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Learning to Listen: The Sound of Sufism in France

Deborah Kapchan

Abstract

How does sound encode sacred affect? And how is sacred sound, and thus sacred emotion, learned? While much has been written on spiritual belief from the point of view of narrative (Harding 2003; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994) and the body (Csordas 1994), less attention has been paid to the power of “sound” and, more importantly, listening, to shape sacred identities and create community. This article attends to the aural dimensions of sacred ritual performance focusing on the role of music, chanting as well as listening and utterance in the performance of a Sufi wadhifa, or liturgy, including the ceremony of remembrance, or dhikr. Moving respectively through the social context, the ritual form and analytical frames, I end by explicating what I refer to as a “literacy of listening” (Kapchan 2008)—that is, the acquired ability to learn other cultures (specifically religious cultures, though not exclusively these) through participating in its sound economy.

1. The Social Context

Riding in the car in the south of France in the summer of 2007, I listen to the radio—a special broadcast on Muslim women in France. A French journalist is interviewing a young woman, a *beur* or second generation French citizen of North African descent. The *beur* has just written a book about her struggles with her parents, her relationship with a French non-Muslim, and her decision to go back to Algeria, have a traditional wedding and raise her family there. I listen intently. The interviewer, a French woman herself, is asking the expected questions: how did you tell your parents that you were involved with a non-Muslim? Why have you decided to take your fiancé to Algeria? What will he do there? Why the return?

Her answers paint her as a woman in search of her identity, disillusioned with the lack of opportunities in France, disappointed by the presence of racism. Although born in France, she has chosen to go back to the country of her parent’s birth, to be a “*mere de famille*,” and raise a lot of children. She hopes her husband will make use

of his skills and education to support them. Although not North African, he too is tired of the hypocrisy of French culture *vis-à-vis* North Africans.

I turn around another rond point. I pass vineyards and fields where white Camargue horses graze. It is warm this time of year, and there is air-conditioning in my rented car. Despite the heat, however, I am wearing socks inside my sandals so that I can say that my ablutions haven't been negated. I enter a small town. There are some youths hanging around in a parking lot, gunning the engines of their car, Arab hip-hop playing on their radio. The center of this town is unremarkable for this region—a cluster of old attached buildings, a bakery, a *tabac* or stationary store, and a few cafés. I continue and bear right onto a small road. There, a line of cars are parked in front of a free-standing house. I pull in behind them and stop the car. Then I reach for the scarf on the passenger seat and put it on my head. Getting out of the car, I push open the garden gate and go inside, greeting the *faqirat* (fem.), literally “the poor ones,” female Sufi devotees.

The room where they are sitting is lined with banquettes, but most of the young women are sitting on thinner mattresses on the floor. I greet each one, kissing them on both cheeks. They are mostly between the ages of 20 and 35, but there is one older Moroccan woman in a *djellaba*—perhaps 60—as well as me, 49. The women are effusive in their greetings. They all have Arab names—even the French converts. Ibtissam is a French graduate student doing her MA in Religious History; Hanan is a flamenco dancer who does a horse act. She has Romani origins; Salima is a French woman with interests in esoteric religions who used to be a practicing Catholic, but converted to Islam a few years ago. There are also many young women whose parents were born in North Africa, but who themselves grew up in France with French as their primary language: Nouzha is a special education teacher in a French middle school. Her mother and father settled in this region in France when she was an infant; Jamila works in tourism, Zohra works as a female janitor and Layla works in the laboratory of a candy factory. Despite some blue collar work, most of the North African women have degrees, either a high school diploma or a “license”, their BA. Several of the women attend with their children who play in the next room.

Rquiyya lifts her prayer beads, in the air, and we begin to chant—first the *fatiha*, the “opening” prayer in the Qur'an. Then the Yassin *sura*. Then follow the names of God, *al-latif*, the subtle one, *al-qawi*, the powerful, *al-'aziz*, the dear. We chant for 90 minutes, and then chanting turns to singing, as we begin to sing songs, a few dating from the time of the Prophet Muhammad, others based on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mystical poems or *qasa'id*. The French speakers enunciate in a beautifully-inflected Arabic, though they don't know the meaning of the words they are pronouncing.¹ Even the North Africans were brought up speaking French. This is less important to them than the power that the sounds contain. Because of Sufism's focus on *sama'*—or what this group translates as “spiritual audition”—there is a regnant and articulate discourse around the power of sound.

Because these young women do not read Arabic, the liturgy booklets have been transcribed into Latin alphabet for them. Asterisks note breath marks; one indicates

a clausal pause where the voice rises; two indicate the end of a phrase where the voice falls. While the ceremony is called a liturgy (*wadhifa* in Arabic), it is in fact all intoned or chanted: the prayers are recited, the names of God intoned and the songs sung. What is remarkable is that the intonation, the diction and pronunciation of the words are extremely accurate. Even the French converts pronounce the Arabic—including the difficult letters like qaf and ‘ayn—with precision. If I hadn’t known better, I would have thought I was in Morocco.

How is it that non-Arabic speakers in France become competent performers of Sufi songs and prayers in Arabic? Of course mimetic reproduction plays a part here. And indeed, there are many places in the Muslim world where non-Arabic speakers learn to recite the Qur’an beautifully (Rasmussen 2001). But unlike pedagogies in Qur’anic schools (*madaris*, pl.), where phrases are taught slowly and over years, the Sufi initiates in France undergo a kind of complete immersion into the ritual all at once. No one gives them individual lessons. They come to the ceremony and they learn to listen. When I asked S., who knows the entire liturgy by heart, how she learned it, she humbly said, “just by assiduity.” When I asked her how long it took, she replied, “only a few months.” I asked another young woman, “But you, H., you understand Arabic, don’t you?” “Just a little,” she admitted. “Then how is it you speak so beautifully,” I said. “Just by listening,” she answered, “you have to listen with your heart.”

Clearly, it is not an ordinary listening taking place, but what some scholars and composers have called “deep listening” (Becker 2004), and what the Sufis call *sama’* (spiritual audition). It is an active and attentive listening that involves not just the ear, but the entire affective and sensate being, a kind of listening that ultimately induces trance. Sufi initiates become competent not just in the music of a new language (which they utter but don’t understand), but in the technique of *sama’*. Learning to listen, they acquire a new soundscape as well as a new way of being in the world. What is the sound of Sufism in France and how is it learned? In this article I break from usual ethnomusicological studies of performance to examine not just the sounds produced by Sufis but how listening to sound creates sacred affect and identity. I advance a preliminary theory about the role of listening in performance—what I call “literacies of listening,” the acquired ability to learn other cultures (specifically religious cultures, though not exclusively these) through participating in its sound economy. Although I build upon, rather than erase, the insights of language study in musical analysis, my focus shifts away from the role of discourse and towards the importance of the auditory in enacting transcendent experiences of the sacred. Examining how ways of *listening* (like ways of speaking) structure perception and create an ethos of religious community, I argue for the primacy of listening and memory in developing auditory “literacy”.²

2. Ways of Sacred Listening in a Secular Landscape

It is one of the hallmarks of our era that religion is growing up in soils long thought to be inhospitable to religious fervor. In Morocco, where I have been going since my experiences as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1982, I have watched as more and more young people don the veil, embracing a religious worldview. In Syria where I was in 2008, mosques that only four years ago made no division between a women's and a men's section now have barriers that block the women from male sight. In Egypt similar conservative trends are in evidence (Mahmood 2004; Hirschkind 2006). But even in strongly secular contexts like France, religion is taking a stronger hold. When Pope Benedict the XVI visited France in September 2008, President Sarkozy received him as if he were a head of State, advocating a *laïcité positive*, "a positive secularism." One of the interesting things about his choice of words is that they are defined by and addressed to the religious community (mostly Catholic), and not the secular one of the French Republic, as if heretofore secularism had been a negative phenomenon—negative to religious practitioners that is. Even some French intellectuals admit that the heritage of the French enlightenment has perhaps gone too far in its reach.³

But what of Islam in France? North Africans represent the largest minority in France, and Islam the second religion after Catholicism (although according to recent statistics, 31% of the French population is atheist).⁴ Given France's history of religious wars as well as the historical alliance of the church and the monarchy, the division between church and state (*laïcité*, or secularism) has been vehemently defended since the revolution.⁵ It is not that religion is absent in France, but that it must remain in its place—that is, the place the state gives it, the private domain. No symbols of religiosity should enter public life (Asad 2006; Balibar 2004; Bowen 2007). Indeed, the question of whether Muslim girls should be allowed to wear the veil in school dominated the news in the late 1980s and 1990s, as girls in different parts of France were expelled from school and banned from attendance. Court cases ensued and the French court decided that "ostentatious" symbols of religion are not permitted in public institutions (though it is up to the school administrators to judge what symbols are ostentatious). The vehement protection of secularism has given rise to equally impassioned discourses about the rights of religious minorities to comport themselves in accordance with their beliefs—not only by Muslims, but by international organizations like the Human Right's watch.⁶

Most Muslims do not want to abolish the line between church and state in France so much as to live in a democracy where religious expression is tolerated. Nonetheless, Islam is often represented as a threat to the French polity and its policies in the media and elsewhere.⁷ Because there is no division of 'church' and state in Muslim countries like Iran or even Morocco and Algeria, many French secularists imagine that Muslims do not and cannot participate in the ethos of the French secular nation (Asad 2006). Indeed, it is the inability of both the Muslim imagination and the

French secular imagination to make space for the other that is a large source of the tensions in France.

Things may be changing.⁸ While we hear a lot about so-called fundamentalism among Muslims in Europe, a surprising number of people are turning to the softer and less politicized forms of Islam associated with Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam. Unlike more orthodox forms of Islam, Sufism is characterized by its emphasis on an intermediary, called a *shaykh*, who guides the disciple on an esoteric path towards the experience of *tawhid*, or unity with God. Sufism is called a *tariqa*, a path, because the disciple proceeds through levels of initiation (*maqamat*, pl.), participating in a ceremony called a *dhikr*, literally remembrance, that involves chanting the names of God, prayer, and often song and ecstatic dance. Practicing the *dhikr*, the Sufi remembers their innate but usually forgotten link with divinity. The choice to practice Sufism as opposed to more conventional or orthodox forms of Islam is significant. While Michael Gilsenan (1967) talked about a decline in Sufi orders, scholars now speak of a revival of “sunni Sufism” that is explicitly non-political, but which entails a search for an “authentic Islamic experience” (Ben Driss 2002:17). Indeed according to sociologist Karim Ben Driss, “the authenticity of this experience is the very spirit of this revival, [and] the reconstruction of identity is one of its consequences” (*ibid.*:17).

Sufi paths are numerous. In Morocco alone there are the Shadhiliyya, the Tijaniyya, as well as the Qadiriyya, the Sqaliyya, the Aissawa, and the Hamadsha (to name only the most well-known). Many of these groups have multi-lingual websites that discuss the history, the ideology and the liturgy of the path, and are active in proselytizing.⁹ Indeed, there is even a web-site where several Moroccan “paths” are mentioned, creating a kind of “Moroccan Islam” out of its diverse Sufi orders—a Moroccan Islam sanctioned by the King, whose picture is on the first page of the site (www.dar-irr.com/forum.html). While in the past Sufi orders represented a threat to the sovereign power of the monarchy, now they are employed by the Moroccan State to counter the rising influence of fundamentalist Islam. Indeed, not long after the former King Hassan II of Morocco died and his son, Mohamed VI took the throne in 1999, a prominent historian and well-known novelist, the director of the National Library and, most importantly, a member of a prominent Sufi order in Morocco—Ahmed Toufiq—was appointed the Minister of Religious Affairs. The order he belongs to is the Qadiriyya Boutshishiyya path whose living shaykh is Shaykh Hamza in Morocco. Many intellectuals are members of this order. The king’s decision to appoint a Sufi as the Minister of Religious Affairs is a strategic move to counter rising fundamentalism,¹⁰ but it also attests to the power of this particular order. Indeed, the Boutshishiyya path has spread beyond the borders of Morocco to France, Holland, Italy, England and the United States (Fig. 1) and has a thriving multi-lingual website in Arabic, French, English, Spanish and Italian, which includes live-stream Sufi songs (*qasaid*, or *inshad dini*) called Radio Samaa. *Sama’*, literally “listening” in Arabic, refers to both the technique of active and attentive listening that Sufis employ in their ceremonies, and the ceremony itself (During 1988, 1993).

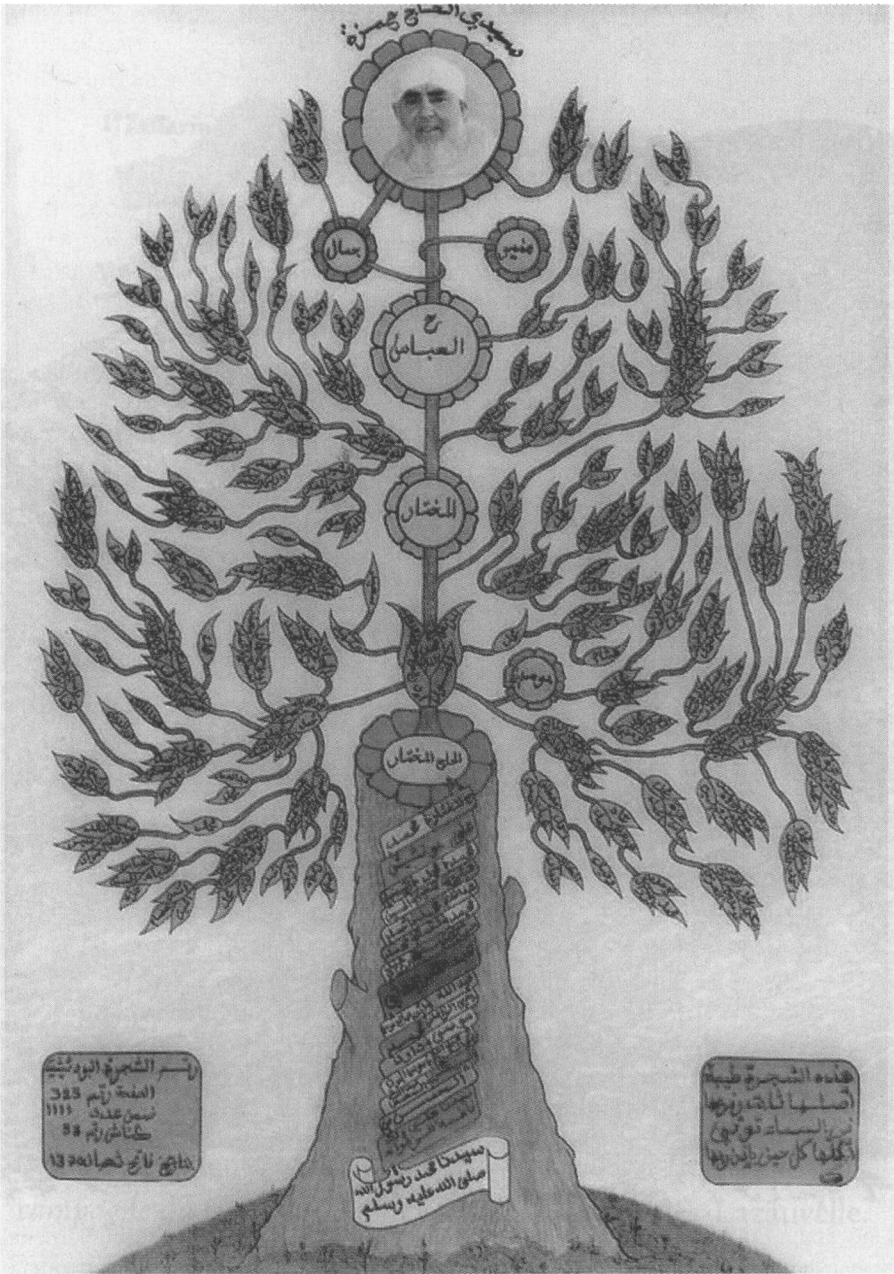


Figure.1. The Boutshishiyya Genealogy.

How do the aesthetics of Sufism—and particularly the techniques of listening practiced therein (*sama'*)—create communities in diaspora and what are the implications of this for France and for “secular Europe”?

3. Ritual Form and the Beads of Time

The power of sound was brought home to me after attending both an international meeting of the Sufi sisters in the region of Paris in 2008 and the yearly pilgrimage to the *zawiya*, the Boutshishiyya sanctuary, in northern Morocco in March 2009. In the first case, more than 150 women from France, the United Kingdom and Belgium came to the meeting, while in Morocco the “foreign” contingent was about as large, but drew from the United States as well. In both cases, there were a majority of second and third generation North Africans in attendance. The liturgy is composed of two parts: 1) the prayers and 2) chanting the names of God (*dhikr*, or remembrance). The liturgy is then followed by the songs (*inshad dini*, or *qasaid*).

The ceremony in Paris began with more than 90 minutes of silent prayer, consisting of repeating the phrase *la ilaha ila allah*, there is no god but God, thousands of times (each *faqira* is given several large beads, each one representing 1,000 invocations). Although the prayer is technically “silent,” the *faqira* is encouraged to “mouth” the syllables—that is, to move the tongue and the vocal apparatus as if speaking (called *ntuq*, enunciation). This kind of prayer is on the borderline of vocalization. It is heard in the ‘inner’ ear so to speak. From time to time, a *faqira* will pass from a barely audible whisper to a breathy verbal intonation; at times the *faqira* sighs the phrase into audibility before her words recede back into inaudibility. Even silent prayer is thus a process of internal and external auto-listening. What’s more, this kind of prayer is done with prayer beads in hand. The constant clicking of the prayer beads are a constant, palpable, and percussive accompaniment to the prayers. And while it is difficult to move the tongue and mouth quickly, the velocity with which the prayers are said is a sign of the initiate’s experience. The beads, the hands that move them, as well as the tongue, lips, and other vocal organs, move in concert to the words that are repeated over and over again with amazing alacrity.

4. The Work of Liturgy

Once the silent prayer was over, the *wadhifa*, or liturgy, began. Like the English “liturgy,” the word *wadhifa* has its etymology in the notion of “work” or “labor.”¹¹ It is a labor of love for the Sufis, one that creates community and actually does the work of self-purification (Kapchan 2009). The *wadhifa* begins with the *fatiha*, the opening prayer in the Qur’an. Then the women recite one of the better known Qur’anic verses: *surat al-yassine*. The women in both France and Morocco recite masterfully, drawing out some word endings and then speeding quickly over whole sentences,

their tone rising and falling together. Although they do not seem to strictly follow any of the elaborate enunciation rules for the Qur'an (*tajwid*), they do pronounce the Arabic beautifully (Nelson 1985).

When they finish reciting the Qur'an, they turn to chanting the names of God. This is technically the part of the liturgy referred to as the *dhikr*: *la ilaha ila llah*, there is no God but God, five hundred times; *ya latif*, oh Subtle One; *huwa hu*, He is He, three hundred times. The *dhikr* is composed of chanting different names of God aloud, keeping count and time with the prayer beads. While the sound of the words is beautiful, it is the power with which they are intoned that is striking. The sound comes from deep within them. The women chant loudly and melodically. After 90 minutes my chest is buzzing.

The ceremony does not stop there. Once again we recite the Yassine surat and then some other prayers, and then the women get out the songbooks.

Many of the songs that are sung after the ceremony are in a canon of Sufi praise songs sung across the Middle East and North Africa, a few dating back to the time of the Prophet.¹² Others are more recent. My research on the history of these songs is just beginning, yet their import for the *faqirat* is clear. At the international meetings, they took up the songs with particular enthusiasm. At one point, a woman possessed of a beautiful and trained voice sang the verses, and others came in for the chorus. Indeed, there is a chorus after every verse in the songbook and the verses are numerous. While chanting the names of God in the Sufi *dhikr* is something everyone does, the songs give those with trained voices a chance to solo, and others a chance to listen. The songs praise the Prophet Muhammad, but also his companions, as well as the living shaykh and leader of the Boutshishiyya tariqa, shaykh al-Hamza. Of course these latter lyrics are more recent.

To be sure, the liturgy and the songs create "a special world of time" for the *faqirat* (Blacking 1973:48; Savage this volume). The repetitive and gradually accelerated rhythms of the chants, the vigorous vocalizations, the swaying of the body, the clicking of the prayer beads, all these elements contribute to an experience of transcendence—called *al-hal* in Arabic, a mystical "state" of union with the divine that takes different forms of expression. During the weekly regional ceremonies that I have been attending for years, this transcendent state usually takes place during the *dhikr* section. At the international meetings however, the songs were definitely the primary catalyst for a state of divine inspiration. This may be due to the fact that songs evoke memories of both melody and lyrics, which together increase the emotional impact of the experience (Mithen 2006:55).¹³ It also speaks to the great emotional power that singing in community creates.

I now turn to the nature of spiritual states (*ahwal*, pl.) in the *dhikr* ceremony and the role of listening (*sama'*, spiritual audition) in creating these transcendent states. What is the role of auditory practice in this trance-like experience? How do ways of listening create a Sufi?

5. Listening to Remembrance: The *Dhikr*

The repetition of the names of God is common among all Sufi groups. A rhythm is created in the beginning that remains fairly stable, though accelerations occur incrementally. This repetition and consequent phonetic parallelism is instrumental in changing the initiate's "state" from a quotidian consciousness, to an enraptured and trance-like condition that they equate with divine communion, or *tawhid*.¹⁴ Indeed, experiencing *al-hal* is one of the effects of the *dhikr*. What is interesting is that each devotee has their own *hal*. It goes a bit like this:

The women are seated in a circle on the floor. They begin chanting vigorously: *allah, allah, allah, allah*. Between each utterance many actively push the air out of their diaphragms in a kind of pumping motion. This makes their breath audible. It is not hyper-ventilation (which involves a rapid intake of air into the lungs), but an inhalation that draws the air deep into the belly, exhaling through an open larynx and producing a breathy vocalization. All of a sudden, one of the women—let's call her Fatiha—breaks with this rhythm. She calls out *allah* loudly. It is almost a scream. She has broken with the rhythm of the other chanters, and is now punctuating their repetitions with short, staccato exclamations. They seem to rise up from her body, to actually take possession of her with a volition of their own. She is in *al-hal*, the state. Now things "heat up", so to speak. Another woman breaks from the rhythmic repetition moaning *allah* in long tones over the voices of the others. She rocks back and forth. Meanwhile some women in the group have risen in their chanting by a half-tone. Another woman is a full fourth above the majority. Although the goal is to chant with one voice, the women are in fact producing an aharmonic, chromaticized melody, creating over-tones as well as counter-rhythms as they go into *al-hal*. This state is a very personal one; indeed, it is considered an intimate state experienced only in sex-segregated rituals among initiates. Nonetheless, this state, this *hal*, is the very heart of the Boutshishiyya Sufi *dhikr* insofar as it represents a culmination of musical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. It is also a key element in understanding how Sufis learn to listen, for despite the intensity of ecstatic performance, a subtle but very present auditory responsiveness remains acute. One *hal* brings on others. Punctuated cries respond to spontaneously clapped rhythms. Swoons are echoed around the circle.

If the repetition of the names of God in a regular ostinato rhythm provides the basis for collectively attaining a state of divine inspiration, more singular "states" (*ahwal*) emerge in the spaces between the words. That is, the *dhikr* exemplifies a singing (and feeling) together in which the fluctuations of *al-hal* provide the counterpoint. Some women perform loud cry breaks, others chant in long tones over the rhythmic faster chanting of the group, the voices of others receding into a whisper, or making a melismatic crescendo into a wail. The manifestations of being in *al-hal* are unpredictable, and women are not supposed to observe each other when in this state. They do and must listen however. Indeed, there are times when the ritual has the qualities of improvisation, when the women are engaging in an aesthetic of

being slightly “out of tune” and “off the beat,” creating a layering of sound and a self-conscious musical conversation (what Keil 1995 calls “participatory discrepancies”).¹⁵ This should not be surprising, as all musical communication is based upon this subtle listening and variegated response (*ibid.*). Nor is this quality of responsiveness articulated, directed, or otherwise orchestrated. However the improvisational and unpredictable qualities of *al-hal* do attest to the fact that the Sufis are listening closely to each other for “ecstatic cues” when performing the *dhikr*.

The *dhikr* section of the liturgy is something everyone can perform right away. The names of God are easy to repeat. And it is in this section that people go into *al-hal*. When the repetition heats up, the improvisation begins. In the *dhikr*, the lessons in listening are more subtle. Each *faqira* hears herself chanting, of course, but she also hears those all around her in the circle. Initially the rhythms are regular. Often the group speeds up over time. Sometimes everyone migrates up a half or a whole step, often following the lead of an (undesigned) *faqira*. People stay in synch until they go into *al-hal*, at which point the improvisation begins—counter-rhythms, over-lays of long-tones on top of the ostinato of the group. Sometimes people clap their hands rapidly, adding micro-rhythms to the already fast pace of the punctuated chants. Sometimes a *faqira* might swoon and call out for God, sometimes another falls completely silent. At all points, the group is listening attentively. And while there is no explicit discourse about *al-hal* (it is thought to be a spontaneous and individual expression of unity with God), there is a rich fabric of sounds that result from the *dhikr*. The *faqirat* take these lessons in listening, and apply them to learning the more difficult and much-less repetitive liturgy. Not only do the repetitions of the names of God get faster and rise in intonation, the occurrence of *al-hal* sparks a kind of chain reaction wherein women’s sporadic exclamations, their swoons and cries, respond to the exclamations of others. Attentive listening is the foundation of this kind of improvisational performance. After three hours, the *wadhifa* ends with a prayer, the women kissing each other’s hands and saying, *allah y-qbal*, may God accept [your prayers].

6. Sama’ Interpreted

Sufis believe that the activity of spiritual audition, or *sama’*, polishes the heart, purifying the disciple and thereby making space for the love of God to inhabit the whole being. As the grandson of the living shaykh is quoted as saying:

Sama’ or spiritual audition is, with Dhikr (the invocation), a major pillar in Sufi education. The content of poems, the rhythm of singing and the whisper of melodies elevate the soul to the subtle presence of the divine Light. This saving Light purifies the soul from its imperfections which progressively transforms the vision we have of the world and the creation. The practice of *sama’* reveals the presence of God in anything and by the same fact invites the aspirant to nobleness of the character. It is in this sense that the *sama’* is considered, in Sufism, a universal message of love and peace for all humanity. (Moulay Mourad al-Qadiri Boudchich, leader of Tariqa Qadi-

riya Boutchichiya Sama' and Madih group. (www.saveurs-soufies.com; accessed 6 October 2008)

For Moulay Mourad al-Qadiri Boudchich, *sama'* is a pedagogy whose practice benefits the individual and society at large. For the North African-identified Sunni Sufi in France, practicing the liturgy is a means of purification, a way of unveiling the secrets of the divine to the self and for the community. *Akhlaq*, good acts or ethics, is one of the stated goals of the Sufi in community, and the *dhikr*, or remembrance of God ceremony, polishes the heart so that right conduct and ethical behavior prevail. Part of this active cultivation of the ethical self is done through music: "every songs contains its own secret (*sirr*)."¹⁶ While the place of music in orthodox Islam has always been debated, its place in Sufi ritual is codified. Indeed, the spiritual practice of *sama'* cultivates communion with God through (attentive) listening.¹⁶

Of course initiates do not hear everything and repeat it right away. Like most initiations, the technique of active listening is learned in stages. As the liturgy begins with the prayers, the *faqirat* also begin there, repeating only the initial words of each phrase. Slowly they add the endings of the phrases, and little by little the middle of the phrase is added, until the whole phrase is learned. Likewise, some phrases are easier than others. Arabic contains a lot of parallelism, and the phrases where this exists are easier to repeat. The high level of prosody in the liturgy aids the listener in its memorization. In essence, the *faqira* learns the skeleton of the liturgy, and progressively adds the flesh and blood, so to speak.¹⁷ There is a process of unspoken apprenticeship in the listening and production of sound.

The songs that come after the prayers and the *dhikr* are perhaps the easiest to learn due to the regularity of the form: the songs usually begin with the refrain, which is then followed by verses, with a regular return to the refrain. The songbooks exist in Arabic but also in transliteration. Often a more advanced singer in the group will sing the verses, and the entire group will join in for the refrain. The *faqirat* do not have to produce sound in order to benefit from the practice of *sama'*. Indeed, listening is its own spiritual activity.

7. Analytical Frames: Developing Auditory Literacy

We are always hearing sounds—whether the jackhammers and sirens of a big city or the cicadas and tractors of the countryside. Yet to listen actively requires another kind of attention. This can be inclusive or exclusive—that is, we can attend to all the sounds that are present in our environment without hierarchy (this is a state of meditative listening) or we can listen selectively, focusing on the sound of the clarinet in an orchestra, for example, or turning our attention to the timbre of one child's voice among others in a city playground. While listening is often assumed to be a passive process, in fact listening is an active endeavor, as essential in the process of linguistic and cultural socialization as it is in musical and ritual initiation.

I first became interested in ways of listening when doing research on the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music (Kapchan 2008).¹⁸ I wanted to understand how people from one aesthetic background came to be moved by sacred music very different from their own. Of course musicians have been trading styles for a long time. This is not new. What has changed is *the way* people listen to the new. What might have passed for noise at another time, is finding another categorical home (Attali 1985). This is largely due to the phenomenon and popularity of world beat, which has been instrumental in tuning the ear to difference, developing new ways of listening and new things to listen for (Kapchan 2008; see also Erlmann 2004; Feld 1994; Taylor 1997). Since so many contemporary music genres combine the musical aesthetics of different cultures, auditors of these musics are now able to identify the components in the mix; they are tuned in to difference, *à l'écoute* as the French say, actively listening. Whether the collaborating artists are Paul Simon and Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Cheb Mami and Sting, or Philip Glass and Ravi Shankar, auditors of such “world” music genres are not only able to recognize the influences present in the music, they are often aware of the actual components employed—identifying modes, rhythms, and lyrics from different provenance.

A sophisticated ear, however, does not a deep listener make. To listen deeply involves an affective stance that, according to anthropologist Judith Becker (2004), is qualitatively different than other kinds of listening. For those who are able or trained to listen deeply, music evokes a profound emotional experience akin to trance, one that is often (though not necessarily) experienced in a group situation. Becker calls it a “secular trancing” (2004:2). According to composer Pauline Oliveros, who first coined the term, deep listening is a self-conscious and active listening that unlocks “layer after layer of imagination, memory and meaning down to the cellular level of human experience” (quoted in Becker 2004:2; see also www.deeplisting.org).

Samaʿ, or spiritual audition, has much in common with deep listening, though it necessarily entails the evocation of emotions specifically associated with the sacred. Indeed, as an explicit technique of initiation, the doctrine of *samaʿ* has been in the Sufi tradition for hundreds of years. According to ethnomusicologist Jean Dering (1993), *samaʿ* first appeared among the Sufis in Baghdad in the ninth century, elaborated in traditions and treatises that spread to the larger Islamic world. It is still employed today in places as different as Turkey, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Europe and the United States.

How does *samaʿ* perform religious and cultural initiation in contemporary France and elsewhere in the Islamic diaspora? I argue here that learning to listen (deeply) in the context of Sufi initiation in France and elsewhere in Europe and the United States is a pedagogy that employs sound, prosody, memory and emotion before passing on to anything resembling meaning or referential language. *Samaʿ* is an aesthetic training and entrainment that moves easily across borders. Indeed, as Sufi aesthetics travel (from North Africa to France, for example), referential meaning is less important than the affective meaning embedded and embodied in the ritual form. This is not to say that this pedagogy is irrational, however. In fact, as a vehicle of affective

communication, music and the emotion it evokes may be intricately involved with cognitive awareness and decision-making (Nussbaum 2001; Mithen 2006). Insofar as our affective states determine both our imaginations and our actions, listening (and the ‘tracks’ it lays down in memory) has consequence in the world. Indeed, listening effects a restructuration of the phenomenological self not only in the performance context but also subsequently, as the sounds continue to reverberate in memory and reorient motivations. Having experienced a corporeal (and, for Sufis, a spiritual) state of ecstasy, humans seek to repeat the experience. The music itself inhabits the initiate and the initiate inhabits the world having acquired a new “culture.” Novice Sufis become literate in listening; that is they develop literacies in auditory practices.

“Literacies of listening” is an oxymoron, combining the inscriptive with the auditory. I employ this oxymoron intentionally in order to unfold the ‘sound within the word’; that is, to better understand the primacy of phonemic sound and memory not only in language acquisition but in the acquisition of cultural aesthetics and religion.

8. Analytical Frames: Beyond Language

The discipline of linguistics, and particularly structural linguistics, has had an almost hegemonic hold on ethnomusicology since the 1960s due, in part, to analogical thinking: music is to language (*langue*), what composition is to speech (*parole*); phonetics are to acoustics what phonemics are to cultural scales, modes, and rhythms. These analogies are compelling to the extent that they provide a way of thinking (about) music and its place in the world as a form of communication. They also implicitly or explicitly privilege language as the defining factor of humanity insofar as it sets humans apart from other animals. While language is certainly an extremely important part of what it means to be human, recent studies point to the foundations of sound and memory as the primary building blocks of linguistic cognition, as well as the role of emotion in rational decision-making (Damasio 1994; Nussbaum 2001). It is impossible, in other words, to neatly separate the rational and the emotional, consigning language to the former and music to the later. Indeed, if physical anthropologist Steven Mithen (2006) is right, language developed from music, and not the other way around, and both are equally essential to our humanity.

There are certainly many parallels between musical acquisition and language acquisition, as well as between musical socialization and language socialization. What is often forgotten in these studies however is the primary role of listening in the acquisition of new styles and status. Learning a new musical aesthetic (or style) involves not just words and syntax, rhythms and melodies, but ways of perceiving and interpreting experience. It requires the learner’s pragmatic engagement with the sensate world, and changes both world and learner. We know from studies of language socialization, for example, that “*styles* of communication...are...linked to

local concepts of social identity and social roles” (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986:163, my emphasis; see also Bernstein 1975) and that social status is often transformed by learning different ways to use language at all stages of life (Hymes 1967, 1972; Fischer 1970). This is as true for sound as it is for words. Learning the Sufi *sama*’, for example, brings with it a new social status. The Sufis in France acquire socio-religious knowledge and identity as they acquire competence not only in performing but in listening to the songs and prayers. Indeed, as one member of the order put it to me, “The pedagogy is in the songs. In the [Sufi] order, one learns through the music. Each song carries its own secret [within it]” (interview, 30 December 2008). It is not only the meaning of the words that creates community, however, *since many of the members do not understand Arabic*. Rather, the technique of attentive listening cultivates an affective stance towards themselves and others. The meaning is of course important, but the power of the words does not depend on an intellectual understanding of them. Rather, the songs live lives independent of any one interpretation. They are the vehicles of the *sirr*, the secrets of initiation (*sirr*, “secret” in Arabic, is a word that has been imported into the French, as a term of discourse). Learning the liturgy and the songs, the Sufi female devotees with whom I work (called *faqirat*, or “the poor ones”) enter into a new community, one wherein ethics are learned, comportment is proscribed and even marriages are made.

How does this happen? Again, I turn to language research not in order to reify narrative, but to demonstrate that even language acquisition relies first and foremost upon ‘sound listening’ and memory. Recent research on language acquisition tells us that language is not just a matter of imitation and production (Skinner 1957), nor of innate grammatical hardwiring (Chomsky 1957, 1959), but of processes of listening and memory that imprint phonemic and intonational patterns on the brain.¹⁹ These memories (of sound patterns in speech) determine future auditory perceptions, acting as “magnets” that help language learners categorize sounds into words (Kuhl 2000). As with language, so with sound more generally.²⁰ In other words, the first sounds we listen to determine what we *hear* later, and consequently how we recognize and categorize our language and our (musical and social) world. Even before children understand the meaning of words, they listen more attentively to patterns that they have perceived before, for example.²¹ They “recognize” sounds and how particular sounds are grouped in their native language. Those initial auditory experiences actually create their perceptions, drawing them to listen more closely to identifiable (remembered) patterns in their language and to categorize other sound clusters as non-language.²²

It is not surprising that listening is linked to memory, or that we gravitate to the familiar in the auditory realm just as we do in other realms, yet it is notable that *acts of listening create our very perceptions*; that is, not only do we perceive the auditory stimulus that surrounds us, but what we hear in our environment is determined by what we have listened to before.²³ This “conditioning of listening” leads in part to our categorization of sound into music and/or noise (Attali 1985). Fortunately these categories are malleable. Like any kind of music appreciation, learning to lis-

ten establishes different aesthetic templates in the brain, restructuring our cultural categories of beauty as well as our perceptions. The technique of *sama*—listening that provokes entrainment and literally entrances—not only creates new perceptions and categories but changes the phenomenological relation of self to ground, or social context.

Because second generation North Africans have often grown up hearing their parents speak Arabic, many have an “ear” for the sound of Arabic in the Sufi liturgy and songs, even if they don’t understand the classical Arabic employed therein: that is, they recognize the phomemics of Arabic and equate it with a sense of self. But even French converts with no exposure to Arabic learn to chant with remarkable precision and pronunciation. Listening to the Sufi songs—for adults—is truly an initiation.

9. Conclusions

Since the ceremonies take place in people’s homes rather than in public institutions, Sufi rituals tend to be less noticed than rituals in mosques, for example. The Boutshishiyya Sufis do not have a “political discourse” (Ben Driss 2002), despite the presence of members in high places in the Moroccan government. And while there is a desire for the members to grow in number (Muslims who convert non-Muslims to Islam have a special place in heaven), there is no discourse of proselytism. To the contrary, there is a quotation from the Qur’an on the Boutshishiyya website that states: “If your Lord had wanted it, all the inhabitants of the earth would have believed. Is it for you to compel men to be believers, when it belongs to no one to believe without the permission of God?”²⁴

Certainly community is formed through sacred affect, and believers are encouraged to frequent other believers (*suhba*, companionship, is highly valued in Sufism). Companionship generates love, but it is also a kind of technique for advancing on the path. As the Boutshishiyya website states: “It is human nature to become what one takes as a model. If the model is good, the soul tends to be good. The whole secret of companionship resides in this.”²⁵ Community is necessary to provide models of good ethics (*akhlaq*), particularly at this moment in history when, according to Shaykh Sidi Hamza, materialism has created such an imbalance between body and spirit. Sufism attempts to rectify this imbalance by the practice of invocation and the concurrent creation of beauty (Ben Driss 2002:140).²⁶

Learning to listen brings the Sufi into divine presence. The prayers (the liturgy), the names of God (the *dhikr*) and the songs (the *qasa'id*) take up residence in the soul until there is nothing but God—at least that is the goal. Learning to listen, the Sufi gains access to different states—of rapture, and perhaps of gnosis. The *sirr*, “the secret,” is realized in the ritual.

The Boutshishiyya group in Paris has two semi-professional singing groups that sing the songs of the liturgy on stage. They also have compact discs that circulate

among the community, at least one of which is commercially available. The reasons for this are many. Of course the Boutshishiyya Sufis are aware that there is a category of sacred music marketed as “Sufi Music” that is recognized by non-Sufis as a genre of world music (Bohlman 1997; Shannon 2003; Kapchan 2008). They are also aware of the power of the aesthetic to bring the seeker to God. Indeed, the Boutshishiyya order often refers to itself as “the path of beauty” (*at-tariqa aj-jamaliyya*). Moreover, it is not accidental that one of the more prominent members of the Boutshishiyya order was the founder of the internationally reknown Fes Festival of World Sacred Music. Indeed, the same Faouzi Skali has now created a new festival, the *Festival de Fès de la Culture Soufie*, that attracts audiences from the proliferating circuit of festivals of sacred music worldwide (Kapchan 2008; www.festivalculture.soufie.com/).

The commodification of sacred music, in this case Sufi music, makes it easy to dismiss the transcendent/spiritual work of music as a screen for larger processes of misrecognition, marketing and capital gain. But the commodification of transcendence does not cancel the effects of sacred music and its performative role in creating communities of sacred affect. While spiritual goods circulate in ever more expansive and lucrative markets, Sufi music nonetheless accomplishes something that transcends both profit and identity politics. It creates, in Blacking’s words, a “special world of time,” one that is desired by a seemingly increasing number of converts (Blacking 1973:48; Savage this volume).

The role of listening in the liturgy is a work—perhaps *the* work—that labors for a sentiment of Sufi community. And yet the Sufi liturgy is also an anti-liturgy insofar as it relies upon improvisation—*al hal*. It balances form and creativity much like any genre of art. While the repetition of the names of God in unison may be said to reproduce “the same”; *al-hal* diverges from the same, creating a simultaneity of sameness and difference, community and singular subjectivity. Indeed, the twelfth-thirteenth century Sufi philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabi talks about such paradox as the foundation of all experience: “To find God is to fall into bewilderment (*hayra*),” says Chittick in his exegesis of Ibn al-‘Arabi, “not the bewilderment of being lost and unable to find one’s way, but the bewilderment of finding and knowing God and of not-finding and not-knowing Him at the same time. Every existent thing other than God dwells in a never-never land of affirmation and negation, finding and losing, knowing and not-knowing. The difference between the Finders and the rest of us is that they are fully aware of their own ambiguous situation” (Chittick 1989:4). The state of *hayra*, the self-conscious embracing of paradox, is not intellectualized in the community in southern France, but is experienced with the heart, and thus known (in the sense of gnosis).

What might this mean for understanding how spiritual audition (*sama*) creates not only unique experiences of time, but different aesthetic and ideological worlds? Sandra Harding (2003) in her book on Christian evangelism makes clear to what extent narrative worlds inhabit us. She recounts how *listening* to hours and hours of proselytizing ultimately began to change the way she perceived and thus interpreted

the world. It was not that she was intellectually convinced by the words of her Evangelist interlocutors, but they nonetheless resounded in her interior affective being, in memory. They inhabited her. Even more than language, music also invades the unconscious, re-organizing perception, and creating iconic links between aesthetic experiences of audition and emotional responses such as awe, rapture, or ecstasy (Feld 1982). After three days of intense singing with the Sufis in Morocco, all I needed was to sing the songs again in my head in order to awaken the deep feelings of love and ecstasy that these songs evoked in the group. Indeed, *sama'* is a technique that restructures the somatic habits of the body such that listening becomes an active and conscious act, it is a "spiritual skill" (Becker 2004:82). An initiate becomes literate not only in ways of singing, but in ways of listening, and these auditory practices in turn determine notions of taste and identity (Bourdieu 1984). Likewise the *dhikr*—the ceremony that invokes the trope of memory to reconnect with divinity—creates associations between words, movements, tones and timbres that lead to experiences of transcendence. Listening attentively (*sam'*) evokes memories (*dhikriyat*, pl. *dhikr*) of other temporalities and experiences of transcendence (*al-hal*).

What are the effects of the "sounds of Sufism" in the larger contexts of France and Europe? In a recent dream, the stone walls of the eighteenth century house where I live in France began to split open and the music of the Sufis began to permeate my home—literally inhabiting French history and space. While this dream symbolizes the extent to which my own unconscious is possessed by the music of the Sufis, it also holds a larger social significance. Sound is not something that can be "kept out"; it invades, inhabits, inheres (in-hears!). It transforms spaces into acoustic places with mood, energy and emotion. We know that bodily techniques determine affective stance, and that our environment (*habitus*) forms and reforms the subject (Bourdieu 1977; Mauss 1979). We know that style is more than mere aesthetics, but is determinative of perception and worldview (Merleau-Ponty 1960; Hymes 1974; Bauman 1977, 1986; Feld 1982; Sherzer 1987, 2002). We also know that both secularisms and religions are ideologies that shape individuals and communities, leaving deep marks (and sometimes scars) in history (De Vries and Weber 2001; Asad 2003). Most importantly, we know that the sensorium shapes society, creating aesthetic and ethical selves (Stoller 1989; Seremetakis 1994; Howes 2003). *Sama'*, spiritual audition, transforms the sensorium and creates the Sufi subject. Furthermore, the sacred sounds of Sufism create social space—in homes, in rented halls where international meetings take place, in cars and living-rooms where the music is played. If ways of speaking and techniques of the body produce common subjects, so ways of listening create aesthetic communities that are sacred in nature. And as with all things sacred, they are set apart.

The restructuring of aesthetic sensibilities and consequently of perception is the *sine qua non* of "initiation." This initiation is voluntary. Like acquiring another language, learning the Sufi liturgy for French-born non-Arabic speakers brings with it a repertoire of genres, registers and styles, each with their own corresponding emo-

tional valence. The high degree of prosody in the liturgy facilitates this by aiding memory.

The goal of the *dhikr* is to remember God. Yet we know from the poetic narratives of Milan Kundera (1980) to the philosophical writings of Edward Casey (for example, 2000) that remembering also entails forgetting. During the *dhikr*, the Sufi's goal is to forget everything but God. This collective remembering/forgetting creates a community that includes some and excludes others. To be sure, this is not the community of the secular French state. Yet it poses no threat to it. The existence of community—whether religious or civic—does not after all threaten democracy in any fashion. Asking what this means for secular France and Europe then is also asking about the effects of sound as it moves into the public sphere and changes the environment. Again, I think of the imagery of my dream—music moving stone! Music, after all, is the most prophetic of arts (Attali 1985). Indeed the two Boutshishiyya musical groups that perform on stages in Paris and elsewhere in Europe also find their place in the sacred music festivals that are proliferating around the globe. The sounds of Sufism are sacred, and thus re-enchant the secular world, but they are also beautiful. They are repetitive, but they also take off into realms of unpredictable improvisation. In short, the French and Europeans would do well in learning to listen to what the Sufis are saying and singing.

Notes

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- 1 This, despite the fact that according to Frishkopf, the meaning of the text is central in these rituals: "Being critical to establishing religious intention, function, and experience, the text must be central in *inshad* performance. Therefore its quality and message are very important. The most acceptable themes are glorification (*tasbih*) and supplication (*du'a*, *ibtihal*) to God; praise and love for the Prophet Muhammad and his family (*madih*, *ghazal*;...expressions of spiritual experience; narratives (*qisas*) about religious figures; and exhortations addressed to the listener" (Frishkopf 2000)
- 2 Like most disciplines growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, ethnomusicology was deeply marked by the insights of linguistics and scholars employed the vocabulary of generative grammar, deep structures, performance and competence often to the point of reorienting a discipline concerned with sound, to one concerned with sound and language (see Feld and Fox [2004] for a review of this literature).
- 3 At a conference called "Giving a Soul to Globalisation" in Fes, Morocco in the spring of 2009, cancer specialist and writer Doctor Henri Joyeux noted that although he was profoundly *républicain* (read: democratic), the current of French secularism has made the French "afraid of the invisible" ("Je ne suis pas royaliste, mais profondément républicain en France, cependant il faut savoir et oser dire que la France a coupé la tête de Dieu quand elle a coupé la tête du roi. La France est un pays sans pères et sans repères et les français ont peur de l'invisible").

- 4 See: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1539093/France-'no-longer-a-Catholic-country'.html; www.catholicculture.org/news/features/index.cfm?recnum=48547 (both accessed 2 October 2008).
- 5 This, despite French president Nicholas Sarkozy's recent call for a "laïcité positive"—that is, a secularism that is positive rather than negative and that is in dialogue with religious leaders and ideas. See the interview with historian Max Gallo in *Liberation*: "L'ancienne conception de la laïcité est dépassée" (The old conception of secularism is dépassée), www.liberation.fr/actualite/societe/351973.FR.php (accessed 15 September 2008).
- 6 Human Rights Watch stated: "The proposed law is an unwarranted infringement on the right to religious practice. For many Muslims, wearing a headscarf is not only about religious expression, it is about religious obligation in salaah."
- 7 For example, when a court case was postponed because a North African defendant was fasting, a headline in the left-leaning journal, *Liberation* was: *Le Tribunal Fait Le Ramadan*—"The Court is doing Ramadan"—in which the journalist stated: "The suspicion that a trial in Rennes was able to adjourn because the accused was observing the Muslim fast incites worry about the strict application of secular principles." This dominated the news in all the newspapers at the time.
- 8 For a while now there has been talk in the press about creating a French Islam, by which is meant a moderate Islam which does not threaten the French State in any fashion.
- 9 When we lived in Fes in 2004 we knew a young man (called a *khalifa*, or overseer) in the Tijaniyya order who spoke fluent Arabic, English, French and Spanish, and whose express job was to initiate foreigners to the Tijanniya order.
- 10 An article dated 1 June 2006 and entitled "Islamists making inroads in Morocco's universities" states:
 CASABLANCA: In Morocco's universities, many students' greatest fear is not an impossible exam, but their own National Union of Moroccan Students, which has become a wing of Morocco's largest Islamist opposition movement. Led by Sufi Sheikh Abdessalam Yassine, the movement Adl wal Ihsan, or Justice and Spirituality, and its hundreds of thousands of members are highly critical of Morocco's monarchy. The government accuses it of trying to engineer the rise of an Islamic state. Last week police launched a crackdown on Adl wal Ihsan activists in several Moroccan cities, briefly detaining 330 amid charges the group is planning an uprising for later this year.
 Morocco has been on alert against Islamic extremism, especially since the Casablanca suicide bombings in 2003, and is an ally in the US war on terror. Efforts to force people to follow Islamic codes also ring alarm bells in a country generally more liberal and democratic than many others in the Muslim world. Students and teachers at the University of Casablanca say Adl wal Ihsan lobbies for a Quran-based curriculum, takes control of campus mosques and forbids all student activities except its own. They said the students' union behaved similarly throughout Moroccan universities, bullying students into following Islamic codes. Ministry of Education officials could not be reached for comment. While the government has taken steps against Adl wal Ihsan, it has made no visible moves against the student union. (www.yabiladi.com/forum/read-44-1148938.html; accessed 23 November 2008).
- 11 Historically, liturgy is not just a form of public worship with a prescribed form, but a public duty performed without recompense by richer citizens for poorer ones. Lévinas defines it as: "the putting out of funds at a loss" (Lévinas 1982:192). It is an act of charity for the sake of community. Often consisting of intoned psalms, prayers, exaltations and hymns, the etymology of the word liturgy reminds us that a religious rite is a service enacted by a ritual specialist for

the people, or a service done by the people for others. Liturgy is a kind of prestation in that it offers gifts, but also exacts obligation, involving participants in a long-term relation of reciprocity; for liturgy takes up a life within social actors that needs to be nourished by sustained communal performance. Insofar as it enacts an ethical relation between social actors, liturgy is performative. It does something in the world, weaving an aesthetic thread—and, who knows? perhaps a spiritual one—between participants. “Furthermore,” says Levinas of liturgy, “as an absolutely patient action, liturgy is not to be ranked as a cult besides work and ethics. It is ethics itself” (Lévinas 1982:192). The Aristotelian ethos that equates doing with being, and practice with moral identity, is very present in the well-known Sufi theologies of Ibn al-‘Arabi (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) and al-Ghazzali (eleventh-twelfth centuries) (see Chittick 1989; Corbin 1998). For contemporary Sufis as well, the practice of piety *constitutes* faith, it is not the result of faith (Hoffman 1995, 1999; see also Gilsenan 1973). One not only learns by doing, but one *becomes* by doing.

- 12 Among these, “Busiri’s celebrated poem Qasidat al-Burda (the Mantle Ode) [which] is recited throughout the Islamic world (Schimmel 1975:181-ff). The poem is usually enhanced by insertion of blessings and praises for the Prophet (salawat), and often by the interpolation of additional poetic lines matching the original (tashtir) as well” (Frishkopf 2000). The Boutshishis also sing “Tala‘a al-Badru ‘Alayna,” a song of praise to the Prophet Muhammed, composed during the Prophet’s lifetime (www.geocities.com/ahlulbayt14/badr.html).
- 13 Steven Mithen in his book on the evolution of music notes that the “memorizing of songs establishes a more extensive and elaborate network of information in the brain because both speech memory and the melody memory systems are involved. This makes the recognition of a song melody easier, because more neural circuits are stimulated when the music is played than is the case when a melody is purely instrumental in nature” (2006:55).
- 14 Hoffman notes that in Sufi and neo-Sufi movements, “extinction” in Muhammad was a means to achieving extinction in, or union with God: “One aspect of neo-Sufi teaching that has attracted particular attention is the emphasis these orders place on visions of the Prophet. The Sanusiyya and Mirghaniyya encouraged their disciples to meditate on the Prophet through visualization in order to attain union with him. This has been interpreted by Gibb, Trimmingham, and Rahman as a substitution of mystical union with the Prophet (an apparent reference to fana’ fi l-rasul, although Rahman interprets it in a moral rather than a mystical sense) for mystical union with God. Trimmingham sees a commonality between the teachings of Ahmad ibn Idris and his contemporary Ahmad al-Tijani (d. 1815), and describes them as having initiated the “Muhammadan Path” which stresses meditation on the Prophet in the hope of achieving fan’a in him. In his opinion, this changed the entire basis of Sufi devotional life. However, we have seen that in the school of Ibn ‘Arabi, fan’ fi ‘l-rasul was not a substitute for annihilation in God but a means to it. Did the Tijani and Idrisi orders really substitute the one for the other? Is union with God no longer considered possible? Or do the teachings of these orders actually reflect a deep continuity with the medieval tradition of fan’afi ‘l-rasul?” (Hoffman 1999:361-62). Insofar as the Boutshishiyya order does not reject “the master-disciple relationship and the hierarchical mystical Way leading to illumination,” it may be said not to fall into the category of “neo-Sufism.”
- 15 Charles Keil describes the theory of participatory discrepancies as a liberating theory for audio-tactile processes and textures. He asserts that “Music, to be personally involving and socially valuable, must be ‘out of time’ and ‘out of tune,’” and that it is “‘out of time’ and ‘out of tune’ only in relation to music department standardization and the civilized worldview, of course” (1995:4).

- 16 Chittick notes that invoking the names of God has practical effects: "Each of these words designates a mode of gaining direct knowledge of God and of the unseen worlds without the intermediary of study, teacher, or rational faculty. God 'opens up' the heart to the infusion of knowledge" (1989:xii).
- 17 For example, in the *waqiah sura*: *Thulatun mina lawwinlina / Thulatun mina alakhirin / Wa as habu shimallu / ma as habu shshimal / Fi samumin wa hamimin / Wa dhillin min yahmumin*.
- 18 Rasmussen in her 2001 article on Qur'anic recitation in Indonesia talks about a government-sponsored "festivalization of religion." She says, "Surely, huge competitions where people from all walks of life witness, listen to, watch, try to perfect, judge, and reward Qur'anic recitation from the holy book and highest authority of Islam qualifies as leading to the spiritual welfare of the nation. In addition to promoting spiritual welfare and growth, the widespread publicization of recitation in the Arabic language serves as yet another way to unify the vast nation of Indonesia, propelling diverse peoples even more strongly into an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983)" (2001:49). She continues: "Coming away from the delightful yet overwhelming sojourn at Pondok Pesantren Al-Itifaqiyah left me with the feeling that Islam is not only a spiritual endeavor but also a civic obligation" (2001:50).
- 19 "The discoveries of the last two decades, demonstrating that by simply listening to language infants acquire sophisticated information about its properties, have created new views of learning. Three important examples of a new kind of learning have emerged. First, infants detect patterns in language input. Second, infants exploit the statistical properties of the input, enabling them to detect and use distributional and probabilistic information contained in ambient language to identify higher order units. Third, infant perception is altered—literally warped—by experience to enhance language perception. No speaker of any language perceives acoustic reality; in each case, perception is altered in the service of language" (Kuhl 2000:3).
- 20 Indeed recent studies in anthropology and neuroscience support the fact that sound patterns (and not words) are primary building blocks in emotion and cognition (Mithen 2006).
- 21 Infanted-Directed-Speech (IDS, or "motherese") contains a high degree of prosody – exaggerated intonations and emphases – to facilitate children's memory in language learning.
- 22 Infants "do not recognize the words themselves, but recognize the perceptual patterns typical of words in their language. They develop a 'perceptual sleeve' in which words fit; a description of word candidates assists them in identifying potential words in running speech" (Kuhl 2000:3). This has parallels in the distinction between music and noise as well (Attali 1985).
- 23 This is what Kuhl refers to as a "perceptual sleeve" (2000:11852).
- 24 On the website, the quote is in French: "Coran 10, 99-100: Si ton Seigneur l'avait voulu, tous les habitants de la terre auraient cru. Est-ce à toi de contraindre les hommes à être croyants, alors qu'il n'appartient à personne de croire sans la permission de Dieu?"
- 25 "La nature de l'âme humaine est de s'imprégner de celui qu'elle prend pour modèle. Si le modèle est bon, l'âme tend à être bonne. Tout le secret du compagnonnage réside ici." (www.saveurs-soufies.com; accessed 6 October 2008).
- 26 Despite the emphasis on good ethics, the Sufis I have known for the past 14 years do not judge others in terms of how well they follow Islamic law (the *sharia*). Very few of them veil outside the ritual context. For them, practicing the *dhikr*, the remembrance of God ceremonies, is the most important aspect of a Sufi life. It purifies the heart, making all good things follow.

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