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Moroccan Female Performers Defining the Social Body

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If you're going to the heights
Come here first and I'll give you some advice
If you get there . . .
Don't talk to the city or its people
Check it out [first]
And how to leave it .

And you, who are leaving, what's your business?
And you who are coming, what's your business?
Those town people are all dummies;
Those going scorn you
And those coming scorn you
But you, you followed in our footsteps
And forgot your family.

Song of a Moroccan *shikha*

Shikhat (pl) are female performers in Moroccan society whose singing and dancing are central to all festivity, including rites of passage like marriage ceremonies and birth and circumcision celebrations.[1] Despite their centrality, however, *shikhat* are socially marginal due to the license that they exhibit both in performance and in their 'off-stage' lives. This article examines the artistic and bodily competencies of the *shikhat* as they articulate some of the more powerful metaphors of Moroccan identity, extending ultimately from embodiments of shame to embodiments of the one heterogeneous nation.

Figures 1 and 2. Moroccan *shikhat* are female singers and dancers central to cultural festivities of all kinds, but also considered socially marginal. All photographs by author.

I first met Mouna at Khadija's wedding. She was the lead singer in a group of four women and two men. These women all wore qaftans made from an expensive peach-colored satinet material, complemented by gold bracelets, necklaces, and earrings. Mouna, in particular, displayed an impressive amount of gold on her limbs. She was an ample woman with fair skin and blue eyes. Because of her eyes, she was called "the blue one" (*az-zarqa*).

Mouna initiated the first song, cueing the man who played fiddle (*kamanja*) and joining him with a steady beat on a clay-bodied hand drum (*tarija*).

"Tell me about my lover,"[2] she sang, "who has gone away, oh bachelor!"

"If I'm gone, I will be back," the other *shikhat* answered.

"The sleep of my mind has flown away," Mouna continued, "and I worry all night. Everybody has his lover."

('awd liya 'la grin-i lli msha 'azri
ila mshit dba n-wəlli.
n-n'as tar mən ras-i
u n-bat n-khammәm.
kula u habib-u.)

Over the course of an hour, the beat got faster and faster, the words more difficult to distinguish. Mouna and the other women in her troupe circled the room, dancing close before the guests seated in the audience or drawing them up and into the dance. In the middle of the last song, Mouna unfastened her hair, curved her back, hung her head in front of her chest, and swung it from left to right, eyes closed, hair waving. Another woman in the group did the same. The music of the fiddle was now in pace with the quick beats of the drum. Several women from the audience were dancing. Mouna resumed an upright posture. She nodded to the man playing the *bandir* and he immediately began a different beat. The *shikhat* stamped their feet in time to the new rhythm and then the set was over.

Figure 3. The *shikhat* sing and dance in close proximity to their audience, often playing with them and pulling them up to their feet to dance.

During the break I followed the performers upstairs. Two brothers of the bride were also there. One *shikha* lit up a cigarette, as did the men, while the brothers poured wine for themselves and for the group. Mouna looked at me inquisitively. I was also dressed in a qaftan and gold, and she didn't understand why a wedding guest had approached her. I explained interest in recording some of her songs.

"*Meskina*, poor thing" Mouna said, using a term that expressed both pity and endearment. She held my hand for the next twenty minutes, asking me questions about my life—why I was in Beni Mellal, where I lived, who my family was.

"This is my friend," she told the others when they were preparing to return downstairs for another set. "She's going to come to my house."

I visited Mouna regularly for the next two summers. She lived in a poor section of town, but in a brand-new house she had paid for with her own earnings. She had two daughters from different fathers, one seven, one fifteen. Her elderly aunt sometimes lived with her, and there were usually friends, other *shikhat*, who came to visit in the afternoon.

Going to Mouna's place was always a bit risky. I had to keep my visits a secret. My in-laws would never approve, and I feared that my middle-class friends, although usually very encouraging of my research, would be embarrassed about my visits to women with reputations for licentious living.

On my visits to Mouna, I would usually find her seated on the floor, plucking a chicken or preparing sweets. Apart from a wooden hutch and a bed in the bedroom, there was no furniture. We sat on blankets on the cool ceramic tiles and leaned on pillows propped against the wall. Mouna's youngest child made brief appearances, drinking the soda and eating the cookies Mouna would set out for me, before disappearing into the neighborhood again. Her teenage daughter did chores around the house; she ran to the grocer to buy soda for us and then sat on the doorstep while the older women talked inside.

Loose Words and Loose Women

Mouna was a very successful *shikha*. Her group was constantly asked to perform at weddings and had already recorded their music on audio cassette and distributed it to cassette vendors in the region. A video for home distribution was in progress. Not all Mouna's friends were so fortunate, however. I met Fatiha in Mouna's house one afternoon. She was a strikingly beautiful woman, especially by Western standards, with dark hair, large brown eyes, high cheek bones, a gruff voice, and a quick sense of humor. We took to each other immediately, and she invited me to her house, promising to sing for me.

Fatiha lived several streets away from Mouna in two rooms that she shared with her elderly mother, two grown sisters (one divorced, one never married), a grown brother, her sister's two-year-old daughter, and her own six-year-old son. The rooms were dark and sparsely furnished. Fatiha's "monsieur," a married landowner in a neighboring town, paid the rent. She told me he was crazy about her, and she tolerated him. (He showed up one day when I was there, a balding man with a generous smile, and was eager to discuss American politics.) Fatiha's younger sister was very thin and ill, possibly with parasites. She did embroidery work for other women to make some money. Fatiha had recently stopped performing in compliance with her man's wishes, but was getting bored sitting at home and wanted her own money. She was thinking about going back to work.

One afternoon Fatiha took me into the backroom, where a picture of a regal-looking man in a white robe and a turban—her boyfriend's grandfather—hung on the wall. She sent her son to buy two cigarettes from the corner store. When he came back, I noticed that he had only four toes and four fingers on his left hand and foot. "I'm crazy about him," she told me. He smiled at me and left. We lit up the cigarettes, I put the tape machine on 'record,' and Fatiha recited:

If you're going to the heights
Come here first, and I'll give you some advice
If you get there, show good will [to the local saint].
Don't talk to the city or its people.
If you talk about them, you'll regret it.
Show good will.
Don't scorn the heights.

And you, who are leaving, what's your business?

And you who are coming, what's your business?

Those town people are all crazy;
Those going scorn you
And those coming scorn you.
But you, you followed the entranced ones
And forgot your family.

(Wa l-ghadi l-ʻalwa
aji n-waṣṣi-k baʻda.
Ila lhagti səlləm.
l-ʻalwa la tkəlləm.
ila tqawlti t-ndəm.
səlləm, səlləm.
f-l-ʻalwa la tkəlləm.

Wa l-ghadi wəsh mgabl?
wa j-jay wəsh mgabl?
l-ʻalwa gaʻ b-bahəl.
wa l-ghadya ʻayb ʻl-ik.
j-jaya ʻayb ʻl-ik.
u tbʻati nas l-hal
ura nsiti walidi-k.)

The movements of the *shikha* trace the patterns of propriety and impropriety in Moroccan culture. Her body is a socially designated site of shamelessness in that her social mask requires a refusal of deference rules and moral norms. By artistically publicizing the intimacies of private life in the public sphere of ritual and secular celebration, the *shikha* sets cultural definitions of public and private domains into relief. She does this by overstepping social boundaries in a performance mode designated for such activity. By assertion of sexual liberty in heterosexual company, expressed in song lyrics, physical postures, and provocative dance movements, the *shikha* commoditizes sex, becoming a fetishized commodity occupying the margins of Moroccan society.

The "inseparability of conceptual and bodily activity" (Jackson 1983: 137) is exemplified in the case of the *shikha*. An exponent of the "relaxed" (*maṭluq*) in Moroccan conceptions of the body, the *shikha* is also categorized as "loose": her freedom of physical expression in dance is tied to an assumed licentiousness in the moral realm. The performance of *shikhat* articulates the tension between the reserved and the open—the *hashshumi* and the *maṭluq*—in Moroccan cognitive categories.[3] These expressions are displayed in postures (lowered eyes, bowed head, or, by contrast, direct gaze, rhythmic gait) and may be used to circumscribe individuals who exhibit one quality more frequently than the other. In the colloquial context, someone who is *maṭluq* is flexible and easy-going, while someone who is *hashshumi* is shy and formal. These physical postures are inseparable from their moral character. As Combs-Schilling notes, "[E]xperiences of the body build categories of the mind" (1989: xv). What Mauss spoke of as the "techniques of the body"—stances, postures, physical habits of body use that are acquired like language and that are equally communicative (1973)—are learned as culturally interpreted "physio-concepts"; they are the terms of embodiment (what Bourdieu 1977 refers to as "dispositions" of the body). Thus, the *hashshumi*, the shy and reserved, denotes respect and deference to the "pervasive male discourse" (Mernissi 1989) in Moroccan society, while the *maṭluq*, the open, the free, asserts liberty from this discourse and is tolerated only when it is unthreatening, as in the case of a lovable drunk.

Figure 4. The looseness of the *shikha*'s body and tongue counters social norms. The *shikha* opens her mouth in public and uses her body to draw others to the dance.

Infamy has often preceded fame for the woman artist. As Jones has noted, "The link between loose language and loose living arises from a basic association of women's bodies with their speech: a woman's accessibility to the social world beyond the household through speech is seen as intimately connected to the scandalous openness of her body" (1986: 76). The "loose" language of the *shikha* is both linguistic and corporeal; these two expressive aspects cannot be divided. The *shikha* opens her mouth in public—singing words that discuss sexuality, inhaling and exhaling cigarette smoke, imbibing wine—and uses her body to draw others to the dance. Often a "meaty" (*mlahhma*) woman,

the *shikha* enacts the carnivalesque body of plenty, moving her hips rhythmically and displaying a minute control of the musculature of the "lower bodily strata"[4] at close proximity to her audience, whether they are male or female. Waving her loose hair back and forth before her face, her feet beating the floor in regular rhythm, the *shikha* may even approach trance (see Figure 5); indeed, her dancing makes salient the permeable boundaries between the sexual and the sacred, drawing upon a vocabulary of movement similar to that used to commune with the spirit world in Moroccan esoteric practice (see Crapanzano 1973; Fernea 1978). The performance of *shikhat* at annual festivals celebrating local saints (*musəms*) reinforces the intricate and often inseparable relationship between the sacred and the profane in Moroccan expressive culture.

Figure 5. A *shikha* loosens her hair and swings her head, approaching trance.

Just as the *shikha* is associated with secularity, she is also aligned with the subaltern and the disenfranchised. Her community is with other *shikhat*. They perform collectively, often in groups of three or four women, playing an array of small drums (the *darbuka*, the *tarija*, the *bandir*), singing and sometimes drumming with their feet on an overturned metal basin (*aj-jafna*). They are usually accompanied by two or three male musicians who play the *kamanja* (the fiddle, a men's instrument), the *lutar* (a three-stringed small-bodied instrument also played by men), and the drums.

The physical centrality of *shikhat* in the majority of Moroccan celebrations and their explicitly erotic physical attitudes make them metonyms for the festive body. But although they are central in their artistic function, they are marginal in society. As representatives of boldness and excess, they position themselves beyond the borders of social restraint, beyond *hashuma*, or shame. Stigmatization thus becomes society's means of controlling them.

Figure 6. As representatives of boldness and excess, *shikha* position themselves beyond *hashuma*, or shame.

Legends of Resistance

The subversive power of *shikhat* song (particularly the complex genre of *l'aita*)[5] is documented in oral legends that recount its political role in resistance movements against the French, as well as against certain Moroccan officials who conspired with them during the protectorate.

One such controversial figure was the governor, or *qa'id*, 'Aissa bən 'Mur, who had a conflict with the Oulad Zaid, a dissident tribe under his jurisdiction in the region of Safi. There are varying opinions regarding the character of this governor. Although some people praise his justice, others say he was a tyrant, an "artist in torture and murder," and a pawn of the administration who collaborated with the colonialists (Kharaz 1995; cf. Bouhmid 1995). He was also, however, a connoisseur of popular music, known for his nights of artistic revelry.

Qa'id 'Aissa bən 'Mur was particularly fond of a *shikha* named Hadda, a religious woman and tribal poet who performed for him whenever she was summoned. Legend has it that the Ouled Zaid tribe persuaded Hadda to criticize the qa'id in song so that other tribes would be aware of his wrongs and would rebel against him. Hadda did this, singing verses such as

'aissa ya d-dwib
ya ujah l-klib.
'aissa l-qatəl khut-u.

('Aissa, oh you little fox,
oh dog-face.
'Aissa, the killer of his brothers.)

When the qa'id heard about this, he commanded Hadda to sing these songs in front of him and, upon hearing them, ordered his servants to kill her. First, however, she was allowed to do her ablutions and pray. Some say that when doing her ablutions, she found a baby crying in a room of his house—the qa'id's grandson, the son of Moulay Hamid. Hadda nursed him, and, consequently, Moulay Hamid forbade his father's servants to kill her, instigating a conflict between father and son. Others say that 'Aissa bən 'Mur either buried or burned her alive. As Kharaz notes, whatever relation this legend bears to history, it attests to the role ascribed to *shikhat* song in political conflict; *l-'aita* was not just sung at harvests and weddings, but had and continues to have a sociopolitical function in the Moroccan historical imagination.

dar s-si 'aissa khlat.
qbalt-ha l-m'ashat.

l-'badi ṣaila[6] 'l-ik
mzaida walidi-k.

(The house of Si'Aissa was devastated.
[Because] It was opposed to the M'ashat [a powerful tribe
with holy lineage.

The 'Abadi [tribe] rioted against you
and also against your parents.)

A parallel figure to Hadda in Western coastal Morocco is Mbaraka l-Bihishiya in Beni Mellal who, during the protectorate, sang songs against the French, and particularly against a captain named Bironi who went on to write a book about the possibilities of civilizing the land and population of the region (see Juwiti 1995). As Juwiti notes, the history of the pacification of Beni Mellal can be read as a dialogue between the colonialist writer and the illiterate but inspired artist who defied him in song, an exploration of "two sides of a single historical wound."

When France invaded by air and the population was chased to the hills, l-Bihishiya encouraged the fighters, and criticized the deserters, singing:

shaft l-hakəm jay-ni rəjdad
b-nfaḍu jdad.
t-bqai b-khir ya l-blad.
hada ma ktab.

(I saw the governor coming after me
with new weapons.
Stay well, oh my country.
That's what's written.)

After the fighting was over and the French had established themselves, l-Bihishiya sang vitriolic songs about the French and those who accepted and worked with the colonialists:

ḥətta 'riwa 'raf l-biru.
ḥətta 'riwa dayr ksiwa.
ḥətta 'riwa 'ad ifari.
shad l-iyam l-məṭluba.
shi 'ṭat-u shi gəl'at l-ih.

(Even a little nothing[7] knows bureaucracy.
Even a little nothing is wearing a little uniform.
Even a little nothing has become a conciliator.
He is holding on to borrowed days.
They are given to some, and taken away from others.)

As a consequence of her songs of protest, Bironi exiled her to a small town in the mountains (*fum l-'anṣər*), but her tribe went to get her, and she returned to Beni Mellal, continuing to sing songs about the evil that was afoot, citing by name the people who died in conflict with the French:

tkəlləm l-kur qbəl l-fṭur
kif r-rʿud l-kharfiya.
shabət kul mən hiya dərriya.
tḥarqat l-khayl u r-rəjliya.

bki yal-məllaliya.
bki b-d-dmuʿ s-skhiya.
l-qaṣba tgəlʿat li-ya.

(The cannonball spoke before breakfast
Like the storms of autumn.
All the young girls have turned grey.
The horses were burned with the foot soldiers.

Cry, oh Mellali woman.
Cry with generous tears.
The fort has been taken away from me.)

Centrality and Anomaly

For a large majority of contemporary Moroccans, *shikhat* continue to be an indispensable part of religious and national festivity: "If there aren't *shikhat* there's nothing" (*ila ma kaynsh sh-shikhat, ma kayn walu*). They are called upon to entertain at saint's festivals, wedding celebrations, naming ceremonies, and henna parties. These social occasions are for the most part ritual times as well as festive events. *Shikhat* divert attention from the private dimension of family rite to a festivity that is created for the express enjoyment of the guests. Although a bride may be taken up in the seriousness of ritual or a little boy may be having his foreskin removed at the center of a rite of passage, the guests engage in a more secular celebration whose success is predicated upon gazing at and dancing with the *shikhat*. "Gazing" in this context is not a passive activity, nor is it confined to men. Initially seated on long couches or mattresses, the guests are approached by the performers, who proceed to dance and sing at high volume directly in front of their spectators, inviting participation as well as soliciting ten– and fifty–dirham notes (about $1.25 and $7) to be tucked into their belts.

The clear visibility of money in the festive context demarcates the *shikha* as a commodity, set apart from the rest of the audience. And yet there is little in the *shikha*'s dress and adornment that separates her from her female public. She wears elegant and expensive qaftans much like those of the guests at the celebration, also displaying considerable amounts of gold. The physical identification of the audience with the *shikha* is thus easily facilitated once the party gets going and the guests allow themselves to be drawn in to the dance.

Different rules of behavior apply in festive contexts, as the ordinary and quotidian gives way to the extraordinary and exceptional (Abrahams 1986). Events such as weddings inevitably provide counterperformances to everyday norms and conventions by putting them into differential and experiential relief. *Shikhat* provide this "relief," yet their marginality in the larger society acts to further instantiate the very moral codes they challenge. Because they blur the boundaries between ordinary and extraordinary experience, between private and public genres of expression, they become the social representatives of transgression (from the Latin *transgredi*, "to step beyond or across").

Codes of propriety are an extremely important aspect of Moroccan culture and of the circum-Mediterranean world in general (see Abu-Lughod 1986; Bourdieu 1966, 1977; Brandes 1980; Herzfeld 1985; Perestiany 1966). The enactment of these codes is context-dependent, relying on notions of social position, status, and discursive role negotiation (Rosen 1984). Within the dominant "moral economy,"[8] one way that women access limited honor and respect is by "distancing themselves from sexuality and its antisocial associations." Yet, as Abu-Lughod has made clear for the Bedouin women of Egypt, normally hidden emotions (such as love and desire) are permitted expression in private and monosexual contexts (1986: 165). Likewise in Morocco, the unconstrained expression of emotion and all activities associated with pleasure are socially curtailed except when given deliberate license during periods of festivity (*n-nashaṭ*) or monosexual intimacy.[9] Expressions of sexuality and personal emotion through music, dance, or poetry, are manifest mainly in particular performance contexts due to their potentially subversive power.

Shikhat embody this subversion as they cross the boundaries between acceptable female and acceptable male behavior; they smoke, drink alcohol, and may have several sexual partners, while capitalizing on their femininity. Because of this, *shikhat* are presented as everything respectable women are not. A popular joke recounts the reaction of a man from Fes when, on arriving home, finds his wife in bed with another man. "All you need is a cigarette," he tells her, "and you'll be a *shikha*." The *shikha* becomes a metonym for female transgression. She is a free woman, and anyone who exercises freedom beyond the socially defined limits is a *shikha*. Maher notes that *shikhat* "are popularly defined as 'women who do not want men to tell them what to do'" (1974: 111; cf. Graham-Brown 1988).

Yet *shikhat* serve a role in the inner thoughts of honorable women insofar as they are licensed in performance to publicize the private desires and disappointments of the majority of Moroccan women. As many as 50 percent of all village women may look forward to divorce, while the statistics run about 28 percent for the "urban employed class" (Maher 1974: 110).

Divorce is easy and abandonment is common.
Beg of the one who cauterized you
If he will take you.

The love that I'm used to
Took the bus and went.

Oh one going to Beni Mellal, put me in mind
The route to Chaouia is between my eyes.

(zawgi f-l-kawi-k
ila bgha y-ddi-k.
l-kbida lli nʿtad
shad l-kar u zad.

l-ghadi l-bəni məllal dir-ni f-l-bal

trəq sh-shawiya bin ‘ayniya.)

The lover here is he who heals by burning—cauterization. The image comes from a traditional healer (*kuwway*) in Moroccan society who cures all manner of sickness (considered "cold") by quickly tapping the body with a hot iron rod. The *shikha* has been abandoned by the one who both healed and burned her and the route of his departure is seated into her bodily memory, "between her eyes."

Figure 7. Abandoned by the one who both healed and burned her, the route of his departure is seated in bodily memory "between her eyes."

The Performance of Openness

Shikhat divulge their own and other women's secrets in public (extrafamilial) celebration and sometimes in bawdy language. The potential subversion of this act is felt by society as a whole. What applies to Bedouin society applies also here: "to express sexuality is . . . an act of defiance" (Abu-Lughod 1986: 157), an assertion of power that has no place in social hierarchy. Because enacted in a festive mode, it is tolerated and enjoyed, a defiance but also a source of social renewal, permitting the social ideation of alternate wells of power within the individual. Despite the unreality created by the performance frame, "both rituals and festivals enter into the process of self-authentification" (Abrahams 1987: 177). There are times when play is dead serious. The *shikha* says, in essence, "I am playing, but I am playing at what I am; I am this mask."

Shikhat have the license to play with gender boundaries and with what is socially permissible during performance time. But *shikhat* are threatening precisely because they extend the license of public performance to their private lives as well. In a real sense, their livelihood lies in transforming their private selves into public display, hypertrophizing themselves. Their sexual liberation and licentiousness become symbolic of their selfhood: the sex stands for the whole.

Being without closure, however, they are also without defense. The poetic publication of privacy in song lyric and bodily movement establishes the *shikha* as public property; that is, her commoditized vulnerability serves the purpose of society as she is appropriated as a symbol of immodesty and becomes an emblem of shame. Yet the performance of *shikhat* exposes the values of the dominant culture to challenge by speaking a different attitude—physical, emotional and moral—into being. They "reflexively comment upon those patterns and alter a society's awareness of itself" (Babcock 1980: 5). Poesis, bodily and lyrical, becomes a means of self-revelation, social reflexivity, and subtle resistance (see Abu-Lughod 1986, 1990; Boddy 1989; Caton 1990; Joseph 1980).

Socio-sexual Reflexivity and the Limitation of Chaos

The altered awareness that s*hikhat* bring to society in their bodily poetics is imbued with social and political import. *Shikhat* illustrate a reality that they actually live, and, by so doing, they draw attention to both the disjunctures and the congruences between the real and the fictional in society's definitions of the feminine. The *shikha*'s unabashed expression of sexuality in song, movement, and lifestyle comments upon and, in a limited sense, reveals what is usually clothed, veiled, and preferably dismissed among those who are modest:

Beer and red wine
she blamed it on them.

They made you drink whiskey
and you spent all night [pining and] crying.

(l-birra u r-ruj
sharbu-k l-wiski
dart-hum hujuj.

bayt ‘a t-bki.)

But this same forthrightness also accounts for her designation as the diseased member of the social body who must pay for her libertinism:

Oh one who bought me,
Put me next to you.

Now you'll begin to need me.

You sold me and I bought you.
My heart is your property.

(ah wa ya sh-sharini
wa dir-ni ḥda-k.
daba təḥtəj-ni.
bə ʻti-ni u ana n-shri-k
qalbi rah məmluk l-ik.)

Or,

I fear that you will become addicted to love.
No doctor will be able to cure you,
even with pure faith.

(n-khafʻl-ik mən l-ḥub la y-bli-k.
u ḥətta ṭbib ma y-qdər y-dawi-k
wakha b-n-niya ṣ-ṣafiya.)

The commodification of desire is here eloquently if ambiguously stated. The body is bought and sold by both men and women, while a piece of it (the heart) is singled out and appropriated. Love infects the body with incurable addiction. Desire becomes a commodity that can be controlled by women as well as a disease that spreads like a virus, uncontrolled. The lyrics sung by *shikhat* attest to the power of feminine desire to change lives and circumstance. But they are also rife with the painful consequences of taking responsibility for that power. The *shikha* is ultimately "burned" because she rejects the boundaries that are socially prescribed for her emotional and physical lives and breaks "the silence of women [which is] one of the bases of Moroccan civilization" (Mernissi 1989: 1). *təḥragt b-l-kabrit, u ʻmr-ni ma nsit*: "I was burned with sulfur," intoned Fatiha, "and I never forgot."

The *shikha* enters into dialogue with many and all. She is a female rebel, a dialogic entity[10] who by her very being questions the validity of the monologic and prescriptive place designated for female desire by the "pervasive male discourse" (Mernissi 1989). Ironically, she also dialogues with the belief that, unchecked, women's sexuality lures men (and thus society) to *fitna*, "chaos" (from the root *fatana*, which means to seduce, or to tempt).

The fear of *fitna* is described by Rosen as underlying the construction of all social relations in Morocco. Because social status is negotiated rather than hierarchically prescribed, he argues, personal and social identity in Morocco take shape in a "web of relationships" that is perpetually transforming and indeterminate (1984: 8). Power and position in Moroccan society are discursively constructed and thus subject to the vagaries and instabilities of interpretation by both kin and strangers. "And over (or under) all this uncertainty," Rosen asserts, "resides a sense—indeed a fear—of chaos, a belief that the orderliness of the world is contingent on many factors and that the tendency, or at least the strong possibility, exists that this uncertain physical and social environment might well give way to utter disorder" (ibid.). Ludic behavior like singing and dancing is particularly subversive in such a climate, threatening to destabilize and decenter the serious and canonical aspects of the quotidian.

This fear of the contingent and inchoate in social relations is certainly not confined to Moroccan culture. Trickster figures in the folklore of many societies attest to the fear and fascination with which humans regard the boundless.[11] But while male performers are also marginal to Moroccan society, conceptions of disorder are clearly gendered; *fitna* is also a synonym for a "beautiful woman" (Mernissi 1987: 31). Insofar as the *shikha* threatens "the orderliness of the world," her social presence provides reasons and reinforces the axiom that "women must be controlled to prevent men from being distracted from their social and religious duties" (ibid.: 32). Her very being proves that women who are not controlled turn to temptation and sedition—to *fitna* (economic motivations are not taken into account in this argument). Because *shikhat* enact their own autonomy, society institutionalizes their freedom and circumscribes the concept of *fitna* in social stigma. The irony, of course, is that *shikhat* perform a very codified set of social behaviors, their roles prescribed and anticipated. It is the contradiction of being victimized for representing a freedom that they are not at liberty to enjoy that leads the *shikha* to lament:

The clairvoyant is the mistress of prediction.
Your tomb is in hell.
Where are the brothers and sisters
Who will be present on the day of death?

(shuwafa mulat l-ʻlam.
qabr-ak f1jaḥnnam.
fin l-khut u l-khwatat
y-ḥadru l-ik yum l-mamat?)[12]

The Competent Body

Despite their rule-governed disorder, *shikhat* are nonetheless artists, taking responsibility for the voicing and interpretation of social disjuncture, caused, for example, by the competing forces of family expectations and personal desires.[13] Indeed, their lamentations (referred to as *bəkiya*, crying) on themes of lost love, abandonment, and sexual longing define feminine crises as they are experienced in the everyday world. The thematic sadness that is registered in the song lyrics, however, is countered by a joyousness of delivery as the words are vigorously drummed and intoned (often around the triad of a minor third and a lowered seventh note). The juxtaposition of mournful words, festive voicing, and sexualized dancing acts both to define and, at least momentarily, to resolve crisis. Contradiction, whether of semiotic codes or of social and evaluative roles, is not bemoaned in this context; rather, the plurality of messages in different symbolic venues acts to integrate and renew the community. Lamentation sung as celebration may be said to have therapeutic effect, the benefits of intersemiotic dialogue finding resonance with evidence from other Islamic rituals and crises (see especially Boddy 1988, 1989). Contradiction is thus celebrated, embodied, and made into strength.

Once they have the stage, *shikhat* dominate and dictate the emotional tenor of celebration. Through the provocative movements and loud singing of the *shikhat*, the audience is drawn up and into a collective state of celebration, their bodies literally pulled into the dance. Like other systems of signification, the body is inherently reflexive (Babcock 1980: 4), calling attention to itself as the primary symbol for self-designation in the performance. For although the *shikha*'s semi-improvised song lyrics delimit social stress points, they are often inaudible

under the percussive noise and near-screaming quality of the voices. It is the body that imposes itself upon the audience, making the most permanent impression both in the moment and in memory. Regardless of the audience's gender, the *shikha* approaches and demonstrates how to "lift the belt" (*ḥaz as-səmṭa*), an undulating movement that rolls the lower abdomen up to the waist. If, as Bourdieu asserts, "competence implies the power to impose reception" (1977: 649), then this is definitely a performance of both competence and power. In performance, the *shikha* is engaged in an intense demonstration of physical and artistic prowess. The audience expects it, and the *shikha* is responsible for communicating it (Bauman 1977). To the extent that the *shikha* successfully lures her audience and captures the attention centered on her, a state of "communitas"[14] may be momentarily achieved, facilitated at times by musical climax or by the loss of self-centeredness that transpires in shared dance. The *shikha*, in this instance, becomes a liminar, a facilitator of transition from one state (*ḥal*) to another.

In delimiting the competence of the *shikha*, it is impossible not to speak of the *shikha*'s body, for the *shikha* is not only a professional dancer, but is understood to be a professional in other physical matters, as a *shikha* has illicit sexual relations (*kat zni*). As one Moroccan novelist describes her, a *shikha* can smoke a cigarette with her sexual organ (Khatibi 1983); she is an adept. Because of the high value traditionally put on virginity in Moroccan society, a number of young men are first "initiated" by *shikhat*. *Shikhat* may provide an introduction to sexuality, both literally for young men, and symbolically for young women, for it is through the physical liberty displayed by *shikhat* at times of celebration that the limits of the feminine "techniques" of the body are socially explored; *shikhat* present to the public the various ways that women may "use their bodies," thus codifying a possible repertoire of feminine movement into the social canon (Mauss 1973: 70). Moroccan girls learn to dance at a very young age in the company of their female kin, but it is only during times of celebration when this competence is displayed outside the family situation. *Shikhat* provide the model for competence in this regard as they call the body to a remembrance of its earliest joys in movement.

Shikhat master the moves of the dance. They are *maṭluqat*, "free, unlimited, unrestricted." They are also fun, garrulous, and outgoing. Someone who is *maṭluq*, is also often *nashṭ*, an adjective which carries connotations of becoming intoxicated. If one is *nashṭ*, one is "lively, animated, spirited," but if one is *na:shṭ* (drawing out the vowel), then one is really in the spirit of things, high on wine or dance or love. A common comment made about a *shikha* is that she is *na:shṭa m'a ras-ha*, "spirited in her head," celebrating and jubilant. When I remarked that a particular *shikha* was so spirited, a young woman was quick to tell me that *shikhat always* embody this quality of exhilaration and flowing movement.

Women who are *maṭluqat* are often appreciated in public and scorned in gossip or the reverse, depending on the intimacy and gender identity of the group. This duality articulates two opposing values: the hegemonic system of deference condemns the *maṭluq* as potentially subversive of the dominant value system, whereas the "subordinate discourse of women"[15] applauds the *maṭluq* as courageous and entertaining, though not necessarily discursively safe:

> The gossipers, what are they worth?
> Oh my hell, oh my hell.
> They're worth the wind
> Those who say disgraceful words.
>
> (u lli hadru ash kay swaw?
> wayli wayli.
> y-swaw r-riḥ
> yal lli y-gulu klam l-'ar.)

Traditionally, unmarried girls have had license to be moderately *maṭluqat* at celebrations such as weddings, as this is their chance to exhibit themselves to mothers of prospective young men. Yet there is a limit to their exhibitionism, since they are amateurs playing at "the dance." Although they may be seen as imitating the movements of *shikhat*, resulting in an inversion of roles (virgin as prostitute), their display is not taken seriously.

Shikhat, on the contrary, are disgraceful precisely because they have no shame (*ma kay ḥashmush*). They extend the license granted by the performance situation to their lives in general. They are licentious in taking authority into their own hands and deciding to author their lives outside the socially admonished roles. But their role is nonetheless socially prescripted; they occupy the margins of society in order that the center may be more clearly defined. Because they carry their performative role into their quotidian lives, they open themselves to social ostracism and marginalization.

The Nonsense Body

Shikhat express and create the festive body by making public a repertoire of movements and emotions, embodied in dance and lyric, that are otherwise limited to familial and monosexual occasions. They also embody the carnivalesque in that they are at liberty to publicly indulge in wine and in cigarettes, a license that is not in general open to women in Moroccan society.[16] Wine is thought to be an integral ingredient for stimulating their verbal improvisation and artistic style. When I asked what *shikhat* sing about, several Moroccans told me, "They drink wine, and they begin to make nonsense." The lyrics of their songs may be considered nonsense by some, but they are a very serious nonsense as they refer explicitly and allusively to a body of cultural tenets that—apart from the Moroccan novel—are not given artistic expression in any other form:

> Please, Mr. Fqih,
> Make me a charm for him
> In order to make him crazy and mad
> And take him away from his parents.
> Oh my days.
>
> Bring the blood of sacrifice
> And we'll put it on his motorbike
> In order to make him crazy
> And leave him to turn in circles.
> Oh my days.
>
> Bring the whiskers of the mouse
> So I can hang them from his door.
> My love has become a cheat.
> Oh my days.

(ʿafək as-si l-fqih
dir-liya shi ḥjiyib ʿli-h
bəsh n-ḥamq-u u n-səṭṭi-h
u n-fərq-u ʿla walidi-h.
ay-yam-i.

jibu dam l-mghdur
n-ʿalq-u l-ih f-l-muṭur
n-ḥamq-u
u-n-khall-ih y-dur.
ay-yam-i.

jibu zghibat l-far
n-ʿalq-hum fi bab d-dar.
ḥabib-i ulla ghaddar.
ay-yam-i.)

Here a folk ethic that is associated more with the feminine than with the masculine world is evoked[17]: the belief in charms, in potions, and in illicit magic. Although this world is known and accepted in Moroccan culture, it represents an alternate power system to that of orthodox Islam. The speaking of these words at a public celebration gives credence to this alternate and feminine power system, thereby challenging more dominant beliefs that classify these practices as shameful. In this, *shikhat* speak directly to people whose origin (*aṣl*) is rural and whose belief system resembles that documented by Westermarck (1926). Although much of the folk mentality has changed, just an hour spent at an herbalist's shop is enough evidence that sympathetic magic and herbs are still solicited on a large scale.

Also at issue in these lyrics is the tension between love and family. *Shikhat* side with the former:

For years I've loved him.
[Now] a woman came and wants to take him.
By your mother, you won't win him
Even if we make his life fall.
Oh my days.

His old wrinkled mother came.
She told me, "Let go of my son."
He's your son [but he's] my love.
Oh my days.

(sinin u ana n-bghi-h
jat uḥayda bghat t-ddi-h.
u llahi ya mmu-k la fəzti bi-h
wakha n-ṭayḥu r-ruḥ ʿl-ih.
ay-yam-i.

jat sh-shərfa taʿt mm-u.
galt-liya ṭalqi wald-i.
nti wald-ək u ana ḥubb-i.
ay-yam-i.)

This theme is common in *shikhat* song, considered a genre of Moroccan popular music (*musiqa shaʿbiya*). The tension between romantic love and the assignment of partners by family and social pressure echoes the *shikha*'s own dilemma: in choosing the former, a young couple attains their own prerogative but loses the support of their families. Likewise for the *shikha*: the same freedom that allows her to live fully in her senses also imprisons her in social stigma. Most all *shikhat* are also divorcées or women who have had to fend for themselves and their children. Many refuse to be dependent on an already impoverished family and decide to work as performers. Categorizing the lyrics of *shikhat*'s songs as nonsense is a way of masking the issues of class, poverty, and female autonomy, perpetuating their social "misrecognition" in the larger community (Bourdieu 1977).[18]

The Exiled Body

As *shikhat* choose against shabby indigence with respectability and for marginality with "independence," their choice is not without regret. "They say this work ruins us," Fatiha told me. When I asked another young *shikha* if she chose her work willingly, she said, "I do it by necessity, sister, just by necessity." Another friend of Mouna's told me, "We're not like you; we're not going to paradise." These comments indicate that social attitudes towards *shikhat* are indeed incorporated into their own view of themselves; *shikhat* become the object that society says they are. There is little resistance to romance here;[19] *shikhat* internalize the dominant value system which degrades their material and spiritual worth.

The *shikha*'s discourse of victimization rationalizes her social position with arguments about fate and financial necessity (Gilligan 1982). Pity is among the most frequently elicited reactions to her plight. As Si Mohamed told me, "I don't judge them, as you never know what circumstances made them become what they are." *Shikhat* are well traveled in tribulation:

If you're going to the heights
Come here [first] and I'll give you some advice . . .

Although "the heights" in the context of this song is a metaphor for "the city," its use is not wholly arbitrary. *Shikhat* enjoy a freedom not only of bodily movement, but of geographical movement as well. But if they see summits that average women do not, they are made to pay

dearly for the privilege. Because they embrace unlawful "heights," *shikhat* are socially constructed as the epitome of all that is low and base in society. As one college-educated working woman put it, *shikhat* are *dégoûtantes*, "disgusting."

Shikhat are usually associated with a particular place (the *shikhat* of Khenifra or of Beni Mellal, for example), though many have migrated from their village or town of birth to cities or provincial centers. A majority have been rejected by their families: "They live alone or in groups, having in common the characteristic that they have left or been repudiated by their kin, and have thus forfeited lineage and male tutelage," says Maher (1974). The rootlessness of the *shikha*'s existence contrasts starkly with the sense of origin (*aṣl*) and belonging in normative definitions of selfhood in Morocco. "To Moroccans, geographical regions are inhabited spaces, realms within which communities organize themselves to wrest a living and forge a degree of security. . . . To be attached to a place is, therefore, not only to have a point of origin—it is to have those social roots, those human attachments, that are distinctive to the kind of social person one is" (Rosen 1984: 23).

In this light, *shikhat* are uprooted personages with no claims to an identifying geography; they are free-floating bodies in social exile.[20] The Moroccan proverb "There is no good in a woman who roams about and no good in a man who does not" emphasizes the masculine characteristics of the *shikha* and her repudiation by normative society (Rosen 1984: 24). In another song, the *shikha* is portrayed as spending her "days touring cities and the country." By following in the footsteps of the *shikha*, one loses not only a sense of place, but one's family as well. In Moroccan society, this is the greatest hardship possible. Without family or sense of place, the *shikha*'s subjectivity must necessarily take roads less travelled. It is not then surprising that the bonds of friendship and mutual aid among *shikhat* are profound.[21]

The Metaphoric Body

Linguistic metaphor functions as a means for constructing identity at all levels of society. Whether women are referred to as horses (*l-khayl*) or deer (*l-ghzal*) in the Moroccan idiom changes the interpretive context of a conversation. "[O]ur experience of the world . . . rests upon choices of metaphor" (Fernandez 1986: x), providing a rich base from which to appreciate the *shikha*'s self-conceptions and society's conceptions about her:

> If I were a porter, I'd carry him.
> If I were a carrier [of children], I'd pick him up.
> I'm afraid! I'm afraid that I'll make him fall.
> If I make him fall, I can handle it. Yes.
>
> What's the matter with him?
> What's the matter with him?
> What is it?
> He looked at me
> And then lowered his eyes.
> And scared me yet again.
>
> Here's my arm for a pillow.
> Easy, easy
> don't break it.
> And even if you break it,
> the bone-setter is nearby. Yes.
>
> (ila kunt ḥammala n-ḥaml-u.
> ila kunt rakkaba n-rəkb-u.
> khaif khaif la n-ṭayḥ-u.
> ila ṭayəḥt-u n-qad bi-h. Hah.
>
> wa ha mal-u hah?
> wa ha mal-u hah?
> wa ha mal-u?
> shaf fi-ya
> u ḥdər ʻayn-u.
> zadn-i kiyya tani hah.
>
> hak draʻi twəsd-u.
> kays kays
> la t-hərs-u.
> ila hərəsti-h,
> ha j-jabbar ḥdaya hah.)

The first impression in this lyric is that of support: "if I were a porter [*ḥammala*]." The verb *ḥməl* [MA[22]] means to carry, to bear, or to support. Professional porters are called "the owners of the carts" and may be hired cheaply to carry goods from the marketplace to home. They are often humble or homeless people who sleep in their carts at night near bus stations or empty stalls. A *ḥammal* is a carrier without even the distinction of a cart. This poem mentions a *ḥammala*, a female porter—an anomaly in Moroccan culture.

The verb "to carry" is also used to express the state of pregnancy: to carry a child. A *mra ḥamla* is a pregnant woman. The verb *ḥməl* has psychological connotations as well, used colloquially in the expression *ma kan-ḥamlush*, "I can't bear it/him." Thus, a *hammala* is someone who bears both physical and mental burdens.

The second line is also predicated on the act of carrying, using the verb *rakəb* [MA], which means to ride or mount. In Morocco, a child rides on her mother's back (*rakba ʻla dhar um-ha*), held by a large piece of cloth secured about the mother's waist. This line thus continues the support imagery: if I were a *rakaba*—one who provides a ride—I'd pick him up.

One also rides or mounts animals; in the following stanza, a woman is compared to a horse who carries both armor and its owner. It is no ordinary horse, but a show horse displayed at national or religious festivals where "they play the horses" (*ka-laʻbu al-khayl*).

And whatever the fair-haired woman does, she merits.
Like the blue-speckled horse armored by his owner
Who took him to the running grounds to be proud of him.
It's for him that I've come.

(u z-zaʿra ila dart-u t-stahəl ila dart-u.
kif l-bərgi sənh-u mul-ah
u dda-h l-ʿalfa y-tʿanna bi-h.
u ʿla qubl-u jaya.)

The French translation of this event (the running of Arabian horses) as "fantasia" no doubt comes from the classical Arabic word for *imagination* (*khayal*),[23] built on the same triliteral verb as horsemen (*khayyal*). Although Moroccans associate the word *khayl* primarily with horses and their impressive performance, there is a semantic interplay between the two realms. The *fantasia* is a dramatic event that engages the spectators as well as the actors in agonistic play, involving the promenade and racing of Arabian horses with elaborate saddles, mounted by riders elegantly dressed in white *jəllabas* and carrying long rifles. From five to twelve horses and their riders line up, the horses biting at the bit and prancing, while spectators gather at the borders of a long field. At the signal, the horses take off at full speed down the dusty terrain for about three hundred yards and then stop abruptly in unison right before the edge of the crowd while the riders shoot their rifles into the air. It is a game of dare that is played with the audience, who try not to leave their places, though occasionally they are forced to move aside. Before the performance, people stroll around and view the horses tethered to stakes throughout the vicinity. Tents are set up for the riders, as these events may last for as long as a week.

The comparison of women and horses has special significance. Horses are animals of prestige in Morocco, and their owners take great pride in them. Not only are the horses monetarily valuable, the owners must enjoy enough leisure to be able to stop their work lives several times during the year to show and perform. The government requisitions them without payment on national and religious holidays, conferring on them a certain status but also incurring resentment on the part of the owners who are obliged to participate. The source of their pride carries a social and economic obligation that pulls the reins on their increased social status.

Throughout these lyrics, women are portrayed as being "armored" as horses in their raiment; they are displayed and owned, a source both of pride and of financial obligation. They must be trained to proceed carefully and in close proximity to others while knowing how to stop at a moment's notice. When they are not being ridden, they are tethered or within guarded bounds. Women are also represented as supporters and carriers of men who ride on them in the capacity of both owners and children, or rest on them as if they were pillows. Such responsibility requires great strength and is not without risk, so the refrain asserts, "If I make him fall, I can handle it. Yes." And even if arms get broken, "the bonesetter" is never very far away.

Metaphors can be either an instantiation of identity or a reorientation of it (Fernandez 1986). These lyrics express the predominant cultural mappings that construct women as subordinate instruments of men's employ. Yet there is a subtle anomaly in this instrumentality: implicated is a feminine agency that is not afraid of taking risks and that is strong enough to bear the results. Her final admission is ambiguous:

Love, love
We didn't have our fill of it.
It's for that [him] that I'm here.

(l-ḥub, l-ḥub
ma shabʿanash mənn-u.
u ʿla qubl-u jaya.)

Is it for him that she is here? Or for the sensation that love leaves in her body? For whom and for what is the *shikha*?

Concluding to Change: The Embodied Nation

Shikhat bear witness to the extreme ambivalence that any loosening of the definitions of womanhood may incite. In interviews, upper-class Moroccan women are not particularly interested or affected by the aesthetic of *shikhat*—they find them rough-hewn and peasant;[24] bourgeois women find them vulgar and try to disassociate themselves to the furthest degree (though in their homes many gather around the VCR to watch and talk about the songs, clothes, and behavior—on and off screen—of their favorite *shikha*); women of the lower classes, the majority, do not approve of them either, but have a more profound understanding of their situation and their choices or lack of them. As *shikhat* can be considered both artists and symptoms of social malaise, they serve a complex and controversial function. In publicizing some aspects of femininity's private side in song and movement, *shikhat* define the feminine while disenfranchising themselves from the "respectable" community.

Shikhat have several functions in society: in breaching the world of male power, they become anomalous, and, as anomalies, they become scapegoats—they epitomize the "fallen woman." On the other hand, they exemplify feminine potential as embodiments of independent and brave women, albeit outcasts. The fascination of the majority of Moroccan women with them bears this out. They are admired and feared, spoken of with both awe and a conditioned disgust. They are women who, by virtue of their physical expressions of emotional and physical liberty, transgress the social codes of modesty. But although their performance is socially sanctioned, their personhood is not. Society both employs and rejects them. They stand for what women can do and for what happens to women who choose to do—namely, social exile.

The exile of the *shikha* is not based solely on her refutation of moral codes, however. Such codes are often violated with impunity by other sectors of society. For example, the behavior of *shikhat* parallels the behavior of upper-class women in many ways. Both categories of women may smoke cigarettes, drink wine, and have casual sexual liaisons, and often display large quantities of gold. The behavior of the *shikha*, however, breaks sharply with the bodily dispositions fostered among *nas shaʿbiyin*, "the folk," her *aṣl* or origin (Bourdieu 1977). A rich woman can obtain her freedom both with money and through an established identification with Western culture, which sanctions such behavior. A poor woman has no such alibi. The *shikha*'s sin is not that she drinks and dances in heterosexual company, but that she commodifies her talents and participates in her own fetishization as a prurient object of male desire. Her sin is her unmediated affiliation with the marketplace.

This affiliation changes radically, however, once her relationship to the economy is mediated. The status of the *shikha* is quickly changing largely due to her reorientation to the market. Successful *shikhat* save their money, buy gold, and eventually buy their own land and homes. In becoming landowners, their social exile is lessened as they resituate themselves in social and symbolic space, buying themselves place names, as well as new social categories.

A year after I met Mouna, she had sold her first house and bought another one in a very fashionable part of town. Visiting a few days after the Great Feast (*l-ʿid l-kbir*), I found her on her roof with her daughters and younger married sister visiting from the Sahara. There were several big plastic tubs, with Mouna washing clothes in one tub, her daughter rinsing in another, and her sister rinsing them once again. The water overflowed onto the red tiles, cooling our hot feet. There were sheep intestines drying on clotheslines strung near the walls of the roof.

I sat on a wooden stool, getting up occasionally to hang the clean clothes on the remaining lines.

Mouna told me that she and her group would soon be performing at a saint's festival (musəm) in Settat. "There will be *shikhat* from all over the country," she told me. "We all sing and dance during the day. Then at night we're in the tents. We eat and drink." I expressed my disappointment at not being able to attend.

"You should come and live in Morocco," Mouna told me.

"There's no work for me here," I answered, adding "but I could work with you Mouna, couldn't I?"

"You don't know how!" her sister told me.

"She can learn," Mouna replied, going along with the joke.

"There's no shame in it, is there?" I said. "It's not like it used to be."

"No, it's not like it used to be," her sister said. "Now everyone wants to be a singer (*mughanniya*)."

Mouna's sister's use of the term *mughanniya* rather than *shikha* is significant. Oum Khaltoum, the famous and loved Egyptian singer, was a *mughanniya*; the term carries little stigma. This change in name though not inevitable, attests to the *shikha*'s increasing centrality in Moroccan consumer culture as well as to her own acquisition of cultural capital therein (Bourdieu 1984). When *shikhat* begin to record their music on audio and video cassettes (often done themselves by renting studios in Casablanca) their agency as social performers is affirmed. If the cassettes become popular, their value as artists is perpetuated. The very association that has stigmatized *shikhat* in the past (their unmediated relationship to the marketplace) is now providing them with a certain social standing precisely because of the intervention of the media.

Perhaps even more significant than the *shikhat*'s use of the media is the media's use of *shikhat*. State-produced television broadcasts air performances of regional *shikhat* groups in an effort to give voice and body to the different regions of an ethnically diverse nation—the *shikhat* of the Souss (a Berber region), the *shikhat* of Tetouan, the *shikhat* of Taroudant. In this context, *shikhat* are no longer emblematic of shame, but metonyms for ethnic and regional identity. Their artistry has been highlighted and their social history suppressed in the service of rallying the "populace" around sentiments which valorize the heterogeneity of the one nation. The *shikha* has become an item of folklore in the monarchy's construction of national identity.

How can we interpret this re-evaluation of the *shikha* in Moroccan popular culture? How can a cultural symbol of shamelessness be transformed into a symbol of national diversity?

The appropriation and exploitation of the *shikha* by national television obviously pays tribute to her extant popularity with the majority of Moroccans. It is an official acknowledgment of an unofficial artform—one with the power to rally intense sentiment and interest in viewers. But this appropriation depends upon a "disacknowledgment" of the *shikha*'s libertinism. Her appearance on television as well as at festivals and folklore spectacles "launders" the *shikha*'s image, purifying it sufficiently to become a symbol fit for regional and national identity.

Metaphors have transformed, but so has the personhood of the *shikha*. No longer a social pariah, the *shikha* finds herself valued, if appropriated and still somewhat anomalous, symbol of nationalism. If successful, she may effect not only a personal transformation from the habitus of "the folk" to the legitimizing domain of landowner, but may also embrace the status of the *mughanniya* and thereby embody the transcendent state.

Notes:

1 An earlier version of this article was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* 107(43) (1994): 82–105. Reprinted with permission of the American Folklore Society.

2 "Lover" here is the word *grin*, from the Arabic *qarin*, meaning "companion," or "peer."

3 These words are not opposites. It is not immodest to be *maṭluq*. A *shikha* often exceeds the *maṭluq* and is characterized as immodestly bold: *ujə-ha mqazdər*, tin-faced. Such behavior constitutes a breach of honor.

4 The terms are Bakhtin's (1984).

5 Many *shikhat* song genres are defined by region; namely *l-gharbawi*, *l-ḥasbawi*, *l-ḥawzi*, *j-jəbli*, *j'aidan*, *l-mərsawi*, *az-za'ri*, and *z-zayani*. Other genres include *l-'lawi*, (song by the Beni Iznesan tribe, near Algeria) *r-rwais* (from the Souss region) and *s-sakən*. Of these, only *l-ḥasbawi*, *l-ḥawzi*, and *l-mərsawi* are considered *l-'aita*, which are *l-'anmaṭ l-murakaba*, complex genres (Bouhmid 1995).

6 This verb in Moroccan Arabic refers to the uncontrollable behavior of a vengeful camel.

7 *'riwa*, literally a little cup handle.

8 I use the term "moral economy" with caution, taking into account that it is analytic category originating with E. P. Thompson (1991). There are several moral economies in Morocco. All of them, however, recognize, even if they don't enact, similar rules for what is considered proper female and male behavior.

9 Lortat-Jacob (1980) notes that codes of modesty in the Berber tribes of the High Atlas mountains in Morocco do not generally allow the enjoyment of music in public places unless specific circumstances of festivity and certain conditions of hierarchical relations prevail.

10 I invoke Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism here. In the glossary of Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*, Holquist defines this term aptly when he says, "a word, discourse, language or culture undergoes 'dialogization' when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things" (Bakhtin 1981: 427). A dialogic entity, then, is an agent of dialogism.

11 See Fernandez (1986) for the relation of the "inchoate" to metaphor. Carol Pateman (1989) offers a critique of the association of women with disorder in Western political thought.

12 This is an example of the genre of *s-sakən*.

13 See Appadurai (1990) for a discussion of the concept and phenomenon of disjuncture.

14 Victor Turner (1977 [1969]) uses this word to denote a state of being in which status, hierarchy, and structure disappear and are replaced with a bond of community.

15 Messick (1989: 217) defines "subordinate discourse" as "a form of expression characterized by its power relation to a dominant ideology with which it coexists. A subordinate discourse must be distinguished from an alternative or competing ideology (or model, theory, subculture), which would entail an explicit elaboration of an oppositional conceptual order, and might give rise to efforts at suppression by upholders of the dominant ideology."

16 This is changing. Because it was once morally prohibited for women to smoke, it has now become a symbol of liberation among young students or women of the upper or middle classes. In Beni Mellal, smoking in public is done infrequently, except by *shikhat*, who make of it a display of transgression, smoking even in public places like post offices.

17 As Dennis Tedlock (1983: 240) notes, "I mean 'world' in the sense that Paul Ricoeur does when he says that the task of hermeneutics is to reveal the 'destination of discourse as projecting a world,' or when he says that 'for me, the world is the ensemble of references opened up by every kind of text.'" These quotations are found in Ricoeur (1976).

18 *Shikhat* do not characterize their lyrics as nonsense. Although they rarely valorize their work, they are acutely aware of the socioeconomic dimensions that have forced them into it. They do not misrecognize the issues.

19 See Abu-Lughod (1990) for a critique of the anthropological literature on resistance.

20 See K. Basso (1988) and Feld (1990) for discussions of the symbolism of place and place names in expressive culture.

21 *Shikhat* not only provide emotional support to their "sisters" but also organize childcare and food cooperatives (buying large quantities to be distributed among themselves).

22 "[MA]" refers to the dialect of Morrocan Arabic, which differs from Classical Arabic [CA] or Berber [B]. Unless noted, all texts were originally spoken in Moroccan Arabic [MA].

23 Also translated as "phantom," "phantasm," "fantasy in Wehr and Cowan (1976).

24 This attitude represents what Scott (1990: 19) calls the "public transcript"—the story as it is wont to be told, either by the dominant powers that be or by those who pay lip service to those powers. He contrasts this with the "hidden transcript," a discourse that employs the "politics of disguise and anonymity" to effect "a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors."

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