lies a knowledge, a point of understanding itself (O’Neil 3-5). And it is this body, this understanding from which I write. My own use of the body is embedded within every dot of ink, every piece of this research: my culture and my history have given me the body as a site upon which to consider the existence of a role and the supposed meanings that can be derived from it.² I sat in the Boutchichiyya *zāwiya* during *dhikr* as my own body, just as I walked the streets and later typed these words. There is a whole collection of bodies connected through

² From the earliest stages of this research, I struggled with the use of the language “the body,” especially in a work that aims to move away from stark dualisms and immovable categories. And yet, I have chosen to quite pointedly use “the body” – as a phrase, as a point of possibility, as a subject and an object – in writing this work. Its use serves as a launching pad, a starting point for (re)considering the cluster of scholarship that has adhered to dualisms and abstractions in researching and writing “the body.” Its use signals an opening into the vast possibility of bodies in *dhikr*.

the ink of this research, leaving footsteps and fingerprints – from Descartes to Merleau-Ponty to my Moroccan friends to you as reader.

Though Amina certainly did recognize this corporeal commonality – Amina, after all, encouraged me to attend and participate in as many *dhikr* gatherings as possible – in responding to my questions about *dhikr* and the body, she engaged with concerns that were at once more basic and complex. For one, our conversation relied heavily on our ability to discuss *dhikr* linguistically, a limitation that was consistent with Amina’s insistence that a true understanding of Sufism and *dhikr* clings to taste. In addition, she questioned how she could possibly help me understand the role of the body in *dhikr* if I was unable to first understand the framework from which *dhikr* and the body were derived. Her concerns were evident from the first moments of our exchange and became the underlying premises from which we spoke. She had just returned the silver teapot to its position on the edge of the table, leaned back into the cushions and sighed, smiling as the last wisp of air escaped her lips.

“*Yullah* [Lets go!],” she said, “I hear you want to talk of Sufism.” I nodded. “And the body, yes?”

I nodded again, leaning closer. “Yes, and the body in *dhikr* specifically.”

“You must first know that we are concerned with the spirit above all else. The Qur’an tells us that Allah created us and breathed His Spirit into us. [It] is interesting [that] you ask about the body because we do not talk about it with our words. Our interest is in having a clean spirit.”

Months of distance from my original conversation with Amina compel a pause here, a brief interlude of reflection to think with Amina in a way that the propulsion of our conversation did not permit at the time. Her first full sentence – “You must first know that we are concerned with the spirit above all else” – is enfolded in first principles. Amina is

disciplining me, emphasizing that I must first know that her collective, Sufi “we” is concerned with the spirit as the first and fundamental premise. It is here that she pulls me in, closer, setting a framework from which to talk about Sufism, the body, and *dhikr*. “We are concerned with the spirit above all else,” she says... not necessarily at the exclusion of anything else, just first and above all else. Amina’s prioritization seems to reiterate an often-emphasized point Dr. Khalid Saqi of the Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute expressed in one of our conversations in May of 2012. He said that Moroccan Sufism is constructed around the profound notion that “you have to be in this world but not of it.” One’s spirit comes to represent a timeless essence that transcends the limitations of materiality. Every *thing* in this world is transitory. It is vanishing. But something exists at the very core of human beings that is constant, timeless, connecting us with Allah (Saqi). When Amina said that “we are concerned with the spirit above all else,” she did not seem to be saying that when we are speaking of the spirit we are not speaking of the body but rather, that there is a higher level of consciousness and being that concerns her “we.”

Though the higher, timeless, beyond material existence that Amina spoke of is most often conceptualized as the spirit, the body refuses to be cast aside as antithetical or inconsequential. The creation story from the Sufi perspective is but one testament to the body’s import, one that travels back, through tradition and memory, to Creation (Kugle 30-35): “Then your Lord told the angels, ‘I am making a human being from earth like clay fired and molded. I have formed him and breathed into him of my spirit’” (Qur’an 15:28). According to Scott Kugle in *Sufis and Saints’ Bodies*, “God tells the angels of divine intent to create the primordial human being with a body of irreducible materiality, made from minerals of the earth” (Kugle 30). We are given the image of God completing a hollow body with a breath of His divine spirit, quite literally filling Adam. Though revered for its physical beauty, the body is also contained by its own physicality. It has boundaries that are restricted

by the laws of time and space. And yet, it is also “a material infused with spirit and is therefore eternal, unbounded by space, opening into the infinite beyond waking consciousness” (Kugle 30). Sufis understand the Prophet’s call to “take on the qualities of God” (qtd. in Kugle 34) as a purification and unification of one’s internal and external realities, as a process of becoming reborn in this understanding of self-body unity (Kugle 34-35). “God created Adam in His own form,” that the body is a “sign” of God, a signature of His creation (see FIGURE 1.) (Allah 62-63). Even upon physical death, when the spirit splits from the body and awaits Judgment Day in the “intermediary phase” or *barzakh*, the body and spirit are then brought forth together, united again in front of God on Judgment Day (Kugle 2-3; Rachida).



FIGURE 1.

“God created Adam in His own form”

The limbs and body of the figure are formed by the name of Muhammad, with the Alif (A) for Allah in the center

(Allah 63)

In a similar vein, Amina then noted that “we do not talk about [the body] with our words,” raising several questions about her conception and verbalization of the body. On one

hand, she seems to be making a clear distinction between the ability to talk about the body and the choice to do so. This sentiment moves through the first words of her sentence – she says “we do not talk about it,” not “we cannot talk about it.” Her statement was declarative, lacking any element of censorship or suppression; she spoke candidly and with ease. Her sentence continued, however, inviting us to engage further. “We do not talk about it *with our words*,” she said, suggesting that the body is beyond words, that it is word-less. The quiet, paradoxical question that derives from Amina’s notion of word-lessness reengages both of us in this space, asking: How, then, do you talk about it? Though I lacked the foresight to ask such a question at the time, the mental mosaic that unites all of my conversations and experiences about and with *dhikr* and Sufism suggest that “we do not talk about it with our words” because where our words fail, where the language of the tongue is insufficient, the body speaks. My fingers float above the keyboard after typing those words, lingering in the paradoxical confidence inspired by doubt. The body speaks, flying in the face of so many Western assumptions of what constitutes talk. And so I came back and asked:

“What do you mean when you say ‘a clean spirit’?”

“The meanings are many. I could talk for our whole time on this.” She laughed. And as I sit here writing, I too laugh, remembering her pleasure in this statement. Amina articulated one of the great motifs of Sufism: the coexistence and codependence of dichotomies - emptiness || fullness; seen || unseen; material || immaterial, known || unknown (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 32-33). There are things we do not talk about, she said. And yet, we can talk forever about the spirit. She continued, saying:

“We call the believer *murīd*, which has the meaning ‘one who desires or wants.’

Every *murīd* works hard with their *shaykh* in their religion because it is a thing that is wanted in the heart. Someone does not decide to be a *murīd* like we are drinking this tea. It is hard. A

clean spirit is close to Allah because it is not obsessed with money or power. It wants Allah only.”

Amina’s words drew me in, quite literally pulling us closer until our knees pressed together under the small table. At first, I struggled to understand the significance of her transition from the body’s word-lessness to desire, wanting, cleanliness and how all of this fit with *dhikr* and the body. Weeks later, while making sense of my notes and remembering the way her words rolled from her tongue and onto my page – as resolve entwined in simplicity – I was reminded of Susan Leigh Foster’s work on the body in dance in *Corporealities: Dancing knowledge, culture and power*. She writes that there “are also desiring bodies, bodies that turn away from and rush back towards one another, bodies that touch one another, that strive together delicately and fervently in front of other bodies” (Foster, “Introduction” xi). In trying to make sense of Amina’s words, of the *murīd*’s relationship with desire, a reading of Foster seems particularly relevant. The clean spirit is close to Allah because it is neither obsessed nor attached to money or power. It is free of object identification, which manifests in a reorientation of desire. The craving and subsequent suffering that are most often associated with material desire dissolve in this reorientation. For Amina, it is not so much that desire does not exist, that non-attachment corresponds with a lack of wanting, but rather that one desires without an object. One longs for God only, a grammatical object lacking material form (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 15, 54, 121-122). And just as the body speaks, it also wants, it desires. Though Amina does not mention *dhikr* by name in the above excerpt, her articulation of a *murīd*’s purpose corresponds well with the objective of *dhikr*: to remember God, His names and His manifestations, His Oneness. It is through the constant practice of *dhikr* that a *murīd* succeeds in desiring God and God only (Amuli 1-3). Thus, *dhikr* is intimately intertwined with the type of desiring Amina mentions: when one

remembers, one desires God only just as when one desires God only, one Remembers (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 167-169).

When putting Susan Leigh Foster in conversation with Amina, we see that the *murīd* is a “desiring body” and it is within the space of *dhikr* that s/he “turn[s] away from” materiality and “rush[es] back towards” God. Within the collective space of *dhikr*, all bodies are “striv[ing] together delicately and fervently in front of other bodies” (“Introduction” xi). Much like Foster, Amina rejects the Cartesian body that is vehicle and tool of the superior mind or spirit. “The fragile suspension bridge that once seemed the lone crossing between mind and body now appears as a super-highway,” writes Foster (“Introduction” xi). Amina recognizes that the body is a source of meaning-making and expression just as it speaks, it desires, and it remembers. It is not only imbued with meaning and culture and language but also is and does all of these things. And that is what this work is about. It is about the body. It is about *dhikr*. It is about the body in *dhikr*. *Dhikr* as the super-highway between oneself and the One. The body as that which moves and speaks and remembers – creating – through the *dhikr* super-highway. But how? But why?

This thesis seeks to answer the how’s and why’s of the body in *dhikr*, and to do so engages with adepts from three Sufi orders in Morocco: Tarīqa Qadiriyya Boutchichiyya (Rabat),³ Tarīqa Ibn Hassouni (Salé), and Tarīqa Al-Harrakya (Tétouan). Driven primarily by the conversations I was blessed to share and the *dhikr* gatherings I witnessed, this work is not a thorough representation of *dhikr* or Moroccan Sufism but primarily a (re)remembering of my experiences and the teachings of my friends in the field, enlivened by my contextual and theoretical readings and through conversations with Ghassan, my interpreter.

³ Though the full name of the Order is Tarīqa Qadiriyya Boutchichiyya, my informants referred to the Order and its adherents as the Boutchichiyya. Thus, I will simply use Boutchichiyya in writing about the Order from this point forward.

The push and momentum of my encounter with Amina necessitates a return to my body beginnings, elaborating on my initial introduction to the body as object and as subject, outside of and within the context of Morocco throughout the first chapter. Subsequently, the second chapter will offer a basic framework for introducing *dhikr* in the context of Sufism given Amina's insistence on this foundation. Because the Ritual of Remembrance, *dhikr*, is the subject of this research, the body of this text will consider the various aspects of engagement with the body within a small slice of the Sufi community in Rabat. Through a series of vignettes, each of the following two chapters will do just this, considering not only the mechanical employment of bodies within the context of *dhikr*, but also a range of other expressions: the body as ascetic in Chapter 3, and the body as a site of memory and expression of individual and collective histories in and through *dhikr* in Chapter 4. Amina reminds us of the stories that shape this work, moving through each line of each page. It is their words that create these words, moving and thinking together. They generate a great many paradoxes, suggesting that *dhikr* is much more than the handful of lines most scholars dedicate to its description. It is an event – no more singular than it is stationary. And the body that moves through this space embodies the great dichotomies lauded through Sufi teachings: the material and immaterial, the articulate and inarticulate, the seen and unseen, the known and unknown. We meet them here – moving, speaking, desiring, remembering.

BODY BEGINNINGS

From the beginning, then, the body is capable of being scripted, of being written.
In that writing, the body's movements become the source of interpretation and
judgment – moral, aesthetic, philosophical, and empathetic.

Susan Leigh Foster in *Corporealities*, xiii

It was not until seeing my mother's hunched form, shrunken in grief from her own mother's passing, that I first recognized the capacity of the body to communicate, to inform, to remember. Her body conveyed an intrinsic pain that was unknown to my eleven-year-old self. Even years later, I was struck with the recognition of that same deep, physicalized pain... the way it wound through the heavy creases of her brow, through the tightening of her shoulders' muscles, the zig and the zag as it passed into her weakened toes, the very same toes that I remember surrendering in the same way years ago. We were able to anticipate these occurrences, each passing year marking another 365 days of absence, another birthday, another Christmas and Thanksgiving. With each anniversary, her body adopted the same postures, the same movements, the same patterns that I had first witnessed years before. Her body remembered.

This notion of "remembering" is one that holds undeniable significance in the construction and maintenance of our traditions, experiences, societies, and selves. Every action and reaction is informed by all that preceded. Even when we wish to forget or have convinced ourselves that we've forgotten, memory continues to shape our being (Connerton 1-5). What is perhaps even more powerful are those memories we deliberately recall. Like a

daughter who grieves the loss of her mother, some memories remain etched in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies (Mauss 70-74).

It seemed natural, then, in my twentieth year, already deeply interested in memory and the body's capacity in remembrance, to sit in a *zāwiya* in Morocco and be moved to tears by the ritual of *dhikr*. The sister of my host-sister had invited me to the gathering, a large, brash women who, on more than one occasion, walked in on my attempts at meditation. Though I grew up in a nonreligious family, upon arriving in Morocco in the fall of 2011 and then again six months later, I was drawn to the apparent significance of spirituality within Rabat, specifically the sacred joining of words, music, movement, and memory. From the call to prayer or *adhan*, delivered five times a day through crusty speakers, to the accompanying prayer and prostration... from the quiet murmur of *bismi'Allah* (in the name of Allah) and the gentle tilt forward that preceded all tasks to the frequently audible recitations of the Qur'an (often completely from memory) that floated through open windows and into alleys. Each of these is *dhikr* or Remembrance of God – the God which is in all things and responsible for all things (Cornell, "Voices of Islam" 57-58).

After returning from Morocco in December of 2011, I found that part of me remained in the streets of the *medina*, sitting legs crossed and leaning against the deep grey walls of the old city. Though thousands of miles away, my mind was racing, waiting, wondering. What did this ritual and these people represent in academia and in my own reality that made returning not only a priority, but also a necessity? What was this thing that beat inside me to a cadence beyond what I was able to express? Pulling me. I found myself longing to return, much in the same way we long for a sweetness we've only just tasted. I'm inclined to believe that much of this longing was a direct result of the newness of it all, a somewhat embarrassing reflection of my green gaze towards the exotic. My only previous encounter with Sufism occurred in a dusty corner of my university's library. It was two weeks before

my departure for Rabat and I had Google-ed “authors on religion in Morocco” in an effort to offset my nervousness with random facts and figures. A few hours and a handful of searches later, I found myself flipping through Akbar Ahmed and David Hart’s *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*. Though considerations of Sufism comprise but a portion of the collection, Richard Tapper’s ninth chapter entitled “Holier than thou: Islam in three tribal societies” stood out for his analysis on mystical experiences in Sufi tribes in Afghanistan. Tapper classified mystical experiences as fundamentally “irrational,” pursued and practiced by those who are poor and uneducated. He wrote that “men with secular power or social claims to religious piety and learning take an ambivalent attitude to Sufi activities” (Tapper 244-245). His entire article is situated within the presumption that mystical experiences and “ecstatic practices” are, as Clifford Geertz wrote, not “really real” (Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* 112, 121). Though unintentionally, his judgment of authenticity for the “ecstatic practices” of Sufis deeply impacted my own initial encounter with *dhikr*. When returning to my notes from my first glimpses of *dhikr* in fall of 2011, scribbled furiously on the back of a stained pastry wrapper as I walked home, the words that stick out echo Tapper’s sentiments: different, almost crazed, trance-like. It was not until sitting against the *medina* wall, waiting to enter the Boutchichiyya *zāwiya* and observe *dhikr* six months later that I began to feel the weight of Tapper’s claim. He was referring primarily to the most observable aspects of Sufi ritual experience, that which we see with our own eyes. For *dhikr*, it was the body that was most jarring. Its sways and jumps and swings and jerks, its rhythms and its rhyme, its movements as well as its expressions, were altogether foreign. Although I had yet to ask for teachings and descriptions of the inner life of *dhikr*, I had an immediate sense that this body – in all of its compelling visuality and sensuality – held knowledge that was beyond my present understanding.

In the following months (both inside and outside of Morocco), I began to become aware of the bodies moving, passing, spinning, speaking, and colliding around me. It became quite clear that the body is much more than a site of physics and politics. It is not absolute nor is it unchanging, but is, rather, a source of meaning-making, a category of cultural experience (Counsell 1-6).

Scott Kugle noted something quite telling about Islamic mystics or Sufis: they emphasize the significance of the body more than other Muslims. He wrote that “it is [the] affirmation of God’s immanence and fascination with God’s presence” that cause Sufis to have “a special focus on the body and the subtleties of human relations that embodiment entails” (Kugle 4). The unique systems of ritual and intention that dominate Sufi awareness emphasize the body as an object wrought with meaning and a subject capable of experiencing and expressing. Scholars such as Scott Kugle (2007) and Shahzad Bashir (2011) have dedicated entire volumes to studying the ways in which the body is treated and understood within Sufism, contributing to the rich collection of information on the subject.

Even in a more general sense, the matters of the body have only recently emerged as an area of study in academic thought. In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century, we begin to see the emergence of Cartesian dualism, a uniquely modern mode of thought led by the French “Father of Modern Philosophy,” René Descartes (Farquhar and Lock, “Introduction” 1-2). Within the Cartesian framework, one’s mind and body were considered completely different, distinct entities: the mind and the body are separate just as the real is separate from the unreal, the seen from the unseen. Thus the thinking, immaterial mind was thought to inhabit the operational, material body, utilizing this vessel as a machine to be controlled and directed (Descartes 328-346). This proved to be a point of contention for Descartes – if the mind is immaterial and the body is material, how can one affect the other? In an effort to account for this discrepancy, Descartes later proposed that the pineal gland was

“the seat of the soul,” and therefore, served as the nexus of interaction between the mind and the body (Descartes 16-22). Other challenges with the understanding of body as machine – more fully articulated by Julien Offray de la Mettrie in the early eighteenth century – arose with Darwin’s theory of evolution. If the body can be subject to evolutionary change, then it cannot be likened to a static machine. Likewise, this conception of the body was later criticized for limiting the body to its physical barriers, reducing its ability to affect and be affected by culture, history, and society (Farquhar and Lock, “Introduction” 1-5).

The debates that arouse among Descartes, La Mettrie, and their contemporaries paved the way for future generations of thinkers concerned with the body. Emile Durkheim and his students Robert Hertz and Marcel Mauss, for example, broke down the mind-body dualism that defined the previous centuries and set the framework for what was to become known as the “lived body” (Farquhar and Lock, "Introduction to Part 1" 19-21). The body was no longer seen as distinct from the cognitive mind but understood as the nexus of one’s individual and collective history, culture, experience, religion, and politics, in conjunction with social practices and images. Much like Durkheim, Hertz maintained that “man is double” and distinguished between the physical body (defined within the scope of its functions) and the socialized body (Durkheim 49-53). In his essay “Pre-eminence of the Right Hand,” Hertz made the bold claim that the body is “good to think with” in describing the tendency of many cultures to prefer the right hand to the left one. Hertz asserted that the biological function of the hand is socially produced and primarily informed by individual experience and social thought. His contribution was undoubtedly significant, for he acknowledged the body’s physical function and its capacity to engage in cultural expression (Hertz 30-33).

Though *dhikr* takes on many forms and expresses itself through many mediums, the role of body is both unmistakable and understudied. While the body as a system of

expression and consciousness has clearly gained scholarly attention over the years, these theories have yet to be thoroughly applied to *dhikr* or *dhikr* to them. Perhaps even more significant is the reality that *dhikr* has yet to be studied from the direct perspective of those who participate. Some have centered their analyses on the ritual's positioning in Sufism broadly (e.g. Ernst 1997; Schimmel 1975), *dhikr* leaders such as the *munshidun* and *naqīb* (e.g. Hoffman 1999; Waugh 2005), the scholar's own experience (e.g. Cornell 2007; Ernst 2003; Geels 1996), and on developing an understanding of the wisdom and charisma of Sufi saints (Amuli; Cornell 1996; Ernst 2011; Geertz 1968; Muzaffer 1981). And yet unexamined are the perceptions of ordinary *dhikr* participants. It's these embryonic connections that have inspired me to go beyond the current literature and consider the role of the body in the Moroccan performance of *dhikr* from and through the narratives of those who Remember, of *dhikr* participants themselves.

Methodology

In methodology, this research derives its data from narratives of nearly a dozen Sufi adepts currently living in Rabat – where Arab, Amazigh,⁴ African, and Andalusian mix to form a Sufi space unlike any other (Waugh 106). Of the eleven men and women interviewed in May 2012, eight are directly affiliated with the Boutchichiyya Order. Of the remaining three, two are adepts of the Ibn Hassouni Order of Salé and Al-Harrakya Order of Tétouan, with the final participant considering herself to be affiliated with her family's *zāwiya* in Ouezzane. Though the demographics of my informants were fortunately quite diverse –

⁴ Oftentimes, the terms “Berber” and “Amazigh” are used interchangeably to refer to the indigenous population of North Africa. For the purposes of this work, I will refrain from using “Berber” – etymologically linked to the Latin and Byzantine versions of barbarian – in favor of the term “Amazigh,” often translated in Morocco to mean “free people.”

representing a full range of ages and levels of experience with Sufism, as well as different genders, socioeconomic statuses, and professions – I made no effort to craft a “representative sample” and instead, depended on those who volunteered to make themselves available.

The vast majority of my interviews took place at Café 7ème Art in Rabat, a well-known café tucked between two large office buildings right outside of Rabat’s *medina*. In typical Moroccan fashion, the process of securing interviews relied heavily on personal references. Throughout the course of a conversation, one interviewee would mention the name of her/his friend, spiritual leader, or family member, declaring with enthusiasm that I *must* contact her/him if I really want to get to the bottom of it all. S/he would excitedly reach for my cell phone, jam down the appropriate numbers, smile and murmur in a jumbled combination of Arabic and French, release a few laughs, and hang up, return my phone and declare, “Yes! You will meet with _____ tomorrow for tea. Come after *asr*!” (the afternoon prayer).

I was fortunate enough to receive the help of a Moroccan student from Al-Akhawayn University, Ghassan, who effectively served as my interpreter during my three-week research period. He proved to be an irreplaceable partner to my efforts, enabling our friends in the field to speak in their language of comfort – English, Arabic, or French (and oftentimes, some combination of the three) – and provided an entry into the complex multicultural world that is Morocco. He frequently asked follow-up questions of his own, reading the words and bodies of our teachers in ways that were beyond my ability to do so. While each interview was geared towards exploring one’s history with Sufism and *dhikr*, how this history is expressed within and throughout the body, and the collective, as well as individual, uses of the body in *dhikr*, the adepts often discussed Sufism broadly and their thoughts about Westerners. Even these digressions were fundamental to this research, providing the foundation from which the body speaks and moves. And thus, while each chapter centers on

a different dimension of the body in Sufism, in *dhikr*, and in memory and accepts an intimacy that often accompanies the narrative form, the very nature of embodiment unites the individual, “private” body with an expansive understanding of body a social metaphor, through which the body marks and wears collective belonging and difference. The body, thus, creates a certain type of intelligibility, becoming both an active agent and a canvas with which Moroccan lives are understood, constructed, and experienced (Farquhar and Lock, “Introduction” 3-5).

As part of and in conjunction with the collection of narratives, it was my prerogative to be a student of the community to the richest extent possible. I attended *dhikr* gatherings at the Boutchichiyya *zāwiya*, engaging and participating to the best of my ability. Because the men and women practice *dhikr* separately, I was unable to attend any male gathering, though it is certainly worth noting that each of the *murīds* with whom I spoke emphasized the equality and similarity between the male and female performances of *dhikr*. Each time, I attended as the guest of one of the *zāwiya*'s *murīds*, sitting directly beside her with an extra Qur'an on my lap, following both the oral and physicalized recitations. Likewise, I explored the expertise of local Sufi scholars and religious leaders when developing the theoretical framework of my research. Of particular note is Dr. Khalid Saqi of the Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute. He has served as my guide to Moroccan Sufism and *dhikr* throughout the process of preparing this work, meeting with me several times in Morocco while engaging in email communication long before and after my research visit.

In a subtler vein, one of the most significant methodologies for this endeavor pertains to the act of writing and reading, re-writing and re-reading. A truly dialogical process, the very act of writing contributes to the development and movement of the narratives that comprise this piece. As writer, I am my own reader too, continually reading and responding to what is written. My text is fully an actor, becoming a correspondent in and of itself.

Likewise, my own readings of the transcripts of my interviews, in conjunction with the initial listening and engagement with other scholars, shifts my own sense of self and sense of my own experience (Ness 133-134).

I have no intention of representing the entire religion of Islam or its mystical components in the following pages – not in a general sense or specifically through the lens of Morocco. Nor do I intend to make any grand claims concerning *dhikr* or the body. I had the privilege of sharing in a small collection of stories, a limited number of experiences told by only a few. Though representing truth, the narratives presented here only embody the intimate truth of some and remain wholly incomplete. As neither a Sufi nor a Moroccan, I have little authority here and so these narratives, these representations of thought and experience, will serve as the foundation of this piece. They are surely the loudest and most prominent voices – just as they should be. It is by them and through them that I hope to participate in this space.

Even today, in our world of globalization and supposed secularism, the influence of Sufism and *dhikr* is undeniable. Seeing Sufism and its practices as less extreme and more accessible than many sects of Islam, the spiritually invigorated Moroccan youth have turned to Sufism in great numbers over the past ten years. With *dhikr* as the most significant, unifying element of Sufism, gaining a deeper understanding of the practice's significance, complexities, and beauty is paramount in understanding the ritual itself and the culture from which it thrives (Saqi). Thus, by considering the body's ability to move beyond the tongue as articulator and the mind as rememberer within *dhikr*, we can situate this research within a full range of discourses and disciplines.

SETTING THE STAGE: WHAT IS *DHIKR*?

“Travel and eat in the gardens of Heaven.” They asked him, “What are the gardens of Heaven?” He answered: “The circles of *dhikr*.”

Prophet Muhammad in the collection of hadīth, *Man-La-Yah'darah al-Faqih*

In Islam, *dhikr* is an Arabic word that has accumulated a plentitude of definitions. Most scholars and translations generally associate it with the term “remembrance,” coming from the Arabic root ذ – ك – ر which becomes the verb “to remember” and the noun “the rememberer” or “the remembered.” *Dhikr* has also been translated to mean recollection, reminiscence, commemoration, naming, mentioning, invocation of God, mention of the Lord’s Name, and (in Sufism) incessant repetition of words, movements, music and sentiments of praise for God (Wehr and Cowan 310). Though each of these translations carries its own degree of complexity, not one properly portrays the intricacies of *dhikr* itself. The English understanding of what encompasses “remembrance” or “naming” or “repetition” hardly skims the surface in recapturing the implications of the word in its original Arabic – in both meaning and beauty (Cornell, “Voices of Islam” 66-69). Thus we must look to more complex definitions and representations to better understand a word that is often oversimplified.

Earle Waugh, in his book *Memory, Music, and Religion: Morocco’s Mystical Chanters*, aimed to represent *dhikr* through the perspective of the *munshidun*, the mystical chanters that lead the musical, poetic aspect of *dhikr* rituals. When describing *dhikr*, he

wrote, “The *dhikr* tradition sees Remembrance as a Qur’anic-validated means of meditation on past verities and on the transcendent being of God, a base upon which Sufism built a structure for probing higher consciousness, engaging with spiritual forces and ultimately coming into a personal encounter with God” (18). For Waugh, *dhikr* is one of the foundational elements of Sufi spirituality, deeply embedded in the collective history and culture of those performing (6-10). It is the “base” of Sufism, the means of “probing higher consciousness,” of “engaging with spiritual forces.” *Dhikr* is the rock that grounds and propels the spiritually invigorated *murīd* “into a personal encounter with God” (17-18).

‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani, the father of several Sufi orders in the 12th century, develops Waugh’s words, defining *dhikr* in the following way:

Dhikr is the impact produced when God comes fully, by eternal grace divine, into the intimacy of the initiate’s heart, which is in perpetual evolution towards “God.” And this *dhikr* illuminates and enchants the heart of the devotee. Consequently, he desires to never to forget God, and wants nothing to distract him from His remembrance, he wants nothing to enfeeble, nor to trouble his well-being. In this case the initiate must repeat the Qur’an in the following saying: “O you who believe! recall often the name of God; recall him, and celebrate his praises morning and night” (33:41). The best *dhikr* is therefore that which springs up from the depths of the heart, inspired by the Glorious Lord! (qtd. in Waugh 23).

Al-Jilani’s words come alive with the same fullness of his *dhikr*. He writes of a “perpetual evolution” and a “desire.” *Dhikr* “illuminates” and “enchants,” it “springs up from the depths of the heart” and is “inspired by” God. *Dhikr*, for al-Jilani, is the embodiment of betterness, a (re)becoming of self in His Remembrance. Within the Qur’an itself, the importance of *dhikr* cannot go unnoticed. Referenced directly in over two hundred verses, the Remembrance of

God is one of the most virtuous acts, encompassing many practices and attitudes (“Search Truth”). *Dhikr* can be performed silently – in the privacy of one’s own heart or home – or aloud, independently or in large groups. The former, revered for its lack of ostentatiousness, entails internalizing the names and manifestations of God, and prayer. Whether in recognition of the God that exists within and throughout the petals of a flower or in the love shared among people, of God as The Source Of Peace and Perfection (*As-Salam*) in the midst of violence and destruction, in recognizing one’s own spiritual poverty and need for God, the silent *dhikr* of the heart occurs with each breath, deeply and continually (Geels 229-231). In addition to these subtler forms of Remembrance, Sufi orders practice a collective *dhikr* in the local *zāwiya* multiple times each week. This ritualized practice often involves the recitation of poetry, the Qur’an, music, and dance, and simultaneously celebrates God while working to move beyond the mundane earthliness of human existence into an inspired, better-than-self state (al-Suyuti 20-29).⁵ To the significance of collective, loud *dhikr*, the second *hadīth* recalls the following conversation between the Prophet and an early group of Muslims:

“O people! God the Almighty has angelic troops that descend and join the gatherings of *dhikr* on earth. So go graze in the gardens of paradise!” They asked, “Where are the gardens of paradise?” He replied, “The gatherings of *dhikr*. So take part in the Remembrance of God the Almighty morning and evening” (qtd. in al-Suyuti 21).

⁵ Debates questioning if “loud *dhikr*” is preferable to “silent *dhikr*” (and vice versa) enliven both the earliest writings of Sufi masters and the most recent academic pieces on Remembrance. To say that these debates are highly contentious and complex is a gross understatement. While this work focuses almost exclusively on the collective gatherings of *dhikr*, the scholarship on “silent *dhikr*” or “*dhikr* of the heart” is extensive. See e.g. ad-Darqawi 1969; al-Halveti 1981; al-Suyuti 2008; Amuli; Ernst 1999; Frager 1999; Schimmel 1975.

The second *hadīth* validates the power of collective gatherings of *dhikr* – or rather, “the gardens of paradise” – and calls for Remembrance “morning and evening.” Thus, it is hardly surprising that *dhikr* is widely considered one of the most significant rituals in Sufism. In his *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, Carl Ernst asserts that *dhikr* “may be called a specialty of Sufis” (92), emphasizing *dhikr* as a process that moves from a physical recitation with the tongue to an inward recitation and remembrance, which engages “the secret” (93), an inward consciousness. Similarly, Dr. Saqi describes *dhikr* as the single most important “practice, activity, state of being” for it exemplifies al-Jilani’s (re)becoming and “perpetual evolution” from mundane, earthly materiality to an expanded state of being. As an ascetic tradition, Sufism is fundamentally concerned with one’s internal reality. It is through the annihilation of the lower self or *nafs* and movement beyond materiality that enable Sufis to connect with God, ultimately realizing His Oneness. *Dhikr* is the primary means towards this realization (Saqi). “Sufism aims to get beneath the skin of human existence,” writes Scott Kugle, “beneath its routine and rules” (1). It must be more than a set of practices or laws to abide by, indicative of the deliberate turning away from the ego-driven self towards God, a unity often articulated as Oneness or *Tawhīd*. This process is long and arduous, and is often likened to the walking of the “Path,” also known as *Tarīqa*, or climbing a ladder. It is a struggle and through struggling, adepts progress to different stations or *maqam* and grow in faith and closeness to God (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 167-169).

It was not until the beginning of the eleventh century that Sufism came to Morocco, nearly three hundred years after first being recorded in the East.⁶ Though its exact origins in Morocco are largely contested, scholars agree that Sufi saints or *awliya*’ played a significant

⁶ While it is impossible to identify the exact beginnings of Sufism, written records from the ninth century point to the presence of early Sufism in Basra, Khurasan, Egypt, Baghdad, and Iran (Karamustafa 3).

role in the tradition's expansion.⁷ It is widely accepted that *dhikr* was the primary practice identified with Sufism at the time and largely responsible for its extensive spread. Sufis believe that there are certain individuals – known as *awliya' Allah* or Friends of God (more commonly referred to as saints) – who experience God's love so powerfully, so clearly that they are able to transcend the triviality of human materiality and exist in an enlightened state of being. These individuals became models in Muslim communities, exemplifying integrity and religious piety. Carl Ernst writes that saints have an “esoteric knowledge” of God and His Truth, which allows them to transcend the *nafs* and witness the Real in *dhikr*, becoming widely lauded for their spiritual superiority (*The Shambhala Guide* 58-62). He quotes Adab al-Muluk in his tenth-century text, “The Manner of Kings”:

The sciences of Sufism are esoteric knowledge, which is the knowledge of inspiration, and an unmediated secret between God (the mighty and majestic) and his friends [i.e., the saints]; it is knowledge from the presence. God the mighty and majestic said [that Khidr⁸ was one] “whom we taught knowledge from our presence” (Qur'an 18:65). That is the special knowledge which is the sign of the saints and the reality of wisdom... [When asked about this esoteric knowledge, the Prophet said,] “It is a knowledge between God and his friends, of which neither proximate angel nor any one of his creatures is aware.” Thus every outer has an inner; every inner has a secret; and every secret has a reality. That is what God the great and majestic gives to his friends, as a secret by a secret. It is one of the signs of sainthood. The saints

⁷ Though typically referred to as *awliya' Allah* by scholars, Sufi saints are known by several names in Morocco. *Amghar* and *agurram/tagurramt* are the Amazigh equivalents while *murabit*, *salih/saliha*, and *siyyid/siyyida* are used in Arabic (Westermarck 35-36). For the purpose of this thesis, I will use *walī* (singular form) and *awliya'* (plural form).

⁸ Khidr is a religious figure from Abraham's time, deeply honored for his wisdom and his service to God (Qur'an 18:65).

subsist by that, and they live a wonderful life by it. They are the most powerful of God's creatures after the prophets (God's blessings upon them all), and their sciences are the most powerful of sciences.

In premodern Morocco, *awliya'* were political and religious leaders, educating local populations in the teachings of Islam while also providing guidance in the social, economic, and political spheres of life (Cornell, *Realm of the Saint* xxiv-xxvi). Throughout Morocco's history, Sufis created communities of faith that revolved around a saint and his teachings. These communities became known as "orders," each with its own system of meaning and practice passed down by the *walī* (Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide* 120-122). When considering the system of practice and meaning associated with *dhikr* this is particularly true.

Even though all Sufi orders engage in *dhikr*, each one has developed its own liturgical archive, patterns of movement, and unique practices and prayer passed down through the initiatory chain of prophets and saints. Thus, the varieties of *dhikr* are endless. For the Halveti-Jerrahi Order in Istanbul for example, adepts form a circle, sitting, and turn their bodies right and then left when reciting "There is No God But Allah" or *lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh* to mimic the rotation of the Earth (Geels 237-239). The adepts of the Senegalese Mouride community in Raleigh, on the other hand, lower their heads, rotating counterclockwise past the heart to the right shoulder and back to a lowered position when saying *lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh* to rub away everything except God from the heart (Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide* 93). The Boutchichiyya of Morocco, for example, frequently sit with their arms outstretched and palms facing upward, opening, and with *lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh* rub their palms on their faces to receive His blessing. The variations are endless, and are often attributed to differences in geography and saint adulation (Waugh 22).

When I first arrived for the collective, female *dhikr* at the Boutchichiyya *zāwiya* in Rabat's "old city" or *medina* with my host-sister A'isha, we were welcomed at the entrance

by a small woman in a pink *djellaba* or traditional Moroccan dress. As she opened the door, patches of evening light leapt onto the tiled floor and bits of sound escaped, the rise and fall of the musical recitation and the shuffle of bodies could be heard even from outside. The woman motioned us in and led us to the back, tiled room where a gathering of Sufi women was already in full swing. The women were spread across the entire room, sitting side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder reciting the *wazeefa* – suwar from the Qur’an, including Surat Yā Sīn,⁹ Surat Waqi’ah,¹⁰ among others – and rocking back and forth. Even though there were hardly thirty women crammed into the small space, the room was filled with such power and force that at times it felt as though the entire building was rocking with the movement of the bodies. Each women’s face was calmly serious, a striking serenity, their lips moving in unison to the words of the Qur’an. The Boutchichiyya recite the Qur’an in the *warsh* style, melodic and in unison. It was as if the adepts spoke from one mouth instead of dozens, each word recited by memory and coming alive in the tongues and breaths of the believers. It was more lyric than monotone, a unique feature of Moroccan Sufism ("Mujaddid of Sufism").

With the signal of the *dh’kara* (female ritual leader or *munshid*), the group transitioned into new liturgical recitations, from reading of Surat Yā Sīn to repetitions of *lā ’ilāha ’illā l-Lāh* (There is No God but Allah), *Ya Latīf* (The Gentle),¹¹ *Hasbunallahu wa*

⁹ Surat Yā Sīn is the 36th chapter of the Qur’an, which is considered the heart of the Qur’an and reiterates God’s absoluteness and the Qur’an’s significance as a divine source (“Search Truth”).

¹⁰ Surat Waqi’ah is the 56th chapter of the Qur’an (known as The Inevitable) and emphasizes that God and His Creation all have divine ends, urging the believers to wait for Truth and Revelation (“Search Truth”).

¹¹ The Boutchichiyya often recite three or four of the ninety-nine names of God during *dhikr* as a way to recollect and remember Him. During each *dhikr* gathering, the ritual leader selects these names based on the attributes s/he wants the adepts to harness during *dhikr*. *Ya Latīf* means “The Gentle” (Muhaiyaddeen 40)

Ni'mal Wakil (Sufficient For Us is Allah), and *Hayy* (Always Living)¹² to reading of Surat Al-Waqi'ah to prayer on the life of the Prophet to recitations of poetry expressing love for Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. Each recitation flowed into the next with unmatched ease, dancing through shifts and spins for nearly three hours.

While certain portions of the *dhikr* were striking for their uniformity in oration and movement, there were also frequent breaks in the collective activity. On several occasions, an adept's movements or words would break from the group, generally signifying a deeply intense moment of spirituality or trance. Shortly after the second hour had begun, an older woman began rocking back and forth while the rest of the group remained relatively motionless. Her movements slowly transformed from a subtle front-to-back motion into a quickened, fully-body convulsion. Her movements were robust and euphoric – bowing forward with deep inhaled breaths and then slowly tilting backwards, releasing her breath on His name, *Allah*. She breathed inward with her entire body, exhaling His name, bending at the knees and then straightening again. These movements were rigid and severe, as if she was being firmly lifted up and down by an invisible string attached to the top of her head. In a discussion later that evening, A'isha explained that this is when the believers focus on opening their earthly bodies to God, concentrating on the Divine Name in order to abandon the barriers that separate one from the Divine. In order to reach this inspired state, believers remember and recite His names and manifestations internally. At the same time, one remembers with body how to reach this state through movement. A truly successful *dhikr* starts with the participants performing *dhikr*, remembering the Divine with their tongue, heart, and body until an inspired, freer state is reached. Then, following the attainment of this condition, God Himself does *dhikr* and the participant is physically and spiritually overcome.

¹² *Hayy* is another one of God's ninety-nine names, meaning "Always Living" (Muhaiyaddeen 72).

This could be seen when a force beyond anything I could attempt to represent overwhelmed one of the adept's body. It was a condition of pure bliss, of true ecstasy, accompanied by tears and cries of joy. The devoted *dhikr* participant knows and understands how to reach this state with the body, remembering previous states of *dhikr* and using this knowledge to inform and improve the current state. Thus, memory is a necessary implement for *dhikr* to function. It becomes an exchange of reciprocity with the believer remembering God and then God remembering the believer (Saqi). To this, the Qur'an notes, "So remember Me; I will remember you" (2:152). Qur'an 13:28 also says: "Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the Remembrance of Allah; for without doubt, in the Remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." This "satisfaction" becomes the physicalized, bodily expression of *dhikr* (Geels 233-239; Saqi).

The physicality of *dhikr* is arguably one of the most significant components of performing the ritual – both in the collective setting that has become the basis of this analysis and the quieter, individual moments (Geels 236-239). The Moroccan *munshid*, Ashhab, noted, "It is impossible to be in the presence of God and the Prophet and not physically *move*, citing as proof that human response patterns to God have been codified in the movements... For [Ashhab], this meant that God expected the human, *as body*, to respond when He was present" (Waugh 32). And yet, the body as flowing and open, moving and malleable in *dhikr* is too often untold, condensed, as Amina might say, to veiling, saint worship, and exotic "Othering." The following chapters aim to step into the body's ambiguity and multi-dimensionality in *dhikr*: as ascetic, as historical, as cultural.

ASCETIC BODY IN PRACTICE

We perceive the exterior of things, but the interior is concealed from us and is occult.
The body is of this world, but the soul is of another dimension, another kingdom.
The access to this kingdom is the entire path.

Shaykh Sīdī Hamza on <http://www.tariqa.org/>

The sweetness of [*dhikr*] is tasted by the one who has taken to *dhikr* with the whole of himself, so that his skin and heart are softened. As Allah said: "Then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah" (39:23).

Imam Ḥabīb Aḥmad Mashhūr al-Ḥaddād in *Key to the Garden*, 116

The two epigraphs live alongside each other, moving across opposite paths and together, meeting here on this page. *The access to this kingdom is the entire path. The sweetness of dhikr is tasted by the one who has taken to dhikr.* Asceticism in *dhikr*, as I learned, is quite different from those practices of self-denial, adapted and transformed from their earlier versions, by which the body is renounced as antithetical to salvation and to Oneness. Shaykh Sīdī Hamza – the spiritual guide of the Boutchichiyya Order – at once sustains and suspends the distinction between the exterior and interior: “we perceive the exterior of things, but the interior is concealed from us and is occult.” And yet Hamza sees “the body of this world” and its exteriority or appearance as accessory to the perfection of “the soul.” Access to the other “kingdom” requires “the entire path,” the total. Al-Ḥaddād also appeals to the wholeness of the “self.” For al-Ḥaddād, corporeality is the very image of enlightenment. Remembrance of Allah is “tasted” and felt: “the sweetness of [*dhikr*] is tasted by the one who has taken to *dhikr* with the whole of himself, so that his skin and heart are

softened.” Remembrance is the combined expression of inside and out (Farah; Saqi). Both authors emphasize a wholeness, an entirety that flows across the skin and through, to the heart, a softening of another dimension. Lingering – open – asceticism is essential to both Sufism and *dhikr*. What does it mean here, in this context, through these bodies, these pages? How do those with whom I’ve met and of whom I’ve read understand what is frequently articulated as denial of the world and the flesh in pursuit of the enlightened whole that is the combined body and spirit of *dhikr*?

It was Friday, shortly after three, and only the tip of the afternoon sun hovered over the *medina*. The shade was fitting, matching the calmness that always seemed to dance through the streets on the day of *jumu’ah*. From where I was sitting, legs crossed and leaning against the deep grey wall of Rue Sīdī Fatah,¹³ the smells and sounds of Rabat’s old city, her *medina*, were exceptionally distinct – a rush of chicken and vegetables in couscous came with each faint breeze and with it, the muffled music of laughter behind thick walls and open windows, and the shuffle of steps crossing into sacred spaces. Across from me was one such space, tucked discreetly among homes and shops with a simple doorway and matching plaque that read “zāwiya Qadiriyya Boutchichiyya,” a place of Sufi practice. The foot traffic here was especially active, mostly women adorned in the traditional Moroccan dress, the *djellaba*, on their way to a gathering of *dhikr*. Over the course of twenty minutes, nearly thirty women entered the *zāwiya* – scholars, mothers, students, the old and the young, the affluent and the impoverished... all with the express purpose of practicing *dhikr*, of performing for themselves, their community, their God. Less than fifty yards down the street, I saw Mustapha approaching, one of the ritual leaders of *dhikr* or *naqīb* of the Boutchichiyya who

¹³ Rue Sīdī Fatah is one of the most frequented streets in Rabat’s old, walled city or *medina*. Barely wide enough for cars, Rue Sīdī Fatah is scattering with produce carts and merchandise stands, shoe repairmen and jewelers, homes and places of worship.

had agreed to meet with me and Ghassan to discuss his role in the Order and understanding of the body in *dhikr*. A few seconds passed and our eyes locked in recognition. I, after all, was the only young, white woman lingering outside of the *zāwiya*. Mustapha lifted his chin, his arm following, motioning me to my feet. Mustapha represents an important voice in this narrative, for Sufism was a topic of his studies before it held a place in his heart. His understanding is deeply rooted in scholarship and academic analysis. He read Kharsa before Abū Madyan, Benchekrone before Rumi, and spoke about Foucault and Ibn al-Arabi in the same breath. Not surprising, then, was my introduction to Farīd al-Zahī, a Moroccan scholar of literature and Islam, initially in my conversation with Mustapha and then again in Scott Kugle's *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*. Much like my conversation with Mustapha, al-Zahī's work suggests the presence of a distinctly Sufi body, one that represents both materiality and asceticism. While the majority of scholars in Islam who have written about the body focus on the body in Islamic law, women's styles of dress, and the pressing debate questioning if the body is one whole entity or an assemblage of organs and limbs (Kugle 16), Farīd al-Zahī has put forth an integrated view of the body, one that embraces what al-Ḥaddād calls "the whole of [oneself]" (116). He appreciates the body as moving and as shifting, as liminal (Kugle 16-26).

Al-Zahī combines his study of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on embodiment with Mircea Eliade, a Romanian historian of religion, in asserting four dimensions of bodily experience: (1) corps or physical embodiment, (2) corporal or social embodiment, (3) corporeal or biological embodiment, (4) corporeality or spiritual embodiment (Tasa and Yurtsever 171). For al-Zahī, these four dimensions of bodily experience reveal the relationship between the ego and the body, a conception that can help in understanding the Sufi practices of and with the body – from fasting to sexual intimacy to *dhikr* (Kugle 16-22). To delve deeper into our consideration of the latter, we will need the schema presented by al-Zahī to help situate us within Sufi consciousness in Morocco, if only by a theoretical basis.

The first dimension of al-Zahī's four-dimensional model is corps or physical embodiment. This is the ground from which all human reality and experience originate. We have the body first, says al-Zahī – before consciousness or any “I” (Tasa and Yurtsever 171). In the Moroccan Sufi tradition that “I” is identified with a lower self or *nafs*, which is close to the Western/Freudian identification of the individual cognitive “ego.”¹⁴ Within this dimension, the *nafs* relates to the body as though it is against the body, opposing it, or as Kugle writes, “struggling with the body.” This is the place from which practices in bodily control like fasting, sleep denial, and celibacy can be understood (Kugle 22-23). The second dimension, corporal or social body, conceptualizes the body as an instrument of use with functional purposes such as sleep and nourishment, reproduction and mobility. The body, here, is a vehicle of expressive action to be controlled and regulated. It learns how to navigate its being and function from within its social circles. The self is a “being through the body” (Kugle 18, 23-24). In the third dimension, corporeal, the lower self is immersed in the movement and activity of the body, and the self is “being with the body.” The body “is turned inside out,” writes Kugle (19). It is here that ecstatic experiences like *dhikr* assume value. The *nafs* becomes so consumed in the ecstatic experience that it loses the ability to recognize itself as distinct, which is ultimately the aim of Sufi practice and ritual (Kugle 19-24). The fourth and final dimension, corporeality and spiritual embodiment, is referred to as “being in the body.” Al-Zahī's final dimension is characterized by the realization that selfhood relies on the body's materiality and sociality. It is enabled but by no means limited

¹⁴ Interestingly enough, there is not a corresponding higher self, which again pushes against the dichotomization of Sufi thought and practice. The *nafs*, lower self, and ego are often used interchangeably and frequently represent the lower levels of the Path within which one is driven by material desires and individual satisfaction. Though the spirit is often articulated by Western scholars as antithetical to the lower self (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 112-115), my interviews with Dr. Saqi and Mustapha reveal that the spirit is not separate from the *nafs* but rather, succeeds in moving beyond the materiality and individuality that drive the *nafs* for a higher sense of unity or *Tawhīd* (Oneness). The *nafs* are absorbed into this larger level of identification (Mustapha; Saqi).

by them. The full possibility of *dhikr* is realized here, when the *nafs* is so immersed in the body that consciousness “withdraw[s] into the body” (Kugle 25). It is here that one sees and experiences and moves with things that originate from within the body itself instead of outside it (Kugle 19 and 25). Hamza’s opening epigraph gains further depth through al-Zahī: “We perceive the exterior of things, but the interior is concealed from us and is occult.”

In describing the four-dimensional model, Kugle writes that al-Zahī’s scheme of embodiment offers a way to understand how all at once the body is a biological entity, a medium of expression, a site of yearning and blessing, and a catalyst for moving past the *nafs*. All of these – together – must guide efforts to understand the body in *dhikr*. No dimension can be elevated as principle without reducing the richness of an adept’s experience with *dhikr*, and the necessary transition from individuality, from distinctness, from separate to wholeness, to Oneness (Kugle 25-26).

In the previous chapter, Dr. Khalid Saqi notes that *dhikr* is the most important “practice, activity, state of being” for the Boutchichiyya Order because it exemplifies the movement to annihilate the *nafs* in order to approach a state of Oneness with God. Annihilation becomes easier as an adept progresses through the various “levels” or stages of understanding. Unlike the spiritually advanced, the young or inexperienced *murīd* struggles to locate and move beyond the ego-ridden *nafs*. This movement becomes easier as s/he devotes more to *dhikr* (Saqi). The same seems to be true of the body. For the *murīd*, the body is first understood in the context and the confines of al-Zahī’s first two dimensions – as (1) a material impediment to the *nafs* and (2) a tool that one has and uses – and then develops over time to encompass not only what one does but who one is (Saqi). This transition in understandings of the body brings us back to Saqi’s point that the *murīd* aims to be “in this world but not of it,” emphasizing that the body, too, is subject to the veils and paths of understanding that each *murīd* must

overcome, must traverse. Dr. Saqi speaks to this process of experiencing in what was, for me, a surprisingly different understanding of the foundations of Sufi practice:

“First of all, the whole business of Sufism is placed, is built on a principle that came from outside of Islam, that did not exist in Islam, which is the *batini* interpretation,” he said. “*Batini*, they will say that to everything there are two levels: there is a surface level and there is a hidden level. The surface level is accessible to anybody. The hidden level is the privilege of the few, the privilege of the elite.”

“What does it take to have access to this ‘hidden level?’” I asked.

“Only those who God loves – this is what they say – will finally discover the Truth. The others – you can practice, you can pray, you can read the Qur'an – but the real *Haqīqa* [or Truth] is not something that you can get...”

“Do you think the body relates to this?” I inquired.

“When we think about the body, the *shaykh* will instruct [you to do] prayers, dances, performances, meetings, contemplation,” Dr. Saqi noted, pausing. “These are all part of what you should expect as a *murīd* during the journey. And as you keep doing it, you keep elevating yourself spiritually until you get rid of the profane way of seeing things and little by little, all those elements of the veil that prevents you from seeing the *Haqīqa* are dropped one after the other until a complete unveiling occurs. The *murīd* goes from a body that prevents *dhikr* to [one that] enables. And after that, you get what is called *kashf*. *Kashf* means you see things that other people don't see. This is the *Haqīqa*. And you see angels, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), you see Paradise, you see Hell, you see your place... until finally you see God Himself.”

He paused again, brow furrowed and eyes narrowing in concern. After nearly twenty seconds he continued, saying, “This is very very controversial from the point of view of Orthodox Islam because of the fact that Orthodox Islam says that you can't see these things

because God says that in the Qur'an. You will never see God. God says it in the Qur'an. You will never see angels. God says it in the Qur'an. You will not see dead people because they never return to you. You can have dreams if you want and imagine things but you cannot see them as they are. So, even this principle of the *Haqīqa* is not universally accepted, though it is the framework for many Moroccans... so when *kashf* becomes a reality for you and *Haqīqa* is realized – that's how you cleanse your soul of all the dirt of this world. And little by little you elate yourself until you reach this step where you can see things. That is an indication that you are no longer a member of this profane world, this dirty world, this materialistic world..." He pauses and leans towards me, continuing with emphasis, "That is what the *shaykh* promises to lead you to. But it is you who will experience the thing. This is an important principle in Sufism that says that you cannot reach the Truth except through a guide. You have to have somebody to lead you to the Truth. Not the Prophet, not the Qur'an – you need somebody who knows God directly, who gets directly inspired by and from God. And it is you who will experience all of these things. It is not through books. It is not through diplomas or degrees or research" Then, just as Dr. Saqi was arguing for the possibility of full unveiling or *Haqīqa*, he returned to the preeminent sensuousness of taste: "It is through practice and it is through tasting. This is a very important word in Sufism. They say 'you have to taste for yourself.' And once you do that, that is how you can get to a result. When we think of the body in these terms with *dhikr*, it is very clear that we have to embody tasting to reach *Haqīqa* and see angels, the Prophet, Paradise, Hell, and when we're ready, God Himself. We need the body, [for] without it the Truth would be beyond our reach."

Dr. Saqi complements Farīd al-Zahī here by expanding upon the multi-dimensionality of embodied Sufism. While al-Zahī articulates a framework from which all bodies of all beings from all cultures can be understood, Dr. Saqi re-roots al-Zahī's premise in Sufi thought and practice, *dhikr* specifically. Powerfully, he unpacks the process of transforming from an adept who only

understands the surface of things to one who sees and understands and tastes and moves through *batin*, or the inner, hidden, highly sought after sense of meaning.¹⁵ The ideal *dhikr* exists at this level of understanding (Kubra 47-52). Dr. Saqi emphasizes the place of the body in this process as what first prevents and then enables *dhikr*. He first comments that “the *murīd* goes from a body that prevents *dhikr* to [one that] enables” and ends with the sentiment that “we need the body, [for] without it the Truth would be beyond our reach.” His statement flies in the face of Cartesian dualism and those proponents who seek to separate that which exists in the mind from that of the body (Kugle 10-12). Meeting Farah further enhanced my sense of the cultural and semantic failure of dualistic thinking to express *dhikr*. Since moving to Rabat twenty years ago, Farah has identified as a *murīd* of the Boutchichiyya Order. *Dhikr* is a divine pursuit for Farah, though, unlike several of our other narrators, her spiritual experience is confined to the *zāwiya*. For example, Mustapha finds meaning in his constant performance of *dhikr* – as he wakes up, in walking down the street, with each word and every thought – whereas Farah practices *dhikr* only within the *zāwiya*’s walls during the weekly gathering. Accordingly, Farah offers a particular perspective on the problem of dualism:

“Muslims – and when I say that I’m including Sufis – Muslims many times believe that offences against God exist with the body and not with the spirit. You know what we’re told is that when you are before God being questioned [on Judgment Day], as a human being you can blame one part of your body – ‘It’s my hand. I couldn’t control it’ – you know what I mean? Or ‘It’s my eye that saw that, that pleasure.’ This guilt is revealing because we are trying to separate our minds or our fears or whatever from our bodies. It’s a human thing.”

With her next words, Farah lifted both hands, opening her palms to the ceiling and rolling her

¹⁵ In Sufism, the term *batin* is usually used in reference to the Qur’an or the purpose of all existence, and the process of accessing the deeper meaning or reality of the two (Renard 123).

wrists clockwise towards her chest. With emphasis, she said, “And so we teach our bodies and discipline them.”

“Do you ever stop teaching your body?” I questioned. She paused, her gaze scanning up the adjacent wall.

“You see, the body of good Sufis already knows.” Upon noticing my apparent look of confusion, she smiled, continuing. “Sufis fast and they do *khalwa* [or spiritual retreat]. There [are] other things too. It is all to learn to control the body. No. The good Sufi still does these things but for the reason of knowing God.”

Farah called me out. I had been thinking, still, that the Sufi spirit and the body were separate. “No. The good Sufi still does these things but for the reason of knowing God.” Farah emphasizes a connection between the spirit and the body that supersedes any dualistic tendency. She recognizes that, in practice, many Sufis mentally and spiritually dissociate the spirit from the body, understanding the latter to be a thing that can act against the spirit and must, therefore, be despised and taught and disciplined. This is the young or inexperienced Sufi. The “good Sufi” or the one who is practiced, on the other hand, understands that it is not about controlling the body, as Farah puts it, but about embodying a sense of connectedness between spirit and body, about ceasing to consider the two to be two but rather, one. It is about moving past the *nafs*, which is responsible for departures from Unity. This is what is meant by Oneness. Much like the spirit, which is constantly striving towards betterment, annihilation, and Oneness with God, so is the body. Both, in practice, displace the *nafs* as obstacle to Oneness (Saqi).

Struggling with the Body

Charged and quivering, ready, a powerful energy pulsed through her body, pulling her from her position sitting on the *zāwiya*'s floor to standing in the presence of God. She bent at her

hips and into her lap, a full-body fold that caused me to catch my breath, gasping. The motion repeated itself, rolling with ease as if a wave. Her shoulders jerked back, the rest of her following. Now erect and facing towards me, I could see that her eyes were closed, her eyelids smooth in a relaxation contrasting the tense rigidity that commanded her frame. Frozen, she lingered in open space as the voices around her quickened: *lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh* ---- There is No God but Allah. Her chin lifted and palms turned upwards, her chest opening. The brief stillness subsided and was replaced by a gentle forward rocking motion. The gracefulness with which she moved beautifully complimented her previous stiffness. Now, she drifted away from Him and back to us. And then, rocking back to Him, the top of her chest filled with air, lifting as if pulled by strings. Her eyes followed, opening, and then tears. My stare was so fixed that when A'isha, my companion, grabbed my elbow and pulled me towards her, I jumped. Our eyes locked and she gestured towards the woman I had been watching with a lift of her chin. She pulled my ear to her lips and whispered in broken English, “This one not eat. *Sawm* [or fasting] helps with *dhikr*.”

As A'isha explained, the woman I was observing during *dhikr* was fasting, an ascetic practice employed by many Sufis to enhance their spiritual experience. As alluded to by both Farah and Dr. Saqi, strategies in controlling one's bodily experience are an integral part of transcending the *nafs* and approaching *Tawhīd* or Oneness with God. For those inexperienced adepts who first practice denying the body, training it and controlling it, fasting is a necessary part of the path to being as body (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 29). For the more experienced adept, fasting comes to represent an embodiment of one's rejection of the material world, an adoption of an immaterial body (Hoffman, “Eating and Fasting” 482). And yet, in the spirit of Farah's evocation of the trap of dualism and her emphatic “No!” I am compelled to think of the body not as immaterial or the opposite of material, but material in a different way. It is, quite

possibly, beyond material. The body, then, provokes us with impossibility, the impossibility that the unseen affords. It enchants us, enfolds us in mystery. The body reclaims that which we have located outside and beyond it. But first, the fasting body must be fleshed out, provided a history and an anatomy.

When speaking to the spiritual foundations of Sufism, Dr. Saqi describes how one of the central goals for Sufi adepts is *faqr* or poverty. Historically, according to Dr. Saqi, Sufis in Morocco have striven to abandon their material existence, both physically and internally rejecting worldly concerns. In efforts to be free from the hold of worldly possessions and preoccupations, it is common for Sufis to struggle against materiality by controlling their bodily experience through practices such as fasting, sleep deprivation, and celibacy, an elaboration of al-Zahī's first and second dimensions – “struggling with the body” and “being through the body” (Tasa and Yurtsever 171). “It is the struggle against the *nafs* [or ego] that we see here,” noted Dr. Saqi. *Hadīths*, hagiographies, and Muslim literatures are filled with great stories of how the Prophet and *awliya'* lived in poverty, revered for their complete reliance on God. It is in recognizing the absolute need for God and nothing else that many Sufis turn away from material desires (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 28-31). Annemarie Schimmel describes the logic of this form of asceticism in writing: “To possess anything means to be possessed by it – the world entralls those who possess some of its goods, whereas... [the true adept] needs God, nothing else” (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 121). Much like Amina, who in the first chapter spoke of desire towards God, Schimmel distinguishes between possessing matter and being possessed by desire or love for God. In the second case, consciousness is given over to desire and love. Achieving this space of what

might be called pure materiality (versus anti-, non-, or immateriality), requires a complete shift in consciousness, an abandonment of the “I have”s and “I want”s and “I need”s for “God God God God.” The abandonment is *dhikr*. The remembrance is *dhikr*. The poverty is *dhikr*, extending from material to beyond material (Hermansen 2-5).

For Moroccans, there is one mystic specifically who played a significant role in the prioritization of practices in controlling the body, Abū Madyan. Madyan was an influential Andalusian Sufi from the twelfth century who spent his years as a young adult in Marrakech and Fes. Though he played a significant role in the development and spread of Sufism throughout North Africa, his impact in Morocco is particularly significant. Among his many teachings, he was known as a proponent of creating harmony between one’s internal and external reality. For Madyan, the body represented a physical manifestation of the *nafs* or lower self, and it was through hunger that the spirit could succeed in imagining and embodying the highest level of being (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 23-29). He writes of the relationship between hunger and Remembrance in his *Basic Principles of the Sufi path (Bidayat al-murīd)*:

He who is hungry arrives and he who is satiated is cut off. He who remembers [God] is moved to meditate, while he who forgets is himself forgotten. This is because hunger comprises ten qualities: the purification of the lower soul from lusts and doubts; remembrance; meditation; the shedding of blameworthy attributes and the acquisition of those that are praiseworthy; the emulation of spiritual masters who have gone before, as well as the Companions of the Prophet and those who succeeded them among the first generation of the pious; preoccupation with suppressing the lower soul; and preventing the lower soul from falling its lusts.... Hunger is the vehicle of the worshippers, the way of the pious, the method of the Gnostics, the key of

those who are guided, and the goal of those who have arrived at the highest [level] of *'illiyyin* (qtd. in Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 29).

Madyan's words drip with the same fullness of the fasting *mūrid*'s movements in *dhikr*: her quivers and jerks match “he who is satiated is cut off... he who forgets is himself forgotten... [hunger is] the key of those who are guided, and the goal of those who have arrived.” In embracing hunger, the *mūrid*, as Madyan wrote, purifies, remembers, meditates, sheds, emulates, suppresses, and prevents (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 29). This time-honored tradition of asceticism trains the believer in humility, opening them to the great many possibilities of Oneness with God. He, after all, provides for His adepts in a capacity that is beyond the conditions of materiality (Hoffman, “Eating and Fasting” 469-471).

Though all Muslims are instructed to fast during the month of Ramadan, Abū Madyan encouraged his followers to fast with more frequency. For him this included a minimum of fasting for three days each month and each day of Rajab and Sha'ban.¹⁶ For those who were able, however, Madyan advocated a more stringent schedule, one that required one day of fasting for each day of normal eating. In addition to this alternating timetable, he also performed (and encouraged his followers to perform) the fast of intercession, imitating Moses' fast in the Egyptian desert and the Prophet's fast during the revelation of the Qur'an in Mecca (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 23-31). Accordingly, Abū Madyan wrote:

I have examined the writings of the Prophets, the pious, the Companions [of the Prophet and their] Successors, and the scholars of past generations; yet I have not found anything that causes attainment to God Most High without [the addition of] hunger. [This is because] one who is hungry becomes

¹⁶ The seventh and eighth months of the Islamic calendar, respectively, which come directly before the month of Ramadan.

humble, one who is humble begs, and the one who begs attains. So hold fast to hunger, my brother, and practice it constantly, for by means of it you will attain what you desire and will arrive at that for which you hope (qtd. in Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 58).

It is clear from hagiographic narratives such as these that the Sufi's inclination to hunger lay in not answering the surface of desire. When the *mūrid* pushes against the possibility of gratification in fasting, desire remains – desire for God's nourishment. And for the “good Sufi,” as Farah would say, desire is oriented away from food and towards God. Textual descriptions of such situations convey the sense of Sufis “being with the body” in hunger. The *mūrid* does not stop being hungry, but is rather in a place of desire without attachment to gratifying it with food. In hagiographic accounts, the extent and severity of Sufis' struggling against and with their bodies varies (Kubra 44-46). The harshest are almost universally limited to the great masters' early adulthood, the time in which they developed and validated their religious piety and potential. A story from the hagiography of Khwaja 'Ubaydallah Ahrar describes how he adopted a lifestyle of subsisting on the bare minimum of necessities and exerted himself in extraordinary ways for the sake of others. He is said to have worn the same wool robe and socks for three years, took care of patients with typhoid, and aided people bathing in public baths. He abstained from eating meat because it connoted luxury and he also shunned water (usually for ten days at a time) (Ahrar 187-196). With time, as Farah observes, these adepts reach a heightened level of corporeal understanding, one in which the intention behind practices such as fasting become so embodied that one is perpetually fasting, if only internally.

To this, Farah remarked, “*Dhikr*, [like] hunger, make me lose myself.” Lose myself. Lose my self. What does that mean? To not simply lose one's self but to be lost in something – in hunger, in *dhikr*. The day after my conversation with Farah, Ghassan (my interpreter)

and I were leaning against the rod iron that encircled the Café 7ème Art, waiting for our interviewee to arrive. After recalling my conversation with Farah, Ghassan's response resonated (and continues to resonate) on a level of such depth and insight that its inclusion seems absolutely necessary. He said, "It means becoming – this loss of self." While I question my own ability to understand the full implications of his words, I am confident in the power of the paradox to which Ghassan points: by losing one's self, one becomes one's self. He speaks of the self as not distinct or individualized, but becoming more than itself – a broader sense of self, if you will. I see no better way of pronouncing a role of the body in *dhikr* than this. Becoming. Not just a being or a doing or a having, but a becoming.

Mohamed, the person for whom we were waiting, finally arrived. Fortunately, his tardiness allowed for my incidental interview with Ghassan. It was from our post outside the café that we first saw Mohamed shuffle past. Distracted, he seamlessly removed his hat and tucked the day's newspaper under his arm. His head jerked left and then right, frantically scanning the café. Upon noticing the man's search, Ghassan asked: "Sīdī Mohamed?" He spun towards us and plopped his hat back onto his head with a grin. Ghassan corralled us to the nearest table and, in French, launched into his well-rehearsed introduction – recognizable words (Lindsay, Amérique, étudiante, and *dhikr*) popped out like dense kernels. Juice, tea, or coffee? Ghassan inquired. Before he could wave down a waiter, Mohamed leaned forward and began peppering us with the facts of his life and questions about my research: I was born in the northern city of Tétouan. When did you arrive in Rabat? How long are you staying? I belong to the *zāwiya* of al-Harrakya but now I sometimes visit the Ibn Hassouni Order in Salé. What, exactly, are you doing? But, why? Ghassan and I slowly moved through his questions, answering together in a jumbled combination of English, French, and Arabic. Once satisfied and grasping his glass of grapefruit juice to his chest, Mohamed nodded energetically and urged us forward. "*Wakha!* [Okay!]," he said with a smile.

Mohamed ended up speaking directly to questions Ghassan and I had been attempting to untangle over the last week, questions of loss and becoming. Frustrated by my repeated request to “explain” or “describe” what the body is doing in *dhikr*, Mohamed said that it is not something that can be explained or described. It is not “of words,” he said. It is a taste... a feeling, an experience, a movement from something over here to something else over there. After a significant pause and a smile, he offered: “You know that the poems we use during the *dhikr* are all the translations of efforts that major masters tried to put into words, while translating the feeling they get when doing *dhikr*. So I feel stressed and weird, like being in the middle of the road between the physical and non-physical world... It is like living a moment of a dream [where you are] just dangling.” Mohamed, much like Farah and Mustapha, embraces the body in *dhikr* as beyond material. *Dhikr* is “like being in the middle of the road between the physical and non-physical world.” Its movements, its essence, its being and doing and becoming, enable the body to become what is beyond the physical: a movement of the body beyond the body – cascading, beating, pushing forward and pulling back – from the worldly physical to the embodied “occult” (Hamza). The mystic poet of the 13th century, Rumi, models movement and becoming-ness in Sufi thought and tradition in his extensive poem, the *Masnavi* (Hermansen 2-4):

From the moment you came into the world of being,
A ladder was placed before you that you might escape.
First you were mineral, later you turned to plant,
Then you became animal: how should this be a secret to you?

Afterwards you were made man, with knowledge, reason, faith:
Behold the body, which is a portion of the dust-pit. How perfect it has grown!
When you have travelled on from man, you will doubtless become an angel.
(qtd. in Hermansen 4)

The words of Rumi – as well as Farah, Mustapha, Mohamed, al-Zahī, and the others who move throughout this text – open up the possibility of being and doing and moving in *dhikr* as something or someone different from what is ordinarily experienced. They speak of being

grounded in an essence, a Oneness that lacks individuality, where the lower self, the ego, is undone. The lower self dissolves into Oneness. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to further unpacking this displacement, first considering the system of body movements – the twists, turns, jumps, sways – and then their subsequent meanings.

Moving through Dhikr: From Struggling with to Being in the Body

The transition of the body from material to beyond material throughout the course of *dhikr* signals the possibility in the performance of *dhikr* as its very fruit. That is, the ritual process is to some extent its own end. Enfolded in Ghassan’s sense of becoming are the signs of a crossing – from the body as ego (working against one’s efforts towards Oneness) to One (with all creation within and beyond one’s self) (Saqi). In crossing, the adept expands the body beyond its physical limits to what Farīd al-Zahī refers to as the dimension of corporeality, spiritual embodiment, or the “being in the body” (Kugle 19-22).

The expression of “moving with the body to move beyond the body in *dhikr*” was one that emerged in several of my interviews. When utilized, it seemed as though the speaker was referring to two different bodies here: the body that moves and the body that one is moving beyond, moving past to reach God. “At times, the person can see and feel things that are not physical,” emphasizes Mohamed, “and so since there is the impossibility of this adept to translate what they are seeing or feeling, [this is when] the body jumps in to translate it.” The *murīd* quite literally moves beyond the physical body and accesses worlds and knowledge that are ordinarily beyond perception, a transformation “into a plenum for the name of God” (Saniotis 75). Mohamed continues, “There is no right and wrong *dhikr*. There is a good *dhikr* and there is a *dhikr* that is just learning to do the *dhikr* right.” For Arthur Saniotis, this process is a “re-authoring [of] the self” or, as Ghassan puts it, a becoming. This is the body

that “arrives at [the] noble station” through hunger (Cornell, *The Way of Abū Madyan* 60), the body of Muhammad during ascension (Ernst, Personal Interview), the body of al-Zahī’s third and fourth dimensions that one is being in and with (Kugle 24-25) and, as I’d like to consider in this space, the body that moves beyond materiality in *dhikr*.

The centrality of the ascetic body in Sufi understanding illustrates that the body far exceeds what can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched through the body’s physical senses. Thus, to consider the Sufi understanding of the body, we are not only exploring a physical entity but questioning how the Sufis of this text imagine and embody their own being (Shahzad 511-513).

For the Boutchichiyya Order specifically, body movements in *dhikr* are thought to fall under the natural inclinations of each *murīd*. For some, this may include side-to-side sways, movements back and forth, jumping, dancing, nodding, sitting or standing, and any other combination of movement or lack of movement. It is believed that “the body takes over” in these moments and propels the limbs to move in ways that will ultimately enable the *murīd* to reach the sought after better-than-self, beyond material state of Oneness with God (Mustapha). Not all orders share the “to each his own” mentality of the Boutchichiyya. Not ten minutes away, down Avenue Laalou and across the Oued Bouregreg,¹⁷ is the *zāwiya* of the Ibn Hassouni Order in Salé. For the *murīds* of Ibn Hassouni, each *dhikr* gathering is “directed” by a ritual leader, either the *naqīb* or *munshid*. S/he designs the entire progression of *dhikr*, choosing the liturgical selections (excerpts from the Qur’an, poetry, and a few of the ninety-nine names of God), leading the accompanying body movements, and setting the pace and progression (Youssef). “This is because we should move together,” suggests Youssef, a *naqīb* at the Ibn Hassouni Order, “and makes the *dhikr* better.” According to Youssef, all

¹⁷ The Oued Bouregreg is the small body of water that runs between Rabat and Salé, and flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

dhikr participants are expected to subdue their own movements for the sake of conformity with the collective. The intention behind such efforts is to reject one's individual inclinations in the rise and fall, the breath, the sway of the group. Still other orders within Morocco and beyond its borders adopt alternative systems – some reject any and all movement, iterating that the best *dhikr* is conducted humbly and in stillness (Keller).

In my conversation with Mustapha of the Boutchichiyya Order, he repeatedly emphasized that while there are rarely good movements and bad movements, there are good and bad ways to move. The major distinction he makes here refers to consistency between one's internal and external reality. He said, "You see, the good *murīd* should not say one thing and do something else. He should think as he acts, say as he does. [Just so], he should move in *dhikr* naturally in ways that his heart feels." Mustapha continued, recognizing that any given adept may deviate from what comes naturally, to move in ways that may be unnatural based on what s/he thinks is expected from others in the community. Mustapha identified these individuals as being relatively new to Sufism, young in age, and/or existing in a lower level of understanding. These are false movements, he said, employed to please some external entity other than God (Mustapha).

"[When we think about our bodies in] *dhikr*, it is a mirror," imaged Mustapha. It reflects a *murīd* back onto him/herself as a measure of "how you're doing." It is tangible, this reflection, because each *murīd* knows how a good *dhikr* feels. The body knows and *dhikr* becomes a way of knowing in itself, accessed through a memory. The body remembers all previous *dhikrs*, suggested Mustapha, and does not consciously decide how and when to move: "[It] just happens," he said, "and [you reach] a point where it is easier to remain moving than to stop." Mustapha continued, saying:

"We actually call this *al-ahwāl* [or the conditions]. It is like the case when Christians listen to their religious chants and they react by moving their bodies... The authentic

reactions, they are caused thanks to the “tasting” of *dhikr*: the *murīd* [absorbs] everything around him – the chanting, the [other] people, the *zāwiya* – and something moves him... Some may stay still, as a reaction. [In fact], the one not showing any body reaction may have stronger *ahwāl* than the one showing violent and quick movement.”

And, again, “tasting” is brought to the forefront. Through its use, Mustapha emphasizes both the experiential nature of *dhikr* and locates this experience in the body. Tasting. Reacting. Moving. Stillness. Strong. Violent. Quick. Movement. Mustapha speaks of the body as creating and containing a certain type of intelligibility. It just knows (Merleau-Ponty, “from The Phenomenology” 134-138). It remembers that if “I” move this way or maybe that way, if “I” slip slowly... No – suddenly... and then “I” do this, which will propel me to feel this other thing (just like (or not like!) last time...) then “I” will rise to the desired *al-ahwāl*, the Oneness “I” so deeply seek (Mustapha; Saqi). The body is a subject here. It is the “I” that thinks, reasons, acts, remembers, and understands. “[It is] like walking,” says Mustapha. “You don’t say to your legs: ‘Move!’ And very often you don’t think ‘I need to move my leg like...’” He exhales and extends his leg out from under the table, bending at the knee. “And [then] my hip like...” He shifts in his chair. “No no no. It happens by itself.” For Mustapha, the body is the transcendent subject that makes walking “happen.” Likewise, it is the body that makes *dhikr* “happen” (Mauss 70-88). It is at the point of “happening” – when the *murīd* is approaching the high point of *dhikr* where the lower self begins to fade into Oneness – that Farah says, “the body starts.” With its movement, there is a coordination that is part and parcel of what makes us, well, us. It does not come from sensation or consciousness’ ability to synthesize as concept the meaningfulness of *dhikr*, but rather, it comes from the reality that the body interacts with *dhikr* directly (Merleau-Ponty, “from The Phenomenology” 134-149).

Mustapha revels in the corporeal “happening” of *dhikr*. He embodies the anti-Cartesian literature of his education, gladly receiving nods of approval from theorists like Farīd al-Zahī and Michel Foucault. His spiritual depth, though, steps beyond the words of these scholars and demands a metaphor of his choosing:

“To better understand the impact of *dhikr* on human body, I’ll give you this example. In big love stories, the one loving their partner...” he pauses with a smile, correcting himself, “... if they are really truthful about this love, they may be walking down the street and imagine their beloved next to them. This is not real, for sure, but this remains a strong feeling that is produced by the love one of the partners has towards the other. This is similar to the love we develop towards Allah, especially in *dhikr*, except that [for us] Allah exists, even when not physically seeing Him – but you can actually see Him through chairs, trees, the environment, in the faces of those doing *dhikr*, as He is their Creator. When the adept starts seeing all these things, the reality has a strong impact on their body. Seriously, this may have an uncontrollable influence – you may start crying when thinking of this relationship. People observing you may think you are crazy,” he smirks whimsically with a burst of laughter and says with emphasis, “but you are obviously not crazy.”

As al-Zahī, Dr. Saqi, Farah, Mohamed, and Mustapha have all demonstrated, through the complexity of Sufi movement in *dhikr*, we encounter a structure of embodiment that fundamentally unites body, mind, heart, and self. It organizes the movement within the ritual itself and allows then for movement beyond, around, above, and through the dualities I carried into the space of *dhikr* – those Western oppositions of subjects and objects, physical and non-physical, self and not-self, motion and stillness, among many others. In the end (for now), I am left with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s question in *On Certainty* (244):

If someone says, “I have a body,” he can be asked, “Who is speaking here with this mouth?”

I will try to answer Wittgenstein humbly with a short take on what I am beginning to understand as the kind of asceticism that informs *dhikr*. The Prophet is quoted to have rhetorically asked and then answered: “What have I to do with worldly things? My connection with the world is like that of a traveler resting for a while underneath the shade of a tree and then moving on” (Talib). Muhammad’s “connection with the world” is enfolded in liminality. Much like our narrators of *dhikr*, the Prophet adheres to an alternative, broadened sense of asceticism that is not so much a withdrawal or a separation from society, an abandonment, rejection, or elimination of the self,¹⁸ but a re-authoring and expansion of being (of which the body, mind, self, soul, personality, subject, and any other quantifier used to articulate a person are all united as being). Asceticism in *dhikr*, as I understand it, is quite different from the strategies of self-denial that renounce the body or the *nafs* as antithetical to Oneness (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 141-144). Rather, it is, as a *murīd* wrote on the Boutchichiyya website, “a miraculous transition from one being to another, from one world to another, and from one life to another” (M.J.). It is being even more fully body, but body dislocated from the syntax of self-denial. I see the marvelous, graceful, daring spins and whirls – dancing – of the exuberantly ascetic *dhikr* that embraces process without an end point or conclusion. The process itself is an outcome: a being with the hunger rather than attached to resolving it, for example. It is a performance of liminality and mortality and becoming in which the divine is right here.

I still have a number of ripped receipts and pastry wrappers bearing the scribbles of my post-*dhikr* walks home. They roughly record the immediate patterns of thought that were

¹⁸ The use of the word “annihilation” by Western scholars to describe the process of overcoming the *nafs*, lower self, or ego – often corresponding with the Arabic word “*fanā*” – could also be insufficient under this understanding of asceticism (Ernst, *The Shambhala Guide* 60; Hermansen 2, 12-17; Hoffman, “Annihilation in the Messenger” 351-369; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 142).

bouncing around during the gathering – single words sandwiched between excessive exclamation points, rough recollections of a quote or two, a scattered list of adjectives. At the bottom of each of these there is a line or two, maybe three, squeezed together and running down the margins detailing my own body in *dhikr*. One day stands out from the rest and reads: Today I moved for the first time – really moved – and while I still maintain that I have never had a mystical experience, there was something else compelling me, pushing me, moving me.

EMBODIED HISTORY AND CULTURE

The body manifests the stigmata of past experience and also gives rise to desire, failings, and errors... The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration.

Michel Foucault in *The Foucault Reader*, 83

As they examine the body's role in the production of narrative, in the construction of collectivity, in the articulation of the unconscious, in the generation of postcolonility, and in the economies of gender and expression, they contour new relations between history and memory, the aesthetic and the political, the social and the individual.

Susan Leigh Foster in *Corporealities*, xv

I remember sitting in the corner of the *zāwiya*, hidden behind my scarf and sinking as inconspicuously as possible into the folds of the cushions, and watching as bodies moved. They hurtled, bent in spins, swayed and rocked, in stillness and in motion. I watched as bodies moved and I wondered, I interpreted, and I projected my language and meanings onto them – given shape and form by my own body meanings and those described to me in conversation, in books, in observation, and in passing. I move through this memory as my fingers walk across keys into words in writing. I am writing from memory, and in this writing the body in *dhikr* is inscribed (Foster, “Introduction” xi-xvii).

Remembrance Extended

In the previous chapter, Mustapha began to situate the presence of memory in *dhikr*. *Dhikr* is, after all, the Ritual of Remembrance. In the most immediate sense, God is being

remembered – His names and manifestations – through the liturgical recitations¹⁹ and body movements (Farah; Mustapha). And as we begin to peel back this first layer, or “peek behind the initial veils” as Dr. Saqi has offered, it becomes beautifully apparent that remembering unfolds so much more. Remembrance takes on new meaning in the space of *dhikr*.

For the *dhikr* participant, the system of movement that propels, activates, and animates the Remembrance of God is largely rooted in memory, in active remembrance. The *murīd* remembers all previous *dhikrs*, Mustapha suggests. The body of the ritual performer remembers what movements and images and feelings work within this space to reach the desired state of Oneness (Mustapha). Just so, the body in *dhikr* is itself a form of knowledge and becomes both an active agent and a canvas with which Moroccan lives are understood, constructed, and experienced. As suggested by the narrators of this text, it is through these modes of embodiment that the individual and collective body embraces what Scott Kugle refers to as “body-as-metaphor.” The body is not only bound in the spiritual reality of *dhikr*, but also emerges from one’s own history and is itself indicative of collective belonging or difference (Kugle 6). Here, the body in *dhikr* becomes a juncture of culture, politics, religion, and selfhood. And, perhaps, just as the body creates each of these notions, they too create the body (Scheper-Hughes 6-10).

In the following pages, I recount several stories of the body folding into memory in *dhikr*. First we meet Rachida, for whom *dhikr* is a familial endeavor, undressed of spirituality and yet deeply situated in her own conception of belonging, place, and movement. Through its performance, she resurrects the bodies of her past – from the young girl who first learned to Remember to the swings and sways of Jewish neighbors. With Youssef, *dhikr* moves even

¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the Qur’an itself is often referred to as the proper form of *Dhikr*. Through its reading and recitation, God, the Prophet, Abraham and others are being remembered.

further into the community of adepts and into education. *Dhikr* becomes the very way in which religious knowledge and correctness are embodied and transferred. In returning to Rachida, we meet the Gnawa, an ethnic minority originating from sub-Saharan Africa. With this community, the remembrance that enfolds *dhikr* is deeply entrenched in a collective history of exile and oppression. The body relives and reclaims past suffering, quite literally wearing the chains of slavery during *dhikr* – reclaiming them, owning them. The variation that exists among these narratives – both in content and presentation – speaks to the diversity with which *dhikr* is understood and experienced. And yet, they share a sense of the body as historical: as deriving from and moving through the histories of individual and collective bodies.

As we embark in the writing and reading of these bodies, I find comfort in Marta Savigliano’s words: “I can only do stories, not histories, no matter how much I research. And no matter how many fragments I collect, I can neither leave them alone nor bring them back dead. I can only imagine them alive, moving, breathing between my sweaty hands” (Savigliano 199). Entire volumes could be dedicated to each of these three authors and the narratives they share. In them, I find assurance in the knowledge that this work is infinite, indefinitely incomplete (Clifford 7; Dumont 2-3).

Rachida: The Child of the Zāwiya

Rachida was born in the northern province of Morocco known as Ouezzane, and her family quite literally holds the keys of the *zāwiya*. As the head family, they are responsible for the daily, logistical functioning of the *zāwiya*, in addition to the quiet comings and goings of its members. Like many Moroccan orders, *dhikr* gatherings for Rachida’s *zāwiya* are full of deep devotion and unmatched celebration. They are filled with food, sandwiched between

gossip sessions and long-needed reunions between friends and family. The *zāwiya* is abundant in kindness and in judgment, fierce beauty alongside ugliness, intellect and ignorance. All of this, squished together and bound by a unity that so fully permeates the space, pulls Rachida through the doors. Every time, she comments with a shrug.

Rachida's stories of *dhikr* are, more often than not, deeply embedded in her sense of history. In the same breath, she speaks of her family's past in *dhikr* and in the *zāwiya*, and remembers her own beginnings. In the act of telling, her distinct "I" becomes a "we" – her sense of self, culture, and history sinking deeply into the *zāwiya*, slipping and sliding across the tiled floor and quickly becoming indistinguishable (Scheper-Hughes 19-22). *Dhikr*, as Rachida imagines it, is not a pursuit of Oneness with God. It is not about annihilating the ego or exceeding materiality. No. It is none of these things. The unity she performs joins self, body, culture, sensation, language, and equality under one roof and one name: family. With her, we remember who she is because of where she came from (Wacquant, "The Prizefighter's Three Bodies" 339-346).

From as far back as she can recall, Rachida knew that she belonged in her family's *zāwiya* as surely as she did not belong. She was born there, after all – was brought into being there, and yet was never really there, not really. "It was too much, too much, too much, too much. It was always too much," she sighs, shaking her head. Her fists are clenched, the tension working up her forearm. Glancing down, she smiles, and a spurt of laughter escapes from her lips. I mimic this progression with my own face now, typing and remembering with eyes closed and notes in hand. "It is always like a big machine that is pushing pushing pushing pushing," she says of *dhikr*. Though part of the machine by the blood of family, she remains out of sync – never quite fitting. Unlike the vast majority of her family members who perform *dhikr* in pursuit of *Tawhīd* (the term Rachida uses to refer to Oneness with God), Rachida pursues a sense of familial connectivity that, for her, is deeply situated within

her own sense of history and meaning. She tells us: “A lot of times, I laugh at the words [in *dhikr*] because they really mean nothing to me. It doesn’t really mean much to me.

Sometimes we are calling upon names and I don’t know who they are. Some have been considered saints and some were just family members that were really noble and I am like, ‘What?’” She smiles and laughs, shaking her head. “But I love it! Because it is the whole family together and it is a lot of fun. And I’m trying to remember things that are very old and are, in a lot of ways, responsible for what our family is today. I think a lot of this is in *dhikr*.”

“What are these things you are remembering?” I ask.

“Uh like how long my family has been here and like,” she stops and looks down at her feet in thought. Almost a full ten seconds pass before she raises her eyes to me, continuing, “I think I remember what all of this means to my family. We get together as women and it’s been my grandmother [who leads us]. And she, as I said, [is] illiterate but it’s recitation and trying to remember to the point that now I am trying to write down all of this because it might disappear. Like my daughter’s generation – I don’t think any of them will keep up on this. I think we are the last generation, I think, to really follow the *dhikr* in the way that our family has for generations. I’m writing it all down.” She pauses again, laughing as she continues, “But then when I read the content, I don’t understand why we are moving this way...” She rocks back and forth at her hips, showing me. “I don’t understand why we are saying these things.” Whispering, “I have to say that it doesn’t really mean much.”

Rachida lets “... it doesn’t really mean much” hang in the air for a few seconds, and we both settle into the silence, slumping. Something about the bareness with which she speaks unsettles me. It’s the first time one of our narrators referred to *dhikr* as containing something other than spiritual significance, as being rooted in something other than God. If meaning for Rachida is not enveloped in the words and movements of *dhikr*, in the pursuit of Oneness and annihilation, where is it? Much like (though also quite different from) Amina,

Farah, Mustapha, and the other rememberers who have informed this work, meaning moves within the *zāwiya* among bodies and histories, sounds, sensations, individuals, and collectives. The rootedness of *dhikr* in Rachida’s familial identity is powerful, given further form by the soft authenticity with which she speaks. *It’s just the way it is...* she seems to be saying from across the table – unapologetically (Counsell 8-12). In confirmation, she returns to her first experience in *dhikr* – or, rather, the first time she remembers participating. All she wanted to do was fall asleep, to dip into the rhythm of her mother’s lap, the cadence of the *wird*, and fall into slumber. It was usually like that, Rachida remembers. Loud. Crowded. Full. And all she knew was that she wanted to sleep:

“I think when I was even younger [this] was true. You saw young children attached to [their] mothers, yes?”

I nod, remembering my visit to the Boutchichiyya *zāwiya*. Two rows forward and across from me, there was a young woman with an infant wrapped around her body in a sheet. The sheet enveloped them both, (re)uniting the two in a single body. I nod again.

“Yes,” Rachida mirrors my nod with her own. “Yes, it’s like that a lot. The child sits on her mother. Sometimes I remember moving my mouth but without words, but usually I fell asleep. I would be on her [lap] and she was moving like (*rocks back and forth*) and [I] fell asleep or sat there.”

“Were you moving too?”

“Of course. I was on her [lap]. When she moved, I moved.”

The image Rachida gives us – of a young child sitting in her mother’s lap and being moved in *dhikr* by her mother’s body – is instantly familiar. From early on, many of us participate in the activities of our mothers, strapped to them, attached by the hand, or following with eager feet. Though the participation is largely passive, requiring little thought or independent action, the body is being educated and socialized. Rachida participated, albeit

involuntarily, in *dhikr*. Fixed in her mother's lap, she was moved by her mother's body long before she could move herself or be moved in *dhikr*. As Rachida grew in age and size, she was removed from her mother's lap and, instead, remembers imitating her mother's movements. She moved herself, but through the knowledge passed from her mother's body to her own (Arom 14-15).

With Rachida's words, I remember the French sociologists Marcel Mauss and Pierre Bourdieu, along with the German Norbert Elias. Working from Mauss' "Techniques of the Body" – driven by the notion that society and culture are built and reinforced in the coordination of bodily techniques – Bourdieu and Elias articulate what is often referred to as *habitus*: the values, behaviors, styles, expectations, thoughts, and bodily techniques that are acquired through and validated by social interactions and processes. Through them, we learn that humans interact with the world through symbolism, and the spaces that comprise this world come to us already organized (Bourdieu 52-57; Elias xii-xiii, 5-7; Mauss 70-76). When Rachida was young, for example, she developed a sense of how the *zāwiya* operates (and should operate). She remembers attending *dhikr* gatherings with her mother and falling into the rhythm of the ritual:

"Yes, I move with the group. I always do. We don't want to stick out."

"Have you ever reached the trance-like state you keep talking about?" I asked.

"I have – and it was like a beat that pounded through me and I couldn't breathe. Yes, I have before. I even fainted once because I couldn't breathe. I know now that is [because] I didn't have oxygen and so I passed out."

All at once, she internalizes and rejects her position in the space of the *zāwiya*, moving with but also against the group. She buries herself in the collective: her "I" disappears into the "we" that doesn't want to stick out. But then she feels "a beat" surge through her and she cannot breathe. In articulating this memory, she remakes it into a shape

that she can understand. “I know now,” she says, and the mystery of the event fades into knowing. In remembering, Rachida rejects the possibility that pounding and breathlessness could result from something other than oxygen deprivation. She embraces an understanding of the body’s possibilities that does not account for not-knowing, for ambiguity where consciousness is concerned. For Rachida, *habitus* is flexibly generated (Mouzelis). It is neither the result of conscious action nor determined by social structures alone, but created and sustained by interplay between the two. It exists in the space between the surge of her body and the logic of oxygen deprivation; among her past, present, and future; throughout her thoughts and behaviors, and within her body (Bourdieu 54-60).

Within her body. We get stuck here, frustrated. How is something in the body? What does it mean to be within? We sit in silence – Rachida settling into the cushions, eyes closed, and I’m tense and sitting on the edge of my chair, embarrassed.

I want to say that the body puts the world together for itself, that it transcends initial experience. But I have no words.

It creates for itself something that happened before its activity... Like when you sat in your mother’s lap and was moved by her! I shift uncomfortably in my chair, pleading for my body to speak instead.

Or, even better, when you were strapped to her or... or inside her! The silence grows heavy and Rachida sits up.

The body heals the division between experience and knowledge. Still nothing.

She smiles knowingly, and says: “You know, there is a lot of Judaism in *dhikr*, I think.” Relief. I sit up straight, matching her smile with my own. “There is a lot of Amazigh culture – and African, actually. So it’s mixed. You cannot find answers in any one area – in Islam only or in Sunni Islam only or even in Morocco only. It even goes back to Spain and our time under France. It goes back to when we lived side-by-side with Jews.”

I remember Amina's deferral, her "great sadness" that I could not possibly understand the ways of Sufism because it is not something that I have tasted. I remember Mohamed's corrective "No": the body's movements in *dhikr* are not "of words." Rachida subtly reinforces both here, but also takes the problem of naming to a whole new level that includes the problem of categorically splitting up lines of history, nation, and tradition. Trying to name the body in *dhikr* – to define it, characterize it, give it shape and form, to confine it to the narrowness of language – is to write with unforgiveable certitude. Sufism must be tasted, Amina reminds us. The body and *dhikr*, as well as the body in *dhikr*, refuse naming as a practice of categorical distinction. They refuse the definitions and classifications that go with a name (or names). They push into and against the boundaries and borders of nations, religions, cultures, languages, and bodies (Ness 129-130). In much the same way, Morocco – as a place and a people – refuses naming. Described by so many as multicultural, Morocco has been and continues to be a fusion of identities that span continents (El-Alamy). Rachida insists on the impossibility of locating the characteristics of *dhikr* in any one place or time or religious tradition. In so doing, she reinforces the transitive nature of ethnographic endeavors in general. As Eric Wolf suggests, there is no such thing as an ethnographic present, let alone an ability to capture culture as timeless or total (J. Moore, 310-313). Just as the history, manifestations, and participants of *dhikr* move throughout the ritual – through time and meaning, among so much more – this research necessarily moves. And I move with it. On my cushion in the *zāwiya*, among scholars and friends, and in writing (even at the moment of un-naming naming), my practice as an ethnographer is thus highly contingent. It is and must always be, as Sally Ann Ness writes, partially true (Ness 129-130).

Rachida disciplined me in not-naming, emphasizing that while *dhikr* and the body are multi – so is Morocco. At the same time, she roots her understanding of what it means to be in *dhikr* in a Jewish past that is embodied for her in her Jewish neighbors. She remembers

“working on the clothes above my house and watching them in their houses” and “playing in the streets with Jewish children.” Her Jewish neighbors also “invited us to their celebrations and we made them bread for Mimouna [a North African Jewish holiday that marks the end of Passover].” The celebration of Mimouna is just one expression of the unity and friendship that bound the homes of Jewish and Muslim neighbors. Like Rachida’s family, many Moroccan Muslims would bring leavened foods or *hametz* to their Jewish friends after Passover. In exchange, the Jews opened their homes to Muslim families to share a meal and celebrate the end of Passover (Jeffay).

Images like this were much more commonplace in Morocco prior to Israel’s founding in 1948. Morocco’s Jewish population migrated to the United States, Europe, and Israel over the next two decades, causing the over 265,000 Jews to dwindle to just under 6,000 (Bard). It seems perfectly plausible that Rachida attributes her understanding of body and movements in *dhikr* to her experience observing her Jewish neighbors in prayer. Individual, familial, generational, and political memories of the once-significant Jewish population in Morocco are both complex and contradictory. They enjoy a long genealogy in Zionism and cultural antagonism, often remembering differences that never existed while forgetting the peace and respect that suffused relations among neighbors of different faiths. Rachida’s memory, however, is thick with amiability, appearing to be untouched by the Muslim Judeophobia born out of demonizing stereotypes perpetuated by the state and media (Boum 15-19).²⁰ As

²⁰ This is the tangible and intangible context in which Rachida is speaking within and against. In a conversation prior to our formal, recorded meeting, Rachida mentioned her academic focus in “Jewish Studies” and her deep interest in Morocco’s dwindling Jewish population. Prior to the establishment of Israel, Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Muslims coexisted cordially – the former often served as mediators within the economic system of the *souk* or market. Following the establishment of Israel, the Moroccan government struggled to simultaneously support their Jewish population, discourage migration to Israel, and stand strong with their Palestinian allies. In the decades since, prominent political figures and business leaders used their influence (and oftentimes, ownership) over Moroccan media

she imagines her own movement in *dhikr*, Rachida remembers seeing the same back-and-forth, side-to-side sways from her rooftop as a child, watching from between clotheslines and through open windows. In remembering, her body is further socialized and educated, coming to represent not only her familial history, but also those times she fondly remembers sitting on the roof, watching. And again, in *dhikr* Rachida embodies her social identity. In the performance of this identity, she refuses to demonize the Jews and (re)performs what she witnessed decades before *in* her body, embodied, as a child. Movement, for Rachida, becomes an unequivocal expression of what must not be forgotten (Bourdieu 52-56).

The stories Rachida tells of *dhikr*, the opening and closing of memories, recover remembrance and forgetting to her body. All selves and versions of selves, all past and present and future bodies entangle in the creation of memory and in embodied ways of knowing. In telling, Rachida makes porous the boundaries between “mine” and “yours,” “ours” and “theirs,” opening up the illusion of definitive ownership to the possibility of embodying what is not directly “mine.” In moving with her Jewish neighbors, Rachida’s Remembrance becomes inseparable from the performance of Jewish prayer: moving with becomes moving as, her sense of self and possibility expanded (Pollock 69-72). For Rachida, the *dhikr* participant is bound to remember (and become) her/himself in others. And in the multicultural junction that is Morocco, the possibilities are endless.

As we neared the end of our conversation, Rachida resurrects a memory of attending the *dhikr* of a Gnawa community, an ethnic minority of West African roots. Though the Gnawn origins in Morocco are highly contentious – Arabic sources offer evidence that

outlets to control the representation of Jewishness, often speaking of Morocco’s Jewish population and Israel in a single breath. The perceptions of Morocco’s younger generations have been significantly molded by the representations of Israel/Jews as enemy, deeply stored in state and media-constructed memory (Boum 518-523).

suggest a Gnawn presence since antiquity,²¹ from the eleventh century,²² and in 1591²³ – a common narrative of slavery, oppression, and violence dominate their history (Sum 10-13). While the Gnawn population has always existed outside of the hegemonic power and political structure of Morocco – subaltern – their influence on the religious and musical cultures of Morocco is irrefutable. The use of music in mediating one’s journey in Remembrance, for example, has been appropriated by many Moroccan orders from their Gnawn brothers and sisters (Sum 93-110). In responding to my question about alternative systems of movement in *dhikr*, Rachida recalled her memory with the Gnawn *dhikr*²⁴ gathering, describing how the Gnawa wear the chains of their enslaved past:

“Many of the Gnawa have incorporated chains they were chained with – that’s why they have the castanets to mimic the chains of slavery,” she says, rubbing her wrists slowly. “A certain reality, I think, is being integrated or that appears in the different types of *dhikr*. It’s not only about God we see. It’s not only about religion or spirituality. It’s a lot about the body and the suffering of the body. We wear it, this history. I think in these moments it is not so much about God, but remembering what it was like and who we are and what we have

²¹ In Morocco’s southern oasis, historical documents suggest that West African farmers lived among Amazigh farming tribes in the 3rd century. Later sources point to Gnawn populations concentrating along trader routes and caravans that stretched across the Sahara and the Atlantic to Moroccan imperial cities (Sum 8-11).

²² When the Almoravids overthrew the prince of Ghana in the eleventh century, many of the elites converted to Islam and intensified their economic and religious ties to the Maghrib (Sum 8).

²³ In 1591, Sultan Ahmad al-Mansur invaded the Songhai empire in the hopes of securing control of the local mines and enslaved thousands for labor, military, and royal use in Morocco (Sum 8-10).

²⁴ It is important to clearly distinguish between Gnawn and Sufi religious traditions. Though the two communities share many elements of spirituality – manifested in intention and practice – the Gnawa trace their lineage to Bilāl, the first sub-Saharan convert to Islam. Thus, while Gnawn adepts recollect God’s name and manifestations and recall the Prophet during Remembrance, they are also invoking Bilāl. Furthermore, *lila* is the Gnawn word for Remembrance, not *dhikr*. Because Rachida used *dhikr* to describe Gnawn Remembrance, so will I (Sum 104-107).

come from. What they survived.” The bodies of the Gnawn during Remembrance bear the mark of slavery, quite literally wearing the chains of an oppressed past. *Dhikr* provides a space for (re)performing slavery, for remembering. And in her telling of the Gnawn *dhikr* as her own – empathetically rubbing her own wrists and speaking seamlessly between “we” and “they” – Rachida makes the body a site of inscription: for wearing pain and for charting relations of power (Waugh 108-115).

The body is historical. It “recasts (several times over) the relationship between the past and the future” (Farquhar, *Appetites* 180). For Judith Farquhar, this is true in China: the embodied existence of the Chinese during the Maoist era is not distinct from present-day realities (204-209). For Rachida, it is also true in Morocco and at/beyond its national boundaries: the body wears and moves through a multicultural, transnational past that is fully and yet never-fully Arab, Jewish, French, Berber, African, Muslim, European, colonized (and colonizer), among much more (Rabinow 31-37). For both Farquhar and Rachida, bodies are not natural substrates that are made new in each time and place. The living body is an amalgamation of all past, present, and future bodies, learned and imagined and performed hundreds of times over (204-209).

The body remembers. What’s the point of that? How is memory spun at the center of *dhikr*? And what is the point? These questions of significance, of “so what?” seep into most academic and artistic pieces, both begging and demanding consequence. And in considering why I am writing and you reading, Rachida shares why she writes: “As I said, [my grandmother is] illiterate but it’s recitation and trying to remember to the point that now I am trying to write down all of this because it might disappear. Like my daughter’s generation – I don’t think any of them will keep up on this. I think we are the last generation, I think, to really follow the *dhikr* in the way that our family has for generations.” In writing and writing in telling, Rachida (re)remembers what it is to Remember. If she does not write, “it might

disappear.” If she does not write, her daughter’s generation will forget *dhikr* specifically (and won’t even know what to remember, much less how to remember), but also the deep and vast sense of ancestral belonging that enlivens Rachida. She writes so they, too, can remember and, in remembering, not forget who they are: a people and a family who Remember. However “too much” all of this is, without it is to be forgotten to one’s self and family.

Seen Unseen: Looking Good, Looking Right

Rachida reiterates well-worn stories of the body: as mindful (Scheper-Hughes and Lock), as “social skin” (T. Turner), as performer (Wacquant), as historical (Farquhar; Bourdieu), among so many others. And yet, at the center of her story is a body that never quite fits – is almost but never fully suitable in the system of *dhikr* that is described by many others. *Dhikr* is, as Annemarie Schimmel reminds us, about “God, nothing else” or as Dr. Saqi notes, is entirely “in Remembrance of Allah” (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 121). Rachida presses the question: How does the body remembering its relationship to itself as a vehicle of divinity relate to the spectacularity of his/her performance: the extent to which the performance is seen, or the object of being-seen?

The singularity of *dhikr* performance (as directed to and for His eyes only) becomes myth – fully visible, fully seen. It is dripping in doubleness. Rachida introduces a third in the often-conceptualized two-party (self and God) relationship of *dhikr*: the on-looker. To the contrary, Youssef, a *naqīb* of the Ibn Hassouni Order in Salé, insists that the truly successful *dhikr* is beyond visibility: the *murīd* has sight for/is seen by God alone (despite the reality that s/he is surrounded by others). He insists, “We actually say, ‘worship Allah as if you were seeing Him. If you are not seeing Him, [you should] know that Allah is definitely seeing you.’” Youssef turns sight back onto itself, suggesting that the very process of exceeding

sight enables the *murīd* to produce, experience, and perform more – more Oneness, more annihilation. There are right and wrong ways to do *dhikr*, he tells us, and the presence of those who know these systems of practice and meaning only help in the pursuit of becoming (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 169-171).

Each order has a system for performing *dhikr*, a series of movements and liturgical patterns that were transmitted from the Prophet through the initiatory chain of past and living guides. *Dhikr* then extends through/beyond the bodies that physically exist in the *zāwiya*, transcending both time and space to include past *awliya'* and *shaykhs*. The (re)remembrance of these guides and their ways enlivens *dhikr* practice, and continues to be one of the most significant components of an order's initiation (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 169-172). While some orders perform *dhikr* with the fluidity and flexibility of the Boutchichiyya Order, others – like those of Youssef and Rachida – practice *dhikr* as formulaic. There are strict guidelines – right ways and wrong ways to remember, to move and speak (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension* 169-173).

As a *naqīb*, Youssef finds himself constantly watching the *dhikrs* of others, adjusting their movements and bodily reactions accordingly. *Dhikr* must be practiced, Youssef tells us, and the *murīd* must be educated in *dhikr* if s/he ever hopes to reach the ideal states of Oneness and annihilation. As a general rule, Youssef believes that extreme displays – violent, loud, and large movements – are inappropriate and are in fact an indication of an adept's immaturity in *dhikr*: “There are certain conditions that are acceptable and others that are not,” Youssef says. “For example, we believe that crying is okay. This is within the religious-accepted frame. But when it goes beyond that to wildness, Satan has reached you and the bad side of the Spirit has lead you to stop controlling yourself. So we think that there are limits. And if the limits are reached, it is the job of the *naqīb* and sometimes the *munshid* or the *shaykh* to bring the *murīd* back into the *zāwiya* and so I will take my hand like this...”

Without pausing, Youssef places his hand on my forearm, gently squeezing, “and bring him back.”

Bring him back. From what? From where? From whom? For the first time, Youssef introduces the possibility of over-performance in *dhikr*, of the body becoming both not enough and too much. Ritual leaders such as Youssef are charged with helping adepts navigate the ambiguous abyss between the two. Some fashion words to articulate the balance and control needed while others use discipline by altogether removing the unbounded *murīd* from the *dhikr* gathering (Mohamed; Mustapha; Youssef). Mustapha, a *naqīb* of the Boutchichiyya, reiterates Youssef’s sense of responsibility: “The strong soul influences the weak souls. So the ritual leader gives the fuel to the adepts to help them ‘take off’ from their station to another one. So this taking off cannot be full and normal if the ‘plane’ has no sufficient fuel.” Youssef’s touch – light and firm all at once – squeezes the *murīd* into “take off.” The body of knowledge and tradition that enable Youssef to control the corporeality of an adept, to both “bring him back” and help him “take off,” is deeply rooted in the precedent of the Order. The body’s possibility is inscribed within the pages and words of the past, writing what the body can and should do. The pursuit of correctness, thus, prefaces Oneness. Youssef’s touch emphasizes that one must look good and look right first, and it is with the help and through the gaze of the spiritually advanced that such correctness, goodness, and ultimately Oneness is possible (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 169-170).

Rachida, to the contrary, refuses to celebrate the gaze. She at once rejects the possibility in its education and recoils from its opportunity. She does not want to be brought back. She desires release:

“What do you call the one who [*waving her arms*] leads the orchestra?” Rachida asks. Her fingers fumble through the air, trying to grab hold of the lost word.

“The conductor?” I raise my eyebrows.

She nods. “[The ritual leader] becomes like the conductor of the *dhikr* and he will go [*hits the table 5 times*] on the floor to keep the rhythm. He’ll also watch you and correct you if you’re not doing it well. I really don’t like it. I think I umm hate it.”

For Rachida, Youssef’s performance of educator in *dhikr*, whose gaze and touch act as judge, destroys the possibility of remembrance instead of enlivening its potential. She situates the body as visible and observed, noting the gaze of the ritual leader. He will go, she says. He’ll also watch. Like most orders, Rachida’s *zāwiya* holds separate gatherings for its male and female adepts. Her use of the masculine subject is, thus, particularly powerful, subtly suggesting a genderedness to *dhikr* that all of my interviewees reject. Even Rachida: “No. No, we all do *dhikr* the same. There’s no difference with men and women.” I can feel Judith Butler and Iris Young cringe. Feminine comportment, they sigh. Is there something more to corporeality, to bodily movement, experience, and function, than physiology? Does Rachida’s “No” preclude what Butler considers an inescapable performance of gendered identities? And Young’s observation that women do not extend out laterally, restricted and restricting the bounds of “my space” with “I cannot” and “I should not”? Is Rachida, then, perhaps more susceptible to withdrawing from the gaze – of the absent male “conductor,” of her family, of God, of me? – because she is a woman (Butler 164-175; Young 141-149)? I remember the resounding “I don’t want to research gender in *dhikr*... I want to move beyond gender” that swept through my early conceptualization and actualization of this research.²⁵

²⁵ In line with the significant (and consuming) body of research that has been introduced on issues relating to the female body and femininity in Islam and the Middle East (Kugle 13), and Amina’s early caution that Western scholarship is obsessed with female covering, I had little interest in focusing on gender in *dhikr*. I feared slipping into the valid and yet well-worn considerations of power and patriarchy, of “opening a can of worms” that I was neither fully committed nor equipped to handle. Methodologically, steering away from a blatant inquiry into gender was natural: as a woman, I could not attend male gatherings of *dhikr*. In addition, the weight of my own assumptions about Islam and women, my aversion and disinterest in doing a comparative study of male and female Remembrance, and the inattention my

Another wince from Butler and Young. I hear them saying “You cannot move beyond gender” (Butler 165-171; Young 153-156). Though glossed over (and moved around), refusing to at least acknowledge the existence of gender in the spaces and bodies and words of this work would be inexcusably negligent. When sitting with Rachida’s discomfort as she speaks of being seen (and, consequently, unseen), as it coagulates into hatred, the unavailability is glaring, especially when juxtaposed with Youssef’s experience. A possible (though partial) means of understanding the difference is offered by Young in “Throwing Like a Girl”: “An essential part of the situation of being a woman is that of living the ever-present possibility that one will be gazed upon as a mere body, as shape and flesh that presents itself as the potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations, rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention” (155). Of her sexed/gendered identity, Rachida offers little. I ask even less. And yet her performed telling of *dhikr* dislodges her living body-self from narrowly understood as spiritual or familial into shifting, moving, and passing. She performs a *dhikr* that cannot be fully, cleanly known.

Her body, seen through by the educating gaze of the ritual’s leaders, is emptied of integrity. The very possibility of remembering is sucked away by what she later articulates as a pressure to look good and look right. While this system of meaning and performance may be positive for some *dhikr* participants – and Youssef would argue that it most certainly is – for Rachida, it is paralyzing. It slips and slides, seeps, into every morsel pieced together in performance. She is both fully seen and unseen:

“I was asked to do *dhikr*, to lead it and sing it, for the wedding of one of my cousins on my mother’s side who was from a very very poor family and for her it was a blessing if I

interviewees leant towards *dhikr*’s possible genderedness, all contributed to my desire to do *something else*. Thus, this work expands and lunges, builds and drifts in ways quite different from versions that could bend closer to questions of gender.

do it,” remembers Rachida. She’s speaking quickly, uncomfortably pushing the words out. “I think for a moment I was sitting there singing and I was feeling the emotion because of how much I know it meant to her. What I was not planning was that when I was singing I just passed out and fell and just behind me there were glasses for tea and everything was there and it seems that when I fell, nothing was broken. I wasn’t burned.” She pauses, licking her lips with a small smile. “This made a lot of people in the audience think that I was a saint. [Laughing] So the BIG problem was that it just happened that there was too much emotion for me – and I had never sung alone before in my life so I was scared also and I felt like this was so important for my cousin and all of them were watching me. But the big problem was after that everybody thought [her eyes widened] ‘she’s a saint!’ [laughing] because they were looking at my *kaftan* and it was clean. Nothing happened. I just think that maybe I did not fall on [the table of glasses] but next to it. No. Obviously that was all but it was horrible because when I wanted to sit back down with the people everyone wanted to kiss my forehead and kiss my hand and I didn’t know what was going on. I became the saint of the evening.”

Like the *naqīb*’s expectant gaze, all eyes were fixed on Rachida as she led the *dhikr* for her cousin’s wedding, hopeful and watching. “... it just happened that there was too much emotion for me.” “I had never sung alone before in my life.” “I was scared.” “I felt like this was so important.” “All of them were watching me.” I can feel the anxiety rise as she’s speaking, the weight of all those gaping eyes pressing pressing pressing pressing. She must look good. She must look right. And then “what I was not planning” happened – “... when I was singing I just passed out and fell.” Miraculously, her performance (though accidental) exceeded all expectations. No. What you see – you, the one watching me – is not me. This wasn’t supposed to happen. No, not like this. Rachida is made into a saint by those

watching her. A friend of God, a *walī*. Second only to the Prophet. Revered for her spiritual advancement. “Oh,” I breathe through my teeth.

Though I do not dare claim Rachida’s sense of visibility as my own, and can only hope that this work pushes against such tendencies, I can empathize at such a visceral level that I feel it now in writing. It’s four a.m. and I am wrapped tightly between sheets and comforter, tucked so intimately among pillows in the dark – trying, though failing, to press the tension from my body and into sleep. The stressed arrangement of future yet determined, exam unfinished, laundry... well, abandoned, birthday forgotten, rent unpaid, and these pages so far from “complete” has located itself between my shoulder blades. I can feel the cadence, the predictable pulse that rushes through my body like a sloppy storm of nausea and dizziness – pushing, spinning, convulsing, flipping, inverting. I trace it to age six – first grade – when I stumbled through my first attempt to read in front of my young peers. Stuck with jumbled letters and mixed up words, I swallowed down the embarrassment. It landed in the space between my shoulder blades. During the End of Course (EOC) examinations two years later, I sat with my back to my classmates, humming Abba’s “Mamma Mia!” I remember feeling the clock’s stare on my backside – the tick-tock of time passing – and the silent glances from my teachers and peers. The buzz of my vocal chords quieted my body. *Mamma Mia, here I go again/My my, how can I resist you?* More readings. More tests. Middle school dances. Bat Mitzvah. Band solos. Horse shows. Track meets. Prom. SATs. Rowing regattas. Morocco home-stay. My first *dhikr*. Sometimes I think this must be what a heart attack is like – or maybe just what thinking about a heart attack is like. There’s an urgency to it, an empty stomach, rushing head, pounding heart LOUDNESS that feels a lot like being gutted. And it’s not so much the doing of the thing that must be done that riles me up, but that feeling of being seen but not seen – not recognized – by some omnipresent eye that looks a lot like my

mom sometimes, or my teacher, my rabbi, my friend, my coach, my brother. Other times, it's just an eye: nameless and staring, commanding my gaze in return.

I wonder if Rachida feels the same gutted-ness, the hollowness of being seen but never looking good or feeling right. The gazes that follow her through *dhikr* attach to the eyes of her family, her peers, her *naqīb*, and quite possibly, her God. They watch as she misses the beat and moves awkwardly, as she forgets the words and giggles to herself. Even when she passes out, when she becomes a provisional saint, they're watching, judging, and inscribing.

And I am watching. *Dhikr* is something that people like me watch, people who visit Morocco to see something. Throughout Sufi orders worldwide, *dhikr* has become an experience also for the foreigner – the tourist, the Western convert, the student and the researcher. Ranging from the open, advertised performances of Istanbul's whirling dervishes, which are regularly attended by large groups of foreigners to small gatherings in Rabat's Boutchichiyya *zāwiya*, which welcomes one or two travelers every few months, *dhikr* has become an object of heritage tourism (D. Moore 57-69; Geels 236-237). Perhaps most striking is the Mevlevi Order in Turkey, for whom *dhikr* is technically forbidden unless performed at tourist events ("Mawlawīyah").²⁶ The appropriation and consumption of *dhikr* and other cultural practices such as music and poetry extends to online platforms as well. Recordings of Sufi music, translated hagiographies and spiritual teachings, Sufi poetry, and videos from *dhikr* gatherings are all available on Amazon and YouTube. Many orders, the Boutchichiyya included, even have websites where their unique histories, teachings, and practices are presented in three or four languages (Ernst, "Ideological and Technological

²⁶ In the mid-1920s, Atatürk banned all Sufi orders in Turkey as part of the state's efforts to secularize Turkey. Though many Sufi orders still meet secretly, the state has allowed for the performance of *dhikr* at cultural tourist events exclusively ("For the Love of God").

Transformations” 238-242). Though, as Carl Ernst suggests, “this is best described as a cultural and commercial appropriation of Sufism rather than the dissemination of Sufi teachings and authority” (Ernst, “Ideological and Technological Transformations” 239). In each of these examples and countless others, the gaze of the foreigner is exceedingly visible, emphasizing the possibility that the object of sight may be captured and appropriated through seeing (Bleeker 17-18). In *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking*, Maaïke Bleeker writes that “the one who is seeing is always doing so from within a prescribed set of possibilities, one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations” (18). The seer of *dhikr* is never an objective, invisible spectator who observes from afar, untouched. We are conditioned to see through and by and because of the cultural practices and experiences that have comprised our existence. “We always see less than is there,” suggests Bleeker, “...we also always see more than is there” (18). We see what has passed and what has yet to come, our assumptions and our hopes, our fears – all seen from the seat of our imaginations (17-18). “It might [even] be closer to hallucinating” (18). In reading, we are seeing through eyes both wholly subjective and unique, eyes that can never truly see what is happening. Or rather, can never see every version of what is happening. Our gazes are as real as Youssef’s touch. They have a shape. They move and mold, expand and contract, exist in real space and time. And in much the same way, possibility is thrown open, exposed to great beauty, a vast expanse. The same possibility dances along a prison’s walls, bound tightly in misunderstanding and in ugliness (Bleeker 18).

The realness of feeling and being seen is aligned with the very nature of performance. It has a quality of visibility: it is not acted out/through alone.²⁷ Notwithstanding *dhikr*’s

²⁷ There are, however, expressions of *dhikr* that are performed individually. Often referred to as “*dhikr* of the heart,” these performances oftentimes take place in the privacy of one’s home, in the street, while commuting to work, in silence or aloud. It is said that when a *murīd*

complexity, diversity, doubleness, and mobility, it is an organized ritual. Each gathering has a structure and a progression, which is consistently followed and reinforced (though oftentimes subtly) by those performing (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 167-170). Though ritualized, it is also performative, a quality that in observation just as in writing opens the seen and the seer/reader to the great many possibilities of the body, of telling, of remembering. It is a place where asceticism, embodiment, history, culture, gender, belonging and difference linger, ajar, to be (re)articulated and (re)defined. Rachida performs *dhikr* in the *zāwiya* and she reperforms (and performs anew) in telling me. I borrow Rachida's performances, (re)performing them here, as hers and my own. Every time, it is (re)imagined and possibilized, wholly different yet bound in similarity. Every time, anything can happen (Schechner 23-31).

It is only now in the final weeks of this work, sitting with legs crossed on my living room floor and tasting my lips – saturated in the sweetness of my Moroccan mint tea – that I realize that this writing, too, performs – is a performance. In writing (and in your reading), a series of performances (that are always (re)performing) coalesce on the page: my experiences with/in *dhikr*; the conversations shared among my Moroccan friends, Ghassan, and me; the memories of first *dhikrs* and all those that followed, and the telling of these memories; my remembrance of each interaction; the present moment (mine in writing and yours in reading);

is capable of identifying God in and as everything, s/he is constantly doing *dhikr*, is always Remembering. It is a state of being with no clear beginning or end (Schimmel 170-174). For more on *dhikr* of the heart, see e.g. ad-Darqawi 1969; al-Halveti 1981; al-Suyuti 2008; Amuli; Ernst 1999; Frager 1999; Schimmel 1975.

and infinitely more (Schechner 24-29). In *dhikr*, just as in life, there is no true origin, no first time. We are always repeating and (re)performing past and future experiences, interactions, conventions, movements, and habits (Ness 144-145, 149-150).

Rachida's *dhikr* is born from within this ambiguity. It gives her a way to think through, to remember, and to perform her identity – the intimacies of personhood and history, of belonging and difference. She wears it in much the same way that the Gnawa wear the chains of a colonial past: inscribed across the surfaces of her body and pulsing throughout. Rachida's *dhikr* has no definitive start, no clear beginning. It is prenatal and it is posthumous (Mohamed). It is memory working and being worked from “both ways” (Carroll 176). As I remember my conversation with Rachida, I recall another exchange deeply embedded in the confines of my own memory:

“I don't understand you,” said Alice. “Its dreadfully confusing.”

“That's the effect of living backwards,” the Queen said kindly. “It always makes one a little giddy at first.”

“Living backwards!” Alice repeated in great astonishment. “I never heard of such a thing!”

“But there's one great advantage in it, that one's memory works both ways!”

(Carroll 176)

MOVING WITH *DHIKR*

As political order and social consensus break down under the impact of modernity, bodies take on a heightened importance... Bodies are no longer accepted as a natural given but rather seen as highly charged with symbolic, social, and ethical significance.

Scott Kugle in *Sufis & Saints' Bodies*, 9

I sink into my couch, eyes closed; I feel Amina's knees press against my body. I remember the pressure of body and body, pushing. "I hear you want to talk of Sufism," her words pulse insistently. "And the body, yes?" I nod again now, sinking deeper into the cushions. Yes. "Yes, and the body in *dhikr* specifically," I echo. *Dhikr*. The body. Sufism. Words recycled and remade from my conversation with Amina have come to stand for the body of this work, the bodies seen, written, and read here. I sink deeper – deeper into myself, wondering if this work has in fact embodied Amina's resolve: Sufism *must* be tasted. She said that I do not understand, that I could not understand because Sufism must be tasted. I continue to wonder whether I have done what I intended – to not colonize these bodies with my words, to not immobilize them, leaving them to move freely within these margins, to speak back and move against what has been written, to not fall into the trap of dualisms and dichotomies that *dhikr* confounds and, again contrary to the spirit of *dhikr*, name not-naming.

Even in fashioning a "conclusion," I continue to be the partial, half-blind ethnographer, questioning if writing is possible at all. The competing question: what if we do not write? I come smashing back against Rachida. What if we do not write? What if she does not write? Rachida is the "last generation" – if she does not write "it might disappear." If we

do not write – as *dhikr* participants, as students and scholars – *dhikr* will be forgotten.

Especially in the West and under regimes like the Turkish government, which has banned the performance of *dhikr*, *dhikr* will be forgotten. We must remember.

Not too unlike the patterned tiles that have come to characterize Moroccan art and architecture – the smooth swirls and bright bursts of French brushes, Moorish tones, and Andalusian strokes – the body in *dhikr* moves through and against my academic propensity to know and to chart. In fact, right as (and frequently long before) a pattern seems to emerge, as a name or a definition begins to form, definitiveness dissolves. From within this ambiguity, I turn to embodiment and fall into its possibility, asking with Andrew Strathern:

When grand theories, paradigms or meta-narratives fail, what can the analyst or ethnographer fall back upon as a starting point or a focus of inquiry?... Obviously, our own immediate being, which is most apparent and yet sometimes most hidden to us... Embodiment is, therefore, a new humanism, not exactly soteriological but one that is intended to bring us back to ourselves. It is, put simply, a reaction against disembodiment (qtd. in Kugle 10).

Long before I “fall back” into my questions of how to ask and write about *dhikr*, my friends in the field sink into Strathern’s “new humanism,” remembering their hidden and immediate beings. Their embodied telling of *dhikr* is itself “a reaction against disembodiment.” In much the same way, Moroccan tiles are known for their consistency: assiduous attention is paid to the precise cutting and decoration of each bright mosaic, which consist of geometric shapes that form popular patterns and images of religious teachings and calligraphy.²⁸ When

²⁸ This distinct tile work is often called *zellij* and is revered throughout Morocco as an art form. The system of patterns and images are often transmitted from master craftsmen or *maâlems* to their students (often in the form of apprenticeships) (El-Alamy).

examined closely, however, they are not consistent at all. For instance, each of the tiles that make up my Moroccan family's kitchen are hand-painted – the center's bright blue strokes burst into stars, which fade into green and yellow petals. Though carefully assembled by the master tile worker or *maâlems*, small gaps and cement smudges melt into the mosaic; minute variations in color, size, and shape vivify each tile's eccentricity. The kitchen, within which we gathered for traditional meals of couscous and chicken – joined in the earthenware *tagine* and soaked in the succulent juices of carrots, potatoes, peas, green olives, and numerous herbs and spices – and a comforting cup of sweet mint tea (all by which, in fact, I tasted Moroccan/Sufi culture) exemplify for me the extent to which in Morocco and concentrated in *dhikr* there is a deeper tradition of inconsistency in consistency. Following that pattern, the narrators of this work engage and burst through conventional ways of knowing and of telling. Accordingly, I have embraced the possibility of a “breakthrough into performance” in the writing process (Hymes 131-134), which makes a wrap-up and tie-it-off conclusion not only impossible but also undesirable.

Perhaps this is why Amina insists that Sufism must be tasted – her great many “No”s still pulse through these pages – and why Mohamed says that the body in *dhikr* is not “of words.” This is why, quite possibly, both Dr. Saqi and Farah emphasize the multi-dimensionality of the body as it remembers, that it works in stages, that it learns as it remembers. This is why, furthermore, the coexistence, messiness, and indistinctness of becoming, remembering, belonging (and not belonging) all converge within one space and body for our narrators. This is why Rachida recoils as Youssef opens to the possibilities of being seen, or seen unseen. In the beginning and the end, this is why the body in *dhikr* both opens and encloses. It expands to the possibilities of an expression and an experience that stretches past the boundaries of language and movement, time, geography, religion, and

history. It also contracts under the regulations of each specific order, packaged and made (un)clean by the gazes of those who know (Féral 49-50).

This work moves with the bodies of *dhikr* – remembering Morocco as it weaves through the *medina*'s streets, twisting through the narratives of eleven *murīds*, spinning as *dhikr* dances around it, through it, opening in these pages... incomplete. I have tried to show how the body in *dhikr* remembers itself to itself and, thus, recalls the self to a kind of agency that is not ego-driven. In *dhikr*, bodies and selves remain distinct to some extent, while they simultaneously become indistinguishable from each other. Despite what the stories of modernity tell of the greatly prized, self-actualized, autonomous, reflexive self – the prized subject, the seat of experience and expression, the source of thought and speech – there is, as Merleau-Ponty writes, “another subject beneath me, for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it”: the body (Giddens 75-77; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 296). His words enliven the very core of this work: that being, becoming, and moving in *dhikr* are done as and through body.

As Marcel Mauss might suggest, there is no natural or first body in *dhikr*. The *murīd*'s experience with and as body is enfolded in bodily “techniques” of survival, ritual, asceticism, and sociality (Kugle 11). The aim of the body is both obvious and subtle: the body moves in *dhikr* and is also a “body among other bodies” (qtd. in Kugle 11). All thoughts, sensations, actions and reactions, all doing and being, all having been and becoming merge together in-body as embodiment. The body is both subject and object. It acts and is acted upon. It moves and is moved, learns and is educated. It is the site of history and personhood, wearing (as the Gnawa do) a past that must not be forgotten. The Sufi path, as Dr. Saqi illuminated in Chapter 3, is comprised of layers and levels. Similarly, the body in the Moroccan *dhikr* tradition is full with complexity and multi-dimensionality. The body twists and tangles with other bodies and with itself, moving among stories and, in its

performance, claims history. I have insisted that *dhikr* is a remembering – not of Allah alone but a constant engagement with every *dhikr* that has preceded this one, an accumulation of one’s individual and collective histories on display.

For so many, *dhikr* is an engagement with the Divine. Through its performance, one both remembers and embodies God’s names and manifestations, His essence. As Ghassan offered, when one loses the lower self, the ego that insists that an individual “I” exists, the *murīd* becomes more in *dhikr*. More melts through words spoken and through the body in movement and becomes beautifully united: the invocator, the invocation, and the invoked are one. As was the case with Mohamed, multiplicity is chased away in becoming so much more and less than a singular self in *dhikr*, consistent with so many of the paradoxes that seem to trump dualism in every corner of Moroccan life (Nasr). Rachida, too, becomes united in herself as one body among many bodies of history, politics, and culture. As she remembers her early experiences with *dhikr* and then the blur of those that followed, she moves from the tactile recognition that *dhikr* as a spiritual endeavor bears little significance for her to the embodied realization that it – it as something her family does and is – makes her very existence meaningful. Through its practice and performance, she refuses to forget her own beginnings and her family’s history with the *zāwiya*. Despite her struggles with the visibility of her performance, *dhikr* also means negotiating the terrain between belonging and difference in search of unity. She says it unites a family with the same mission, which is practiced in the same movements and words:

“At some point, we are saying the same thing and we are moving the same movement and I am looking and everybody...” She leans forward, eyes narrowing. “... and everybody is doing the same thing. No one tells us to do it but we do. A lot of the time people are dressed the same way. A lot of the time people are sitting the same way and I think this is itself, sometimes, this could make you feel a very strong moment of being equal and I think

every time I feel that, I think, ‘Oh my gosh! It is almost like death!’ I think that this is what it is. It is this moment where by remembering God or the Prophet or, like for me, just moving to my grandmother’s voice, we are same.”

As we heard in Chapter 4, Rachida excoriated the disciplinary power of the *naqīb* who banged out the rhythm on the *zāwiya* floor. Even though, in the women’s practice, the *naqīb* is/was a woman, Rachida’s comments felt like a critique of masculinity or at least regulatory control. Here, I cannot help but hear her beat out the rhythm herself in this resonant litany of living sameness that is nonetheless “oh my gosh... almost like death!”:

we are saying the same

we are moving the same

everybody is doing the same

dressed the same

sitting the same

we are same

As I listen to Rachida, the strength, the rhythm of her voice is overwhelming. I cannot hear death here. I hear her erotic, not as contained by the sexual, but released into sensuousness, into her delicious invocation of connectedness, into the music of “we are same” – ancestors, children unborn, Christian to Buddhist to Jew, all that is and has been and will ever be are same, are equal. Rachida’s caution drips through Chapter 4 and yet, at this moment, she makes not only a moral claim but also a political one, a spiritual one. And here is her “breakthrough into performance” – her body and her words are coalescing in a performance of self that is so far beyond anything previously said. I am bursting through my own cognitive frameworks to think with Rachida. “Almost like death” is, for her, about the

invocation of relatedness in *dhikr*, calling back asceticism and divinity as right here. Death, too, is right here. The magnitude of her “breakthrough into performance,” her agency, her embodiment, her erotics – right here.

Rachida’s performance in *dhikr* moves against self-denial and immerses itself in the purity of the one, indivisible whole. The visibility of performance and the body signal Unity’s presence as well as its absence (Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 142-144). Rachida’s imagining of *dhikr* intertwines with the ideas, histories, presuppositions, fears, and desires of those performing – it breaks through into performance. Though the bodies of this work write and tell of the body as ascetic, historical, and cultural, among so much more, what swings and sways, what pulses forward and lingers back in *dhikr* are bodies redolent with possibility – endless possibilities of purpose, agency, and meaning, (re)calling me to more questions:

To what extent is the expression “the body” both sufficient and insufficient? Is there ever an individual body? In dhikr and in Sufism, how are Oneness and multiplicity negotiated and understood – together and apart?

How does reading and writing about dhikr form the ways in which it is experienced and imagined? How does the imagination that is invoked by reading religious texts (hagiographies, hadīths, the Qur’an, Sufi poetry) and non-religious texts move those in dhikr?

How do dhikr and its performing bodies move and turn, shift and endure through time and place? How do the ever-present forces of globalization and modernity – which are transforming the possibilities and visibility of dhikr, opening it up to the world – contribute to its (re)imagination (see Bruinessen and Howell; Wilson)? How does dhikr’s expression differ among orders, each with its own unique and shifting history – within Rabat, across Morocco, throughout North Africa, and extending into the world?

Which elements of dhikr are specific to the orders of this work – the Boutchichiyya, the Ibn Hassouni, and the al-Harrakya? And what is uniquely Moroccan about it?

How are experiences and relationships of power, colonialism, politics, and inequality (alluded to by Rachida) embodied and negotiated in dhikr? How are they, too, remembered? How do the ever-present eyes of the West watching the Rest (re)colonize dhikr in exotic Otherness?

Do men and women do dhikr differently? How is femininity and masculinity performed in dhikr – performed in excess, in hesitation, in absence?

How does the dhikr participant engage with Remembrance through material culture – the vast array of instruments, materials, clothing, and objects that fill the zāwiya (bringing us back to the Gnawn use of castanets, Rachida’s clean kaftan and the glasses that remained unturned by her fall, the dense tiles that met Youssef’s hand as he kept rhythm)? How are these objects used to facilitate Remembrance, to negotiate social interactions, and enrich/enclose the corporeality of dhikr?

To what extent does music in dhikr, or its lyrical recitations and rhythms, contribute to the progression of dhikr? How is music, too, enfolded into embodied memory?

To what extent do dhikr and its performers fetishize visibility? To what extent is dhikr invisible or unseen? When and how is being seen different from “looking good [and] looking right”? When and where is Oneness lost and/or found in seeing and being seen? And what is significant in the difference/combination? Does appearance have gender and implications beyond the immediate scope of this project?

Is (and to what extent is) the use of “annihilation” by Western scholars antithetical to what the narrators of this work articulate as “moving beyond” or “becoming” in dhikr?

How is Remembrance a function of privilege? Coming to this question crystallizes, for me, the discussion Ghassan and I shared with Mustapha about the dynamics of power and privilege within dhikr. Who has the right to remember, or to forget?

When does embodiment, inside and outside of dhikr, not “bring us back to ourselves?” When is embodiment “most apparent to us?” When is it “most hidden to us” (Strathern)?

The body in *dhikr*, the stories of Remembrance, and the very acts of remembering, telling, and writing raise more questions than answers. They turn from a free-flowing curiosity into shapeless unknowing. In making, they are unmade, unbound, and unhinged – let loose into endless partiality, made free in possibility. And in the space between first words and last lines, we begin again with Marta E. Savigliano (228):

To be remembered and continued.

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GLOSSARY*

There are few efforts more conducive to humility than that of the translator trying to communicate an incommunicable beauty. Yet, unless we try, something unique and never surpassed will cease to exist except in the libraries of a few inquisitive book lovers.

Edith Hamilton in *Three Greek Plays*, 16

<i>baraka</i>	translated by some as “charisma,” or the spiritual appeal or grace accessed through direct contact, proximity, or connection to <i>awliya</i> or saints/Friends of God
<i>barzakh</i>	narrow passageway that adepts travel during ritual or prayer between this world and the higher spiritual realms
<i>batin</i>	an inner dimension of reality accessible by adepts with deep and advanced understanding; the transcendence of superficial or outward appearances for deep spiritual meaning
<i>bay’a</i>	induction into a Sufi order; often accompanied by the teaching of rituals, practices, and other order-specific systems of spirituality/religiosity
<i>dervish</i>	synonym to <i>faqir</i> ; derived from the Persian word <i>darwish</i> meaning “door-seeker;” used in reference to Sufis
<i>dhawq</i>	tasting; used to distinguish firsthand experience from intellectual, academic, or speculative understandings of reality
<i>dhikr</i>	a form of individual or collective prayer often translated as “remembrance”; often involves rhythmic repetition of God’s names, poetry, excerpts from the Qur’an, and movements; each <i>tarīqa</i> has its own systems for performing <i>dhikr</i>
<i>djellaba</i>	traditional Moroccan clothing; a long, loose, sleeved robe with a large hood worn by men and women

* The translations provided here are based on the definitions offered by John Renard in *The A to Z of Sufism*. I found his interpretations to be both helpful and revealing.

<i>fanā</i>	translated into “annihilation” and “passing away” (in God, the Prophet, or a religious master); when the <i>nafs</i> is annihilated in <i>dhikr</i> , this state is often called <i>fanā</i>
<i>faqr</i>	poverty; the derivation <i>faqir</i> is used in reference to a Sufi adept
<i>hadīth</i>	the record of the sayings, traditions, and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad; documented by his companions
<i>hāl</i> , pl. <i>ahwāl</i>	a condition or state; often used to refer to the condition a <i>murīd</i> experiences while engaging in ascetic practices such as fasting, prayer, retreat, and <i>dhikr</i> ; it is thought to come from divine grace
<i>hametz</i>	leavened foods, which are forbidden on Passover
<i>haqīqa</i>	the ultimate reality or Truth; the highest level of Sufi knowledge, practice, learning, and experience
<i>hijab</i>	a veil or scarf worn by Muslim women; it generally covers the hair, though its use, purpose, and style vary drastically for each individual, family, and community
<i>ittihad</i>	another way of expressing the union or Oneness of the lover with the Beloved; differs from annihilation in the sense that there is no complete loss of self
<i>jumu’ah</i>	means “Friday prayer”
<i>kaftan</i>	a traditional Moroccan garment worn by women; <i>kaftan</i> come in simple and elegant styles and are often worn for weddings and celebrations
<i>kashf</i>	known as unveiling; it is a type of knowledge and insight that is accessed by the religiously elite and is often associated with tasting
<i>khalwa</i>	commonly known as “retreat”; it is a withdrawal from society in the hopes of fully committing to spiritual practice for a set amount of time; the most common <i>khalwa</i> lasts for forty days and includes intensified prayer and fasting
<i>lila</i>	Gnawa tradition of Remembrance
<i>maâlem</i>	master craftsmen and tile workers
<i>majnun</i>	means “possessed” – oftentimes by love; commonly used in reference to Nizami Ganjavi’s poem “ <i>Majnun Layla</i> ” (“Possessed with madness for Layla”) as a name for Qays, a man who is overwhelmed by love for Layla

<i>medina</i>	in Morocco, <i>medina</i> refers to an old Arab or non-European section of the city; in most Moroccan cities, the <i>medina</i> is enclosed by tall walls built in the city's early years as defensive measures
<i>munshid</i> , pl. <i>munshidūn</i>	chanter in <i>dhikr</i> and <i>sama'</i> sessions; known as the master rememberer
<i>muqaddam</i>	one of the leaders of an order; directly below the <i>shaykh</i>
<i>murīd</i> , pl. <i>murīdūn</i>	refers to those who want and desire, the disciples of an order; subject to the teachings of the <i>shaykh</i>
<i>nafs</i>	known as lower self or ego; underlies many of the fundamental efforts of Sufi thought and practice to resist the base instincts, materiality, selfishness, greed, lust, and other negative tendencies/attributes
<i>naqīb</i> , pl. <i>naqaba</i>	translated to mean "lieutenant," the Arabic terms <i>naqīb</i> and <i>najib</i> (pl. <i>nujaba'</i>) refer to ritual leader responsible for the spiritual progress of <i>dhikr</i>
<i>qraqab</i>	metal castanets used by the Gnawa
<i>rūh</i>	the spirit
<i>sama'</i>	means "listening;" uses music to invoke altered states of consciousness and intense emotion
<i>sawm</i>	fasting
<i>shaykh</i>	Arabic for "elder," and commonly refers to religious or community leader; within the context of Sufism, the <i>shaykh</i> is entrusted with the spiritual guidance and leadership of an order's <i>murīds</i>
<i>souk</i>	a North African or Middle Eastern market
<i>tagine</i>	traditional, earthenware cooking dish in Morocco; also use to describe a type of dish (often a combination of meat and vegetables cooked slowly)
<i>tarīqa</i> , pl. <i>turuq</i>	meaning order, "path" or "way," and refers to the formal Sufi organization and its corresponding system of spirituality and practice
<i>Tawaf</i>	the circumambulation around the Kaaba
<i>Tawhīd</i>	Oneness; the ultimate goal of <i>dhikr</i> ; the union of the lover with the Beloved
<i>walī</i> , pl. <i>awliya</i>	the Arabic <i>walī</i> is from a root meaning "close to, near" and is often translated to Friends of God or saints; refers to the spiritually advanced adepts, who are second only to prophets in the Sufi spiritual hierarchy

<i>warsh</i>	the Moroccan style of reading the Qur'an – lyrical and in unison
<i>wird</i> , pl. <i>aurād</i>	also known as litany; traditional recitations that are transmitted from famous adepts and spiritually elite as part of an order's heritage
<i>yullah</i>	used in various ways; common uses include: "hurry up," "lets go," and "move"
<i>zāwiya</i>	a Sufi lodge or place for Sufi liturgies, retreats, and social gatherings
<i>zellij</i>	Moroccan tile work

TRANSCRIPTS

In my effort to fully embrace the intimacy, multi-dimensionality, and incompleteness of this work, I have included, below, the transcripts of my interviews. Amina, who was introduced in the Introduction, is not included here in transcription because she did not want to be recorded, although she permitted me to write about her. All of the interviews conducted in French and/or Arabic were translated and transcribed by Ghassan. He inserts [] to indicate his own interjections and additions post-interview. We used the Interview Sample Questions in Appendix C as a guide and reference point, but felt no obligation to constrict our conversations to its suggested questions and flow.

In lieu of requirements mandated by the UNC Institutional Review Board, Ghassan and I prefaced each interview with a brief description of the research and a review of the IRB-approved consent form. Consent forms were offered in English, French, and Arabic, and included a description of the research, a note on compensation and confidentiality, the option of agreeing or not agreeing to audio recording, and my contact information. These forms are included as part of Appendix C.

Per the request of several interviewees and in an effort to maintain the strictest confidentiality, the names of all participants have been changed in this thesis and in all corresponding documents. Dr. Khalid Saqi is my only friend from the field whose name has not been changed, because he speaks to Sufism, the body, and *dhikr* from his academic expertise rather than personal experience.

After formally agreeing to the interview and signing the consent form, Ghassan and I asked each interviewee if s/he wanted us to change or withhold any potential identifiers (i.e. order of affiliation, position in the *zāwiya*, hometown, profession, etc.) from the records. All participants agreed that changing their name was sufficient.

Dr. Khalid Saqi
Unaffiliated; Scholar at Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania
May 9, 2012
English

[Prior to my arrival in Morocco, Dr. Saqi and I had arranged for me to come to his office at Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute the morning after I arrived for a discussion about dhikr. We met for almost two hours in his office, indulging in tea and reveling in the frequent interruptions by his colleagues at the Institute]

Lindsay: How does one become a Sufi in Morocco?

Dr. Saqi: The very first thing is that you have to want. The motivation is the number one issue in *dhikr* and it has to be right at the beginning of the quest. But once you desire to be a Sufi, you have to give a pledge to the *shaykh*. There is a bilateral kind of pledge - you pledge (because it is YOU who wants, not the *shaykh* who looks for people to come... it is an implicit desire in him but he doesn't say it openly, he would love to see all people follow his *tariqa* but he doesn't go and he doesn't preach openly). So you go to him and this is already a sign that you want the thing and that you're convinced. Nobody forces you. Nobody pays you to do that. You want to do it for the love it... but that is just the first drive. The pact consists of in two things, in two principles. You want to get to *al-Haqīqa*. The *shaykh* promises to lead you to, to take you by the hand and lead you step by step to *al-Haqīqa* on certain conditions. Your part is you want *al-Haqīqa* and the part of the *shaykh* is to help you get to *al-Haqīqa* which is the Ultimate Truth and which is God, knowing God by doing. So the conditions lie between these two terms, of the contract.

So, first of all, the whole business of Sufism is placed, is built on a principle that came from outside of Islam, that did not exist in Islam, which is the *batini* interpretation. *Batini*, they will say that to everything there are two levels: there is a surface level and there is a hidden level. The surface level is accessible to anybody. The hidden level is the privilege of the few, the privilege of the elite.

Lindsay: What does it take to have access to this 'hidden level?'

Dr. Saqi: Only those who God loves - this is what they say - will finally discover the Truth. The others -- you can practice, you can pray, you can read the Qur'an – but the real *Haqīqa* is not something that you can get. Now the *ba'atini* principle itself came from outside Islam and it is this principle which underlies the whole of Sufism as well as Shi'ism because if you don't rely on it then you'll have to give proof and evidence is lacking if you want to prove something and so you avoid this stumbling block to be able to, to have an open-ended kind of spiritual life so that you have to believe.

The guy who comes to the *Haqīqa* from the *shaykh* is called the *murīd*, the wanter. means to want. The *shaykh* is the guy who will give this to you. But with that said, the *murid* will have to accept EVERYTHING, to submit absolutely to the will of the *shaykh* without asking any questions at all. If you apply yourself to this kind of journey and accept to do everything that the *shaykh* tells you to do, then that is the most important thing because you only need

(theoretically this is the basis) to do what he tells you. Physically... and of course, spiritually. But all of this has to be situated in the framework of total submission.

Lindsay: Do you think the body relates to this?

Dr. Saqi: When we think about the body, the *shaykh* will instruct prayers, dances, performances, meetings, contemplation, and etc. These are all part of what you should expect as a *murīd* during the journey. And as you keep doing it, you keep elevating yourself spiritually until you get rid of the profane way of seeing things and little by little, all those elements of the veil that prevents you from seeing the *Haqīqa*, are dropped one after the other until a complete unveiling occurs. And after that, you get what is called *kashf*. *Kashf* means you see things that other people don't see. This is the *Haqīqa*. And you see angels, the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), you see Paradise, you see Hell, you see your place... until finally you see God Himself (*pause*). This is very very controversial from the point of view of Orthodox Islam because of the fact that Orthodox Islam says that you can't see these things because God says that in the Qur'an. You will never see God. God says it in the Qur'an. You will never see angels. God says it in the Qur'an. You will not see dead people because they never return to you. You can have dreams if you want and imagine things but you cannot see them as they are. So, even this principle of the *Haqīqa* is not universally accepted, though it is the framework for many Moroccans... so when *kashf* becomes a reality for you and *Haqīqa* is realized – that's how you cleanse your soul of all the dirt of this world. And little by little you elate yourself until you reach this step where you can see things. That is an indication that you are no longer a member of this profane world, this dirty world, this materialistic world... That is what the *shaykh* promises to lead you to. But it is you who will experience the thing. This is an important principle in Sufism that says that you cannot reach the Truth except through a guide. You have to have somebody to lead you to the Truth. Not the Prophet, not the Qur'an – you need somebody who knows God directly, who gets directly inspired by and from God. And it is you who will experience all of these things. It is not through books. It is not through diplomas or degrees or research.

It is through practice and it is through tasting. This is a very important word in Sufism. They say “you have to taste for yourself.” And once you do that, that is how you can get to a result. When we think of the body in these terms with *dhikr*, it is very clear that we have to embody tasting to reach *Haqīqa* and see angels, the Prophet, Paradise, Hell, and when we're ready, God Himself. We need the body, without it the Truth would be beyond our reach.

Lindsay: So then where does *dhikr* fit?

Dr. Saqi: *Dhikr* is one of the first things the *murīd* has to go through. First, at least in some - originally this is how they started, they had you had to go through a forty-day period of total isolation – you are completely isolated from people in a pretty dark place and you live on very little food. You don't wash your body and you spend all the time doing *dhikr*, saying prayers, repeating things, and concentrating and uh meditating uh and if you go for the forty-day period, that's your first step into Sufism.

Now, the *dhikr*, is something that – okay there are two types of *dhikr*. You have the “tongue *dhikr*,” which is different for all Sufi orders, like “*lā `ilāha `illā l-Lāh*,” There is No God But Allah, but there are specific prayers invented by different Sufi orders that distinguish the members of these orders from the others. Or, you can take such *dhikr* and the numbers and

the times that you say them are specific to the different Sufi orders. So if you accept to be a member of the Sufi order, you also accept to do the different *dhikr* formula, which is the way that it is done in that Sufi order.

Now, I told you in one of the letters that I sent you, that with the body there is generally something done collectively. Because I mean when you're on your own, generally its more concentration and saying things that counts, but when you are together, it becomes more physical, it becomes more uh audible, it becomes uh more collective, it becomes more of a matter of give-and-take, and you hear somebody say chants, repeat, you chant together, you read the Qur'an sometimes together, uh and you act together. There are several ways of behaving your *dhikr*, of acting your *dhikr*. Again, depending on which Sufi order you are from (*one of Dr. Saqi's colleagues from the Institute walks in and they chat briefly in Arabic – he brings tea. Dr. Saqi stands up and walks to him*)

Dr. Saqi: Do you like our tea?

Lindsay: Yes, very much.

Dr. Saqi: Would you like some?

Lindsay: Yes, please! *Shukran* [thank you]!

(*Dr. Saqi and the man prepare the tea; a large group of men come in and help themselves – the man with the tea turns to me*)

Man (in Arabic, slowly): *Wash ka-ttkellem l-arabiya?* [Do you understand Arabic?]

Lindsay (in Arabic): *Shwiya* [A little]

Man (in Arabic): *Sbah el-khir. La bas? Ana murid (hands me a small glass of tea) wa laakin (trails off...)* [Good morning. How are you? I am a *murid* but...]

Dr. Saqi (in English): This guy is specialist on Ibn 'Arabi – have you ever heard of this guy?

Lindsay: Oh yes! The poet? (*switching to Arabic*) *Metsharfin* [It's nice to meet you]!

Dr. Saqi: He won an award for his Ph.D thesis this year.

Lindsay: Ah, *mabrouk!* [Congratulations/You are blessed]

Man (in Arabic): *Allah ybarek fik* [God bless you too]

(*They continue chatting in Arabic – after several minutes, the men leave with their tea and Dr. Saqi returns*)

Dr. Saqi: Ah, the last thing we were talking about was the fact that *dhikr* has different forms: verbal, physical – and the physical is generally collective – the verbal is both individual and collective. There is another *dhikr*, which does not rely on words or physical acts but on meditation. And this is not just a Sufi thing, by the way. *Dhikr* in Arabic means “to

remember” and *dhikr* can be “remembrance,” *dhikr* can be “mentioning” – and the two go together. When you say something with your tongue, it is both uh a cause and effect thing. It is, first, the idea, the abstract that underlies the oral representation and that oral representation helps you more how to remember the thing. So when you say “*lā ’ilāha ’illā l-Lāh*,” first you believe in it – the idea comes in a fraction of a fraction of a fraction of a second and it turns into, it takes the shape of sounds and those sounds sort of instill the idea of belief and gives a kind of uh goes through this uh cycle of coming from the heart, going through the tongue, and reinforcing the heart. So the belief in Sufism is that (*clears throat*) the words are not the end of the story. There are things that we don’t understand, there are things that we do and sometimes we keep saying or doing things until you get into a state of *fanā*. *Fanā* is complete uh complete... so you dissolve into the rest of the world. You are no more a body. You are no more yourself. You are, you turn into something that doesn’t have boundaries, that doesn’t have predictable rules, that doesn’t have restrictions. And, therefore, you can very easily do things with your boy, with your tongue, that have never been done before, or that have never dictated to you.

(Another man knocks and enters – Dr. Saqi welcomes him and they briefly chat while the man pours himself some tea... the man takes a seat behind Dr. Saqi’s desk with a book and his tea)

So, for the Sufis, *dhikr* – besides... okay... for Orthodox Islam *dhikr* has two meanings: remembering with the heart and the other one is *dhikr* of the tongue, which is when you say. And because saying something normally comes as a result of thinking that something or processing it in your mind, in your heart, *dhikr* can then also be done with the tongue. And sometimes you say *dhikr* one time and it doesn’t pay off, but by repeating it time and time again, you discover its real value, its heart, its spirit. And by repeating it, I may say that every time you say it, you discover a different facet of it. And you keep going on and on like this until you really know what that means, that it is not your tongue any more that...

(another man burst in the room with his arms flung open and the man behind Dr. Saqi’s desk springs up from the chair and says “As-salam ’leykum” [Hello!]. Dr. Saqi rises from his seat and hugs the man, saying “Ahlan, ahlan, ahlan, ahlan” [Hello, hello, hello, hello!]. He turns to me and says:)

This is another professor at Dar al-Hadith – they both have the same specialty. But that guy who was sitting here (*points to his desk*), he’s probably one of the group who makes number one of the category of specialists. Unfortunately, he doesn’t teach here as a full-time professor, but does a lot of research with students.

So, uh, is it clear? Does it make sense?

Lindsay: Yes, yes. Thank you! So is it possible to reach these beyond-the-boundary, as you said, states with just one of these – the *dhikr* of the tongue or the *dhikr* of the heart or the physical? Or is there a combination of all...

Dr. Saqi: Okay, let me put it this way. Let’s begin with the not spoken and the not physical thing. This is more abstract. You can sit, you can lie, you can -- I don’t know -- be motionless, but your soul wonders in the vast uh horizons of of the spiritual world. So, here, it’s your heart that is working, that is doing *dhikr*. The second level is speaking. Lets say that

until now, your body is motionless except for your tongue. Your tongue being the speech track, your tongue being the lips – this is the area where the *dhikr* is uh realized vocally. But, this had to rely on the previous step, which is the heart, the heart. The third step is the physical one. You cannot do the physical one while not saying anything. You cannot just – at least not to begin with – you can get together, start singing, first just standing, moving slightly, swaying a bit. And then, little by little, you get more agitated. And, at a certain time, you may stop speaking and your body is speaking. But that’s, if you want, at the end of the process. You cannot imagine a group of people getting together and doing *dhikr* without any words or, at least, without any sound. There can be music, not words. With music, the body has to respond to a kind of sound stimulus. Generally, it is words because they have meaning, but sometimes it’s also music that reminds you of other things. You know the Pavlov experiment and, how do they call it?

Lindsay: With the dog and the bell?

Dr. Saqi: Operant conditioning, yes.

Lindsay: Yes.

Dr. Saqi: There’s this stimulus that comes and reminds, reminds the mind and whatever of something that is usually associated with it. And then the response to the stimulus uh does not need the other association. Here, we’re talking about the music that would normally go with certain chanting, but by repeating it so often – and you get rid of the words and the music – on its own can remind you of those words that would otherwise have that effect on you. And, therefore, take an example: a singer. You know his or her songs – if the music is played to you, the words keep coming to you (*another man enters, Dr. Saqi says, “As-salam”*) the words keep coming to your mind. You know what words with what piece of music?

(The new man approaches us and welcomes me with “Ahlan” and a smile. Dr. Saqi stands and embraces him.)

Lindsay: *Salam* [Hello!]

Dr. Saqi: A professor of jurisprudence at Dar al-Hadith.

Lindsay: Ah, *metsharfin!*

Professor of Jurisprudence: *Metsharfin.*

(All three men in the room (Dr. Saqi, professor of jurisprudence, and the other professor/researcher from behind the desk) chat in Arabic. Dr. Saqi asks to be excused and the three men leave the room for 10 minutes.)

Dr. Saqi: So what are your other questions?

Lindsay: I was wondering about body movements specifically....

Dr. Saqi: Based on my understanding, I think it should, first it should move voluntarily.

According to a certain conscious drive, to begin with, and then gradually (*another man enters and grabs some tea*) and gradually, you move into this uh how do they call it? This trance. But, unless you're into it, body and soul, unless you are conscientiously into it, you cannot move into this higher level, this more more uh elated stage where you don't have any control over your body anymore. Or at least, I would say, you can have uh just a partial control over your body. Let me, of course, you practice sport?

Lindsay: Yes.

Dr. Saqi: What's your favorite?

Lindsay: I run.

Dr. Saqi: You run? Okay you are my ideal example! Do you have any distance as a preference? Do you compete?

Lindsay: Yes – my favorite is the half-marathon... so around 13 miles.

Dr. Saqi: Okay, so at the end of the process, you keep running and running and running and at a certain time you don't think about every step – how to raise your foot and where to put it and at a certain time, you're like a clock that, it's as if you're pressed on "play" – and your legs and your arms keep moving according to a pre-set manner that you're almost unconscious of. So, this is physical and yet, at a certain time, your legs keep moving for themselves as if independently of your will. It's not totally independently, independently of your will, but you sort of think of something else. You don't think of your legs and the details of the way you walk. So in Sufism, it's more or less like this. You start doing it consciously with physical effort but at a certain time, it's your body that keeps going by itself. And you do have control! If you want to stop it, generally you can stop it without any problem. But then, you think of other things: you're absorbed in different, in a special kind of world that is not natural in everyday practice. And you keep chanting, the voice keeps going higher and higher sometimes, and the energy I mean the movement is more and more energetically done and (*phone rings*) you reach a peak at a certain time and that is... Excuse me (*answers the phone*)

I'm sorry there's an urgent matter here. I need to talk to the Director. I should be back shortly. I'll bring him a cup of tea (*laughs*). Hmm (*sips tea*)... tastes good enough (*laughs again*). Good enough to convince him.

(*Dr. Saqi returns 10 minutes later*)

Dr. Saqi: He was not convinced (*laughs*). We'll go ahead and continue. What other questions?

Lindsay: You were talking about how *dhikr* means "to remember" – so those remembering are pulling from things they know or recalling a knowledge that is already within, what is that knowledge that is being recalled in *dhikr*?

Dr. Saqi: I'm not sure if it is trying to recall a knowledge, as you say. I'd rather say that it is trying to understand the hidden meaning of an expression that transcends itself in terms of

meaning. When you say “*lā ’ilāha ’illā l-Lāh,*” it’s not just words, it’s not just a structure. It’s “There is No God But Allah” in everything. There’s No God But Allah in kind of, lets say in reliance. You cannot rely on anybody who may trust other than God. There’s nobody to fear other than God. There’s nobody to love other than God. There’s nobody to worship other than God. You see, it’s by repeating these that you discover these meanings. Its not, I would say, a kind of pigeonhole that you revert to every time you want to. The pigeonhole concerns the prayers, the expressions, the numbers, the times, the ways you do them, but these are just means to the more serious thing, to the uh desired things, as you said the first time. The desired thing is God, is knowing God, is is being with God, is is uh feeling God, is experiencing the love of God, uh is uh that kind of situation where you know that God is everything, you are nothing. You are there to realize how little you are, how you want to understand the nothingness of yourself and the everything-ness of God. And these are not things that you know. There are things that you discover every time. And you don’t necessarily discover these things once and for all and the other times you just revert to them. Every time, every day, is a new experience. Every prayer, every *dhikr*, is (*phone rings*) is a new discovery (*he answers the phone*).

Sorry – that was my sister (*laughs*). So, to get to the point that I want you to get to, this new quest is something you experience every time. It’s something that you have to do it for yourself, on your own -- with the help of the *shaykh* and your group of course – but nothing will do it for you. You see? That’s a big, that’s an essential principle in Sufism. (*with emphasis*) You experience your spirituality. you don’t hear about it. It’s another kind of meta-spirituality. It’s spirituality as you experience it – nobody can describe it for you. Yes, you taste it!

Lindsay: What does it mean to do it for yourself but with the help of the group?

Dr. Saqi: You sing together in unison, you dance in unison, you begin in unison, and you end in unison so that at a certain time you’ve melted in the group. It’s a kind of give and take, as I said. I mean, this is the mean of collective work. It’s seeing the others doing something and being influenced by that and I mean everyone does it. Everyone benefits from the others – just as you are doing it, others are doing it with your help. And sometimes, sometimes you get together just physically but you do the *dhikr* individually. It’s also essential, it’s also very important to get together. For example, doing the prayer together: you get together and everyone is reading the Qur’an on their own, but the movements are done collectively. You follow the leader, the *imam*, but what you say, what you ask God for, is different, is not necessarily what what the person next to you is asking for.

Lindsay: So do you think there’s anything specific about the movement itself or the body itself that is helped along by doing *dhikr* collectively?

Dr. Saqi: Okay. Do you like dancing?

Lindsay: Yes.

Dr. Saqi: What is so important about dancing? I just want to put you in a similar situation so you know that dancing is not just a matter of meaningless physical movement...

(A woman enters and Dr. Saqi jumps up in excitement, greets her, and they chat for several

minutes – he says that he must go to another meeting now. We arrange another time to continue our conversation the following week)

May 12, 2012

[Dr. Saqi and I met again in his office at Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute. Before launching into my questions, we briefly discussed my interviews thus far]

Lindsay: In some of my interviews so far, we've been talking a lot about the spirit in relation to the body...

Dr. Saqi: Sure sure. I think the body -- not just to Sufis, but to all people who believe in God and who believe in, let me put it this way, for the divine religions in general – the body is just the vehicle of the sou. The soul, there is a verse or maybe two verses in the Qur'an that talk about the soul in this way. Uh God says, "If they're asking you about the spirit or the soul, tell them that is the concern of God. And they know but very little. Only very little was given to them, very little knowledge was given to them by God." So, the essence of the spirit, what it is, and – these are things that are impossible to know about because God did not tell us about them. They are part of the unseen world. So angels, Paradise and Hell, God Himself, all this is unseen. These are things we may or may not believe in without seeing them. You don't have to perceive these things to believe in them, otherwise they wouldn't be called unseen.

So, the spirit is one of those things that are difficult to understand, but we still believe in that. Uh, it is only when the body, in the womb, in the fetus, finishes it's fourth month, that the soul is blown into the body and that's where this fetus becomes a full-fledged human being. I don't know about the calendar, the evolution of the fetus, but this is something that was told to us by *hadīth*. *Hadīth* tells us that, describes the development of the fetus in the womb and that after four months, the angel comes and blows the spirit into the body. That's when uh the human is a real human and the soul leaves the body at the time of death. On death, there is another separation. And, after that, on the Day of Judgment, the soul is brought back to the body and we're resurrected in a different shape but its basically the same us, the same individual... so the spirit is something abstract, something difficult to understand, and the body sort of carries the spirit and it is the uh -- what do they call it? it's a very common word... like cooperation? – the relationship between the body and the soul that we keep living, acting, thinking, judging things, taking positions. So, if uh this coordination between the spirit and the body is done properly, then we are doing a good thing. If, we say they help each other to do the good thing... if, on the other hand, the person does bad things – maybe we're speaking of say conspiracy – both will suffer. If the spirit is sent back to the body and the person then goes to Paradise, the person goes body and soul. If the person goes to Hell, body and soul. Now, uh the body is from clay, from earth, it is a substance. The spirit is not substance, it is from God. We don't know what that means, but God says, "It's from me!" And that means that it's something very different and just like the body, the material body, the soul can be improved or worsened. So you improve it by choosing – this is very important – by choosing to do things like prayers, like doing good things to people like respecting them,

giving charity, etc. So you purify your soul little by little. It can regress at times and progress at others and the more you work on it, the higher it goes on the latter of spiritual improvement if I may describe it this way. And the more bad things you do – I mean in terms of religious evaluation – the worse you get with your spirit or your soul, the lower you get.

So, *dhikr* in general helps to do exactly this: it helps to purify the soul because we cannot dissociate them, and so if the spirit improves then the body improves and if the body improves then the spirit improves. How does the body improve? By doing good things... for example, by *dhikr* – *dhikr* is the most important practice, activity, state of being. And then there's fasting. Fasting is quite biological, but it has consequences on the soul – it is a struggle against the *nafs* that we see here. You see, when you worship you perform physical, symbolic acts, but that has spiritual meaning. It has a direct impact on the soul and the body. So *dhikr* in general, *dhikr* in general – whether we talk about Sufism or any other religious denomination or whatever – it is the same. Now, you focus on Sufism – what changes here is the interpretation of prayers and maybe some additions to the definitions of the soul and there is an endless space of interpretations, descriptions, imaginations, etcetera. So Sufism can limit the concept of the spirit one way or the other.

Lindsay: So in this period before your birth – the first four months – and then after you physically die but before Judgment Day, do the spirit and the soul have a physical form? Do we know what that looks like?

Dr. Saqi: The spirit is never physical. The spirit combines with the body, the physical, to make a human a human... a living human. So the spirit does not change – there is no way we can say anything precisely about the spirit because God says you will not know. The question is I expect you're your uh your question to be more along the lines of... (*man walks in and they begin speaking in Arabic*) Have you met this man before?

Lindsay: No, no I haven't.

Man (slowly): I don't know how to speak English (*laughs*)

Lindsay: *Ma'shi mushkil* [It's not a problem!]

Dr. Saqi: This is the philosopher of Dar al-Hadith.

Lindsay: *Metsharfin!*

Dr. Saqi: He teaches philosophy and this year he won the prize for a book on philosophy.

Lindsay: *Mabrouk!*

Dr. Saqi: And we're proud of him!

(*they continue chatting in Arabic for a few minutes*)

So, uh, I thought your question was going to be – so what about the fetus before the fourth month? Wasn't it developing before then? Yes, yes it was. And this is an interesting question because it has a relation with the body per se – does it change any way, does it keep living

until the soul leaves it, or before it does? *(another man walks in with tea – there’s a brief exchange in Arabic between the two. Dr. Saqi stands up, fetches the tea, pours some for both us, and sits back down).*

Yeah – it was a body but not a body with a soul... although it was a living body in that it was evolving. This is analogous or maybe the more complicated question concerns the body while it is sleeping. There’s a versus in the Qur’an that says, “God...” Let me find the translation. *(Stands up)* My favorite translation is Youssef Ali. Let me find... *(flips through the Qur’an)* the chapter of Yunis and then you can see it. Let’s see *(keeps flipping... scans the pages for a few minutes)*. It goes: “It is Allah that...” Here, read it aloud for yourself.

Lindsay: “It is Allah that takes the soul of men at death and those that die not He takes during their sleep. Those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back from returning to life, but the rest He sends to their bodies for a term appointed.”

Dr. Saqi: Do you understand?

Lindsay: Maybe you should explain it just in case?

Dr. Saqi: When a person dies, God holds the soul and never sends it back until the Day of Judgment. For those who go to sleep, He holds, He summons the soul just while the person is asleep and then sends it back while they are awake. Until that time, that fixed time, that appointed time, which He only He knows comes and that’s when He will hold the spirit once and for all. Now read it again with this in mind: “It is Allah...”

Lindsay: “It is Allah that takes the soul of men at death...”

Dr. Saqi: So when you die, He will take your soul.

Lindsay: “And those that die not He takes during their sleep...”

Dr. Saqi: Right, so when you are sleeping He still takes your soul, but the difference is what comes after...

Lindsay: “Those on whom He has passed the decree of death, He keeps back...”

Dr. Saqi: He keeps back. He doesn’t send it back. Uh huh.

Lindsay: “From returning to life, but the rest He sends to their bodies...”

Dr. Saqi: The rest is those who are sleeping... He sends it back until He appoints a term that is real death.

Lindsay: So then what is the body... is the body empty during...?

Dr. Saqi: That’s that’s a very hard question. I think this is why He discourages us from asking to many questions about the soul because it is for Him to be concerned with. This is why Sufis call sleep “the smaller death.” You’re dead but you can get back to life. What does happen while we are sleeping – that’s a big question. Your soul goes away from, leaves your

body... your heart is still beating, your blood is circulating, you can speak, you're breathing, you can stand up, you can shout, you can drink and you don't know what you are doing, and you can see things, you can be scared, you can do this at sleep. But what happens exactly at that time is certainly not what Freud said about sleep. There is a *hadīth* that says a dream is one of three things: it is either it is sometimes from God and that means it's a kind of inspiration; the second type is from Satan, from the Devil, and that could be horrible, like you could have nightmares; or, the third one, is from what you're preoccupied about and this is where Freud talks about his theory. So this does not explain directly the separation of the soul from the body, but it does say something...

(Man walks in with family guests, introductions are exchanged, and then they leave).

So, as I said, it's a difficult world, the world of the spirit. Do you know *ijtihad* – rational thinking, like personal, intelligent interpretation?

Lindsay: Yes.

Dr. Saqi: So it opens up a lot for trying... but then again, the spirit is a domain where intelligence helps you very little. I hope that makes sense.

Lindsay: Yes, it makes a lot of sense. So I'm reading a book right now and the author writes a lot about how, when you're in *dhikr* and you're saying "*lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh,*" the words and letters are located in certain parts of your body... so like your navel and it moves through your chest...

Dr. Saqi: This is why I said it's very difficult to prove these things. Navel – how do I know it's true? I'm not sure that it means much. I think these are things that is something that people say, people who are philosophical and like making deep meanings. We cannot agree on these things. We have *hadīths* that talk about the heart as being the source of spiritual activity uh even some versus in the Qur'an talk about the heart as being the locus of the mind, not the brain – the brain is the organ that facilitates that can facilitate a lot of the intelligent activities. So the heart is the motor of our intellectual, as well as our spiritual endeavors.

Uh, Lindsay, would you allow me now to go to do my prayer – the Imam is calling me.

Lindsay: Yes, of course.

Dr. Saqi: So if you would like to come back on Wednesday, we can continue discussing. In the evening, there is a lecture that I think you would like – so call me in a few days and I'll tell you the time.

May 16, 2012

[Dr. Saqi and I attend a lecture at Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute together on religious dialogue in Morocco, specifically concerning peaceful exchanges across different religious and socioeconomic communities. Following the lecture, to ascend to his office and continue

our conversation from the previous week.]

Lindsay: So I was thinking a lot about silent *dhikr* since we last met – what is going on with the body...

Dr. Saqi: Visually, it's not moving but you know, for example, you think you get into uh a level of *dhikr* where you do feel the pulse of the heart and so the body is moving. The hands, the eyes, the ears, all of these can move with the movement of the heart. You can shed tears easily. Your complexion can change. All of these things happen. So even though the limbs are not necessarily moving, it doesn't mean that there isn't a movement inside of the body.

Lindsay: So can you take me through the same question with the collective *dhikr*?

Dr. Saqi: Yeah. It's the same thing – sometimes you can be saying things without moving visually... and sometimes you're moving a lot. What happens is that *dhikr* is musical, it has a rhythm – even when it isn't rhythmical it becomes rhythmical because you're repeating it. Let me give you an image: when you're on the train, that sound that keeps repeating itself ends up sounding like something musical so even when its loud and ugly, you end up following it with your body until you fall asleep and when it stops, you wake up because you were consciously following it. I guess it's similar when you are doing *dhikr*. The body responds little by little... it may not go very far in responding, but at least there's this swaying movement, especially if you are sitting. If you're sitting, it is just your legs that are supporting you and the presence of the others on all sides of the body, that limits your movements sideways.

(Phone rings – Dr. Saqi answers, chats for a few minutes and then hangs up)

The shame is that you have recorded everything (*laughs*). Everyone wants to talk to me when I want to talk to you (*laughs*). So we were talking about...?

Lindsay: The body in...

Dr. Saqi: Oh yes, the body in *dhikr*. I said once you start actually experiencing – going through the meaning, living the meaning, appreciating the content of what you are saying – you cannot help but respond physically. But, I guess then, that musicality or, as I said, the kind of rhythm and the pace of the repetition, the speed of the movement, have a very powerful... so like I said, if there are people sitting by the side, then you also control your movements so you can move in unison. There is no way that you can go against the current of the movement.

So, uh, when you stand up, then the legs contribute to the movement and are physically more agitated. Some people even jump. Some chants, some poems are more physical in they know that sometimes you don't say certain types of *dhikr* – you know, words that are soft and cool, you must say them that way too. So, uh, lets sum it up this way: different types of *dhikr* are accompanied by different physical responses or, lets say, different degrees of physical response. So like we said earlier, even when you look totally immobile, there might be things inside you that are physically moving. And, uh, those people who read, who do these *dhikr* on a regular basis, know when to respond, when not to, the schedule, the program of the

physical involvement of the different *dhikr*. But one thing that I keep repeating is that the physical response, the big, the very not quite violent but uh mobile kind of physical response normally takes place in collective *dhikr* with the others. That's something that needs a bit of reflection.

Lindsay: How are these movements and ways of moving learned?

Dr. Saqi: I think it's because people do them and you just copy them. There's no logic relation between what you say and how you respond physically. It's just arbitrary. This accompaniment is learned – it's a matter of habit. At some point the *shaykh* or *awliya* decided that this is how it should be done and I don't know for some time... maybe a few years, maybe a few centuries. It's uh generally distinctive. There is an order that chants and dances in ways that are different from ways of, say, the Boutchichiyya. There is something common, but there is always something distinctive of each Sufi order.

Lindsay: So the fact that the movements exist is significant but what the movements are is not necessarily of significance?

Dr. Saqi: That's not what I meant. I meant that uh the relation between the relation and the *dhikr* is arbitrary. There is nothing logical. For example, if you have never heard what these people say and you see them dancing, there is no way to predict how they'll move when they say certain things and vice versa. If you hear them and you don't see what they are doing – so if you just hear – there's no way that you can associate that with a particular movement of the body. SO what I meant was that, take Sufi order X – when they say “*lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh*” and keep repeating it, first they start saying it and then saying it and swaying a little until they reach a certain degree of physical agitation and at a certain time they stop and some of them may even pass out. But other Sufi orders, lets say Sufi order Y – they can say the same *dhikr* and they can respond physically in a different way. So when you see the different Sufi orders saying the same thing – and sometimes not even hearing them at all – you can just look at them and realize their movements and say, “Okay, this is Sufi order whatever.” Just by watching the movements you can say, “Oh these are Boutchichiyya Sufis and these are Tijaniyya or the Shadhiliyya.” Once again, they don't do it because there is a mathematical relation or scientific relation between those movements and those words – its just that that works in that way for that particular Sufi order.

Lindsay: So memory seems to play an important role...

Dr. Saqi: Oh yes. See, we are starting to peek behind the initial veils now (*laughs*). In Islam, in general, you have five prayers. Muslims do them at a certain time and know always what to say or read. But how? So we know that the Prophet did it this way and little children, they go into the mosque, and see people doing things that they probably don't understand and little-by-little, they pick up the movements and the words, and they get to learn – either by asking or by reading or simply by memorizing the different types and the different prayers and how they are done. I guess it is the same with Sufi orders. Suppose you walk into a *zāwiya* not knowing what they will say, how many times they will say it, how they say it, what kind of physical they will uh show – you don't know. And, suppose you come back another day at a different time and you see there's a difference... something new, something different. So you keep coming at these different times and at the end of the process, you realize that the first time they do something that they don't do the first time. Now, why they

do that, why they started doing it, that's a different story. It rests with the *naqīb*, the *shaykh*, the *murīd* – all of the people, it's an affair of those involved (*with emphasis*) within the family of that Sufi order. Again why – sometimes we don't know why, it's just developed – sometimes they try to find an explanation to why this movement this time or this *dhikr*... it is hard to explain because, after all, it's not why or how it came into practice that counts, but what the effects are. It's what they gain from it, what they get out of it, and to what extent that elates them, that purifies them, that assists them in Remembrance of Allah. *Dhikr* is fully in Remembrance of Allah – and all of these things are part, even when we can't or shouldn't explain it. It makes us better – that's what the whole story is about. Sometimes we must take different routes and, as I said, each order has it's own distinctive way of performing *dhikr*.

Lindsay: So *dhikr* translate in English to mean “to remember” or “recollect” or “recall” – I think “to mention” and “invoke” as well...

Dr. Saqi: *Dhikr*, as I mentioned the first day, has two meanings. There's remembering with the heart – you can sit and say nothing and remember that one is created by God and etcetera. And the second *dhikr* is using the tongue to help the heart remember. As I said before – maybe I said it to you, maybe I said it to someone else – you can, it's a kind of dialectic relation between the heart and the tongue... it's like the chicken and the egg. Which proceeds the other? Is it the heart that comes first, or does the tongue send it back to the heart? So what counts is that they both act and react so that the result is okay, it's deepening through your heart, your nerves, your body, your soul, through all of you so you don't feel that it is just your tongue that is saying these things or your body moving this way – but that it is the whole of you.

So you are remembering the grandeur of God, the mercy of God... you remember the forgiveness of God, the Prophet, the mercy of the Prophet, Paradise, the angels. You question is particularly interesting in that Sufis don't remember the bad things like Hell and Satan. So when they are moving through the different veils they say they see the Prophet, the angels, Paradise – they say they see their place in Paradise and not in Hell because that's something impossible... this unveiling that you reach is a sign from God that you have been accepted by God. There is no way to be accepted and love by God and go to Hell – this is what they say anyway. So, I guess, the *dhikr* – one of the most important things it does is that it helps you forget the world... it helps you get away from the material, the material temptations. In that time you are doing *dhikr*, you are above that. You are not hungry, you are not thirsty, you are not worried, you tend to get very close to a state of perfection so the world to you is nothing... you becoming interested in only one thing: God. That's what Sufism is all about: describing the *Haqīqa*, the Truth, which is God.

Lindsay: That's really interesting because doesn't *al-insaan* [Arabic word for humankind] translate to mean “the forgetful ones.”

Dr. Saqi: Mmmmm... that's what some people say. It's one of those theories.

I guess if we hadn't been forgetful creature, we would have been unhappy, very sad for so long. For example, the day I lost my father – it's because I forgot that shock, those unhappy moments that I can smile, that I can eat, that I can have good relations with people, that I can enjoy the world. If I hadn't been able to forget the death of my father, I wouldn't have even been able to eat. How can one have sex, for example, if he is sad... it's something that you

cannot imagine. So happiness is largely based on forgetfulness. Now, forgetfulness does not always play a positive role in life. So some Sufis say that you should never forget your sins – not that you should despair about the mercy of God, no. You should always be positive about the pardon if you are sincere in your repentance... but always remember that you are so little, so weak, so – to use the Sufi terminology – you are nothing. God is everything and you are nothing. You are nothing without God, you are nothing. By remembering, you feel that you need God and by remembering this and feeling it, God graces you. The more independent you think you are, the farther you become from God. This is the type of forgetfulness that is not uh advised.

Lindsay, sometimes when I'm talking to you, I think you're profound (*we both laugh*) – not just hearing what I'm saying, but you're processing things (*we keep laughing*). It's an interesting discussing we're having. I think it's important.

Lindsay: And really beautiful in a lot of ways...

Dr. Saqi: Oh yes, and I think I said this to you: there are two types of Sufis... extremists Sufis that talk about – what is that word they use in philosophy? Uhhh... it's like those who say that God is not just that God who created this (*points around the room*) – everything you see is an extension of God Himself. It is God, we are part of God. Do you know the word?

Lindsay: I'm sorry, I don't...

Dr. Saqi: Give me one moment (*walks over to his desk and begins typing*). Please take some sweets.

Lindsay: *Shukran.*

Dr. Saqi: I think it's Pantheism. Yes yes – Pantheism.

Lindsay: So it's the idea that God is in everything? In this chair, filling this room...

Dr. Saqi: Yes, God is all the world. Yeah – uh huh. (*Flips through an old dictionary*)... Pantheism: the religious idea that God and the universe are the same thing and God is present in all natural things. Pantheism...

So this is considered extreme by Orthodox Muslims to that it's heretic to say that we are God and God is us – no. God created us, we are His creatures. And there are good and bad things in this world... so the bad things cannot in any way be related to God. I mean, He created them with the choice. There is no way we can say that God is perfect, God is beautiful, God is everything good. And then there's what we call Sunni Sufism, which is much more accepted to Orthodox Muslims because it doesn't go so far. So this is where things like saying Sufism is beautiful becomes contentious because some don't think it fits into proper Islam or proper religion. SO think of the Day of Judgment – when we go before God, some people ask: How can God judge, ask, ask part of Himself? Some say that this does not stand.

So, as we say in Arabic, Sufism is a world, an ocean that doesn't have a sea, a beach, have a limit. You can swim and swim and sail and sail and you will never reach the shore. It's a shore-less ocean. But, it's good to sail in big oceans and take chances because you might

come across a mermaid or something beautiful, something something that you'd been told stories about but never experienced. So Sufism is this kind of world.

When can you meet again?

[Dr. Saqi and I discuss possible meeting times for the following week. Despite our best efforts, schedule changes, and unforeseen conflicts from both ends over the next few days, we are unable to meet again while I am in Morocco. We do, however, continue communicating over the telephone and via email – both in Morocco and after I return to the U.S.]

Mustapha
Qadiriyya Boutchichiyya Order, Rabat
Arabic
May 21, 2012

[We reviewed the IRB consent forms and briefly discussed the research. Mustapha expressed considerable interest in the consent form and so we discussed its purpose for a few minutes before beginning. As discussed before the interview, Lindsay asked each question in English, Ghassan translated to Mustapha in Arabic, Mustapha responded in Arabic, and Ghassan provided a sentence or two synopsis before moving on to the next question. Occasionally, Ghassan asked his own follow-up questions. Below, is Ghassan's transcription of the interview. He inserts [] to indicate his own interjections and additions post-interview]

Lindsay: How long have you been with the *zāwiya* Boutchichiyya?

Mustapha: [Almost] since 1988.

Lindsay: Why *zāwiya* Boutchichiyya?

Mustapha: It is difficult to give an answer to this question, why? First, before joining this *zāwiya* [which is called “Tariqa”, translated as “Path”, but could be a synonym for the word *zāwiya*], I had no affiliation to any *zāwiya*. I was a common Muslim believer. I actually was a student of political sciences at the public university, and was [thus] fearful of such religious/Islamist “movements” and political parties. Another factor I should mention concerns the fact that I come from an old family, that of “Al-Idrissi,” that have Sufi affiliations in their history. As a result [of this second factor], I had long had an interest in learning more about Sufism, especially that I had long had a strong belief that Sufism could be a very good means for the solution of many problems that face mankind [mainly materialistic].

Ghassan: How did you come to join?

Mustapha: So how did I come to join the *zāwiya*? In fact, I faced questions that many people have in their life: What is life? What sense does it have? Why am I here? The answer to these questions were never found in the sermons of *Jumu'ah* prayer [Friday sermons that are conducted just before this prayer, making it a long weekly prayer during which people listen to two sermons, about one or two different subjects before praying] or in the books I was reading. Therefore, Sufism seemed to be the most relevant way for me to solve these questions. In this sense, I established a spiritual contact/bound with the Master. With time, I got to learn about Sufism and, therefore, understand the truth more clearly about life and the questions I had in mind. This is, in general, how I got involved in the *zāwiya*. Oh, and the direct reason for my involvement was due to a stranger who lost his paper while visiting the country. I knew that the *zāwiya* is used to help people in such issues and others, and so I accompanied him to that place. Once there, I had an urging interest to learn more about the *zāwiya*. Since then, I started attending *dhikr* gatherings, which were the major attraction for me.

Lindsay: So what did those *dhikr* gatherings mean to you?

Mustapha: There are two types of *dhikr*: the individual *dhikr* and the collective *dhikr*.

Ghassan: And the difference?

Mustapha: For the collective *dhikr*, it is characterized by its usage as a means to create and strengthen a social bond among its members. Secondly, this *dhikr* brings a harmony through which people act collectively [during the *dhikr* sessions]. Third, the fact of being in collective gatherings help people understand how well they are improving in terms of getting along with people, becoming better actors in the society, and offering better treatments for the people around you.

As such, this collective *dhikr* offers you a mirror to measure how well your ego is getting. Moreover, as you would have noticed, our world societies are increasingly becoming materialistic and more individualistic; the collective *dhikr* offers a special type of a tool that helps its members alleviate some of this “individualistic” burden from people’s shoulder. Of course, one cannot miss the importance of individual *dhikr*. With time, the adept is asked to practice some individual *dhikr*. I, for example, say “There is no God but Allah” [*lā ’ilāha ’illā l-Lāh*] 500 times in the morning, and a similar number of times in the evening time.

You should know that one of the special characteristics of our *zāwiya* is the fact that we do not urge the newly affiliated and other adepts to radically make a positive change in their life such as stopping the smoking habits, or refrain from drinking alcohol. Instead, we ask these people to do these small steps which will enable them to take the initiative of making this change once they feel that the time has arrives. Having said this, one should not think that the collective *dhikr* is more important than the individual one. The latter simply means that it is very convenient for people who cannot make it to the *zāwiya* and prefer to take more control of these activities, alone, far from gatherings of people.

All this does not mean that the *zāwiya* goes against the teachings of Islam; this simply means that the *zāwiya* takes time and goes step by step into the achievement of its objectives. In old times, *shaykhs* -- among whom there is ours, Shaykh Sīdī Hamza -- used to impose strict rules for anyone wishing to get affiliated to the *zāwiya*. This was the case in old times – people had to grow beard, dress in a very formal and specific way, and to stop some sinful behaviors that would not be accepted in Islam. With Shaykh Sīdī Hamza, a radical change was introduced to the whole course of Sufism [in Morocco]. Shaykh Sīdī Hamza is actually considered as the figure that modernized Sufism. I can explain this in the following words: in the past, the adept had to look and seek his Master. Today, it is the other way around. In the past, people had a kind of “thirst” to learn about Sufism. Today, it is the Master who has to stimulate the interest in people’s life to get attracted into the *zāwiya*.

Ghassan: Can you explain...?

Mustapha: So when the adept is new to the *zāwiya*, they start with the 500 “task” to do, once in the morning, and once in the afternoon. One week later, the number increases to 1000, and to 2000 in the third week, for example. Some weeks later, the person will have to do these 15,000 times twice a day. So this would require a minimum of 1 hour and 30 minutes or 2 hours twice a day. By doing this, the person needs to be in a quiet environment and have

already done their ablution. Once done, by the end of the day, the person starts rethinking about their day and understanding, more, the bad things they did during that time. So this is like a way for the person to self-discover themselves with new lenses. The rationale behind this is to allow people to develop their own way of correcting their path without having other people dictate what they should be actually doing. People will then become independent and would know the best thing to do on their own, but over a period of time - not immediately.

Lindsay: I noticed that with the collective *dhikr*, the body is moving a lot – why does it move?

Mustapha: That’s what we actually call this “*al-ahwāl*” [the conditions]. It is like the case when Christians listen to the religious [Gospel] chants and they react by moving their bodies. There are two cases of these *al-ahwāl*: the authentic ones and the non-authentic ones. The latter are those that are reacted because of neurological problems, or psychological issues the person may have. So this *dhikr* could stimulate such body response to the *dhikr*. As for the authentic reactions, they are caused thanks to the “tasting” of *dhikr*; the person likes what they are hearing and may cry, for example, as a result of that. The *murīd* [absorbs] everything around him – the chanting, the people, the *zāwiya* – and something moves him. It is [almost] like the body takes over. Some may stay still, as a reaction. [In fact], the one not showing any body reaction may have stronger *ahwāl* than the one showing violent and quick movement - this is just to say that the body reaction does not act as an indicator of the person’s strength in regards to *dhikr*.

Ghassan: How do the *al-ahwāl* come to be?

Mustapha: Of course, the *al-ahwāl* are adapted by the adepts from their *shaykh*. The strong soul influences the weak souls. So the ritual leader gives the fuel to the adepts to help them “take off” from their station to another one. So this taking off cannot be full and normal if the “plane” has no sufficient fuel. In our case, the *dhikr* acts as a food for the soul and fuel for the spirit to enlighten the heart and liberate the person from anything that may be an obstacle on their way [and anything that can stop the person from taking off]. Obviously, the objective of *dhikr* is to worship Allah. The indirect goal is to get to know Allah.

If we are to categorize the knowledge of humankind, we can come up with three categories: the science of creatures, the science of understanding creatures, and the science of the Creator [I am not sure about the difference between the first two categories, but he obviously wanted to distinguish between two broad categories of knowledge using his own understanding]. So what seems to be the most important science? The first one is common for all humankind, biology, sociology, and geology. For this science, you can spend a lot of money to know a tiny bit of something related to one of these fields. For the second type, it allows people to know how they should actually live and survive in the world; and this is the role of religions that show people the paths of how to live. The third type is the most precious one for which you can spend all your life to reach it; if you do, you will have fulfilled the most satisfying of pleasures. It is the Master who helps you understand this [third] science. So the Master is more about the quality and the methodology he or she is offering to their adepts in order to help them go in this sense. Therefore, we have many masters, but the goal is one. Sometimes, you can cross a “fake” *shaykh* who is pretending to be one - these may just want to show off, or be members of families that have offered famous *shaykhs* and, thus, want to be a *shaykh*

but they are not qualified to be one. The real *shaykh* is the one who has the knowledge and experience to share.

According to our *shaykh*, Sīdī Hamza, we should not be attached to *al-ahwāl* because they are not the indicators of how well people get influenced by Sufism, whether positively or negatively. Instead, we should care more about the feeling we get over time, in relation to how we think our faith has strengthened. In other words, when we get to understand the meaning of *dhikr* we are doing, we start feeling a close relationship with Allah. We remember our other *dhikrs*. This “close feeling” gives you a hint to change your relationship with other people, to build it on respect and mutual understanding.

Lindsay: When you are doing *dhikr*, do you feel something in your body?

Mustapha: Hahaha, I’m still trying to deliver my message.... It is hard to do this... With time, you may or may not experience *al-ahwāl*. In any case, you need to feel there is a supernatural power that is surrounding you.

To better understand the impact of *dhikr* on human body, I’ll give you this example. In big love stories, the one loving their partner, if they are really truthful about this love, they may be walking down the street and imagine their beloved next to them: this is not real, for sure, but this remains a strong feeling that is produced by the love one of the partners has towards the other. This is similar to the love we develop towards Allah, especially in *dhikr*, except that [for us] Allah exists, even when not physically seeing Him - but you can actually see Him through chairs, trees, the environment, in the faces of those doing *dhikr*, as He is their Creator. When the adept starts seeing all these things, the reality has a strong impact on their body. Seriously, this may have an uncontrollable influence -- you may start crying when thinking of this relationship. People observing you may think you are crazy, but you are obviously not crazy.

Lindsay: So are there good and bad movements?

Mustapha: No no no. You need to move in the way that you want, but it needs to be true. You see, the good *murīd* should not say one thing and do something else. He should think as he acts, say as he does. [Just so], he should move in *dhikr* naturally in ways that his heart feels.

[It is] like walking [almost]. You don’t say to your legs: “Move!” And very often you don’t think, “I need to move my leg like. And [then] my hip like...” It happens by itself. But then sometimes I think we move how we think someone else wants us to move. It is like eating when you are not hungry because everyone around you eats and you think it’s what you should do. These are false from when you are a young adept. And you [reach a point where] the body does things without instructions [because] you do it [so often]. [It] just happens and [you reach] a point where it is easier to remain moving than to stop moving.

Lindsay: What do you personally feel and experience while you are in *dhikr*?

Mustapha: I am a human: sometimes I may go through these *al-ahwāl*. At other times, I may feel nothing. The feeling may differ from one time to another. The difference in all these reactions or their absence is the point I am trying to make: you do not get one standard

pattern of reactions, but I do get a different set of various reactions. What is important for us [as adepts] is whether we are improving our way of viewing the world or if it is not changing.

For Sufis, their point is not to take over the world and deliver their message by whatever possible mean, like bombing myself to convince an America of a viewpoint. No no no... For us, Sufis, we see other people as an extension of Allah's soul. We are not the same, and would thus need to respect other people regardless of our differences. This very point makes the difference between Sufism and other trends of religious teachings. This does not mean that Sufis will accept the agenda of invaders just because they need to be nice, and hospitable

You need to know that *dhikr* stimulates new trends of good ethics and behavior in the adepts' lives. Sufis view others as their family members. We [Sufis] also need to ensure a good treatment of others, as well as nature where we live. Today, when we hear about the need to act ecologically friendly, we should know that these trends are meant to preserve the human being's profit they get from the trees surrounding them. But for Sufis, we need to preserve nature because we strongly believe that nature is a mirror of Allah's creation.

Lindsay: You talked a little bit ago about the movements and feelings you experienced, like the crying and the shaking, I am wondering if there is some kind of pattern? Can you predict these moments?

Mustapha: No no... It [*dhikr* and the reactions I get] is like turning on a TV channel and you are not sure about the one you will be getting, at that moment. But this is not the important thing. What is important is the doing of *dhikr*. The principle is that the human being is a creature of Allah; so the creature should show love to this Creator without holding specific expectations from Him. If I start doing *dhikr* expecting myself to cry after 30 minutes, I will fail at actively participating in the session... Such expectations act as obstacles that will stop you from seeing reality.

Lindsay: ... But are there certain words that consistently elicit the same response?

Mustapha: Yes [words] like "*lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh*" [There is No God but Allah]...

There are different levels - not time dependent - but these depend on the adept's readiness to be able to support the *dhikr* assigned by the *shaykh*. These *dhikr* depend on the spiritual status of the adept, and the issues they are facing. For us, our *shaykh* gives us two kinds of *dhikr*: *dhikr* that are meant to defend our spirits from the demon and evil spirits. These only serve for protection. The second type, which is more important than the other one, is about the "Path" that our souls should follow. This second type is divided into three categories: (1) there is "*lā 'ilāha 'illā l-Lāh*", (2) there is the name of His Majesty, and (3) the prayer on the life of Prophet Muhammad.

Ghassan: Can you explain more?

Mustapha: The second category is not easy - the adept should have spent a significant period of time for their *shaykh* to grant you the permission to pronounce this name [Allah] in the *dhikr*. It is because this name is strong and required a very strong emotional readiness to do it that such permission is not easily given. Once pronouncing this name, the adept feels like being on the top of the universe, literally [not to say feeling happy, but really feeling above

the universe]. The maintenance of the relationship with the Master is very important: it actually helps the adept remain connected to the real world, instead of getting into this ivory tower where they'd become disconnected and become detached from reality. Our aim behind *dhikr* is to be strong as in being a perfect human being, and not becoming like a super hero, such as Super Man. My aim behind *dhikr* is to never stop and this is how I am strong and [more] perfect.

Lindsay: What are the other things said during *dhikr*?

Mustapha: There is the Qur'an, the *sama'* [the hearing] of chants and poetry... We have daily meetings and reunions.

Ghassan: Why daily?

Mustapha: Because our time has become more materialistic than any other time. Of course, the meetings are optional. It is up for the adept to choose whether they want to take "this shower daily or less regularly, like only once a week, or once a month...".

There are three things that keep the adept alive: a good maintenance of *dhikr* sessions [to do *dhikr* on a regular basis]. The second thing is to have the orientation and connection with the *shaykh* to do the follow up. The third thing is to keep communication alive with the *skaykh*. For me, for example, I visit the *shaykh* [Shaykh Sīdī Hamza] in Oujda and stay with him in his home for three days, to guide me and provide me with the advice I need. So the *shaykh* acts as a guide, and has no further power or duties in this sense; it is him who guides us to the right path, and corrects us if we are not doing the right things.

Lindsay: When you are doing *dhikr*, do you feel the heat of *dhikr* just in your heart, or do you also feel it in your finger, in your toes, in your...?

Mustapha: Yes, in your heart and in your body. After many times of doing *dhikr*, you will be in station we call *fanā'* [the End of Life, or the End of everything after which comes the afterlife... sorry, Lindsay, but I cannot find the right word] in which the ego disappears. The body takes over. All of the humanity has the same ego. The *dhikr* starts burning this lower self until it fades away, and makes it cease to exist. Then, and only then the eyes of the heart get opened on the reality as it is, without having to look at this reality through the lenses of this ego. The reality of the human is strange: you have to know that the essence of human's soul comes from God. So, in every one of us, there is a part of this "God." Then, without this ego, we can see this origin in other people clearly, and purely.

Lindsay: Is the ego in the body?

Mustapha: Yes, it is in the body.

Lindsay: ... So after we are done, and the spirits leave our bodies, in the Judgment Day our bodies and spirits are reunited, so what does that mean about the body in your life?

Mustapha: What shall I say... Let me give you an example, a simple one. Can you imagine that our society's members live naked? [He was asking me (Ghassan), I said NO!]. So this is impossible. We all need these clothes to live altogether. The body is the envelope of our soul,

and the soul is the Truth. That is why it is not easy to accept the Truth: this is like the situation when you see someone walking, naked, down the street.

Also, why am I speaking about the body? It is important to do some “duties,” like worship, even if the spirit has its own source of energy and its own ability to connect with other souls as it requires no language to do that or to connect with God.

I have conducted some research in the West about the health and the body. They [the West] have a kind of veneration to the body, believing in the value of the body. In fact, some thinkers believe that we could reach the stage of immortality, which is [obviously] not true. Whenever we are sick, weak, ill, or tired, god is putting us in a test to see how we'll react to these different states and situations. For some, sickness may lead some people to reject the existence of God; others would just find this as another reason for them to believe in the existence of God. Also, the human body had needs (of food, water, reproduction), and for these needs to be satisfied, God has set a rules through which the human being is tested to see if he/she is going to abide by them or not.

[He then looked at us, stood up and said his time was up (he needed to be back for afternoon prayer). He asked Ghassan if he had any paper and Ghassan nodded, handed him his notebook and pen. Mustapha wrote down the name of Farīd al-Zahī, encouraging both of us to read his work – it might be helpful, he said. He then thanked us and walked away]

Farah
Qadiriya Boutchichiyya Order, Rabat
May 23, 2012
English

[Farah and I reviewed the IRB consent forms and briefly discussed my research before I turned on the recorder. Farah said that she preferred to speak in English and so Ghassan did not join us. Below is my transcription of the interview]

Lindsay: So to someone who knows very little about Morocco, what would you say the role of religion is?

Farah: It's a major role, of course. It's a major role. It's an integration of uh identity, and this is why in some researches Moroccans have been interviewed and they would say they are Muslim and then Amazigh [or Berber], Arab, Saharan. So they would first give the uhh umm data Muslim. So the religion is very important. And of course, we have been so far successful in the decisions we've made. In those matters we've made some good choices, I should confess. Throughout the centuries, we made the choice that we are Junayidis, which is Sunni Sufism. So, those choices definitely contributed in I mean in the differences. So in answer to your question, yes indeed – religion is capital and Morocco has made some good choices so far and this is why religion in Morocco is moderate and has been purposeful. We did focus, quite early, on the purposes of religion here in Morocco and this is what gives a good deal of flexibility and freedom of religion in Morocco.

Lindsay: Do you think Morocco's history with the French or the Spanish, or the Amazigh minority affect Morocco's experience and expression of religion?

Farah: I don't think so, no.

Lindsay: So it's pretty separate?

Farah: It's not an issue. It's just part of what it is [and] who we are.

Lindsay: What would you say is the place of Sufism in Morocco? Especially with the other religious communities here, how does Sufism fit?

Farah: Sufism is uh here within our religious construct. It is like water in a rose – you cannot say these are the petals of the rose and this is water. It's all, it's a unity, it's a unity. So it is within the religious construct as a whole and this is due to the fact that spirituality in Morocco is uh a capital component of this Moroccan identity. This is not just something that happens fourteen centuries ago – this was the case for uh millenniums here, in this place. There is a big deal of spirituality.

We, in Morocco, have always had the feeling that we are not alone in this universe. We know that we are very limited, for sure. We know that the unseen envelops the seen and the unknown envelops the known and we are very uh aware of those issues. This is what makes

Moroccans spiritual in a smooth way, in a smooth and [telephone rings – Farah has a conversation in Arabic, lasting around 2 minutes] I'm sorry. What else do you want to ask?

Lindsay: So I've read many articles about how the youth in Morocco are turning to Sufism in large numbers...

Farah: I think this is not specific to Morocco. It's uh worldwide phenomenon. I think that homo sapiens are overwhelmed – they've had it, they are fed up with eating and consuming and consuming by sight, by hearing, by touching, fed up with things and this material aspects of existence. So we started having some other aspirations a few decades ago. Uh we discovered that convictions that we'd had, that we can control the world, that we can fix it, that we can orient it as it suits us. Uh, this was, as I said, our nearest conviction. And that all those utopias that try to control the world – to control the wave rather than to surf it... umm alluding to Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and to all those people who thought they have the reins of the world and that they can fix it, they can make it right. And this version is of righteousness because it is limited. It is narcissism, to ideology, to ummm self-worshipping, to some postulates that shape themselves with their certain groups. This is why it has all collapsed because we homo sapiens cannot be drowned in the waters of other's convictions and be convinced. We can simulate being convinced, but it can last just for moments. If it is not true, if it is not uhh deep, profound, then all of those paintings will just vanish, disappear. So I think that this is not a Moroccan phenomenon: it's worldwide.

Lindsay: Can you talk a little bit more about where Sufism fits into what you just described?

Farah: Sufism to Islam is like the spirit to the body: it's the quintessence, it's the reminder that you are not just this body. It reminds you of the fact that you are a lot more than that. It reminds you of your limitations, of your ephemerality, of your ignorance. It invites you to open some more eyes in your being – inner eyes. Because it is what we see through those material eyes is really limited. So Sufism is the answer. Sufism is also the integration of your inner and your outer dimensions. It nourishes your body – you feel satisfied. But you will not be fully satisfied unless you nourish also your intellect and your spirit. Otherwise, it's how the Rolling Stones would say, "I can't get no satisfaction" (*laughter*). So Sufism to Islam is what some schools of Christianity would represent for Christianity generally, what Kabbalah is to Judaism. It is a reminder of largeness for human beings.

Starting from the end of the 19th century, there were some trends that were sort of condemning Sufism and spirituality in general, and accusing it of being behind all of this collapsing and this fall and decline of Islamdom and the rise of Salafists currents and trends, and then Sufism was also in a certain form of crisis. Sufism wants not renewed, wants not Shari'a. It can slide in a very swift way in a certain non-reformist way. So this is why we always need new reformers like Shaykh Sīdī Hamza and Ahmad al-Tijani. These reformers reopened spirituality once again.

Lindsay: So the core of my research here in Morocco is *dhikr*, do you...?

Farah: *Dhikr* – as its name indicates it – is Remembrance. So you remember. And within this cosmology, we humans are in Paradise and we were spoken to by our Creator and then we uh finished here on this planet for a long test and quest at the same time. We have this divine breath within us -- this is our major component – but we have also this body and those

desires that Allah should live and we always need to set up this equilibrium: we need to live in the Earth (and our instincts will assist us to do this) but also exist as part of this infinite universe. We need to Remember all of this in order to live together. There is this other dimension why we are here and this is why there is this beautiful poem that says: “So lets make it to the Paradise of Heaven because this is our home, this is our home and this is our camp. And here [on Earth] we’ve been made prisoners of the enemy, Satan. We should not forget who we are and why we are here!” In Arabic, it rhymes very good.

Dhikr, then, is our most efficient tool and manner to conserve Remembrance, and to be able to make this equilibrium between our components: our bodies and our spirits. And, in this context, that is a factual, real context that has its needs and that requires a form of presence and efficiency. So *dhikr* is our way to Remember the profound reason of our existence: this is why we are here. Two, *dhikr* is our light and our spot to conserve our relationship with our origins and our Creator. It’s our way to love and be loved and to communicate, to feel, and *dhikr* is definitely very efficient in waking up our real part and our real way. I think this is the quintessence of *dhikr*, this dialogic relationship with our Creator.

Lindsay: So how do you understand the body in this?

Farah: So the tongue belongs to the body, so this tongue that you would be making *dhikr* with is belonging to the body. And your boy would be seated and feeling all of those benefits and all those waves – tidal waves of light. So, the body is definitely a capital component in this *dhikr* process.

Muslims – and when I say that I’m including Sufis – Muslims many times believe that offences against God exist with the body and not with the spirit. You know what we’re told is that when you are before God being questioned, as a human being you can blame one part of your body – “It’s my hand. I couldn’t control it” – you know what I mean? Or “It’s my eye that saw that, that pleasure.” This guilt is revealing because we are trying to separate our minds or our fears or whatever from our bodies. It’s a human thing. And so we teach our bodies and discipline them.

Lindsay: Do you ever stop teaching your body?

Farah: You see, the body of good Sufis already knows. Sufis fast and they do *khalwa*. They’re other things too. It is all to learn to control the body. No. The good Sufi still does these things but for the reason of knowing God. I mentioned a few minutes ago that the waves of light could sometimes be tidal and when they are tidal, we are not always successful in surfing them. So sometimes with *dhikr* we surf quite well and sometimes it’s too strong, but it’s not harmful.

Lindsay: So is there a right way?

Farah: No, its spontaneous, its spontaneous. You just need to follow. This is not methodology. And this is why, for instance, that you would notice that within the Naqshbandiyya Path the *dervish* train the *dervishes* – it’s a discipline. But this discipline is simple. You might think that uh it’s calculated, but it is not because it is just retracing one beautiful reality, which is uh that very reality that was discovered by Jalal ad-Din Rumi

because the way the circumambulation is done and this dance is performed reminds us the circumambulation around the Kaaba and it goes against movements of the uh watch.

Lindsay: So counterclockwise?

Farah: Counterclockwise. And Jalal ad-Din Rumi discovered that the Kaaba is just uh the Kaaba is just a cube, and it's just a house that plays a role of a narrow arrow that is pointing to the transcendent Creator. So the *Tawaf*, which is the circumambulation that is done around the Kaaba. The end of the day would be circumambulation around the Truth, around the *Haqīqa*. And this *Haqīqa* is in the Kaaba but it is in your heart as well. So when you perform circumambulation around your own heart, it's also circumambulation, it's a form of worship so when Jalal ad-Din Rumi discovered, (*with emphasis*) rediscovered the secret we're looking for is within, not outside.

Lindsay: Do people move that way in...

Farah: Yes.

Lindsay: in Morocco when they do...

Farah: No. They do not. It's another manner. It's another manner, but what uh Jalal ad-Din Rumi discovered is this and this is what has been said by this beautiful poem that says (*recites poem in Arabic*). You're looking for Layla – Layla is a ladies name, which ummm which means pretty, which means and there is this uh story of the *Majnun*, the one who is crazy of love to Layla – his name is Qays or *Majnun* – crazy – but Layla in the Sufi use means “the Truth” and you are looking for Layla, the Truth, and Layla is an emanation of yourself, your own self. It is within, not outside.

So, those movements are just a response to true, real feelings that you would feel throughout performing *dhikr* (*Phone rings – she answers and speaks briefly*). *Asif* [sorry], Lindsay. Yes?

Lindsay: So when I attended *dhikr*, I saw a lot of rocking back and forth...

Farah: There is some jumping here as well. Yes. You see, it's a warmth that you feel in your heart. You cannot just, if you are strong enough you will not move. And some Sufis who have a mastery of their feelings – they would feel those light and all of those tidal waves – they would stay still. But it is a level very high level. When you later go, this is what you will start doing in a spontaneous way. The secret here is uh spontaneity. So those movements are those movements are when you stand up and start saying, for instance (*she shifts to speaking in a raspy whisper and begins rocking back and forth, almost dipping forward*): *Allah Hayy, Allah Hayy, Allah Hayy. Allah Hayy* means “Allah is Alive.” You feel it, (*with emphasis*) you feel a certain presence... so you cannot just stay still. And this is why you would just manage all of those feelings through that because otherwise it is unbearable... you cannot (*trails off*).

Lindsay: So does the *shaykh* or the *muqaddam* or the *naqīb* or whoever is leading the *dhikr* ever say “You should move this way” or “you should...”

Farah: No, no. For instance, sometimes, you hear some screaming. And I've attended for instance, sometimes, live, some big rock festivals and you'll hear people screaming or

fainting when listening to Mick Jagger or whomever. It's a spontaneous expression of what you feel. It's so strong – you like it so much that you cannot contain yourself. You just express it. There's the music and the expression. And likewise, with Sufism, sometimes you have some strong feeling and it is just managed in this way. The movement is uh very powerful – have you heard about Sufis who do not eat? They fast? The example of Mick Jagger is like hunger because you are lost in what you're doing. *Dhikr* too hunger, make me lose myself.

Lindsay: Where do you think this loss comes from?

Farah: From God – we are remembering Him. I practice *dhikr* every day. You see, in Sufism, words cannot contain the feelings. Words are just something that will try to explain because it's it's another, another matrix. It is not this matrix. So the words are very literary. It's not precise. And this is why they call it the language of Sufism. So it's, I think earnestly that it's uh beyond concise and precise description. If you try to precise, you just miss it.

Lindsay: What is the thing you're missing?

Farah: I cannot explain this. As I said, words are literary.

Lindsay: Do you remember the first time you did *dhikr*?

Farah: Of course I do.

Lindsay: Would you be willing to tell me about it?

Farah: I was a child. I was thinking... I was with my father. It was beyond my, I could not understand it. But I felt it. I was trying, I was really trying and I felt so happy. I felt good. Serene. There is this flow of tranquility... and a purity that... it joined me. I remember. I can still, it was Friday afternoon. My father was a *Tijani* [of the Tijaniyya Order] and I was uh there. It was dark. 1960...4... 1964. Maybe 5. Long long long time ago. I just felt (*takes a deep exhale*) "Alright... That's okay. That's good." But I cannot pretend that I remember exactly how it was.

Lindsay: Do you think it was different then from *dhikr* now for you?

Farah: It is not uh something stable, repetitive, because when you are spontaneous you just respond to what you feel. There are no restrictions. You see? There are no restrictions because you are supposed to be in confidence when you do *dhikr*. You are not supposed to be under cameras – being watched by someone. And this feeling of confidence is capital in the *zāwiya*. Once you lose this, then spontaneity will just vanish.

Lindsay: So even though the movements are spontaneous, have you ever noticed any patterns for you? With how you react or how you feel or...

Farah: Yes. There is a global movement. It is called *ammara*²⁹ and sort of to manage those flows of feelings. You just manage them through *ammara*, which is this soft, sweet jumping.

²⁹ It was difficult to understand Farah here – my spelling of this word could be incorrect

And you just try to manage cause you cannot contain it being seated. It's too strong. It's too overwhelming. And so you need to manage it, you need to move with it, to spread it within and out. It happens when it happens. You cannot say. You see, exactitude and Sufism are not neighbors. You see, it happens when it happens. This is just a match.

Lindsay: This jump...

Farah: Jump is too strong of a word. It's more of when you move. And *ammara* means when you uhh are filling up something so your heart is, you are filling up your heart, your being, your body. The place, it is a construct. It's like if you are moving some origin of light. It's a process, you see. This is not, I cannot agree with the word "jump." Jumping is too material. It's too material (*trails off*).

Lindsay: And the voice in *dhikr*?

Farah: Yes, this is called *sama'* and sometimes just *dhikr*, just to be lit up without expecting it. But yes, when there is *sama'*, it is a preparation. And especially if you listen because what is being said is more than musical flowers. When you listen to the words, then (*trails off*). And much of what we say comes from old mystics like Ibn 'Arabic, who came from Andalusia but had a big influence here in Morocco. There are poems which there is a praise of Allah, God. There are poems that are talking about the Prophet whom himself, peace be upon him, cause he is the leader towards the Beloved, God. And there are also some other poems that are the source of intoxication. They get you drunk. It is talking about the feelings. When you feel confused – this delicious confusion – and there are other poems that are talking about uh the Path and uh its levels. There are some other poems that are sources of advice: they tell you how to proceed, how to behave yourself. And each type of those poems have its aroma, its flavors, its spiritual flavors that are said during *dhikr*.

Lindsay: Are *dhikr* and *sama'* together, do they...

Farah: There is *dhikr* and there is *sama'*. But *dhikr*, it is another exercise. *Sama'* is another. There is *dhikr* within the *sama'* but it is not the *Dhikr*. There are many forms of *dhikr*, many forms. *Dhikr*, within Sufism, is like a medical prescription. It is stronger than antibiotics. In America, you cannot get an antibiotic if you do not have the prescription of the doctor. And this is the same with *dhikr*. You cannot just go and perform *dhikr*. If the prescription is not precise, it can have some uh collateral effects. So you need to have the *shaykh* who will tell you what to do. He is the one who does the diagnosis and is aware of your status. But they still do not say to do it this way or that way.

Lindsay: More of "be" this way?

Farah: Yes yes.

[*Farah looks at her clock and says that she has another appointment. We chat a little bit about Dr. Saqi and then part ways. She says to feel free to contact her if I need anything else*]

Mohamed
Al-Harrakya Order, Tétouan
May 24, 2012
French and Arabic

[As soon as we sat down, Mohamed began peppering us with questions about the research -- 10 to 15 minutes passed before we discussed IRB consent forms and began recording. The conversation progressed slowly – per Mohamed’s request, Lindsay asked each question in English, Ghassan translated into French, Mohamed replied in French, and Ghassan translated his responses back into English. Below is Ghassan’s transcription of the interview. He inserts [] to indicate his own interjections and additions post-interview]

Lindsay: So the focus of the project is *dhikr*; can you tell us a little bit about what *dhikr* means to you?

Mohamed: This is a big question... *dhikr* has many types. I will not go into the scientific details... *Dhikr* is actually an important pillar in Sufi education. So, as I said, it has many types: there is the private *dhikr*, known as the “wird,” which is the spiritual bond that ties between the *shaykh*, the head of the *zāwiya*, and their adepts. The *wird* is done either in the morning, in the afternoon [or both], for specific times [in terms of repeating the words, or sentences]. So we do it everyday, after *al-fajr* prayer, for example, or *al-maghrib/’ishae* prayer, knowing that we had a defined number of times to do it each time. When to do this, and how to do it. The other type of *dhikr* is more famous. This one is related to *sama’* as it consists of “chanting” the name of Allah or saying “*lā ’ilāha ’illā l-Lāh*” and other sentences or [religious] poems that would push the adept to remember Allah and purify his heart.

Lindsay: Why are you doing the *dhikr*? What is its benefit to you?

Mohamed: First, *dhikr* is like a process of purification to the spirit. It is meant to forget about the daily problems and pressure we get at work, or simply in our personal life... So the *dhikr* helps us overcome all these “constraints” to get closer to God. Second, for us [Sufi adepts], *dhikr* is a way to renew the relationship between us and God. This relationship, I should say, is not based on “greed” [to gain Allah’s pardon, for example] but on love to Allah. Also, the *dhikr* allows us to see the beauty of God by chanting the different poems and reading Qur’an passages. Moreover, the *dhikr* helps us purify our hearts from sicknesses that are not only affecting our bodies [like flu...] but also affecting our souls. So *dhikr* can act as a medicine to heal our hearts from the sicknesses of life.

While doing *dhikr*, the music we chant changes from being a form of entertainment to pass our time and becomes a means for us to get closer to God.

Lindsay: Do you remember the first time you did *dhikr*?

Mohamed: No, for a simple reason: while I was not born [yet], my mother was doing *dhikr*.

Lindsay: Ah... and after you were born?

Mohamed: Yes, my family tells me I was doing it when I was a very little child.

Lindsay: So what does your family tell you about it?

Mohamed: I am told I would interact with people doing *dhikr* around me, or I would sweat when *dhikr* was done around our place.

Lindsay: Would you go to *dhikr* sessions at the *zāwiya*?

Mohamed: Yes.

Lindsay: With? --- your family, or your father, your friends?

Mohamed: My father died when I was a child. So mum used to take me to a master *shaykh* (who was actually my brother), he had a [traditional] school that used to teach children how to do *dhikr*. So that is how I learned it. My brother also guided me to do more extensive research when I grew up, on Sufi major figures like Ashishani...

And when I came to Rabat, I met with a great and prominent master who goes by the name of Sīdī [Mr] Abdellatif Ben Mansour -- who died just recently. Ben Mansour lived for many decades, with three kings [meaning he lived while Morocco was actually ruled by three different Kings].

Lindsay: Were there other ways too?

Mohamed: Many things, really many things... First, this man [Ben Mansour] used to write poetry that would be used in *dhikr*. Also, he used to compose rhythms that would use in the chants of *dhikr*. More interestingly, Ben Mansour was also affiliated to the Harrakya *zāwiya*.

Lindsay: Do you notice similarities and differences between the *zāwiya* in Tétouan and the orders here?

Mohamed: In essence, they all share the same roots and mission. But in terms of the form, there are differences. Masters would have different methodologies in teaching the same science. For example, the poems and *wirds* may differ in terms of their origin [wording, and year of composition, and frequency of usage from one *zāwiya* to another]... the essence remains one and the same.

Lindsay: Why do you think these differences exist?

Mohamed: These differences are mainly due to the environment where the masters [and when] they were born. According to the needs of people living at a given time and place, the master comes up with their own methodology.

Lindsay: I noticed how active the body is, during *dhikr*, why is that?

Mohamed: The *dhikr* has an “influence” on the spirit. Such influence is observed on what you see as the body action and behavior. At times, the person can see and feel things that are not physical [that go beyond the normal world we live everyday], and so since there is the

impossibility of this adept to translate what they are seeing or feeling, [this is when] the body jumps in to translate it. So let me give you clear examples to understand this... In old times, when we had no Internet, a lover would send a message to his/her beloved one. When this other partner gets the message, they may kiss the letter, not because they have to, but because they feel they need to do it, but do it without really thinking about doing it. Another example: when you are watching a football game in which your favorite team wins, you would scream and feel very happy. The reaction itself is not really justified, but it is something you do and you like it, without really planning to do it the way you actually do it.

Lindsay: So what sort of movements do you do when you do *dhikr*?

Mohamed: There are [many] types of doing *dhikr*. There is Al ‘Imara - also known as Al Hadra. In this type, the group forms a circle and start chanting the name of Allah [the name of Allah which is the Sultan of God’s names].

Lindsay: Is this the *dhikr* you do?

Mohamed: No, not really.

Lindsay: If I were watching you do *dhikr*, what will I see?

Mohamed: [*Speaking directly to Ghassan*] If she is around, I will not feel her because I’ll be concentrated. The act of doing *dhikr* systematically means that the person has a will to be detached from reality to be really doing *dhikr*. I am sure if she was around, she would feel something strange, powerful, that will give her another understanding of what she would be observing. [*Turns to Lindsay*] What you see is just an external observation of what the adept is really going through, from their inside. If I were to go into answering this question, I’d be reluctant because we do not do entertainment *dhikr*, but real religious *dhikr* to which we do not really care about how we look like, but we care more about strengthening the relationship between God and us. I am saying this because what you will see will most probably look very similar to a scene of musical chanting and dancing.

Lindsay: Did anyone ever teach you how to move?

Mohamed: Certainly... We have a person who would go into the center; we would call him the *naqīb* or *munshid*, or teacher of the circle [in a traditional sense]. This person is meant to administrate, in a way, the circle members and how things should be correctly done. In other words, I can say that this teacher is like the maestro of the orchestra- this is just a way for me to get you to understand what I am saying! So when one of the group members does a movement that is wrong, it is the teacher who intervenes to correct him.

Lindsay: So what constitutes a good movement, or a right thing to do?

Mohamed: Actually, we have three stages: First, there is the *muwassa’* [i.e. the Expanded], the *muqantar* [the Arcade], and the *mahzouz* [The Shaking] - the first, second, and third stages. All these stages require different tones for the chants, and speed, and time spent on each part of the *dhikr* process, during one session.

The first stage is a bit slow, and it is when we say “*Allah hayy*” [i.e. Allah is alive]. The second stage is the one when we get quicker. The third stage is even quicker; during this stage, we would pronounce the word *hayy* [alive], stressing [as you can see] this second part.

Lindsay: So you also mentioned that you can get corrected when you are doing a wrong movement... can you talk a little bit more about that?

Mohamed: The *naqīb* [or *munshid*] has a gentle intervention when correcting the wrong movement; they would go slowly towards the person doing the bad movement and would quietly, and kindly ask him to correct the tone, or the speed or saying “*Allah hayy*”.

Lindsay: So is it possible to have a good *dhikr* and a bad *dhikr*?

Mohamed: No, there is no right and wrong *dhikr*. There is a good *dhikr* and there is a *dhikr* that is just learning to do the *dhikr* right. Of course, there are those who can learn quickly while there are those who need more time than others to do this.

Lindsay: So is your *dhikr* the same every time you do it?

Mohamed: The form is different, but the content is the same. Three elements can decide which type of *dhikr* you should be doing - as part of the group *dhikr*: 1) the time [when you are doing it], 2) the place [is it your home? Or a public place?], and 3) the “brothers” [company, who is there?].

Lindsay: For you, what does *dhikr* feel like? Can you explain or maybe describe it?

Mohamed: This is a big question because *dhikr* is not of words. You have heard of tasting? Yes. You know that the poems we use during the *dhikr* are all the translation of efforts that major masters tried to put into words, while translating the feeling they get when doing *dhikr*. So I feel stressed and weird, like being in the middle of the road between the physical and non-physical world. It is like living a moment of a dream just dangling.

Lindsay: Has the *dhikr* changed over the years, for you...?

Mohamed: Certainly, we did say there are many masters, who have their own approach to *dhikr* and we also talked about the fact that there are three elements that influence the nature of *dhikr* you are doing.

[*Mohamed expressed his need to leave as he is running out of time...*]

Mohamed: The [last] thing I want to say is about the order of *dhikr*. We start by reading the Qur’an, which is standard for all *zāwiyas*. Then we pray on the life of the Prophet. Afterwards, we read “*Ahazabe*” that have been prepared by the master of the *zāwiya*. After all this comes the *sama’* in which we are exposed to poems which were written by major world Sufi masters. After we get “heated”, our bodies start reacting: we hold our hands altogether [as a part of the group]. When the group master feels that group members reached the stage of feeling the strength of God, we end by reading final passages of the Qur’an.

Rachida
Unspecified Order, Ouezzane
May 22, 2012
English

[Rachida and I reviewed the IRB consent forms and briefly discussed my research before I turned on the recorder. When arranging our interview, Rachida said that she was comfortable speaking in English and so Ghassan did not join us. Below is my transcription of the interview]

Lindsay: What do you think the body is and its purpose?

Rachida: There is a difference with what the text says and the interpretations of the text but then also the real life of people. Umm. In the text there is a big difference between the religious interpretation of the text and the way people treat their body – very different. In the religious interpretation there is a responsibility over the body: we are responsible for our bodies. As Muslims we are supposed to be responsible for our bodies and treat them well – take good care of the body, the body is very important, it is also considered that the body will be questioned after death. So the different parts of the body are to be questioned about what they've done wrong, what they've done well – that's basically what it is. And so the body is very important and the fact that we can bury the body after death, has to do with the fact that it is a responsibility... so when we bury the body – we don't throw the body, we bury the body, we take good care of the body – we bury it because we believe the body will also resurrect and join the soul in the hereafter. So the relationship with the body is very special. There should be a good care according to the religious people.

In real life, people are still considered that they have to be very careful with a dead body, but the people do not necessarily consider, do not necessarily treat the [living] body the same way. To the contrary, a lot of times people feel that the body is guilty for things that we do. A lot of the times, we're talking about what my body has done, but not what my soul or what my spirit or what my mind has told my body to do. This is a very interesting thing. A lot of the times, it is the body that should be covered. For instance, there are times when the body – I don't know – is not treated well. So the relationship with the body in real life is not necessarily the interpretation of the text. I don't know if I answered your question...

Lindsay: So is the body then a vehicle for the soul or is there something else going on? Is it just like a physical...

Rachida: For the text, for the religious text, yes. It is equal to the soul. In other words, both are important for life to happen, but also for life after death to happen. It is the separation of both of them that enables death then umm in order to revive, to resurrect later on they have to uhh come back together. So in other words, they are equal. You know what I mean? So by burning the body we are not throwing the body, we are not considering that [the body] is not good for anything. But we have to read the text, which is not true in real life. In the text we have to believe that when we bury it, we are just keeping it in a safe place for the resurrection where it will come back. But, in real life we feel, when death happens, that the body is uhh over, but what is important is what I have done as a soul or a spirit and therefore it is because

of the body that I've done whatever I've done... and so the body is the guilty part of the human being in real life. And so we're blaming the body for anything we've done or we are considered that "See?! The body is gone I mean it's just dust but the soul is still there."

Lindsay: So when a person dies, their spirit leaves the body and goes to God?

Rachida: Well in Islam, it goes to the *barzakh*, which is the intermediary and then it will not go to God, definitely, until it meets with the body.

Lindsay: Do we know why this is the case?

Rachida: Because a human being is only complete with the soul and the body according to Islam – not to the popular belief but to what I mean "the textual belief" if I may. The interpretation of Islam is that there is no full encounter with God. [After we die] we are still in the intermediary phase until both parts are complete and that is the human being.

Lindsay: So what happens next?

Rachida: It is both the body and the soul that will be punished or rewarded.

Lindsay: Together?

Rachida: Together. And I think it's a very important, I think it's a very interesting aspect of Islam because it is different from other religions where the responsibility of the, we are responsible over our bodies because the bodies are going to be questioned and the bodies are important.

Lindsay: Is the body understood to be able to think or feel or experience in ways that are separate from the spirit or the mind?

Rachida: No. The responsibility, the idea is that ummm as a human being we're responsible body and soul of everything. So that the idea is to emphasize the importance of the body by specifying members that have been guilty. As a human being – when we are being questioned and being blamed – we are trying to save ourselves. I'd rather have my hand cut instead of my being... Or my leg cut or my eye or whatever but just save my soul or my life in the hereafter.

Lindsay: So in that intermediary phase before our spirits come back with our bodies for questioning, is the spirit understood to have a form? Or a physical-ness?

Rachida: No. Actually we don't know. According to the text, it's very clearly stated that the soul is the secret of God. So that's something that is written in the Qur'an.

Lindsay: How does someone know the right way to use the body?

Rachida: *(long pause)* It has to do with belief. It is very difficult to say who is the right person to practice religion or not. Its part of practicing – either you practice it from a religious perspective or you do it from scientific perspective or you do it from I don't know from popular education. In the text there are uhh mentions of how to take care of the body:

by washing the body, by moving the body, by feeding the body. A lot of the time and I'm sure you find this in Morocco, in parts of the Islamic world, you will have people say: "Well God ordered us anyway to do it." So when you speak about cleanliness – Rabat for instance is very dirty – cleanliness comes from belief. Okay... but in practice? How do you treat the body? You can legitimize any form of taking care of the body by going back to the text or vice versa by taking good care of the body or hiding the body or by how do you say controlling the body... you can always find ways to legitimize the text sooo... It is very difficult to say what the best way to treat your body. It is very difficult but its just like when I was talking about the *hijab*.

So with the *hijab* it is the same thing. I mean I can read it by saying, "There is no place in the Qur'an that tells me why I should, you know, completely cover myself." And others say, "No no! It is very clear. Cover it!" I wouldn't say that one is wrong and one is right. I would just say that the way these people are speaking about why they are doing things this way could be convincing, and could be respected. And not that they convince me to do it, but it is convincing still. It depends on how you speak to people and where they find their uhh answers. Sometimes not necessarily in the Qur'an, sometimes it is in the hadith, sometimes it is in popular culture believed to be rituals and conduct and tribal influence sometimes and we think that it is important.

Lindsay: So I've read that some Sufis – in Iran specifically – believe that the body is "readable" and that certain letters of the Qur'an correspond to areas of the body... so when you say "There is no God but Allah" it moves from the naval up around to the heart. Do we see a similar understanding in Morocco?

Rachida: What there is in Morocco is that our forehead is the one that contains all of the writings and lectures and our destiny is also written on our forehead. So the forehead displays different stages of our history. It is kind of sacred because it is the part that is the closest to God when we bow in the prayer and actually we're encouraged to say any prayer we want at that moment, which means that we are supposed to be the closest to God and therefore God can answer any of our prayers so that is the belief. And at the same time, we cannot put our feet on the forehead of anyone because its where the writing is and I think it has to do with the fact that the writing has been uhh considered to be sacred because Islam came as a religion that – one of the most important miracles of Muhammad was the writing of the Qur'an and for countries like our country where you have a very high rate of illiteracy, the writing is even more sacred. Egypt is the same way. In other countries, you don't find that much. Plus the fact that this is a country where there is a lot of remnants of early Shi'a. A lot of the things comes from Judaism. A lot of the things come from Shi'a. So yes we are Sunni but a lot of the times you find in things that they come from a mix of. In your topic there is a lot of mix.

Lindsay: Ummm so uh then is there a different *dhikr* in Morocco?

Rachida: *Dhikr* – We cannot justify it just from *sunna* or from Islam. You know, there is a lot of Judaism in *dhikr*, I think. There is a lot of Amazigh culture – and African, actually. So it's mixed. You cannot find answers in any one area – in Islam only or in Sunni Islam only or even in Morocco only. It even goes back to Spain and our time under France. It goes back to when we lived side-by-side with Jews. All of these things have influence.

Lindsay: Is there anything that the body is capable of doing that the Spirit cannot do?

Rachida: Some people do believe that yes, the body can rebel against the Spirit. Umm there is a belief that and one of them is actually the trances that the spirit stops and the body starts. It's uh reacting out of control from the person I guess. And yeah, some people do believe this and there is a very strong belief in this country – maybe in others, I don't know – that when you go in trance, the body takes over. [We hear loud laughter below us] That's a meeting, you know. Haha.

Lindsay: Hahaha, wow. So umm, what is the purpose of the body in *dhikr*?

Rachida: For instance, there is a relationship between reciting the Qur'an and the body. The recitation of words of God and words about God or words about the Prophet will touch you – in your soul and in your body. And when you are reciting, you are going like this (*she rocks back and forth*) and whether you want it or not, if it is something that does not happen, if it doesn't touch you, then it is dangerous or not good.

And I think, again, that this is something that is all very similar to the way I used to watch the Jews when I was a girl. There was playing in the streets with Jewish children and they invited us to their celebrations and we made them bread for Mimouna. It was back we had Jewish neighbors and I was working on the clothes above my house and watching them in their houses. Praying, it is very very similar. When you are reciting, you go like this with your body until there is a feeling that is different. It is like another stage where you can feel the body saying “I want to cry!” or “There are heartbeats in my body” or “I can't breathe” to other stages.

Lindsay: So whenever someone is moving in *dhikr* – where does this movement come from?

Rachida: I think it comes from deep inside but I think part of this comes from learning from the *zāwiya*. We are born in a culture where everyone is doing *dhikr*. And a lot of time, you're just doing it because everyone else is doing it. When we see our mothers and our friends and the people we respect doing something a certain way, we do it too. It's natural, I think. It is the same with music. It is not necessarily a question of belief, is what I mean. It is a question of familiarity too.

For instance, I was born in a *zāwiya* in Ouezzane. My entire family was there. My mother made me go with her when I was a girl and I sat on her. I think when I was even young... was true. You saw young children attached to mothers, yes? Yes, yes it's like that a lot. The child sits on her mother. Sometimes I remember moving my mouth but without words, but usually I fell asleep. I would be on her and she was moving like (*rocks back and forth*) and feel asleep or sat there.

Lindsay: Were you moving too?

Rachida: Of course. I was on her. When she moved, I moved. I was a child, going with my mother once and all I remember is too many people. I really think I should have been five or six. But I remember that it was quite dark, there were a lot of women, everybody was singing, it was very loud, and all I knew is that I wanted a space to sleep. It was too much, too much, too much, too much. It was always too much. (*Laughs*)

I really don't remember much about the *dhikr* but all of us had to do it. I love it – but then again I like to go because of the family. A lot of the times I laugh at the words because they really mean nothing to us. But we like it. And there are moments of climax where I have to say that I understand how people go into trance because it's moving so quickly and everyone is together. It is always like a big machine that is pushing pushing pushing pushing. At that moment, no one is better than the other. I think it is all of the universal values that I can find through that moment that I love and who cares if I don't do it for God. Singing together, moving together is better than gossiping together.

A lot of times, I laugh at the words because they really mean nothing to me. It doesn't really mean much to me. Sometimes we are calling upon names and I don't know who they are. Some have been considered saints and some were just family members that were really noble and I am like, "What?" But I love it! Because it is the whole family together and it is a lot of fun. And I'm trying to remember things that are very old and are, in a lot of ways, responsible for what our family is today. I think a lot of this is in *dhikr*.

Lindsay: What are these things you are remembering?

Rachida: Uh like how long my family has been here and like (*long long pause*) I think I remember what all of this means to my family. We get together as women and it's been my grandmother. And she, as I said, illiterate but it's recitation and trying to remember to the point that now I am trying to write down all of this because it might disappear. Like my daughter's generation – I don't think any of them will keep up on this. I think we are the last generation, I think, to really follow the *dhikr* in the way that our family has for generations. I'm writing it all down. But then when I read the content, I don't understand why we are moving this way... I don't understand why we are saying these things. I have to say that it doesn't really mean much.

Lindsay: So do you still do what everyone else does?

Rachida: Yes, I move with the group. I always do. We don't want to stick out.

Lindsay: Have you ever reached the trance-like state you keep talking about?

Rachida: I have – and it was like a beat that pounded through me and I couldn't breathe. Yes, I have before. I even fainted once because I couldn't breathe. I know now that it I didn't have oxygen and so I passed out. It was very strange. I think there was too much emotion. I was asked to do *dhikr*, to lead it and sing it, for the wedding of one of my cousins on my mother's side who was from a very very poor family and for her it was a blessing if I do it. I think for a moment I was sitting there singing and I was feeling the emotion because of how much I know it meant to her. What I was not planning was that when I was singing I just fell and just behind me there were glasses for tea and everything was there and it seems that when I fell, nothing was broken. I wasn't burned. This made a lot of people in the audience think that I was a saint. So the big problem was that it just happened that there was too much emotion for me – and I had never sung alone before in my life so I was scared also and I felt like this was so important for my cousin. But the big problem was after that everybody thought, "she's a saint!" because they were looking at my *kaftan* and it was clean. Nothing happened. I just think that maybe I did not fall on it but next to it. No. Obviously that was all

but it was horrible because when I wanted to sit back down with the people everyone wanted to kiss my forehead and kiss my hand and I didn't know what was going on. I became the saint of the evening.

Lindsay: Oh. Wow, that's crazy. What did you do?

Rachida: What could be done? (*Long pause*)

A lot of the times we can just repeat the names of God and that is *dhikr*. And at some point, we are saying the same thing and we are moving the same movement and I am looking and everybody and everybody is doing the same thing. No one tells us to do it but we do. A lot of the time people are dressed the same way. A lot of the time people are sitting the same way and I think this is itself, sometimes, this could make you feel a very strong moment of being equal and I think every time I feel that, I think, 'Oh my gosh! It is almost like death!' I think that this is what it is. It is this moment where by remembering God or the Prophet or, like for me, just moving to my grandmother's voice, we are same.

Lindsay: So your experience with *dhikr* seems to be really tied into your family history, can you talk about that a little bit more?

Rachida: The way I am living it today, it is much more about bringing the family together. For instance, it is not always a very spiritual moment for us but a more fun moment. Last November, I invited the family members from my father's side and very few from Abdelhay's side [her husband]. So I invited them and it is no longer that spiritual for me. You know, it's just a nice moment. It's just fun.

Lindsay: So then what was *dhikr* like? What would I have seen?

Rachida: I want to say that it is no longer initiated. I mean, yes, we are in a *zāwiya* and a lot of the times it is one of them that is initiated. You could have someone have a bowl, for instance, he will throw the bowl. It's like the umm what do you call the one who leads the orchestra?

Lindsay: Uh conductor?

Rachida: Conductor. He becomes like the conductor of the *dhikr* and he will go (*hits the table 5 times*) on the floor to keep the rhythm. He'll also watch you and correct you if you're not doing it well. I really don't like it. I think I umm hate it.

Lindsay: Do you know if the movements in *dhikr* ever change? Like are they different for men and women? Over time? Have they changed for you?

Rachida: No. No, we all do *dhikr* the same. There's no different with men and women.

In the south of Morocco, a lot of time the *dhikr* has a lot of Berber influence – much more than the North! The North has much more Andalusian and Arab influence. There is also the African influence with the *Gnawa*. So these differences are I think quite interesting and important. The movement of the body! The body moves differently. Many of the *Gnawa* have incorporated chains they were chained with – that's why they have the castanets to

mimic the chains of slavery. A certain reality, I think, is being integrated or that appears in the different types of *dhikr*. It's not only about God we see. It's not only about religion or spirituality. It's a lot about the body and the suffering of the body. We wear it, this history. I think in these moments it is not so much about God, but remembering what it was like and who we are and what we have come from. What they survived.

Dhikr is not only about religion or spirituality. It's a lot about the body, the suffering of the body that you find in the *dhikr*. So you have that and if you read their history, there has been a lot of suffering. They are trying to perpetuate that frame of the body as a form of I don't think it is much about God at that moment and much as there is about the body. Umm, in my family, when they are singing, they are trying to perpetuate there the interests of the family to remain there. This is a very important. It's that. It's much more about me and who I am and who we are. So I think (*trails off...*)

Lindsay: So when you say "remain there," what do you mean? Like remain as a cohesive unit?

Rachida: Yes, yes.

Lindsay: Okay.

Rachida: It is very important for that family to show to the people that they are still together no matter what. It may be less, there may be people dying, but we're perpetuating tradition that shows that you know we are still there, are together. People are thinking about that. So sometimes I will get phone calls: "Why didn't you come?!" So I think even though it's of religion and spirituality, it is also used for other purposes.

Lindsay: With your family getting older ummm, what do you think, how will *dhikr* continue?

Rachida: I hope so. I don't know, someone will have to do it. And uh, we're trying to write down all of these things. It's not only good to have the audios and the videos of these people – though some people are being strange about wanting their faces to be seen. So I think we will really keep it in writing. We have, I don't think, that this is something that will I think within ten or twenty years, this will not happen again. Yes, we have family reunions like the one I've done and I think that was a general feeling of love that people had. And I have this house in Ouezzane that I've had now for five years and they've been requesting to come there and have a lunch that would be very traditional lunch and they kept asking me to do it and I said, "Yes, we'll do it!" And then I've been telling Abdelhay, Abdelhay has been getting upset because I've been saying for four year and haven't done it. He says, "Get a date now! Write it on your calendar! And lets organize it." And that's how I did it when it happened but it's much more to have them come, but it turned out to be fun with the *dhikr*. But I think maybe soon we will stop meeting for the *dhikr* and have lunch only. Because that shows to the community unity too. When our children get older, I don't think they will continue the *dhikr*. As the *zāwiya* keeps weakening, it will become less important to show the people that it is strong. So we will still share something we like together. That could be an alternative. Because they've been requesting, "When are we going to do it next?" Well I didn't think about next. I just thought about that time and I mean my job to them was like, "You eat, you sleep, you sing, you do *dhikr*, you leave. That's it!" (*We both laugh. Still*

laughing...) So when I see them, I hide. There is no next time. But it's, I feel like they would like to have it every year but I don't want to promise anyone anything. I want someone else to do it because I don't want to have a ritual. I don't want it to turn into a regular, I don't want to turn into *that* person in the family. I don't want that.

[A woman knocks on the door and Rachida tells her to come in. They have a brief exchange in Arabic – Rachida says she must go now, stands up, thanks me, and asks about my recorder – Would I write down the information for it. She likes it a lot. We agree and she leaves. The woman walks me out.]

Youssef
Ibn Hassouni Order, Salé
May 16, 2012
Arabic and French

[We ordered tea, reviewed the IRB consent forms, and briefly discussed the research before beginning the recording. As discussed before the interview, Lindsay asked each question in English, Ghassan translated to Youssef in Arabic/French, Youssef responded, and Ghassan provided a short synopsis before moving on to the next question. Occasionally, Ghassan asked his own follow-up questions. Below, is Ghassan's transcription of the interview. He inserts [] to indicate his own interjections and additions post-interview]

Lindsay: Could you tell us about the body in Sufism? What do you understand the body to be?

Youssef: First of all, it is not the body per say; it is more about the ideology and how people think about “the body.” To explain, the believer needs a “pleasure for the spirit” whenever they are – at all times like in the workplace, at home, or simply with other people. In fact, in life, people need a special space for their spirit to be at ease with the environment. For this to be done there is the prayer and the Remembrance of Allah. In this sense, I must mention that the reading of Qur’an is important. There is a verse that says that it is thanks to the saying of the name of Allah that the believers’ spirits get relieved and relaxed. In order for the believers to do this, they do not necessarily need to go a mosque or a mausoleum. Believers could simply stay at home and practice this. As for the prayers, as you must know, the Muslim should do ablution before performing it. Afterwards, the believer should forget about life and its problems in order to think about Allah without being distracted by any other issues.

Ghassan: So would you say that the spirit more important the body? Then is the body a good thing, a bad thing...?

Youssef: For Sufism, we [Sufi adepts and leaders] should talk to people with words that they understand the best. As a matter of fact, there are different types of Sufi adepts: there are the elite, the commoners, and the elite of the elite [i.e. there are 3 levels of Sufi adepts for which each type of people would require a different language for the message to be understood]. In all these levels, there is the *murīd*, meaning the Sufi adept who can belong to any of these categories. For us, in Sufism, we say that the mind could simply refer to the body given the fact that the mind is the engine that dictates what the body is expected to do. In the *zāwiya*, we teach the adepts how to remember Allah by teaching the adepts the right words that could be used for this end. Also, for this to be well done, the adept should forget that more than one name of Allah could be pronounced, repeatedly, but it takes time to move from one stage to another. In all stages, the objective is to transport the believer from one world/stage to another one that is higher and closer to Allah. Gradually, the adept strengthens their relationship with Allah with the time they spend doing these [verbal] activities. Moreover, one should not forget that when listening to the Qur’an, the listener [believer] should be in their full mental and conscious capabilities to understand the meaning, and see Allah [through the words of Allah as written in the Qur’an]. The stage to which the adept should

arrive after this time of *dhikr* could feel similar to that to which a person would feel after a class of yoga [used as an example for Lindsay to get the essence of this idea].

In any case, I cannot say that the body is less or more important than the mind. However, I can say that when being involved in the *dhikr*, the first element that is being “treated” is the soul of the person. Afterwards comes the body. In fact, the body is always present in this process, but the time when the body jumps in, as an element of the equation, could be delayed and come after another element (of the mind).

Lindsay: So if the body separate from the mind or the spirit, the soul?

Youssef: We could say this, yes. Especially with the silent *dhikr* and loud *dhikr*.

Lindsay: What is the difference between silent *dhikr* or *dhikr* of the heart and loud *dhikr* – you know, of the tongue?

Youssef: The silent *dhikr*, or *Dhikr Al-Qalbi* [translated as the “heart *dhikr*”] is for adepts that are advanced in their status, regarding to the process of Sufism, like the case of my late grandfather. With this in mind, one should not say that this type of *dhikr* is better than the other type; this simply means that in order for the adept to perform this type of *dhikr*, all body parts and attention should focus on the *dhikr*. In other words, the focus should be really strong for this *dhikr* to take place. Also, the silent *dhikr* is usually performed individually, but it could be performed in a scene where many people are gathered but each of the group members does it silently, on their own.

For the loud *dhikr*, or the *Dhikr Al Jama'i* [meaning the “group *dhikr*”] is performed in groups. Actually, the group plays an important role in this type of *dhikr* because the heat of the group actually passes from one member to another in order to energize all group members. This type of *dhikr* could be performed at any time, but there is [usually] specific times in which it is usually perfumed. Such times include Friday afternoons in which many rituals take place, depending on the traditions of each *zāwiya*. For example, ‘*Issawa*, *Gnawa*, and *Hmadsha* use some musical instruments to heat up the body and get the participants pushed to be active. In general, for Moroccan Sufi adepts, the motivator is usually the chants, like in the case of our *zāwiya*. We actually say: “Worship Allah as if you were seeing Him. If you are not seeing Him, know that Allah is definitely seeing you.” Again, for our *zāwiya*, we organize some competitions for the adepts to chant the Qur’an, and to celebrate the end of Ramadan. All these events could mark special dates for a *zāwiya* [like ours] to perform the group *dhikr*. For other *zāwiyas*, some of them perform this group *dhikr* standing while others do it while sitting down.

Lindsay: Whenever you are doing silent *dhikr*, if your body is not physically moving -- so I could not see you moving -- is there an internal movement?

Youssef: For the silent *dhikr*, the adept’s concentration is all driven for the *dhikr*. In fact, all the concentration and attention of the adept is focused on this activity. One can say that this adept is, along all of his body elements, doing the *dhikr* and is, thus, detached from reality and the environment surrounding them. I don’t know if you can explain this but it would be hard for people to grab the essence of this *dhikr* and understand how that who performs it actually does it.

You should know that even if the adept performing the silent *dhikr* seems to be quiet and still, his heart and all of his body parts are actually actively involved in the *dhikr* process. For the group *dhikr*, it also has its own rituals: those who cannot really be active in the silent *dhikr*, they may find it easier and more fruitful to take part of the group *dhikr*. In fact, before one can actively be doing the silent *dhikr*, they may want to think of the group *dhikr* because it can strengthen the adept's willingness to carry out these activities for more/longer time. In both types of the *dhikr*, the adept should have the interest to learn and have a pure intention to do *dhikr* to find the spiritual pleasure, and not to show off in front of others. Also, for those doing *dhikr*, as I said before, they should be fully involved in this activity. This means that when they begin doing *dhikr*, they should think of drinking water or eating before starting, and not to do all of this in the middle of the *dhikr* - these observations are made today but none of them should actually take place... If *dhikr* is being done, it should be the only activity being performed.

Historically speaking, in the year [1930] when the Berber Dahir was issued, the *dhikr* performed in the mosques pronouncing the name [of God] of “*Allatif*”, one could actually plant fear in the hearts of the French and was the reason why the Moroccans could overcome and fight this Berber [discriminatory] law.

Lindsay: I read that when you say “There is No God but God,” the letters or sections of what you are saying are located in certain parts of your body... The “lam letter” is....

Youssef: This is only related to Shi'ism. We, Sunnis, have a different approach. This is a matter of “*Ijtihad*” in Shi'ism, but we don't have this in Sunni Islam.

Ghassan: Are there any similar practices...?

Youssef: No no.

Lindsay: Um so then in the collective or loud *dhikr*, what is the body doing?

Youssef: In the collective *dhikr*, there is the *dhikr* type in which the people remain sitting, either crossing legs or laying down the leg while staying sitting on the ground, all groups members forming half a circle shape gathering. The essence in this *dhikr* is to move the body. There is also the circle shape group gathering in which there is the chief of the group standing in the middle of the circle, then we have a part of the group chanting while the other part is actually supposed to repeat what the former chants. The choice remains open for all adepts, depending on the interest to go for sitting down or standing up. In general, the elite of the elite would have a tendency of sitting down while doing this collective *dhikr*.

So what is the goal behind the *dhikr*, in the first place? The goal is for the body to enjoy the *dhikr*. And in order for this to be fulfilled, there should be a harmony between the man's body and mind. All body parts should go in one direction while performing *dhikr*.

Ghassan: How do you know how to reach “harmony?”

Youssef: First of all, every Tariqa has their own rituals and rule of *dhikr* conduct. This means they have their own way of teaching the chants, the words that should be used, and how all of

this is being taught by the *shaykh*. After a period of time, the adept is exposed to these methods of teaching and ends up learning the process. For those sitting up, they have their own rituals that are slightly different from those of the people who are sitting down, or even more different from those *zāwiyas* where the musical instruments are actually playing a central role in *dhikr*.

Lindsay: Are there right ways and wrong ways to move?

Youssef: ‘Ulemas, generally, reject the movements explaining that these are not integrated in the religion of Islam. For these opponents, the adepts should be aware of their actions and refrain from making loud voice speaking, or tearing up their clothes while doing *dhikr*. Today, we see less and less of these behaviors [such as seeing people hitting their heart with the wall]. For us, in Sunni Islam, our objective is to satisfy the soul while respecting the boundaries drawn by our religion. We will all die, but we should know that thanks to *dhikr*, we can keep our walking on the right path to make our life experience the best one.

Sufism is not an isolation of the person from their environment - though some Sufi leaders may choose to do this, but (generally) people would try to live their life while taking into consideration the afterlife that is waiting for them: they should get prepared for this after life. *Zāwiyas*, then, stand out as the adequate space for people to do all of this, especially in old times because today we have the schools and universities and other spaces where the believers could actually go to satisfy their spiritual curiosity, in addition to the mosques.

Ghassan: What about the conditions?

Youssef: There are certain conditions that are acceptable and others that are not. For example, we believe that crying is okay. This is within the religious-accepted frame. But when it goes beyond that to wildness, Satan has reached you and the bad side of the spirit has lead you to stop controlling yourself. So we think that there are limits. And if the limits are reached, it is the job of the *naqīb* and sometimes the *munshid* or the *shaykh* to bring the *murīd* back into the *zāwiya* and so I will take my hand like this [put his hand on Lindsay’s arm] and bring him back.

When believers want to visit a mausoleum, there are some rules they should respect: pray, read the Qur’an, and pray for that *wali* buried there while bearing in mind that only Allah can satisfy a prayer, and not the person buried there. In Islam, we have a direct relationship with Allah. When we need something, we ask Allah directly without having to ask someone to do it on His behalf. The fact that believers go to a mausoleum is solely meant to remember his good deeds, and see how these deeds could serve him in his afterlife while no one can actually escape death.

Lindsay: In your life, has the movement of *dhikr* changed?

Youssef: There has been a slight change in the form, but not the essence. In old times, people used to have time to visit the *zāwiya* on a regular basis, and for longer times compared to now. Today, this had changed. For our *zāwiya*, we have *dhikr* sessions regularly held, along with *madih nabawi* [this is a class of Arabic music that speaks to the Prophet], every Friday afternoon, and on national and religious holidays. In general, people became more material and attached to the different forms of Information Technologies (i.e. TV, internet...). Even

for cinemas, they get fewer audiences because there are CDs and DVDs; people's behavior changed over these decades because of these changes. Before, people were more eager to do things for free like to organize a festivity. Today these people would be more interested to do this against a price that others will have to pay [i.e. people are more materialistic]. For *zāwiyas*, if you see one or more that are popular, it is very likely that they are sponsored by the state or by private parties like individuals.

Lindsay: Sponsored how?

Youssef: With money or words of praise. It's [interesting] because [recently] there have been big donations made to *zāwiyas* with big spaces for men and women?

Lindsay: Do men and women do *dhikr* separately?

Youssef: Yes.

Lindsay: Why?

Youssef: We do not have segregation in order to avoid sinful acts. During *dhikr*, the adept should have pure intentions before and during *dhikr*, so the separation is meant for this intention to remain as such even when the *dhikr* is being performed. Even during the prayers at a mosque, men have their own space for prayers that is located in front of the women, so these stay behind. They all conduct the same prayer and the *dhikr* is the same, but they should be separated- unlike the case for Christianity for example.

[Youssef asked Ghassan for the time and then said he must go, asking us to walk with him to his car. On the way, he gave me the name of the Ibn Hassouni YouTube Channel, and the links for their blog and "Daily Motion" channel:

YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/accharif?feature=results_main

Dailymotion: <http://www.dailymotion.com/relevance/search/elhassouni/1#>

Blog: <http://corsaire007.skyrock.com/>

Upon reaching his car, he ducked inside and emerged with a DVD and pamphlet on the Ibn Hassouni Order and urged me to watch/read if I was able of understanding the Arabic]

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DOCUMENTS

IRB: Consent Forms

Before formally beginning every interview, Ghassan and I reviewed the attached IRB-approved consent forms with each participant. Consent forms were offered in French, Arabic, and English.

Per the request of several interviewees and in an effort to maintain the strictest confidentiality, the names of all participants have been changed in this thesis and in all corresponding documents. Dr. Khalid Saqi is my only friend from the field whose name has not been changed, because he speaks to Sufism, the body, and *dhikr* from his academic expertise rather than personal experience.

After formally agreeing to the interview and signing the consent form, Ghassan and I asked each interviewee if s/he wanted us to change or withhold any potential identifiers (i.e. order of affiliation, position in the *zāwiya*, hometown, profession, etc.) from the records. All participants agreed that changing their name was sufficient. Thus, to honor these requests, I have chosen to exclude consent forms with names and signatures from Appendix C and have instead, attached the empty templates in English, French, and Arabic respectively.

Statement of Consent

Principal Investigator: Lindsay Rosenfeld
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: Global Studies

Study Contact: Lindsay Rosenfeld at lrosenfeld@me.com; 0610 08 19 39 (Morocco) or 001 828 851 0477 (U.S.A)
Della Pollock at pollock@email.unc.edu; 001 919 962 4946 (U.S.A)

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the role of the body in the Sufi ritual of *dhikr*.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in this interview will last approximately two hours.

What will happen if you take part in the study? Compensation?

You will be asked various questions about your history and experiences with *dhikr*. You may end your participation at anytime for any reason. You may skip any question for any reason.

In order to keep a record of our conversation for future reference, I would like to record our conversation with an audio recording device, but only with your permission.

- I agree to be audio recorded.
 I do not agree to be audio recorded.

If you indicated that you agree to be audio recorded, you may ask to have the recording turned off at any time. Participation in this study will not be compensated, financially or otherwise. However, your assistance is greatly appreciated by our research team.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

We do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. However, if you feel uncomfortable with the interview process at any time, you are free to terminate your involvement.

How will your privacy be protected?

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. Every effort to keep your personal information confidential will be made in this project. Your name and any requested identifying information will be changed in the final write-up.

Lindsay Rosenfeld may be contacted by email or telephone for any reason.

If you have questions or concerns about your participation in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at 001 919 966 3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I affirm that my participation in this study is voluntary and understand that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Déclaration de consentement

Chercheur principal : Lindsay Rosenfeld
University of North Carolina à Chapel Hill - Global Studies Department

Lindsay Rosenfeld à lerosenfeld@me.com; 0610 08 19 39 (Maroc) ou 001 828 851 0477 (États-Unis)
Della Pollock à pollock@email.unc.edu; 001 919 962 4946 (États-Unis)

L'objectif d'étude

Pour comprendre le dhikr. Il vous sera demandé diverses questions au sujet de votre histoire et les expériences avec le dhikr. Vous pouvez mettre fin à votre participation à tout moment pour une raison quelconque. Vous pouvez sauter une question pour une raison quelconque. Afin de garder une trace de notre conversation pour référence future, je voudrais enregistrer notre conversation avec un dispositif d'enregistrement audio, mais seulement avec votre permission.

- Je suis d'accord pour être données audio enregistrées.
 Je ne suis pas d'accord pour être données audio enregistrées

Si vous avez indiqué que vous acceptez d'être un enregistrement audio, vous pouvez demander d'avoir l'enregistrement désactivé à tout moment.

La durée et les éléments d'étude

Cette étude sera dirigée pendant une période de trois semaines, et ce à partir du 7 May 2012 jusqu'au 26 May 2012. L'étude inclura les observations et les interventions des participants en incluant leur travail sur terrain. Votre participation à cette entrevue durera environ deux heures.

Les risques

L'étude n'a aucun risque prévisible pour les participants. Cependant, si vous ne vous sentez pas confortable avec le procédé d'observation ou d'interview, vous êtes libre de terminer votre participation.

Compensation

La participation à cette étude ne sera pas compensée, financièrement ou autrement. Cependant, votre aide est considérablement appréciée par notre équipe de recherche.

Confidentialité

Tout effort de maintenir votre information personnelle confidentielle sera fait dans ce projet. Vos noms et toute autre information d'identification seront changés dans la description finale, et seulement connue à l'équipe de recherche.

Lindsay Rosenfeld peut être contacté directement par courriel ou par téléphone pour une raison quelconque.

Si vous avez des questions ou des préoccupations au sujet de votre participation à cette étude, vous pouvez contacter le comité d'examen institutionnel au 001 919 966 3113 ou par courriel à IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participation

Je soussigné,, confirme avoir lu les rapports ci-dessus et compris que ma participation à cette étude est volontaire tout en ayant la liberté de retirer mon consentement à tout moment sans pénalité.

Signature

Date

J'ai pris conscience que cette étude puisse comporter les entrevues et/ou les observations qui peuvent être enregistrées et transcrites.

Signature

Date

وثيقة قبول
الهدف من الدراسة (البحث):
لفهم الذكر

المدة و الاليات المستعملة للدراسة (البحث):
هذا البحث سيدوم لمدة 3 أسابيع و سيتضمن حوارات حول موضوع البحث.

المخاطر:
هذا البحث لا يحتوي على أي مخاطر محتملة لكن إذا كان هذا سيسبب لك أي إحراج أو قلق، لك الحق في التراجع و إيقاف صلتك بالموضوع قد ينتهي بك مشاركتكم في أي وقت ولأي سبب. يمكنك تخطي أي سؤال لأي سبب من الأسباب.

من أجل الاحتفاظ بسجل للحديثنا كمرجع في المستقبل، أود أن يسجل حديثنا جهاز التسجيل الصوتي، ولكن فقط بعد إذنكم.

أوافق على أن يكون الصوت المسجل.

لا أوافق على أن يكون الصوت المسجل

إذا كنت توافق على أن يكون الصوت المسجل، قد تطلب تسجيل ابقاف في أي وقت.

رقم هاتفي هو: 0610 08 19 39 في المغرب و 001 828 851 0477 في أمريكا
بريدي الإلكتروني هو: lerosenfeld@me.com
أو مستشاري: pollock@email.unc.edu و 001 919 962 4946
إذا كان عندك أسئلة عن هذه الدراسة، يمكن الاتصال "مجلس المراجعة المؤسسية": 919 966 3113 أو IRB_sub-jects@unc.edu

التعويضات:
المشاركة في هذا البحث لن تكون بمقابل سواء مادي أو غيره، لكن مساهمتكم ستحضى بكل الإحترام و التقدير من طرف فريق العمل.

الخصوصيات و الأسرار:
ستبدل كل الجهود لإبقاء هذه المعلومات في سرية تامة، كذا أسماءكم و كل المعلومات التي تعرف بشخصيتكم. الشروط التسجيلية ستدمر مباشرة بعد الاستماع إليها و تدوينها من طرف الاساتذة.

المشاركة:
أنا الممضي (ة) أسفله، أقر بأنني قرأت و بوضوح المعلومات المشار إليها أعلاه، و أؤكد أن مشاركتي هاته كانت بمحض إرادتي و بكل طوعية. و أعلم أن لي كامل الأحقية في التراجع عن هذه الموافقة و بدون غرامة أو جزاء.

الامضاء : التاريخ :

و أعلم أن هذا البحث يتضمن حوارات و ملاحظات من الممكن ان تكون مسجلة أو كتابية.

الامضاء : التاريخ :

فريق العمل:

IRB: Interview Sample Questions

At the start of the interview, thank the participant for agreeing to an interview, go over consent form, and briefly introduce research. Each interview will be open and free flowing, and, thus, the following questions will be used as a guide rather than a formula.

1. What is Sufism?
2. When did you first start considering yourself a Sufi?
 - a. Is Sufism something that your family prescribes to? Has this always been true?
 - b. What sort of role does it play in your life?
 - c. What makes you a strong believer in Sufism?
3. What do you think are the most fundamental aspects of Sufism?
4. What are some of your religious traditions or rituals?
5. Can you tell me about *dhikr*?
 - a. What is it?
 - b. Why is it important to Sufism? To you?
6. How is the group performance of *dhikr* different from your individual practices?
7. I noticed how active the body is during *dhikr*, why is that?
 - a. What is the body's purpose?
8. Are the movements the same every time?
 - a. How are they the same?
 - i. How do you remember them every time?
 - ii. Where is this memory located (mind, body, etc.)?
 - b. How are they different?
 - c. Are they the same or different when considering the group *dhikr* versus individual *dhikr*?
 - d. Do you ever do these movements outside of *dhikr*?
9. When did you first start doing *dhikr*? Can you tell me about that first experience, if you remember?
10. How did you know how to move?
 - a. Taught/learned through formal instruction?
 - b. Taught/learned subtly, through observation?

- c. Not taught?
11. How do you know how to move now?
 12. Are there right movements or wrong movements?
 - a. Why?
 - b. How?
 - c. Who determines this?
 13. Do different Sufis move in different ways? Why?
 14. Do you have any other memories (i.e. from childhood) where your body moved like that?
 15. Can you explain for me what it feels like to do *dhikr*?
 - a. Where do you feel these things (body, mind, soul, heart, etc.)?
 - b. Does it feel like this every time?

Other possible questions:

16. Have the movements changed over time? Were they different 5, 10, 20, 50 years ago?
 - a. If yes, how?
 - b. Do you have any ideas about why they have change?