

The Traditional Hammam Bathhouse from Morocco to France:
The Body, Purity, and Perception

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Abstract

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This dissertation explores what it means to be clean - spiritually, corporeally and psychologically, not only in the context of Moroccan traditional bathing practices, but also within the ethnographer's experience and perception. It gives a detailed account of the ethnographer as a subjective research instrument and the role of personal trauma in shaping perception in the field. The metaphysical and social implications of participation in the traditional hammam are illustrated through visceral ethnographic writing based on participant observation and interviews in urban Morocco. In addition to the exploration of traditional hammam practices in Morocco, this study also investigates the role of bathhouses in diaspora in France, in Paris and Marseille, and explores how various disparate desires - tied either to capitalism, religion, and/or socio-political position - motivate participation in the hammam tradition. Hammams in recent iterations in Morocco and in diaspora reveal re-appropriations of an Orientalist aesthetic established by the colonizer as well as additional enactments of power reversals. Throughout the

study, ethnographic description is layered over a foundational story arc that reveals the ethnographer's geographic movements, follows her psychological unraveling and reintegration, and finally, provides a window onto her own self-reflection and psychoanalytic treatment once she has left the field. The psychological effects of trauma on the ethnographer as research instrument and how the condition of that instrument affects the resultant ethnographic process are at the heart of this work. Ultimately, this study has implications for the phenomenology of perception, affect theory, and psychological anthropology while also contributing to a body of knowledge about daily life, healing and the body in North Africa.

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Note on Transliteration of Moroccan Colloquial Arabic

(Adapted from Deborah Kapchan, 2007)

Following convention, I have kept the transcriptions of place names and proper names that are known by particular spellings. Also, words that have a long history of usage in English, including “hammam” and “jinn,” have been written in the orthography that is common in English and not italicized or written with any additional diacritics.

Consonants

For consonants I have followed the system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. The consonants not found in English are written as follows:

dh represents the Modern Standard Arabic letter *dhal* as in the English “that,” usually becomes a “d” in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic.

gh is a voiced uvular fricative, pronounced like a French “r”

kh is a voiceless uvular fricative, similar to the last consonant in Bach

q is a voiceless uvular stop, somewhat like k, but farther back in the throat, corresponding to the letter *qaf* in Modern Standard Arabic

‘ is a voiced pharyngeal fricative, corresponding to the letter ‘*ayn* in Classical Arabic

’ is a glottal stop, the Arabic letter hamza.

The emphatic consonants in Arabic are shown with a dot under the letter that most resembles it in English: **ḍ, ṣ, ṭ, ḥ**

Vowels

For vowels, I employ the system used by Heath (1987). For full or long vowels I use **a, i,** and **u**. But for short vowels, unlike Heath's system, which uses the schwa, I use the letter “e” or none at all, since Moroccan Arabic often shortens vowels to the point of elimination.

Hyphens

I follow the system of hyphenation employed by Deborah Kapchan (1996).

1. to indicate definite articles before nouns: l-faran, the oven
2. to indicate prepositions when they are not followed by a vowel: f-l-faran, in the oven
3. to indicate possessives: khbz-ek f-l-faran. Your bread is in the oven.
4. to indicate objects: shefna-hum. We saw them.
5. to indicate verbal prefixes marking duration and gender: kay-mshi, he goes; kat-mshi, she goes

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Dedication

In memory of Haj Abdeslam Rhenifel, a pillar of calm, whose wise heart overflowed with love and wonder for his family, friends, neighbors, and all living beings.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*The hammam, say people of long ago,
Is the silent doctor and healer.
People go seeking favor and blessing, whether they are healthy or sick.
He gives all he has and acts as your protective armor.*¹ -Najdi

In this dissertation I explore what it means to be clean - spiritually, corporeally and psychologically, not only in the context of Moroccan traditional bathing practices, but also within my own ethnographic experience and perception. I include a discussion of the personal trauma and psychology that shaped the perception of the ethnographer, the primary research instrument in the field, myself. As a springboard to this psychological discussion, I start with a discussion of the hammam as a space and institution – the traditional place where Moroccans purified body, mind and spirit. The first stanza of a poem written expressly for this study, highlights the physical and psychological importance of the hammam as a source of health and healing. As Najdi suggests, the hammam is more than just a place to bathe: it is also a “silent doctor and healer.”

The Hammam: A Basic Description

The hammam in Morocco is a multi-roomed public structure intended as a communal space for cleaning the body with steam and hot water. Before the French occupation of Morocco, each neighborhood in the old medina (city) of Fez had its own hammam. Some private homes had wells or fountains (in the finer homes) as water sources, but none had running “tap” water or bathing facilities except royal palaces or pashas’ residences. Water for cooking and basic

¹ See Appendix A for the complete poem in Arabic and English and an explanation of the poem’s genesis and author.

cleaning was collected from a neighborhood communal fountain, and the weekly trip to the hammam was an indispensable spiritual and corporeal ritual for every individual to purify body and soul. This tradition of the weekly hammam-visit continues in many parts of present day Morocco, even in urban areas where modern plumbing and hot water heaters are commonplace. Even though many homes have showers and bathtubs, most individuals do not consider the result of home bathing as truly “clean.” Showering is considered superficial and dissatisfying. Soap and water are only a fraction of what constitutes clean: opening the pores in heat, warming the bones, exfoliating the skin and moving into a state of deep relaxation are obligatory to the ritual. Most importantly, Islam prescribes how to clean the body for prayer, and while these rules are not readily apparent in the hammam, they underlie the design and behavior by default.

In the last two decades (1990-2010), increased tourism has also precipitated the development of the spatially and functionally divergent “spa” or touristic hammam, designed specifically with the tourist and the Francophone Moroccan elite in mind. Waiting and changing areas are more often exotically decorated with sheer shimmery curtains, candles and sequined pillows. Raised beds for massage and exfoliation allow more personal space and privacy for visitors who might be disturbed sharing floor space and rubbing elbows with other naked women. The chambers of the spa hammam itself are often smaller and guests have private spigots or alcoves. Often there are private showers to rinse off after treatments. The touristic style hammam is much more expensive than the local popular *sha'abi* (people's) hammam, so most local Moroccans would avoid these, but there is evidence that more people are coming to favor a more Western style bathing space with individual spigots and more private spaces for washing and changing. More such “modernized” hammams are becoming available, taking the place of traditional hammams.

The popular neighborhood hammams, many of which still exist today, particularly in the old medinas of imperial cities such as Fez and Marrakesh, were ubiquitous in pre-colonial Morocco. Many continue to function today, although I have recently learned that one of my research sites, a *sha'abi* hammam in the Hay Agadir neighborhood of Fez, shut down shortly after I completed my research. These hammams are functionally and architecturally derivative of the Roman hypocaust baths of imperial Rome. The water is heated in large cisterns in the innermost room of the hammam by a wood-fueled fire under the main space of the steam baths. Usually, the hammam consists of three rooms that become progressively hotter as one moves towards the last room, which holds the water cistern, or *brma*. Most visitors move through each room, working up to a ten to thirty minute stay in the hottest area. The heat from the fire heats the floors of the baths as well as the water. The floors of the hammam are made of hard stone with thick layers of salt underneath to hold in heat. The air is heavy with moisture and steam. As more water is released into the cistern, steam travels upward and increases the temperature temporarily. In the cooler rooms, closer to the entrance, the opening and closing of the door allows for some air circulation and cooler temperatures.

A People's Hammam in a Fez Neighborhood, March 2012

We struggled out of the back seat of the black two-door Fiat with our three plastic buckets, plastic cups, soap, brushes, and two duffle bags stuffed with clean clothes, robes and towels. The wind blew dust from the road into my eyes and I teared up, but suppressed the urge to cry. I resented the lack of control I had in Fez. My body was no longer my own to clean and care for, as the family's schedule subsumed my agency. My hair was pulled tightly into a ponytail to contain and hide the greasy grime. We started driving west of the family house in

Hay Agadir and within five minutes we saw the half completed construction of the new neighborhood Hay Hadiqa. My nine-year-old daughter and I had been living in a house with her grandparents, aunts and uncles (my in-laws) in Fez. Their sizable concrete house, about a ten-minute drive from the famous Bab Boujeloud in the medina, and about the same distance to the center of the Ville Nouvelle, was like many of the neighboring homes and had no hot running water and no central heating; it had been two weeks since we last bathed. The kitchen was the domain of my mother-in-law, so sneaking in to boil a big pot of water to then bring up the stairs to the toilet room, would have required permission and explanation. In fact, I had asked to do so, but was told it would be unwise – that I would catch a chill, the cold – “*l-brd*”. It was March and still too cold for bathing inside. The 1950s cement construction of these homes behaved like a vector for concentrating the damp cold inside its walls. It was like sitting in a dank cave insulated from the warmth of the powerful Fez sun. Although the weather was spring-like, clear, and seventy degrees outside, the interior spaces of the house hovered around fifty degrees. With no space heaters or central heating, we ambled about day and night in fleece robes brought from Seattle, winter coats, and blankets. Touching the body with water, leaving oneself vulnerable to the cold air was considered dangerous by our hosts. Cold and heat in Fez are imbued with power and must be protected against and received carefully.

Nobody seemed concerned that Laila and I were two weeks filthy and undoubtedly smelly. Back in the United States I often felt unclean if I didn't shower daily, but in Fez, showering wasn't considered cleansing. It wasn't purifying. Hot showers were few and far between in working class Moroccan homes and, anyway, showering was considered a poor substitute for bathing in the hammam. If I had been showering every day, my Moroccan

household would still have considered me filthy for not having properly sweated and scrubbed my body of its top layer of skin in a steam room.

Frustrated, I discussed protocol with my sister-in-law, Nour, complaining to her about how disgusting I felt. She reminded me that I still had to wait to go to hammam anyway, since I was on my period, and I could become weak in the heat and might pass out in the hammam. Other women in the neighborhood, I noticed, exposed their greasy clumped hair strands without self-consciousness, while others walked about with professionally and elegantly blown out hairstyles. Some pulled their hair back so that, to me, the degree of clean or dirty was less recognizable. Others covered their heads with a simple headscarf, or *drira*. My older sister-in-law Aziza often laughed and explained that the *drira* was just a pretense. She explained that most women weren't actually using their headscarves as an enactment of religious modesty, but rather, were covering up their hair because it needed a good wash. She has repeated this joke to me twice now. She herself often covered her own hair with a *drira* as many middle aged working women do in Fez. In years past she had left her hair uncovered more frequently. Indeed my understanding of clean and dirty whether hair, bodies, food, or homes, was culturally specific. Mary Douglas (1966), in her classic treatise on the understandings of cleanliness and dirt, analyzes the relativity of perceptions of clean and dirty, "There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder" (p. 2). Thus our inability to notice what we have not learned to notice is based on culturally specific experience. I would further venture that the compendium of senses, as theorized by Kathryn Geurtz, are a foundation of cultural identity. Geurtz and Farquhar, in their ethnographic studies, suggest that the senses mediate the relationship between mind and body, and thus between the self and environment (Farquhar, 2002; Geurtz, 2002). And

the way we learn to perceive with our bodily senses is learned and embodied in what might be considered a sensual *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984).

The drive to this new hammam had taken us through the exposed cement construction of Hay Hadiqa – ironically named “Garden Neighborhood” despite the utter lack of plant life. This was a brand new development of massive apartment complexes in an area that was once open fields and well-established olive groves. The family told me that the open spaces were used during the holiday ‘Ashura to build fires that children would then throw various items into and jump over – rituals associated with purification in the new Islamic calendar year. These traditions are also sometimes attributed to pre-Islamic and Jewish practices (see Maarouf, 2009; Westermarck, 1905).

We drove down the main boulevard, where ‘Ashura fires once burned and olive groves once stood. It was a newly paved but crudely finished wide street lined with wide sidewalks littered with smatterings of plastic bags, paper, metal, garbage – piles of garbage. Plumes of smoke floated up from some piles that had been partially burned, and some were just sitting, abandoned in the hot sun. New concrete apartment buildings lined the boulevard. Some were just shells – their empty rooms exposed to the sun and dust. My stomach churned as we bumped along through ruins and the embryonic shells of new buildings...the painful birth of new but uninhabited apartments and mansions. I found their cold emptiness lonely and sad. We turned down a side street to the newly built hammam and Laila, Aziza, Sarah and I helped to un-pile the buckets and supplies from the trunk. We said good-bye to Hicham, then plodded through the loose dirt next to the road. We walked up to the hammam, opened the door, and went through a small hallway to a low barred window. “*Rb ‘a,*” - four - we asked for four tickets to the hammam,

paid, received four inch-long newsprint tickets, and continued down the hallway, where they were immediately soaked from the steam and wetness everywhere.

The main changing room was not as crowded as it had been two or three weeks earlier when we were last here. We paid the plump woman behind the counter a few dirham. She was charged with safeguarding personal belongings, which stayed stuffed into wooden shelves while people bathed. She had a teapot on a single butane burner, a blaring TV, and was moving in and out of her area shouting her communications and conversation with the other workers. I didn't sense that she was watching the bags much, but the system must have been working, so I tried to trust it. We sat ourselves down and began undressing, down to our underwear bottoms. Panties stayed on in the hammam. This antechamber wasn't large or decorative. Down a narrow hall was a small sink outside of the door to a basic squat toilet room with no toilet paper. There was a feeling of crowding, as teenagers and middle-aged women jockeyed for position, to view themselves in the white plastic-rimmed rectangular mirror above the sink. There were hooks on the walls, and wetness everywhere. The floor was cold and slippery.

Around us were bodies in various states of undress. Some had just finished their hammam, red cheeked and limp, lying on the benches, eyeing us from time to time. Some were sleeping. Some were adjusting bras and adding layers of cotton stockings and long underwear tops and bottoms before donning floor length robes, or *jellabas*. Everyone wore plastic slip-on sandals and headscarves to cover wet hair. Several women, on a break from the internal rooms of the hot hammam, crowded in front of a mirror next to the sink. Some in their forties checked the hair dye they had applied to their roots while younger twenty-somethings shaved their arm pits.

An unassuming cream-colored door lead into the first room of the hammam, from which Aziza could assess today's state of affairs – was it crowded? What was the mood? Aziza did a quick inspection inside while we waited for the report. She then grabbed us by the hands and installed us in a spot where she had dropped all of our buckets and implements. “Stay here, and I'll go get water,” she said.

Muted light beamed in from narrow windows near the ceiling. Ceilings were vaulted but simple. The room was dimly lit, with whitish bare walls and hard surfaces. The ground was the color of sand - wet, gritty in places from traditional mud products, and slippery with soap and hot water. We sat on our little stool and mats, waiting. Seated bodies, with white, modest and wet panties lined the perimeter of the square room. Some were large, slow moving elderly women with henna-dyed orange hair, and others were lithe teenagers with long black braids and budding breasts. Some lay prostrate on plastic mats, and everyone was surrounded by Chinese plastic products: white and blue buckets, white and green plastic stools, 3x5 plastic mats with carpet designs. Young children, male and female, slid and played among these bodies and objects. Voices bounced and reverberated through the chambers and echoed through the three inner rooms of the hammam.

At first I was relieved to have found a space today for our little group of four. We were able to establish our spots in the first, coolest room. On our last visit, we had been wedged into a corner, barely able to move without rubbing elbows with our neighbors. However, on this day as well it ended up too crowded for me. We had bought some *ghssul* with our tickets (a clay powder, dried and scented with rose) to wash and soften our hair. We had put it in a plastic bowl on the ground to use later, but the elderly lady next to us had stretched out, on her mat on the ground, and inches from my own behind. I was seated on a plastic mat decorated like a Persian carpet,

and she was splayed out on one, with the *kiyyasa* scrubbing her top layer of skin off, having her turn over. She repeatedly dipped her big toe into the little tub of *ghssul* I had waiting. In the spirit of fieldwork, I tried to embrace the uncomfortable proxemics of my situation, but despite all my self-talk of tolerance, I couldn't bring myself to use the *ghssul*. I did not want strange toe in my clean hair. Any protecting or purifying potential of the product was psychologically destroyed for me in that moment.

This scene was at odds with the mysterious and picturesque orientalism generated by early travel writers (Wharton, 1920) and picked up subsequently by the marketing strategies of the tourism industry. Orientalist paintings (Delacroix, Gérôme, Ingres) depict the bathhouses of North Africa as languid, sexualized, mysterious and elegant – the stuff of Scheherazade and the 1001 nights. But here, women worked hard, schlepping water from the inner chamber faucets, kids climbed in and out of plastic buckets, slipping, sliding, shrieking and splashing. Women sat, inches apart, on the hard stone ground, bumping, and fighting over space as they brushed out their hair, endlessly, and deposited black clumps in a pool of filmy water as it slowly drained to the center of the downward sloping floor. Here, voices and shrieks echoed in the open spaces and strange toes dangled into personal hair products.

Women from several contiguous neighborhoods converged here. Some knew each other. Some arrived together. They talked. They didn't talk. They spent hours. At one time each neighborhood had its own hammam. According to pre-protectorate accounts, the old medina had twenty-one hammams to service the city (Le Tourneau, p. 247). In years past at my in-laws' house, we only bathed at the closest neighborhood hammam – Hammam Agadir. We would walk up the steps, past the neighboring houses, lugging our accouterments, clothing and towels in bags and buckets, past kitchen smells of roasted green peppers and chicken tajine from the dusty open

olive tree grove between the family's block and the next housing block over. This walk to the hammam was the same walk as to the *faran*, the public ovens. The hammam and the ovens were fueled by the same fire, so the walk was a familiar one for me and anyone living in the neighborhood. I had been there many times and on the day before my wedding we had gone to that hammam with all the female members of the family, along with my female relatives. It felt like my hammam.

Now, with my young daughter in tow, the family insisted we go to this "cleaner" hammam by car. The distinction between a clean and dirty hammam was not clear to me initially – and I had never heard discussion of such a distinction before. But I came to find that “cleanliness” was determined by a number of factors: 1) hammam construction year, 2) existence of a *brma*, versus the more technologically modern spigots for water distribution and 3) socio economic status of clientele. The newer the construction, the more modern the water distribution system and the wealthier the clientele, seemed to determine whether a hammam was suitable and clean. I have talked with Fassis who claim that a hammam isn't really a hammam without a *brma* in the deepest chamber. It may be nostalgia and resistance to change, or it may be that the communal participation in getting the water, while polluting the central water in the eyes of some, is a key part of the ritual cleansing, and an equalizer. Was communality aligned with purity? The fear surrounding being alone in the hammam points also to the importance of the communal experience. When I lived alone in the Ville Nouvelle Moroccan women often asked why I wasn't afraid.

Clients dip their buckets or the hammam's buckets directly into the hot or cold water in these cisterns, which may become contaminated by drips of dirty water, soap, hair, skin that may

be in or on the buckets or on hands or bodies. The topic of polluted water is not one I had ever heard prior to the new interest in the newer hammam.

On this day I noticed an olive skinned, green-eyed beauty. Her cheeks were rosy and her body was slightly plump, but so youthful and smooth. She had put her two young boys inside buckets of water to play after they slipped and played on the hard floor. I marveled at her beauty as she reclined, seemingly relaxed, on the ground, letting the *kiyyasa* (hammam worker) scrub her entire body. She flipped over, ignoring her boys. I have always been an overly cautious mother, and to be able to tune out the squeals of my children while relaxing in the heat, is unfathomable. She was entirely unfazed, while her boys squirmed, screamed and splashed. Should anything happen, the entire hammam would undoubtedly help out, but I can't help attaching myself to the responsibility for my own child's behavior. Here she sank into her own body, while her boys were quite separate. Once she was finished with her own scrub, she managed the boys – scrubbing and washing them. I imagined she was around twenty-five years old. The age differential of married couples in Fez is quite striking. Usually the man is significantly older – since he must be able to buy adequate housing and be able to support a wife (Newcomb, 2011). I mused at her possible situation. Had she known her husband before they married? Did she love him? Did she live in this newly built neighborhood in a brand new apartment? Did she have hot running water at home? Did her husband appreciate her beauty? Was it too cold in her house too? She seemed so relaxed and at peace with herself and her elegance, while encircled by the cacophony of a popular hammam. I wanted, somehow to see her transformed into a princess, at home with her attendants, in a private bathing room. She seemed far too elegant for the muck and noise surrounding her.

It was a day of youth and beauty in the hammam – we also saw a bride (*'arusa*) in the deepest chamber – the hottest room. While it is mandatory to spend at least a few minutes to an hour in this part of the hammam, to sweat and relax, not everyone can withstand much time in the heat. Those who stay long, earn bragging rights and share with their hammam companions. Length of time near the *brma* is always a topic of conversation on the walk or the ride home. Aziza called us in to walk into the back room to see the *'arusa*. She was in a little arched alcove – like a small human sized doorless closet, an area named the “corner of the bride”, or *qnt d-'arusa*. There, she sat on a small wooden stool, with a candle burning next to her, and because she was deeper within the hammam with fewer people crowded about her, the candle stayed lit. I have only seen candles lit for bridal rituals and within the touristic hammam. Several *kiyyasa*, or female hammam workers, scrubbed her, then walked her slowly out of this room, backwards, while singing the standard marriage song (see chapter 4, II-Water section, for complete song)... *Slaa w slaam 'ala rassul allah, la jayh illa jah sid-na Mohammed* (prayers and peace on the messenger of Allah, there is no one greater than our Prophet Mohammed).

I explained to my daughter that I had been a bride like this at one time. When I was undergoing my own premarital rituals in Fez and visited the hammam in Hay Agadir, two *tayyabat* performed a similar ritual with me - leading me with one woman on each arm. They took me to the bridal corner, and literally pushed my face into it, forcefully. They instructed me to look to my left, over my shoulder, then to my right shoulder, and sang to the angel and devil residing over each. My daughter just looked at me with pleading eyes, and said, “Mommy, I’m itchy.” Her intolerance of the heat and the crowds impinged on my own tolerance of everything.

I told Aziza that I was going to take her out to get dressed. “Don’t let her get cold...wrap her up well...cover her head,” she instructed me. So, I brought her out to the waiting room – a

shocking twenty degrees cooler. I got our bags of clothes from the woman who was guarding the belongings, and Laila first wrapped herself in a towel, then removed her wet panties. It would not have been prudent to remove underwear from the bottom half without first covering up, although nobody seemed shy about exposing their breasts. Nobody paid much attention – as I helped Laila get dressed. I was still dripping and planning to go back in, not having properly exfoliated or washed my hair yet. So, Laila wrapped her hair in a towel, and I hung her cotton leggings and long sleeved shirt on a hook so it wouldn't drop on the wet bench or floor, and she sat, spacing out, with the handful of women in the room. Some were disrobing – stuffing clothes into bags for storage. Others were taking breaks, or lying down on bellies - relaxing from the heat in their partially conscious states. Some were so red-cheeked and groggy, I worried that they were sick, but I saw this often. Many women take naps in the waiting room after a hammam. Checking in with Laila, I asked if she would be okay getting dressed without me while I went back to Aziza and finished washing. She said yes, and I returned into the first room of the hammam. Aziza maneuvered me so that she could scrub my back. I sat, with my knees to my chest, exposing my back to her and she put a rough mitt on her hand and began to scrub me vigorously. Layers of grey skin came off in rolls, with the black harsh sandpaper mitt and I marveled, every time, at how much dead skin floats away on the floor, towards the center drain in the middle of the room. She insisted on scrubbing my stomach and breasts, and even my face, which I resisted like a child, batting her away. She did this every time. She has always taken me on as hers – and she mothered me like her own. I had never reciprocated in the scrubbing, because she never allowed it. She escaped into the *brma* room – the hottest chamber and sat there, scrubbing herself. Then Aziza chased down Sarah, her niece, who tried even harder than I did to escape. In the past, I had scrubbed the back of my mother in law, Aziza's mother, as she

counseled me on why I should get pregnant again, to save my marriage, or how I am scared of my own shadow... a not so subtle hint that I needed to stop worrying so much about things I couldn't control.

I rinsed myself off, then washed my hair with shampoo as Aziza disappeared into the deeper rooms to heat herself sufficiently. In a few minutes, I felt as clean as I needed to be. I was scrubbed, my hair was clean, and I was hot. The inner heat would linger for a only a few delicious hours. My daughter was waiting and I didn't want to leave her alone, possibly cold, and unable to communicate with the women around her. I found Aziza and explained that I'm going out. She said "*daba n-ji*," which literally meant "I'm coming right now" but could mean anything within the range of "I'm coming immediately" to "I'll be there in about an hour or so."

Laila was in the waiting room, watching the activity, but doing fine, all things considered. She was clothed and wrapped in my fleece robe. I got dressed and she helped me. We sat and waited for Aziza. Hicham, Laila's uncle and our ride, called the phone in the hammam changing room to see if we were finished. The worker guarding our bags picked it up and yelled around for Aziza. I grabbed the phone and told Hicham that we were done but Aziza wasn't yet. He said he would be outside. In my experience in Morocco there was a lot of waiting. He waited outside – standing – hanging out. Waiting. We were waiting inside.

As I waited and let the scene blur in front of me, in that hazy half relaxed mode after a hot bath, the scene looked more like a painting. Half naked bodies and headscarves, in the changing room. There was more corpulence today than last time, and women were carrying themselves conveying burdens and heaviness. Sarah, my niece-in-law, was only fifteen or so and didn't do this, but she was skinny and young.

It was another 20 minutes before Aziza emerged with Sarah, and they got dressed and we finally went outside. The air felt cold and fresh on our scrubbed skin. The soles of my wet shoes picked up dust and we tracked clumps of mud into the car. Hot and musty, we drove through the wreckage and embryonic possibility of the neighborhood. I noticed small shops with tables of melons outside and advertisements for Kinder bars – a Dutch candy. I looked forward eating a satisfying meal back home, having a ravenous après-sweat appetite.

When we got home it was late afternoon, and we sat in the salon, and first drank some green tea with fresh mint. I felt alive and restored, but still bound and bundled up, trying to stay warm and safe.

Paris: Hammam in The Great Mosque

It was during a trip to Paris shortly after my Moroccan husband Rachid and I separated, that I first experienced the Great Mosque hammam. The experience struck me, not because of the pleasure I derived from the visit, but because of the sudden access I gained to an intimate, specifically Moroccan cultural activity in the middle of Paris, where I could speak with the attendants in Arabic and move about as though I were back in Fez. Oddly, however, the aesthetics were jarringly different - more colorful and sensual – from the neighborhood hammams I had patronized in Fez. Indeed this Parisian trip to the hammam was the initial impetus for a more focused interest in the hammam in Morocco and paved the way for questions about how community traditions and institutions such as the hammam travel in diaspora.

...

When I pulled open the heavy wooden door to the Great Mosque hammam in Paris and faced a vaulted blue room, dense with steam and sunbeams, I stood, quietly stunned. White

female bodies, exposed and motionless, lay, mostly naked, on high, padded green tables. Women in white smocks and colorful headscarves chatted loudly in Arabic and bustled about as they massaged these reclining silent bodies. The scene was more vibrant and bright than the simple, dark neighborhood hammams in Morocco. Here, in the largest mosque in France, the rules of Islamic modesty and the conventions of an Orientalist “exotic” aesthetic co-mingled. I had never seen such sensuality in any of the hammams I had visited in Morocco – only in 19th century French Orientalist paintings. What explained this dissonance between the traditional hammam of Morocco and the exoticized French-Muslim hammam?

The mosque hammam in Paris is not the only site of tension between a colonialist discourse and a more traditional North African bathing practice. In the last decade, large traditional houses in Fez and Marrakesh have been converted into boutique-hotels, often including a more spa-like hammam with decoration and embellishments. Other similarly luxurious hammams are common inside large five-star hotels for an “authentic” and “sensual” experience. This re-invented Moroccan hammam experience re-enforces the exotic stereotypes of colonial fantasy through attention to traditional objects and aesthetics, to luxury and pampering, but they lack social relevance as communal sites for ritual bathing. I explore this tension further through ethnographic descriptions of the Mosque hammam and several other hammams in Paris in the latter part of this dissertation.

Outline of Chapters

This work explores the traditional labor institution of the hammam in multiple sites in Morocco and France. I highlight the production of Moroccan identities and ideologies through individual experiences of bodily practice, piety and aesthetics and thereby also address how

Morocco and Islam are performed for and consumed by a local and global audience through commercialized and carefully managed public facilities such as touristic hammams and mosque complexes. I focus most closely on perceptions of the individual, social, physical, psychological and spiritual body. Colonialism, Westernization and globalization have transformed traditional practices in complex ways, shedding light on how people see themselves as Moroccans. Based on my research in Morocco and France, the diversity of new practices may indicate the diversity of what constitutes Moroccan-ness in both Morocco and France. In France, the non-immigrant French, including French citizens of North African descent, grapple with their own sense of identity vis-à-vis North African immigrant culture. This understanding of self is complicated by the guilt and responsibility as colonizers. North African-French immigrants demonstrate a range of identity through their own bodily practices, spiritual beliefs, (as French citizens, but also as the colonized).

In writing this account, I take a liberally self-reflexive approach by mingling ethnographic discussion of jinn (spirits) and the ethnopsychiatry of practices surrounding the hammam, with stories of my personal psychological crisis through field work - a period preceded closely by the suicide of my father.

This work follows the general chronology of my dissertation research time, by first discussion of the hammams in Marrakesh and Fez in Morocco, and then France. In this first chapter, the Introduction, I opened with the first stanza of a poem written for me in Fez expressly for this study, followed by a general description of the hammam, and two personal vignettes – the first describing a hammam visit in a middle class neighborhood of Fez, and the second, describing my first impressions of the hammam in the Great Mosque of Paris. Chapter 2 “Theoretical Themes” outlines how this work engages with theoretical literature and other

related studies about bodily practices, spatial aesthetics, Orientalism and postcolonial studies, desire and ritual piety. Chapter 3 “Context: Characters, Costumes and Sets,” describes my research sites in Morocco and France, the cast of characters and interlocutors, and my own positionality and background. Chapter 4 “Hamмам Elements” sets the stage for Chapter 5 by describing use of the elements Fire, Water, Air and Earth as a poetic device and organizational scheme for understanding the flow of elements, substances and bodies through the spaces of the hammam. In Chapter 5 “Fire, Water, Air and Earth,” I explore, in depth, the pre-colonial, traditional hammam in Morocco. This type of hammam, while becoming less common, is still in existence at this writing, especially in some of the older parts of the imperial cities: Rabat, Fez, Meknes, and Marrakesh. I examine this style of hammam through a close discussion of four Aristotelian elements integral to this ritual bathing practice: Fire, Water, Air, and Earth. I trace the movement of Fire from the furnace room, to the hottest room of the hammam where its power transfers to Water. I move through each room from hottest, to middle to coolest room, where I discuss Air and its related phenomena: sound, echoes, and spirituality. Finally, I end with the changing room and entry of the hammam, where I use Earth as the metaphor for the bodily self, material objects, and commercialism. Using the elements as an organizational device allows for an examination of how people engage with and connect with these elements literally and metaphorically and the meanings and transformations that emerge from such connections. How humans in the context of the hammam tradition relate with space and matter illuminates a new way of understanding sensory experience. Chapter 6 “Bread and Blood: Clean and Dirty Bodies” is an exploration of the world outside of, but in dialogue with the hammam. I describe, with a self-reflexive intimacy and detail, my own shifting relationship and comprehension of substances encountered in Moroccan daily life. Chapter 7 “Escape from Fez to France” is the

fifth element in my experience of the hammam: me, myself and I. It is an intimate discussion of my personal experience of jinn, possession and my own anxieties and obsession with purity and contamination. I explore how personal tragedy and disenchantment mark my subjective anthropological evaluations of cultural processes. I focus, in particular, on my own ideas and local ideas about disease and permeability. I also trace my own experience of being in Freudian therapy and analysis in Seattle, post fieldwork, and I evaluate this experience and the revelations gained thereby against a Moroccan interpretation of my symptoms and experiences. In Chapter 8 “Paris Hammams: Panties and Bourgeois Bohemians,” I use the hammam in Paris as a lens to investigate how Moroccan identity has traveled (in diaspora) to Paris and interfaced with French identity.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL THEMES: ORIENTALISM; DESIRE AND THE PRODUCTION OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR PIETY; VISCERAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Introduction

This dissertation provides a unique perspective on the subject of Muslim identity and experience in a postcolonial context in Morocco and France by analyzing everyday bodily practices, spatial aesthetics, desire and ritual piety. It is primarily a study about the body - how it is regulated, perceived, experienced and treated through the lens of the hammam in Morocco and France. I look at power relationships underlying social relationships as well as power exerted by other forces, and I investigate how these practices influence ideologies locally, nationally and globally.

This is also a study of the space of the hammam itself, and how that space orders and shapes the experiences of the body. I also consider how these perceptions and practices have changed over the past two decades that I have intermittently lived, worked and conducted research in Morocco. I tell the story of how these belief systems surrounding the social life of the hammam have impacted the relationship I have with my own body, psychological and spiritual self. I endeavor to answer the following questions: how does the hammam operate to structure perceptions of the corporeal body and the metaphysical/spiritual self? How is the hammam experienced - either as a performance of belonging in the community or as consumable commercial object, in the lives of local residents, hammam workers, and tourists in Morocco? Similarly, in a second, corresponding site in France, what is the role of the hammam in the lives of French born residents, residents of North African birth or descent, and hammam workers in Paris? How does an understanding of these various experiences help us understand how Moroccan and French identities are constructed in Morocco, France and transnationally?

People in Morocco still depend on the hammam as a place of spiritual and corporeal cleansing, but this social site is often overlooked or given short shrift in anthropological, social and historical studies of Morocco. Indeed the hammam provides a dynamic site through which to examine ideologies and their production and performance. I observe the role of the hammam as a liminal space but also as a social entity and itself an agent of social and spiritual transformation. In recent years the hammam has also become a destination site for Western tourists in Morocco, whereby the hammam as an essentialized Orientalist concept, has been re-appropriated by some Moroccan entrepreneurs and marketed to a willing audience of outsiders – in this way inverting and complicating the economic and social power dynamic. Thus, the descendants of the colonized are marketing to the descendants of the colonizer, rendering them vulnerable while also disseminating a reinvented performance of an Orientalist imaginary and redefining transnational Islam.

There are four main theoretical areas that drive the arguments in this dissertation: Orientalism, desire, self-reflexivity, and power. In this chapter I will discuss these theoretical areas, and include an overview of relevant ethnographies that focus on North African Muslim communities, the everyday and the senses.

First, I engage with works on Orientalism and Post Colonialism. Said's most basic premise of Orientalism is that Western discourse misrepresents the East and thereby creates a fixed binary opposition between the two. Many have critiqued Said, suggesting a more nuanced dynamic at play. In France, I consider the hammam as a living Orientalist *tableau vivant* – a living image or a performative field. These performative “paintings” are collaboratively created by Muslim and non-Muslim actors. I suggest, in keeping with recent (historical and art historical) critiques of Orientalism, that the relationship between the “exotic” East and West is not

necessarily in static opposition, but is oscillating, hybrid and more complicated (for a range of discussion see Ali, 2015; Celik, 2002; Clancy-Smith 2006; and Lewis, 2004). Through ethnography showing the complexity and heterogeneity where these two worlds and desires meet is possible. Thick description can reveal the agency of individual actors, destabilizing the formulae and predictions of theory. Additionally, ethnographic thick description of the hammam in France contributes to the de-romanticization of the deeply embedded exotic Oriental imaginary.

Second, I use theories of desire to frame the hammam as a destination and practice. Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety* (2004) investigates a particular kind of desire for piety in the women's mosque movement in Egypt. She suggests that this type of desire is produced through daily action. Deleuze and Guattari (1972), in their book *Anti-Oedipus*, argue that desire production is a genuine force (in contrast to the Freudian imaginary) in the postcolonial context. This desiring machine appropriates that which is outside of the individual and incorporates it into the self. The ideas of Deleuze and Guattari are most useful in looking at the tourist-based hammams in Morocco and the hammams in France. The Neoliberal concept "prosumption" (the confluence of consumption and production – where producers are also consumers) helps to structure an understanding of modern spirituality and the search for personal meaning and to help define and differentiate between forces of desire.

I also include a discussion of the liminal quality of the hammam and its transformative ritual significance in shaping desire for non-Muslim bathers in France and Morocco (Ebron 1999, Turner 1969). The hammam has been reproduced in new forms and contexts (for tourists in Morocco and for locals and tourists in France) and these hammams often attract individuals seeking a meaningful or enjoyable cultural experience. This consumption is related to a

commercialization and commodification of culture, objects and art, as discussed by Walter Benjamin (1935, 1968) who wrote about the “aura of historical objects” and the loss of authenticity and distance when art is reproduced and consumed en masse. The Comaroffs (2009) evaluate the commodification of culture through commercial consumption of associated objects and (re)produced “authentic” experiences. The hammam has been reproduced for tourists in Morocco and for tourists and locals of all types in France; in a neoliberal context it has been repurposed and re-appropriated, as a desired experience for self-therapy, self-improvement and spiritual transformation.

Third, I describe the importance of ethnographies of the senses and the everyday, and describe my own reflexive approach. I expand upon the work of others who have advocated for self-reflexivity in ethnography by including a deep reflexive component in my ethnographic telling of this hammam research. I also devote a generous amount of discussion to my own psychoanalysis and psychological position throughout several chapters – as a way of demonstrating how the psychological state of the researcher can influence perception and experience. By detailing how the ethnographer goes about each day, trying to perform the mundane tasks of eating, buying food, working, even breathing and coping (some of which became difficult or impossible at particular junctures) this work reveals how trauma can trigger a drastic shift in perception, fundamentally altering the ethnographer’s observations.

Finally, power relationships underpin all of these theoretical areas of investigation. Throughout the analysis I trace the flows of power in particular contexts with particular people. Sources of power with relationship to the hammam consist not only of people and institutions, but also substances and forces of nature, as well as spiritual and metaphysical forces.

Part 1 - Orientalism and Post Colonialism: De-Romanticizing the Exotic East with Dead Skin and Ugly Undies

Civilizing the uncivilized – the civilizing mission, has persisted at least since the Middle Ages since the European Catholics saw their duty to spread their beliefs and ideology. In the late 19th century, the French, who also invented the term “civilization” declared their “special mission to civilize the indigenous peoples” that they had come to control (Conklin, 1998, p. 1). Indeed much of the Orientalist representations of North African French colonies were made in service of this civilizing mission – which with assumptions of cultural, moral, and intellectual superiority, implied that the indigenous peoples of north Africa were *not* civilized.

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) argues that Western scholarship has consisted of misguided cultural representations of The East, historically produced by Westerners who had imperialist agendas. These representations supported and perpetuated this long established civilizing mission, patronized the East, and reinforced the Western dominant power relationship. Said shows that Foucault’s notion of discourse offers an alternative way of thinking about ideology. Cultural construction can be historically determining and can define and shape history. Western expansion to the East was not just motivated by economic greed. Said also argues that the seemingly impartial and “objective” academic disciplines collude with and are instrumental in producing forms of colonial subjugation and administration. *Orientalism* provided evidence of the complicity between politics and the production of knowledge. Finally, Said convincingly argues that the construction of Orientalism was self-generating with little relation to its object: “the Orient.” Orientalist discourse constructs Western knowledge of the Other.

Texts can *create* a knowledge and reality based on what they *appear* to describe (a form of Western fantasy). For example, Ingres’ *Turkish Bath* (1862) takes its inspiration from Lady

Montague's early 18th century letters detailing her visit to Istanbul. Despite impressions, Ingres was neither painting from eyewitness memory nor accurately depicting Lady Montague's descriptions. In fact, she makes clear that no licentious behavior between women took place in the baths, but in Ingres' painting, two women erotically caress one another's breasts, and are completely naked, outstretched and languid. All this quite the contrary to the hammams I had seen in Morocco. Orientalist representations distort and fictionalize.



Figure 2.1 The Turkish Bath, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, 1862-63

Instead of supporting Said's argument that the Orientalization misrepresents Eastern, Muslim women, setting up a binary, I wish to extend the metaphor of representation to the hammam. If we consider the hammam in France, and the tourist hammam in Morocco, as a co-created representation of the Orient, we can make the case that the hammam is a collaboratively

constructed representation with many authors – from East and West. It is a collectively authored and multifaceted space - a much more complex, nuanced and collaborative project.

Orientalism, and its textual and visual imaginings of the hammam as an exotic, decorative, decadent place of repose, has erased the grit and realism of the hammam in Morocco. Most neighborhood hammams are without luxurious trappings, colorful tiles and arched windows. The experience requires labor, sweat, work, noise and energy, although it can be restorative and relaxing after the fact. Orientalist representations ignore the underlying meaning and the power of waters and cleansing. Where the traditional hammam once derived its meaning and power from the spiritual energy of the water itself, sacred sources, springs, or the *baraka* and spiritual energy of their founding *sayyad*, now, many newer hammams in Morocco have been “cleaned up” of such invisible power sources, and display new tile and shiny faucet fixtures and more luxurious accouterments. Whenever I have mentioned a study about the hammam to older Moroccan citizens, they invariably referenced Sidi Harazem and Moulay Yaqoub, both sacred sites where the spring water is renowned for its healing properties and restorative power. Soaking pools and hammams are scattered about the grounds, which have been pilgrimage sites for many years.² These sorts of representations are largely invisible in Orientalist texts.

Others have written about Orientalism and the Colonial enterprise suggesting that Islam has become an objectified exhibition (Mitchell 1988, 1998; Bayoumi 2000; Celik 1992).

Timothy Mitchell’s *Colonizing Egypt* (1988) illustrates how reordering space by the colonizer in

² One can buy bottled water from Sidi Harazem at any corner store, and at restaurants or homes. One often hears the joke in restaurants or homes, “Would you like a glass of “Sidi Harazem or Sidi Rubinet” (Water from the saint Harazem or Saint Faucet?) playing on the dichotomy between sacred and profane.

a Cartesian and rectilinear style in Egypt, shapes experience and ideology. Indeed the way the hammam is built and structured affects how bodies move through it and use it, and in France and Morocco, offshoots from traditional hammam layouts shape the experience therein. I explore this idea especially within the discussion of Parisian hammams and tourist hammams in Morocco, where spaces, which would otherwise be vast, are restricted, or where spaces usually hidden from view are unusually open to view, as in the Paris Mosque hammam. Mitchell also discusses the experience of space in the Parisian exhibitions of Egypt in his article “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order” (1998). He illustrates the confusion that Egyptian delegates experienced when visiting the World Exposition Egypt exhibition because of the incongruity between the representation and the real. Later, their experience of a Parisian department store further played with their orientation in space, their identity and sense of self. Mitchell plays with the idea of orientation, reorientation, representation and authenticity – ideas which factor greatly into the experience that tourists and non-Muslims have at the hammams in Paris and the tourist hammams in Morocco. Tourists look for what they perceive as authentic and exotic and opt for visits to the hammams that recreate Orientalist representations that fit their expectations and satisfy their desire (See Comaroff, 2009).

Malek Alloula (1986) in *The Colonial Harem* analyzes postcards of Algerian women, produced by the French in the early 20th century, and sent from Algeria during the colonial period. He writes about the photographer-colonizer’s representation of women through these postcards, which were sent back home from Algeria. Alloula suggests that these cards convey a violent conquest of the West over “the Orient” through possession of both land and female bodies.

The images circulated and created an imaginary of Algerian women, many of whom had been hired, dressed and posed for the photos, creating a carefully stylized and curated collection. They reveal an obsession with the licentiousness and loose morality of Muslim women – some topless, some partially veiled, some smoking, some posing sensually with other women. The postcards did everything to support the idea that North African women were exotic, untamed and mysterious and even powerful in their sexuality. These photos also did nothing to fragment the idea of the harem – as these women seemed an infinite series of women, all belonging to the same collection.

Alloula expresses the wish that a similar record, in reverse, existed of the colonized gaze on the colonizer, since the postcards are only a product of the colonizer's gaze and fantasy. He explains that these photographs are a French colonial projection of a world that never existed, that reveal more about imperialistic desires that produced the images than the cultures in which they were produced. At the hammam in France and Morocco, the bodies of North African women within the hammams are confined to the walls of the hammam, but they are not static – unlike the paintings or the postcards. However, the women in the hammam are a group of North African women without clothing – so, part of the Orientalist fantasy revealed in paintings and postcards, but in the case of these real spaces, the women are not posed or static. They have agency and voice.

In addition to the colonialist representations of North Africa linked to postcards and paintings, travel writing produced eyewitness descriptions of Moroccan women, specifically “the harem” – defined by the colonist as a case of mistreatment and imprisonment of women – one of the symbols and evidence of African barbarism. This aligned with the fantasy that women were leisurely, bored, deprived, backward, ignorant and uncivilized. Despite Said's suggestions that

Orientalist discourse is homogeneous, representing the colonial subject, there are, in fact, various categories of writing on “the harem” in the former French colonies of North Africa, Turkey and the Middle East. The European accounts written by men tend to be fictional, or based on hearsay and imagination, since all female spaces were forbidden to them. Many of these anecdotes helped support the colonial agenda and produce the Orientalist fantasies and images of languid sensual spaces and captive women that persist today. Many other women’s accounts tended to be non-pejorative of the Orient, and sometimes undermined the male colonialist agenda, but these were not as popular or influential, or, in the case of Montagu, were misinterpreted or inspired more influential but distorted representations (Mills 1991, Yegenoglu 1998).

European women Orientalists, such as Edith Wharton, Mary Montagu, and Isabelle Eberhardt, wrote accounts based on their real access to the female spaces of the harem and baths in North Africa. Feminist writers argue that female Orientalists portray North Africa and the Orient as a “heterotopia” with contradictions and complexities absent in male Orientalist discourse. Interestingly, it has been argued that female Orientalists, particularly Eberhardt, negotiate their own status and identity in their writings about North Africa, since their impressions of women throw their own position within western gender hierarchies and power structures into new relief (Lowe 1991, Lewis, 1996).

Some such accounts openly report that harem life was not as oppressive as others had reported. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in her letters (2011) suggests that Western European garments of the time were actually *more* oppressive than their Eastern counterparts, as she describes the shock expressed by Turkish women bath attendants when she revealed her own clothing to them. “... I was at last forced to open my shirt, and shew them my stays;... they believed I was so locked up in that machine, that it was not in my own power to open it, which

contrivance they attributed to my husband” (Montagu, [1866] 2011, p. 286). To the Turkish women attending her, the corsets and clothing she wore seemed a prison fashioned by her husband, a paradoxical reversal of the Orientalist paradigm. Additionally, Montagu reports that she observed no sexual activity within the hammam. Despite Ingres deriving inspiration from Lady Mary’s writing, he nonetheless inserted shocking sexual themes of women fondling one another into his painting, *Turkish Bath* (see Figure 2.1).

Some accounts more obviously support the colonialist agenda, illustrating how torturously limited, domestic and prosaic harem life *really* was. This, of course, mirrored the European expectation of the Orient, and exaggerated or embellished the truth of harem life. Edith Wharton is perhaps the most famous and widely read American travel writer to go to Morocco. Through her writing she “endorse[s] French colonialism underwritten by central tropes of Orientalism” (Tromly, 2009). Wharton extends the idea of imprisonment not only to the women in Morocco who are imprisoned by their cruel controlling barbaric husbands, but to the houses and cities themselves, as veritable cultural prisons of savage backwardness. While on a visit to the women’s quarters of a wealthy Fez palace she describes the women she encounters and the vast difference between the limited, narrow and ignorant, oriental versus the superior occidental minds:

Conversing through interpreters is a benumbing process, and there are few points of contact between the open-air occidental mind and beings imprisoned in a conception of sexual and domestic life based on slave service and incessant espionage. These languid women...know little of cooking, needlework or household arts. When her child is ill she can only hang it with amulets...the great lady of the Fazi palace is as ignorant of hygiene as a peasant-woman of the bled...all these colourless eventless lives depend on the favour of one fat tyrannical man, bloated with good living and authority, himself almost as inert and sedentary as his women, and accustomed to impose his whims on them...both sexes live till old age in an atmosphere of sensuality without seduction” (Wharton, 1920, p.194-195).

Wharton includes first hand detail and description, but does not have Arabic at her disposal and has a thin understanding of daily practices and belief systems. I can see how she would interpret a lack of activity (cooking, needlepoint, intellectual pursuits) as boring simplemindedness. When guests of honor are present in a home in Morocco, it is often considered the most polite to sit without doing activity. It is the highest respect to offer inactivity to a guest. I often marveled at the hours spent sitting in silence in Morocco, simply enjoying company or food, or the night sky from the rooftop. This certainly was no reflection of a lack of intellect or skill in my experience. Without command of Arabic, Wharton must have been limited in her understanding of the inner workings of the harem, its daily life and the inner thoughts of its women.

In contrast, Eberhardt, who had converted to Islam at the age of 18 and lived in Algeria, often disguised herself as a man, and she considered the Muslim world morally and spiritually superior to Europe and its traditions. Her hybrid and transgressive behavior and identity made her a polarizing “masculine” character. This image was shaped by her indulgence in alcohol and hashish, cross-dressing, resistance to the colonial machine, conversion to Islam, an eroticization of the North African women and landscape, and her longing and desire for the people and culture of Algeria. In her discussion of women, she often de-emphasizes aggressive tendencies towards sexuality (an Orientalist stereotype) and instead often highlights their candor and femininity. She has been criticized as invoking male empowerment, implying a desire to dominate, consume and objectify the Orient. In her writings, she always circles back to an ecstatic, nearly erotic love of the spirit and nature of North Africa:

Felt seduced all over again by the heady sight of a desert sunrise as I travelled from Biskra to Touggourt...At Sidi Amram I stretched out on the ground by a fire that was burning dried

*djerids*³. The sand felt warm and the sky was ablaze with countless stars. Oh Sahara, menacing Sahara, hiding your dark and beautiful soul in bleak, desolate emptiness! Oh yes, I love this country of sand and stone...” (Eberhardt, 2003, p. 59).

Her diaries are riddled with erotic but ascetic descriptions such as this, of love and desire for the desert and nature. She wanted to produce and consume her own experience of belonging and identity.

Through Eberhardt and her critics, I hear echoes of my own ambiguous identity throughout my time in Morocco and I am also made aware of my complicity as a (female) producer of Orientalist discourse. My desire to belong to Morocco, but my inability to ever truly “be” one of its women, or even embody their position of power within the culture, inevitably shaped my perspective, my experience and my writing. Among some of the expat women living in Fez at the time, we often joked that we were considered neither women nor men in Morocco - that we fit into a third gender category. We were welcomed into both feminine and masculine spaces, yet we belonged to neither. While we were able to sit at the all-male cafes, on public terraces in plain view (a disgrace for respectable local women), we were also able to join the private sphere of women in their kitchens, henna parties, and hammams. We had the sense that we were not gender equals, but gender inferior on all fronts: neither real women nor real men. We were honored and treated as valued guests, but at the same time, we were also seen as nonsensical and curious pets, lost and unable to fend for ourselves, and defying any real place or role within Fez society. As a non-Muslim foreigner, I sensed, in contexts outside my Moroccan family, that my morality was always questioned, and my sexual looseness was assumed. At the

³ Palm leaves

time this felt simultaneously liberating (access to the men's world) but also demeaning and erasing (lack of real belonging in either domain).

Today, I still question whether my marriage was perhaps in part, my attempt to transcend my ambiguous status in Morocco - to be a true insider and member of the female ranks, to mark and make meaning not only of my love of a Muslim Moroccan man, but of my love for the smells and sights, language, kindnesses, people, streets, cafes and traditions. It was also a desire to embrace and possess the small romanticized moments I relished at the time and in my memory: the taste of ripe tomatoes on brown round bread in the outdoor courtyard of a Moroccan French villa, the smells of roasting peppers in the 'Ain Qadus neighborhood streets, passionate oral and physical fights erupting in the streets just before dusk during Ramadan, painfully early but haunting morning calls to prayer and the calls of the fish mongers with their wheelbarrows of *hut*,⁴ meditative but rousing rhythms from drumming ceremonies two doors down, the bursts of blooming orange blossoms in the early spring breeze, the quiet slow heat of deep summer, and the soft penetrating mystery of dark almond eyes. I wanted to consume and belong to this second home, a still largely forbidden place, inasmuch as I possibly could, and I wanted to be equally subsumed or consumed by it. I also question whether my own pursuit of personal meaning squares delightfully with the Neoliberal modern middle class idea of prosumption (consumption and production simultaneously) where we create and consume, in an exercise in personal transformation, a pursuit of our own individuality, of our potential, and our best, most fulfilling selves (Dawson, 2013, Toffler 1980).

Finally, in contrast to these white female Occidental accounts, are a handful of indigenous writings revealing harem life from an indigenous female insider's perspective. Huda

⁴ In Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, the catch-all word meaning fish

Shaarawi's (1987) *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist* and Moroccan scholar, Fatima Mernissi's (1994) "*Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*" are memoirs that recount upbringings in an urban North African harem. While both women were fiercely independent feminists, their accounts of harem life reveal its cultural, social and familial richness. For them, life was filled with blessings and tragedies, as any life, but in both cases, their hunger for opportunity to pursue education led them to intellectual and geographic (spatial?) freedoms.

Mernissi gives a balanced account of her childhood in the old medina of Fez, with its medieval urban circulation and architecture, describing the wonders of the harem world, and also the frustrations with her limited access to outside frontiers. Her harem was a mixed space where men and women of the family could interact. Strange men from outside the family were not allowed to interact with the women. Overall, her harem account is rich with stories, visitors, songs, incantations, group outings to movies, fun pranks, sensually charged transgressions (boys would sneak up to the roof terrace, despite that area being designated only for the women, to sneak glances at neighbor girls, and vice versa). In one of her chapters she tells of visiting the *hammam* – the significance of which, to her, seemed to be its value in capturing the heart of a man. The two means by which one could catch a husband were magic and beauty, and going to the hammam was a complicated beauty routine. She describes her hair as horrible, and the hammam as the place where she applied tobacco olive oil concoctions and henna to make her hair more attractive. She describes the washing off process as her favorite, and the hammam in general as a "warm, misty island." She describes the pouring of water, the bowls and buckets, and the screams of women over personal space, and the splashing of henna. She walked away from the hammam feeling beautiful. The terrace and the hammam were her favorite parts of harem life. Informants in Morocco mentioned that true beauty could be measured by the way a

woman looked just after she left the hammam. Mernissi extends the metaphor of the harem and hammam, the demarcations of borders (invisible and structural), inequalities to the colonizer and colonized, to political, social, and economic borders and limitations.

“Harem” in English is still a loaded term evoking Orientalist and Hollywood images of captive women with no agency. However, the “word ‘harem’ (in Arabic *harim*) ... is also related to the Arabic word *haram* meaning ‘sacred’, ‘forbidden’, ‘inviolable’ and ‘holy’” (Golley, 2004, p. 523) and is not inherently gendered. Historically, women were designated a space (in the home) that was forbidden, not to all men, but only to those who were not part of the immediate family. Thus the *harim* or harem in English is related to the division between sacred, holy, protected, on the one hand, and taboo or forbidden on the other. The *harim* is a sacred space of a sanctuary, a space where women are given privacy and safety. The Arabic words *haraam*, *harim* and *haram* are derived from the same root letters h-r-m. In Fez, the word *haraam*, with the longer vowel after the middle root r, is most often used to refer to something strictly prohibited to Muslims: alcohol and pork are well known examples. As an example of the conceptual and linguistic fluidity between the ideas of sacred and profane, in Morocco, *haram* refers often to any sacred space or area, the inner, sanctuary of a mosque or shrine, for example.

To further illustrate the concept and connotation of these words, particularly in Fez, in a personal communication with a former colleague and friend, Mostafa Oujjani, he explained the beautifully worn wooden beams that permanently traverse the narrow pathways near the Mausoleum of Moulay Idriss. He said:

[The beams] are placed in every alley leading to Moulay Idriss Mausoleum and they are there to prevent mules or donkeys from getting in to al-Idrissi *haram*. The *haram* that evokes Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem, is used in this context to suggest the sacredness of the place. There have been some other anecdotal explanations of these beams – they are there to make the visitor bow (out of respect or allegiance or both) when entering al-*haram* al-Idrissi.

The *haram*, here, evokes a bounded space and marks a division between sacred and profane. Thus the women's space at home, *harim* and the *haram* are conceptually related as spatially sacred, divided and forbidden.

In France there are hammams that were built outside of the Muslim context, yet they continue to signify and evoke the imaginary of the Hollywood harem: one that persists from the Orientalist discourse. The closed doors of the hammam, the site where Muslim women disrobe and de-veil, is still evocative of harem fantasies, of submissive imprisoned women, or aggressively sexual women behind closed doors. It also evokes ideas of beauty, rest, relaxation, and indulgence. In recent decades, the West has perpetuated the colonialist notion that the Muslim woman needs liberating. Abu Lughod suggests that recent Western political agendas in Afghanistan and the Middle East have been furthered by the call to liberate oppressed Muslim women – to throw off their burkas and face coverings, as though they had no agency or control over their choices. Abu Lughod argues against Muslim women needing saving by from the burka, from the veil by the West (Abu Lughod, 2002).

In France, however, if we read the hammam as a representation of the East, as the frame for a painting, then, authorship is collaborative. In my own research, the hammams within which I participated and observed in Paris were collaboratively authored by owners, patrons and workers who represented North African Muslims, Israeli Moroccan Jews, Algerians, French Catholics and international tourists. The hammam is a place where all women, from East and West, are disrobed and Said's polarizing binary of West constructing East breaks down. If the hammam is a representation, then it represents pockets of resistance and rupture. Talking to women at the hammam, we understand more about whether women need liberating from their veils, or whether banning the burkini and headscarf are truly liberating or not. One Moroccan

woman passionately described to me that this “liberation” expressed by French women is actually unfair to women, as it is devaluing. From her perspective it showed that women were not respected or cared for – that liberation signaled a breakdown in morality and a *lack* of civilization. Women in France, to her, were “over-liberated” to the extent that they lacked rootedness or moral foundation, and they would as a result lose their own sense of value.

Another North African hammam worker was astounded at the loose morality of the French – and to her their behavior was silly and laughable. She did not ache for this kind of lifestyle – she found it beneath her.

Opinions, behavior, aesthetic choices and attitudes are heterogeneous. Aesthetically, inside and outside of the French hammam, one sees a range of aesthetic assimilation and a range of attitudes about behavior. On the street, some Muslim women look outwardly “French.” Some look “Muslim” because of head coverings. In the hammam it is sometimes difficult to know who is who. Chandra Mohanty in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses” suggests that Arab and Muslim women are neither passive victims nor homogenous in terms of “historical, material and ideological power structures” and that these women should be seen in their contextual complexity. Her suggestions that “there is no one Moroccan woman” (p. 6) holds true in France and Morocco. How women construct their own identity in the hammam gives insight into how people are exerting their freedoms and negotiating between modern trends and their own cultural traditions. A student, Zara, exemplifies the complexity of the individual identities of hammam participants. Zara’s mother is French Catholic and her father is Tunisian Muslim but she lives the secular life of a politically active doctoral student. She resides in a multicultural Bourgeois Bohemian, or Bobo, district of Paris where she enjoys an active social life and travels frequently to North Africa for scholarly conferences, cultural

outings and visits to her extended family. The concept of Bobo is examined by David Brooks (2000) in his book *Bobos in Paradise* as a new postcolonial French social class composed of the young, socially conscious, educated, and privileged. Zara's identity is rooted simultaneously in France, Islam, secularism, the Bobo class, Tunisia, and many points between. Her case is not unique.

Part 2 - Desire: Muslim Piety and Secular Piety

This study engages with a number of theoretical ideas about desire. Since this is a multi-sited study that includes a study of hammam in both the sovereign Muslim Kingdom of Morocco and the democratic Republic of France, I have accounted for what I see as two major paradigms of desire at play. On the one hand, desire is a *productive force* propelling individuals to pursue action, on their own behalf. On the other, desire is the *result of bodily practice*, whereby daily activity and practice produces desire for piety. The **First Paradigm** involves *Religious Piety*. The **Second Paradigm** involves what I have termed *Secular Piety*.

Paradigm 1

First Paradigm: Bodily Practice Produces Desire for Religious Piety

Saba Mahmood's more recent treatment of women in Islam explores the bodily production of desire for piety in Egypt (Mahmood, 2005). In *Politics of Piety*, Mahmood argues that desire for religious piety and union with Allah, in the context of the women's Piety Movement in Cairo⁵, is produced through mundane daily activities that may or may not be

⁵ The Mosque or Piety Movement in Egypt (and throughout the Muslim world) is the recent trend for women and girls to study Islam in a more formal context. They memorize the Qur'an and learn Hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammed) and often they do this at the mosque; in the past they had studied at

spiritually intentioned. In Morocco and in France, piety is, as Mahmood proposes, similarly produced as a product of daily or mundane activities such as bathing at the hammam. The hammam is a means of performing the big ablutions in Islam and thereby allows a bather to unite in prayer with Allah. In Morocco, as in Mahmood's Egypt, daily routines and bodily practices produce the desire to be a more pious person and better Muslim.

Mahmood also addresses agency in her analysis of the production of desire. She counters Western ethical and feminist agendas by suggesting that agency at the local level in Egypt looks different. In other words, belonging to an Islamic movement doesn't automatically imply submission to a patriarchal system. Mahmood explains the agency within women's choice to belong to the movement, and how they choose to participate. Covering their heads with the veil or headscarf is actively not a symbol of oppression, but rather an "ultimate symbol of our freedom," of identity and Islam. Mahmood suggests that the veil is a marker of a different kind of sexuality distinct from Western understandings and performances of sexual identity. The West has been obsessed with removing the veil in order to *civilize*. Instead of a "marker of Islam's backwardness," as has been claimed by the products of Orientalism and more recently by Western politicians, analysts and media, the Piety/Mosque Movement rejects this uninvited crusade to *unveil* by reclaiming the veil as a "marker of civilization." (Abu Lughod, 2002).

Desire for Religious Piety: Aristotelian Habitus

home since the mosque was considered a male space. This movement also includes learning how to balance religious devotion with the demands of modern life and encourages the pursuit of careers, education and involvement in aspects of society that require men and women to mix.

It is helpful to elaborate here on Mahmood's theoretical underpinnings for this process of external practice of performative acts such as prayer (or memorization), as a vehicle for creating internal dispositions (Mahmood, 2004, 135). She draws on the Aristotelian notion of *habitus* to illustrate the idea that practice and discipline can contribute to the ethical formation of personhood⁶. *Habitus*, by Aristotle's definition, is a "tradition of moral cultivation" acquired through "human industry, assiduous practice, and discipline, such that it becomes a permanent feature of a person's character" (136). A distinctive feature of this *habitus*, is that once instilled in the body, the ethical or moral disposition is an enduring characteristic – it is permanently embodied, unlike a habit, which can be variable, changed, stopped, or begun at any time.

Aristotelian teachings of ethical formation influenced Christian, Jewish and Muslim theologians from the 11th to the 15th century including Thomas Aquinas, Maimonides, Avicenna, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Khaldun. In fact, Ibn Khaldun's discussion of *malaka*, usually translated as "habit," very likely comes from the Aristotelian *habitus*. *Malaka*, in Ibn Khaldun, is the highest degree of faith, such that this faith of heart takes command of every activity of the body – the body becomes subservient to it (Mahmood 137). Mahmood explains that emotions are evoked in the mosque lessons in order to hone a pious disposition. These are a triad of emotions: fear, hope, and love, but are not inspired by spontaneous experience, necessarily, but are consciously exteriorly evoked in order to promote an interior pious self (140). *Taqwa*, equated with the "capacity to fear God" and "piety" is one such emotion that can be evoked through weeping

⁶ This is not to be confused with Bourdieu's use of *habitus*, which refers to the more passive acquisition of a disposition through the body, as a factor of socioeconomic class. He defines *habitus* as a primarily unconscious process that does not involve pedagogical agency and which cannot be acquired through individual choice (Bourdieu 1977, 1990).

during prayer. Performances of emotion, such as this, whether spontaneously felt and exteriorized, or consciously produced, are examples of how bodily practice constructs piety (145-6).

Desire for Religious Piety: Evoked Through Emotion, Repetition and Movement through Space

Piety is produced, thus, through bodily action. This has implications for the hammam in both Morocco and France. The ritualized bathing practices, experiences and thoughts are repeated weekly throughout life, and are embodied. In this way the hammam is another locus of piety production. Other scholars have studied bodily movement and repetition as constructing piety. Kristina Nelson, who, like Mahmood, conducted her field study in Egypt, explains how pious emotion can be expressed *and* constructed through a related emotion: *huzn* (loosely translated as sadness) in the process of recitation. It is not uncommon for a Qur'anic reciter to be overcome by *huzn*, which is considered a state of ecstasy, and weep during the recitation. Whether or not this emotion is spontaneous or feigned is not important, as long as the emotion is affected in order to “invoke the desired state” rather than “for purposes of show” (Nelson 1985, 96). So, in daily recitation, even the disciplined practice of displaying emotion can be constitutive of desire, and will eventually develop into the spontaneous internalized and externalized pious emotion. With the correct *niya*, or intention, this practice produces desire. This is not unlike Amy Cuddy's mantra “fake it till you make it” and her recently popularized (and controversial) idea that positioning the body in certain “power poses” actually creates physiological, hormonal changes in the body (Cuddy, 2012; Dominus, 2017).

The repeated naming and praising of Allah is related to the Sufi practice of chanting known as *zikr*, the remembrance of God. Pnina Werbner's (2003) ethnographic work with a Sufi

order in Pakistan and the U.K. deals with the bodily, spatial expressions of Muslim identity. She explains that on the Sufi path toward God, the primary ritual practice is *zikr*, which has the power to transform bodies and purify the soul. It also has the power to sacralize and Islamize the spaces that the sounds and bodies pass over and through. One of her interlocutors explained that when he began practicing *zikr* correctly, the body and heart automatically performed *zikr* all the time: “every moment of the day and night, even when a person is doing other things. Like now, when I’m talking to you” (Werbner 2003, 41). This practice of *zikr* seeps into every mundane daily task, in the same way that the women in the Cairo mosque movement enter into a relationship with piety in their daily tasks as they go about their days. In the hammam, songs and blessings, offerings to jinn and to the patron saint, and the workers likewise sacralize and mark the space, giving it meaning and *baraka*⁷.

The sacralizing of space is an important principle in Sufi Islam. Transformation of the self is important, but the movement through literal space in a journey or symbolic pilgrimage is equally important for achieving a transcendent self and an Islamic universe. “It is the divine transformation in space that is the ultimate proof of the divine transformation of the person” (Werbner 2003, 45).

Pakistanis in Britain organized processions through spaces where they settled, and by chanting *zikr*, inscribed Islam onto these public spaces. According to another interlocutor, “you must do *zikr*...when you are standing, when you are walking, when you are lying down. According to the Hadith [sayings of the prophet], when you walk along saying *zikr*, then everything, including people and objects and things of nature, will be your witness...even the stones and buildings...once you have said *zikr* stamping on the earth, the earth will wait for you

⁷ *Baraka* translates loosely to sacred blessing, power, and grace

to come back again” (Werbner 2003, 53). It is in the repetitive action of chanting in remembrance of God, that bodies are inscribed with piety and purity, but also the spaces, objects, and even the earth touched by bodies becomes infused with the spirit of God. In this way bodily practice is not limited only to personal transcendence, but bodily practice engages the immediate environment. The hammam is imparted with spirit and spirits – and in this way is often referred to as an eerie or haunted, but always an important place. The indirectness of this meaning and spirituality imbues the space with meaning and entices the Bobo participants.

Desire for Religious Piety: Al-Ghazali - Feigned Ecstasy and Dances of Desire

Nelson (1985) uses the teachings of eleventh century Sufi scholar al-Ghazali, to illustrate the way to achieve a state of union with God while reciting the Qur’an. He clarifies that feigning ecstasy (brought on by huzn, sadness and emotion, weeping, the fear of God) is acceptable if it is not done to deceive, or for the sake of appearance. This simulated bodily practice, the process of going through the motions, is a method of training the body, of learning how to feel such emotions and achieve an authentic ecstatic state in the future. According to al-Ghazali, “while the beginning of these states may be forced, their ends are true” (as quoted in Nelson 1985, 97).

Deborah Kapchan describes the Gnawa trance ceremony as the “dance of desire” (Kapchan 2007, 8). The Gnawa are a Muslim subculture in Morocco, who claim descent from a black companion of the Prophet, and whose music inspires trance. It is neither race nor genealogy that defines the Gnawa, however, but the ability to trance (Kapchan 2007, 52). Gnawa ritual has been heavily influenced by Moroccan Sufism and saint worship. In Sufism, it is, as we saw in Pakistani Sufi zikr, the desire for union with God that brings one nearer to a spiritual communion with him. For the Gnawa, these desires are spiritual, but are discussed with

corporeal metaphor and acknowledged as sexual. The relationship between the spirit inhabiting the body is similar to that of lover and beloved: there are moments of conflict, ecstasy, and moments of transcendent union. Mastery of communication with the spirit makes an entry into a state of grace, known as *baraka*, possible, and the body takes on attributes of the spirit. In this state, the body is able to withstand tremendous pain, as proven through bodily mutilation, glass-eating, direct exposure of the skin to flames, and the body undergoes an alchemic transformation. It is the ritual of trance that combines intense sensory input: sounds of singing, chanting voices, rhythms of drums and instruments, repetitive movements of the head and body that result in this spiritual union and ecstasy with the spirit (Kapchan 2007, 33-35). It could be argued that the process of bathing in the hammam has similar trance-like qualities. Some Moroccan bathers have described “sleeping” in the hottest rooms, and going into an altered state. The purpose of the bathing ritual is prayer, ultimately, but in undergoing the bathing process, the body undergoes rigorous actions and motions, most of which are repeated numerous times: water collection, deep scrubbing, rinsing, heating in the hottest room. Throughout the process, the body is subject to cacophonous sounds, bodies, echoes. In the end the result is a deeply relaxed state that penetrates deeply into the corporeal body, but also mind.

According to Kapchan, there is a certain repertoire of movement that precedes falling into possession trance. These movements, which Kapchan calls “gestures of transit,” facilitate the state of physical and spiritual change from one realm to another. This recalls what Nelson (1985) demonstrates as the power of weeping during prayer to facilitate closeness to God through *huzn*, or how Caton (1990) describes the power of formulaic pious phrases in oral poetry to generate pious emotion in the poet and audience. The movements themselves signal a bodily memory of the experience of trance, of the heightened union, and simultaneously, these

movements transform space into sacred space. Usually the trance possession ceremony is conducted at a private home that hosts for the night. In this way, space becomes sacralized similarly to the way Sufi procession in England sacralized the space that Muslim bodies chanted through and passed through.

The body itself also creates space as it gestures and moves. Kapchan draws on Lefebvre's theory of bodies generating spaces through micro and macro gesture. This involves both private daily routine (prayer, walking, eating) and larger collective gesture such as sermon or group prayer. Lefebvre suggests that gestural systems embody ideology and bind it to practice, so that the movements of the body are integral to creating reality. So, abstract ideology takes form in the way of gesture and becomes real action in the world (Kapchan 2007, 53). In the hammam, bodies' gestural performance of bathing, gathering water, hair combing, exiting, dressing and resting appropriately, signal cultural belonging and ritual transitions: from polluted to pure, dirty to clean, single to married. While not identical, there are similarities – and indeed both westerners and Moroccans consider the hammam to be invigorating, restorative, and transformational. It creates a transformational experience, not unlike trance.

Returning to Saba Mahmood, it may be useful to apply this principle of bodily practice as generative of pious desire in the hammams. Applied to the ritual purification process theoretically underlying a visit to the hammam, it is useful to consider al-Ghazali's notion that habitus can be formed through bodily action with *niya*, right intention, particularly for the Bobos who are specifically well intentioned in their desire for participation in and acceptance of religious and cultural minorities. But does the doing itself, of the same bathing ritual, lead to the same ends, as proposed by al-Ghazali? By proceeding through this ritual process, in the mosque hammam, for example, a place that literally borders the mosque, a place of Islamic faith and

practice, which also borders Islamic principles by virtue of its tradition as a site of purification, the body does not always become a more spiritual pious body. Perhaps for the non-Muslim there is an advancement of understanding, an elevation of mood. Perhaps *niya*, or intention, may or may not be a catalyst for imbibing some piety, but appreciation, understanding and openness to the Other are prevailing outcomes.

Desire for Religious Piety: Sacred Embodiment - Qur'anic Traditions of Voice, Body, and Space

As Kapchan explains, the voice and vocalization is central to Islamic theology, a key aspect of achieving piety through action. The prophet Mohammed received the revelation of Qur'an orally, and was told to recite aloud. In this process, and indeed, in daily life, the voice inhabits the speaker and the listener (2007, 95). Traditionally, children learn to memorize verses from the Qur'an at an early age through recitation, and memorization of the Qur'an in its entirety is a goal for many, and quite often achieved. An understanding of the semantic meaning or message may come later, but the power of the words themselves is considered sacred, and at the same time inseparable from their meaning. Niloofar Haeri's anthropological research in Cairo confirms that to many Cairenes, form and meaning of the Qur'an cannot be separated. To her interviewees, the idea of translating the Qur'an into another language seemed absurd and impossible. In this way Saussurian semiotics breaks down and the relationship between signifier and signified is not arbitrary (Haeri 2000, 74-75). The reverberations of the utterance, the actual sound of the words and phrases of the Qur'an are considered to be imbued with sacred power or blessing, what is often referred to as *baraka*. The power and spirit of the recitation would be erased by a textual semantic translation. By uttering the Qur'an, the words of God are evoked, and over time, desire for rightly guided religious behavior is produced.

The paradigm of all knowledge in traditional Islamic learning is the Qur'an, which is considered the word of God. Memorization of key texts, beginning with the Qur'an, and then moving into the religious science and jurisprudence, the sayings of the prophet, and so forth, are part of the traditional educational process in Morocco and Egypt. Perfect imitation of the Qur'an, the words of Allah, for example, is highly celebrated and encouraged, whereas attempts to imitate Allah's creations, by depicting (through art, drawing, other forms of representation) are strongly discouraged. Allah created mountains, humans, and animals in their perfect form, so the

imitation of such perfection is sacrilege – and considered a challenge to Allah’s power to perfection. Thus the re-voicing of the word of Allah contains within this very act of reciting, a remnant of the original discursive power and authority (Said 1977). This process of bodily practice, the saying of and memorization of the text, figures largely in a number of ethnographic works, particularly those located in Morocco and Yemen (Eickelman 1985, Haeri 2003, Messick 1992, and Wagner 1994). These works all elucidate the importance of a learner’s physical embodiment of authoritative Islamic texts, prior to his or her development of an understanding of their meaning. Thus, knowledge and cultural capital are first embodied through painstaking rote oral repetition as a vehicle to making this text a part of one’s permanent bodily constitution, in the Aristotelian sense of habitus. In this way, the text becomes part of the fabric of the one’s personhood. Memorization and conscious embodiment of texts is thus a traditional foundation of Islamic knowledge, power, and piety.

Recent ethnographic research in Cameroon also describes the practice of specific bodily posture and eye gaze while learning to recite the Qur’an in traditional schools. Bodily practice and correct imitation (pronunciation) must be followed in order for the recitation to be effective. It must be faithful to the original. Thus, bodily practice corresponds directly with becoming a pious individual (Moore 2008, 645-647).

P1=>P2 Desires Comingling: Transition from Religious Piety to Secular Piety

In Morocco, the hammam may function as a diversion for women from the work in the home, but more often than not, it is an outing and event requiring endurance, patience and strength (small children are often in tow and need tending, buckets of water are heavy, and the heat and steam are difficult to withstand). It is also a place to clean, to purify one’s body for

prayer, and a place for rites of passage and transitions: pre-wedding, post illness, post birthing, post menses, post sexual activity. In contrast, in France the hammam has been collaboratively constructed as a therapeutic and sensual escape, in some cases, but individual agency takes on multiple contours and the choices made and results are diverse.

The hammams of Paris are sites where women from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds come together in an intimate space. Depending on the site in France and factoring in both workers and visitors, one might encounter a combination of women of various backgrounds: French Catholic, North African Muslim, recent immigrants, second generation North African, individuals of mixed religious background, and international tourists. In the space of the mosque complex in Paris, specifically in the bathhouse, or hammam, a variety of religious, cultural, aesthetic, and bodily desires and motivations are enacted. Here various female bodies with different motivations and desires meet.

Paradigm 2

Second Paradigm: Desire as Productive Force for Secular Piety

While it does not correlate precisely, the “secular piety” performed by the Bourgeois Bohemian or “Bobo” social class in postcolonial France is an innovative expansion upon and re-adaptation of Mahmood’s theory of piety. I also apply and extend Mahmood’s theory to the tourists who frequent the hammam in Morocco and others who go to the hammam in France by exploring this idea of a “production of secular desire.”

In France, the Bourgeois Bohemians (Bobos) constitute a social class that pursues a secular piety through their actions in support of multi-culturalism – an unofficial social “movement” that supports the French Republic’s founding values of equality, liberty and

fraternity. By engaging in daily activities that directly support ethnic minorities, their practices and traditions, the Bobo class is acting on their *desire* for ethical and rightly guided politico-moral behavior, but also for overall value and meaning in daily life. Through direct participation in ethnic otherness (frequenting ethnic restaurants, going to shisha lounges, spending the day at the hammam, accepting religious difference), rather than simply observing from a distance (which was frequently the mark of the colonial Orientalist behaviors and writings), the Bobos are both supporting underrepresented populations in France, showing their pan-religious acceptance, having a good time while feeling absolved of colonial guilt, and finding personal and collective meaning. Through these daily activities, the Bobos strive for their unique brand of “secular piety.”

As previously outlined, Orientalist theory suggests that a distanced colonial gaze drives fantasies about the Other and a certain desire for that which is mysterious, unknown, and forbidden. Colonial-Orientalist imaginings, scholarship, travel writing, art and other discursive production created a range of imaginaries about Islamic women and the harem, with an assortment of resultant associated desires for the Other. Some Postcolonial theory rejects the idea that desire is simply trying to fill the void of what is lacking (the Freudian approach) but instead, suggests that desire is a productive force a “desiring-production” or “desiring machine” that is part of an essential process of life, a creative will to appropriate that which is outside of the self (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972). This is similar to the Nietzschean concept of “Will to Power” - the pleasurable force that propels the individual to achievement, ambition, and to strive to reach her highest potential. Deleuze and Guattari call desiring-production a “universal primary process” underlying the social and psychological realms. Thus, in the context of a capitalist modern society, such as France, the desire for the hammam experience within this framework of desiring-production, treats the hammam experience as a pleasurable means to self-betterment.

This “will to power,” a pursuit of betterment, can be applied also to the Bourgeois Bohemian or Bobo social class in France. Through desire (the desiring-production) this social class engages in experiences such as the bathing ritual at the hammam, for its ethical and transformative value, a potential to elevate the self, and for self-improvement. It is the desiring, in this case, that drives the doing. Through the process of doing and the desire to partake in the exotic Other, through bodily rituals and processes, the Bobo class undergoes personal transformation, comes to new understandings, appropriates new beliefs, and/or becomes enriched in some way. The desire for secular meaning gives rise to bodily behaviors that in some way shape the individual towards a more enriched understanding of themselves and world around them.

Desire for Secular Piety: “Saving” Muslim Women

In the hammam in France, the unveiling and undressing equalizes Muslim and non-Muslim women in the same space. Although not a universal marker of Islam like the veil, the hammam has similar associations to Islam and the Orientalist imaginary. This bathing space conjures images of sequestered naked women of the North African harem. The dominant paradigm in the West, as suggested by Abu Lughod (2002, 2012) is a moral crusade in which “Muslim women need saving.” In the Western imaginary, the confines of the hammam walls provide an unveiling – a place where the harem women are finally free of the control of their “barbaric” husbands. They are at liberty to be sensual and sexual (as exemplified by Ingres’ Orientalist painting *Turkish Bath*, see Figure 2.1). The Bobo desire for secular piety, I theorize, is constructed in part through a collaborative unveiling/veiling – a participation in what was once distanced by pure representation, objectification and commodification of culture: postcards,

paintings, stories, rugs, and other “timeless” objects that created an aura of cultural authenticity and distance (Benjamin, 1968). Now the Bobos enact their desire through bodily participation.

Desire for Secular Piety: Distance and Commodification

The experience of the hammam combines both historical objectification and fetishization by the West and by North Africans themselves. The hammam is an object of male desire even in North Africa, as male novelists and filmmakers have produced art reflecting on their own nostalgia and longing for the women’s hammam that they were able to partake in as young children but is now forbidden. Tahar Ben Jelloun, in his novels *The Sand Child* (1987) and *About My Mother* (2016), narrates both male and female characters’ poignant memories of the hammam, revealing their importance in the imagination of both sexes:

...when the cashier at the hammam refused to let me in... she considered that I was no longer an innocent boy but already a young man capable by his mere presence of rousing the hidden desires of honest women! My mother made a show of protesting, but was really pleased. That evening she spoke proudly of it to my father, who decided to take me with him to the men’s hammam in the future (Ben Jelloun 1987, p. 24).

The cashier, out of shame, probably deliberately avoids discussing male arousal, and instead suggests that the boy now has power to arouse the women. Such scenes illustrate the rite of passage associated with graduating from the women’s to the men’s hammam, and the fondness with which they remember their days in with the women (see also Ben Jelloun 2016 and Boughedir 1990).

In recent decades, the touristic style hammam and the French hammam have created a space where a once distanced Orientalist desire for entry into the exotic world of the harem can be consummated for tourists and non-Moroccans. In their book *Ethnicity, Inc* Jean and John Comaroff (2009) write about this commodification of identity, culture and the future of ethnicity. Comaroff and Comaroff cite Walter Benjamin’s idea of the “aura of historical objects” (1968, p.

216) as they discuss the fetishization of culture and the “other.” They suggest that historical objects have a spirit or aura that creates a phenomenon of authenticity. Even though the object itself might be close, it creates a distance of elusiveness. So, the hammam provides an historical objectification with an interactive and immersive experience of the Other and the sense of having entered into an “authentic” way of life. This need to consume objects and experiences in the West, according to the Comaroffs, emerges from the native “other” as a stand-in for a lack of cultural authenticity. In an absence of chaos and violence the reproduced cultural experience is a “supplement to the myth of civilized modernity” – so a sort of antidote to the excitement lacking in Western “civilization.” This search for meaning, for self through the authentic “other” heightens the lack and creates desire.

In her discussion of heritage tours to Africa, Paula Ebron (1999) suggests that *culture* in this context becomes a commodified object. She also posits that the process for African Americans, going on a travel tour of this type is an emotional and highly charged “ritual process” in which the classic stages of separation, liminality, and reintegration produce social transformation (Turner, 1969). In the case of the tour that Ebron studied, participants were pressed to rearticulate their identities within particular narratives of family and homeland—narratives that allowed the participants to reaffirm their sense of being successful American consumers, but with a culturally privileged difference. This idea of ritual transformation and commodification can also be applied to the experience of the Bobo class visiting the hammam in both France and Morocco. The Bobo are restructuring their experience of being French colonialists by embodying what was once a distinctly other, Orientalized, and distanced foreign phenomenon. It is a way to integrate with the Muslim minority, through a commodified, habitual or occasional hammam experience. This re-orientation of the colonized and colonizer through

experiencing the cultural object/process of the hammam, restructures the Bobo understanding and relationship to a once mysterious and unknown culture.

In the context of the African heritage tours for Americans studied by Ebron, transnational trends, understandings of culture and individual identity converged through the strategies of multinational capitalists, the dreams of diasporic black African communities, and the income-generating plans of African national governments to produce Africa as a commodified cultural object of global significance. In this process, Africa became sacred and commercial, authentic and spectacular. Similarly, the hammams in France represent an intersection of state control, commodified “Muslim” culture, postcolonial desires for meaning and integration, and capitalist motivations. The tourist hammams in Morocco are similarly structured although they serve an even broader international audience, and disseminate, through the visitors who experience them, a broader transnational understanding of the women of Islam.

A trip to the hammam at the Great Mosque in France and heritage travel to Africa for an African American are both transformative cultural and educational experiences driven by imagination, commodification of and desire for authenticity. The Great Mosque, whose gardens, mosque and café host places of repose and contemplation, serves also as a monument in recognition of North Africans who served France. The Great Mosque serves equally as “culture as object” and experience. As Ebron argues that travelers go on a pilgrimage to Africa, to take part in a Turnerian, liminal and ritualistic, transformative journey, the hammam experience in the Great Mosque is a mini pilgrimage to North Africa for the Bobo and tourist audience and to some extent for North African immigrants too, where they are reminded of their heritage and homeland.

According to Ebron, the heritage tours to Africa, which are primarily experienced by

people of African descent, can evoke tremendous emotional response. In the case of the Great Mosque in Paris, it is not only people of North African descent who frequent the mosque, but also the French non-Muslim population, and tourists to France of a variety of nationalities and backgrounds. Tour busses park along the street and usher in groups of tourists from all over the world on a daily basis. While many of the hammam visitors do not comment on the “return” of a “subjective sense of remembrance” (912), as do the African tourists, they do report aesthetic exaltation and cultural apotheoses, about a nostalgic and profound sense of renewal. One article even sites Paris and the Great Mosque hammam as her “therapist,” and says, “I am not in search of prayer but an entirely secular form of refreshment” (Marton, 2012, p. 3). For North African immigrants, the hammam visit can be a return to the “homeland” where the experience signals formative experiences from childhood in Morocco.

The Bobo Desire for Secular Piety: Commodified Neoliberal Religiosity and “Prosumption”

In the neoliberal context of modern France, where religious symbols are banned from public life, where equality reigns as a state sanctioned principle, the search for meaning has taken on new forms that co-opt religion in creative, secular ways, incorporating therapy and self-care. In the individual-centered life of the new middle class, the role of consumer and producer are merging - creating a type of personhood where an “individual becomes the product of his own making through the consumption of religious symbols, practices, and experiences” (Gautier, 2013, p. 125). The Bourgeois Bohemian experience of the hammam is exactly this kind of new spirituality.

Dawson (2013) argues that in many societies of Brazil, North America, and Western Europe, people have become increasingly involved in alternative religiosities, particularly among urban professionals who pursue “aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual gratification, and

psychophysical stimulation which finds its greatest pleasures in the new, different, and exotic” (p. 135-6). Through this pursuit they seek a transformative process (echoed in Ebron’s heritage tours and the hammam experience). The Bobo, or the late modern individual, is, in the spirit of neoliberalism, her own “virtuoso of the self” guiding both the production and consumption (*prosumption*—a term coined by Toffler in his 1980 book *The Third Wave: The Classic Study of Tomorrow*). The benefits and results of such spiritual *prosumption* “always involve some form of direct (physical and emotional) or indirect (employment and living conditions) betterment to the spiritual prosumer” (Dawson, p. 138). There is a sense of spiritual accomplishment and transformation, whereby the prosumer has gained meaningful, even spiritual, self-fulfillment through the process of moving from point A to point B on a life continuum. This maps onto the idea of Bobo desire, for the transformative process of the hammam in a secular but pseudo-spiritual context.

Hornborg (2013) extends this idea by looking at neospiritual therapies and personal coaching in Sweden. She argues that therapy and coaching reappropriate and restructure traditional religious services towards personalized wellbeing and success. Individuals strive to reach their full potential in this intersection between religion, economics, and wellbeing. This idea of the conflation of religiosity and personal accomplishment and ethical entrepreneurship underpin the Bobo desire for secular piety in their patronage of the hammam.

This neoliberal notion of the individual as ultimately responsible for her own spiritual, economic, emotional, corporeal, and psychological health/success may not be limited to the secular domain. Mahmood’s theory of piety holds true in that actions produce desire for piety. However, some theorize that religion mimics the transactional nature of capitalism. If God/Allah is the ultimate prize-giver, then piety has a transactional quality. Religious rewards are based on

individual actions and individual responsibility, not unlike laissez faire capitalism (Opal, 2014). But entry into the religious community in Morocco is built into daily action and community practice, such that the individual has fewer choices of how to enact their spirituality and religiosity.

Part 3 -Visceral Ethnography: the Everyday, the Senses, Imagination and a Self-Reflexive Approach

In this study I use a “visceral” ethnographic description of everyday practices, the senses and imagination, as a means to understanding desire – my own and other’s. A visceral ethnography can only be written from within your own viscera. I have written much of this dissertation from my body, showing how personal emotional trauma produced radical shifts in my own perceptions of what I saw, did, tasted, heard, felt and sensed in “the field.” The reflexive approach I take helps support an understanding of desire, mental equilibrium, and Orientalist/Colonialist ideologies. What follows below is a review of visceral literature, including relevant ethnographies dealing with Muslim communities or particularly salient thick description and how my own study articulates with these studies.

Visceral Ethnography: Everyday Practices

De Certeau (1984) in *The Practice of Everyday Life* also makes the case for an analysis of individual movement through space. He argues that the individual is not subjected to the institutionalized structures and systems mapped onto the city, but instead individuals have agency to poach these systems and move in unique and personalized ways, showing resistance and individualism. In this way, a study of the everyday, the singular body in space, tells a unique story of the space of the hammam in urban Morocco and France, and indeed a story quite different from the one John Bowen (2008) tells of the Paris Mosque, from a predominantly top

down perspective, through interviews with officials and representatives of institutions. My observation of movement, description of and interviews with individuals provides a bottom-up approach and also disentangles understandings of individual desire.

Visceral Ethnography: Theory of the Senses

A variety of anthropological and theoretical scholarship has called for the inclusion of the *senses* in ethnographic writing (De Certeau 1984, Derrida 1986, Escobar 2001, Lefebvre 1991, Meleau-Ponty 1993, Stoller 1989). These works advocate for a descriptive inclusion of the sensual experiences of the body as it moves through space and dialogically produces culture. Merleau-Ponty (1993) suggests that scientific thought erases much of the evocative of everyday life. Non-theoretical writing about a place, a sense of place, a being in a place, includes, as Stoller suggests, “writing that includes non-theoretical sense” (30). A call for such elucidations of the senses in writing include not only sight, smell, taste, feeling and the sound of this experience, but also, a sixth sense, imagination (Casey 1976, Crapanzano 2004, Appadurai 2001). The body brings to each new experience of place or ritual, its own memories and repertoire of past experiences, culturally constructed meanings and expectations. Imagination is necessarily reliant on memory, thus the body comes into a dialogic relationship with space as it moves through and produces memories and meaning. A number of theorists have suggested ideas along these lines (Bakhtin 1981, Casey 1987, and Lefebvre 1991).

Thus the goal of an ethnographic study attuned to the aesthetics of the senses, including the imagination, is, in a general sense, to gain insight, to communicate, through writing, the experience of a social group or another individual in a particular place and time. It has long been a goal of anthropology to gain an “insider’s view.” As Stoller (1989) points out, Malinowski

established as the goal of ethnographic writing to the give reader a sense of what it is like to live in the land of others (Stoller 1989, 8).

Visceral Ethnography: The Metaphysical, Imagination and Barzakh

We carry embodied memories and experience as we move through space, all of which act upon our subjective imagination, a lens through which we experience and perceive any particular moment in space and time. Steven Feld (2005) quotes Edward Casey in order to illustrate the importance of imagination in the experience of any place. “Moving in or through a given place, the body imports its own emplaced past into its present experience: its local history is literally a history of locales...Orientation in place...arises within the ever-lengthening shadow of our bodily past” (Casey 1987: 194, as quoted in Feld). The experiences of culture, space and place employ more than just the five senses. In fact, the concept of “the” five senses is outmoded. We have other fundamental senses not counted in the canonical five, most notably, balance (see Geurts, 2002). The conscious and subconscious create associations with past experience and memory, and the brain makes associative relationships which structure psychological and bodily knowing.

From an Arab epistemological view of spatial and sensory perception, the idea of imagination plays an important role, particularly in understanding the relationship between human kind and the divine. Crapanzano (2004) and Kapchan (2007) investigate the teachings of the 13th century Arab Sufi philosopher Ibn al-‘Arabi, who defines *barzakh* as that which is in the space between things, a phenomenon that cannot be perceived through the worldly senses, but only through imagination. This term appears in the Qur’an and is used to mean the state after death, corresponding roughly to the term *limbo*. An effort or desire to embody and understand *barzakh* requires undertaking a non-rational process of thought and being in the world that

ultimately allows for a deeper relationship with the divine. This relates to the hammam as a sacred space, a place that produces a desire for right behavior, a place that readies the body for prayer and union with the divine.

Visceral Ethnography: Thick Description in Ethnography

Even though her work focuses on the other side of the world, Kathleen Stewart's work resonates with this sense of attention to the imagination, the details of the senses and movement through space. Her ethnographic prose and thick description in *An Occupied Place*, and *A Space on the Side of the Road*, both about a run-down town in West Virginia, employ a unique poetic depth of language to convey the spirit and aura of place.

Stewart writes about West Virginia as a place and space of desire – desire as defined by Deleuze and Guattari as that which *produces* culture (rather than marks something lacking). Stewart's poetic telling of the place includes the tactile and imaginary, real and insubstantial, and includes description of abandoned people and things, and of remembering and storytelling. Stewart succeeds in her unorthodox ethnographic writing, in producing “an intensely occupied and imagined space” (158) a “surreal space of intensification” (143) in which she incorporates and even “mimics the effects of local poetics in performance” (140). She avoids the “‘you are there’ realism of a flat ethnographic description,” and instead, her pages feel as though they are thickly collaged with the wood, the fabric, the words, the grit, the seeping wetness of a gasping West Virginian town. She writes the everyday, the aesthetics of sights, sounds, smells, - the feelings of a place, and evokes the re-telling, remembering and the social imaginary of her interlocutors and of herself. Stewart's lyrical ethnography is viscerally enticing.

I have been inspired by this style, but in my own thick descriptions of the hammam and environs, my prose is more personal and self-reflexive.

Visceral Ethnography: In Morocco

David Crawford (2008), whose work focuses on the indigenous Ishlhin in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, calls for a similar kind of rich, unsettling and penetrating thick description in his essay *How Life is Hard: Visceral Notes on Meaning and Order*. Crawford's work also responds directly to Geertz's plea to attend to the "hard surfaces of life" in ethnographic writing, supporting Geertz's appreciation of the dirty sensory underbelly of life. In order to understand how difficult living in poverty is for rural Moroccans, Crawford claims that ethnographic words must viscerally describe the corporality and transformation of the bodies of our interlocutors. Of course, visceral description in an ethnography of bodily practice in middle class urban Moroccan benefits equally from this kind of visceral and sensory description. He claims that "anthropology has been much better at unveiling concepts than sensation, and attempts to illuminate sentiment or suffering generally devolve into ideas about them" and thus we, as ethnographers, must aim to evoke and describe the heat, the cold, the drudgery of the body (2). It is my wish to evoke some of this corporeal sensation in my own thick description, and because of the limitation of my own body and perception as my research instrument, I include my own movements, musings and bodily sensation.

In addition to Crawford, a number of other recent ethnographies focus on the "everyday" in specifically North African Muslim communities (Hoffman 2008, Kapchan 1994, Mahmood 2005, MacPhee 2012, Newcomb 2010, Ossman 1994, 2004). Along similar lines, Katharine Hoffman (2008) penned an account of the meaning of homeland for the Tashelhit-speaking Berbers in Morocco. It is not centered in any particular village, but rather moves from place to place and follows the notion of what it means to belong to a particular social group of Tashelhit-speakers/Ishlhin in urban and rural contexts. Hoffman's work effectively conveys a collective

identity of a marginalized people through close linguistic analysis. She centers her study on the aesthetics of language, poetry and song, in places in Morocco. Longing and nostalgia are pervasive in her descriptions and detailed analysis, and a sense of place begins to emerge. My own work follows the identity of Moroccans from urban areas in Morocco to urban France, thus similarly tracing belonging within an aesthetic boundary – in my case the architectural and ritual spaces of the hammam.

Susan Ossman, in her 2002 ethnography, *Three Faces of Beauty: Casablanca, Paris, and Cairo*, discusses the role of beauty salons for women in these three urban centers. She even devotes several pages to a discussion of the *hammam* as the location of an imaginary, traditional body, and space where Orientalist ideas of women have not yet been criticized. In fact, even Arab men have commemorated the *hammam* as a lost paradise that they were forced to abandon at the age of 5 or 6, when they had to begin going with the men, instead of their mothers. The site of the *hammam* is still accepted as a luxurious female, traditional space, but not so for the men, who, as bearers of the modern, must not linger in the spaces of nostalgia. Ossman only mentions the hammam peripherally, as it corresponds to the institution of the beauty salon in France and Morocco. The hammam, she points out, is a place of nostalgia in the imaginary (both Western and non-Western) and thinking of these traditional spaces as locations of the “real” or “profound” Arab body is dangerous (46-47). She cites the hammam at the Great Mosque of Paris as a displaced bathhouse, an “orientalist interpretation” and a place where, for the steep entry fee, only an elite class of tourists or Muslims can afford to wash (52). In my own work, I expand upon the social and symbolic space of the *hammam*, and learn about the lives and imaginaries, bodies and desires that actually do intersect in this aesthetic and aestheticizing space, from Muslim workers, Muslim bathers, non-Muslim bathers, and tourist-pilgrims.

Visceral Ethnography: North African Body and Identity in France

John Bowen (2008, 2010) investigates issues of the identity, body and spaces in France from the perspective of state regulation and management, with a focus on Muslim adaptations in response to such management. He suggests that the mosque in France is a site where the managing effects of state power shape the experience of Muslims and non-Muslims. He also debates the role of the state in regulating what women can and cannot wear, with the hyper symbolic headscarf at the center of the debate. Bowen's discussion of the tensions between French nationalism and Muslim identity through the symbolic headscarf resurfaced in recent state involvement with the burkini (banning bathing suits that cover the whole body) in coastal French towns. The conflict illustrates France's relationship with Muslim immigrants and the Muslim world, and indeed may symbolize the fear and hysteria faced by many Western states in the face of an exploding population of Muslim immigrants. This study focuses on the Muslim and non-Muslim body in the semi-private spaces of the *hammam*, showing how regulations, religious and social pressures are experienced emotionally and viscerally and how they are embodied in bodily hexis and habitus.

Visceral Ethnography: The Hammam in Morocco

A sizable number of travel writings, memoirs and ethnographic works in English have mentioned or touched briefly on the hammam (Davis 1983; Geertz 1979; Kapchan 1996; Mernissi 1987, 1994; Montagu 2011; Newcomb 2010, 2017; Nin 1970; Ossman 2004) but very few ethnographic articles or longer works have focused exclusively on the hammam in Morocco or France. The exceptions include Valerie Staats' 1994 article, in which she recounts the traditional Moroccan hammam ritual and her personal experience and observations of social life therein, exploring its role as a hub of social life and religious ritual purification. In his 2004

article “Communication and the Social Production of Space: The Hammam, the Public Sphere and Moroccan Women” Griouad, a Moroccan born scholar, explores similar themes but with considerable depth and with attention to the spiritual dimension of the hammam. He draws parallels between the hammam and the mosque, but points out the contradictions indicative of this space since it is where sacred and profane collide. Two articles by Moroccan authors focus specifically on the architectural space and meaning of the hammam (Raftani and Radouine 2008, Kilito 1992). Maria Messina (1991) devotes a good portion of her dissertation to the hammam proper, addressing ideas about purity and pollution in Islam, vulnerability and jinn (pp. 176-211). My own work expands on these discussions by adding the psychological (desire), metaphysical (spiritual) elements, and my own psychological experiences to the discussion, supported with ethnographic interviews and observation. My analysis also extends beyond the analysis of the urban Moroccan context into the transnational iteration of this institution in France.

Visceral Ethnography: Self-Reflexivity and Psychiatry

A study of the hammam in France and Morocco sheds light on the transformative and therapeutic power of the hammam rituals and cultural experiences for individuals in France and Morocco. Many ethnographers have made the case for a self-reflexive approach to anthropology (Behar, 1996, Ellis 2004, Maréchal, 2010, Rosaldo, 1989). My approach expands the self-reflexive approach by emphasizing how personal emotional trauma can trigger radical shifts in perception. After a series of shocking and painful events prior to embarking for the field, my understandings of what was dirty, clean, safe, unsafe, sacred, polluted were genuinely distorted, and this directly affected how I could do, experience, observe and write ethnography. Mary Douglas (1966) argues that ideas of clean and dirty are culturally relative, and purity and taboo are culturally shared and agreed upon categories that help us organize the world as falling either

inside or outside of their boundaries. Through the process of doing this work, I discovered that these categories are also dependent upon emotional and psychological stability. Perceptions of clean and dirty were emotionally relative in my case. The research instrument (the ethnographer) shifted her ability to interpret and categorize, shaping the collection and interpretation of data, and ultimately the ethnographic product. The story told in this dissertation has been influenced significantly by the tragedy that preceded and overlapped with my research, which altered my positionality in unanticipated ways, influencing where my attentions were drawn and subsequently, where my focus fell. I was obsessed with my fear of contamination, heat and entrapment, my own search for serenity, and my desire for the false safety of Western culture. The themes of the various parts of this dissertation align with my obsessions at the time: piety, spirituality and jinn, Orientalism, purity and contamination, imprisonment in harems and borders, and mental health.

This dissertation also engages with Moroccan ethno-psychiatry (Crapanzano 1973, 1983, Kapchan 2007) and Freudian psychiatric principles to provide springboards for mental health disorders and behaviors from two distinct epistemological perspectives. Surprisingly, Western and Eastern belief systems overlapped, in part, in terms of my own mental health concerns.

Part 4: Power Relationships

Power relationships underlie these theoretical themes of desire and Orientalist/postcolonial analysis. I trace the flows of power in particular contexts between particular people, natural substances and supernatural forces. Sources of power in the context of

the hammam include **people**: patron saints, workers (who in turn are metaphorical saints), patrons, owners; **nature and substances**: wind, heat, fire, water, earth, air, salt, stone; **supernatural forces**: jinn, *baraka*, jealousy.

In Morocco, hammam workers – *tayyabat*, *kiyyasa*, *kissala*, and *furnatchis* - those with little social or economic capital have increased power in the context of the hammam because, it can be argued, they are closer to the divine. They also uphold cultural traditions. Their services are compensated on a “pay what you can” scale, and they act as repositories of knowledge about the dynamic life of the individuals within the immediate community. In their daily work they deal with sensitive categories of care and treatment - rituals of the body, are agents of transformation and rituals of the body (weddings, post birth, readiness for prayer). Their work is meaning making, purifying and spiritual.

The power of the hammam in Morocco does not come from its high-end fixtures or elegance, but rather from being tied to substances (earth, fire, water), its power to purify, and its associations with saints and patrons, whose power or Baraka can be bestowed through touch and presence. Finally jinn, which are powerful presences in the psyche of hammam visitors and workers as well as powerful presences in the spaces of the hammam, exert a unique power over belief and behaviors. As discussed above, Kapchan’s (2007) work on Moroccan Gnawa trance music traces the ecstatic physical and spiritual relationship between individuals and spirits, jinn. The jinn are also important players in my study of the hammam, where such spirits exert their power and force. Encounters with spirits and experiences of possession figure into both the Moroccan and French analyses of the hammam.

The harem, where divisions are clearly demarcated between men and women, inside and out, is a metaphor for power relations. Mernissi points out that limitations placed upon women in

her own harem in Fez, Morocco were reproduced in the colonizer-colonized relationship.

Diaconoff (2009) writes extensively about the literary treatment of the hammam in the context of Morocco, as well as Mernissi's discussion of physical and metaphorical borders in Moroccan daily life:

Harem principle is like a metaphorical 'architecture,' adopted to explain the exercise of power and the mechanics of exclusion. In the actual imperial harem, woman occupies a hidden interior space, forbidden to all men with the exception of the master, while man moves freely in the polis, open to all with the exception of women. Hence, the distinction not only denotes two spheres of private and public, but, through the bias of excluding one sex from both realms, inequality. This is Mernissi's real interest, whose origins she intends to trace" (Diaconoff, 2009 p. 128).

Harem-like relations exist wherever there are relationships of power, "whether the divisions and partitions are political, sexual, or geographic" (Diaconoff, 2009 p. 128). Borders and walls are real and symbolic.

Concluding Thoughts

My research provides a unique perspective on the subject of Muslim identity and experience by combining attention to everyday bodily practices, aesthetics, and piety, and how these practices and ideologies are influenced by local, national, and global forces. The *hammam* is a dynamic place of many meanings and desires: it is a place where people energetically engage in social life, in ritual, renewal, and faith. It is a space of vigor, heat, water, purification, relaxation, beauty, bodies, indulgence, tourism, commodities, fetishism, Orientalism, work, gossip, and laughter. It is *not* static. Issues that a study of the hammam brings to the fore are: identity, religious practice and freedom of expression, religious symbols in public spaces, human rights, women's rights, immigration, and marginalization, to name a few. My ethnography addresses these larger issues, but through the particular of individuals at the hammam and the minutiae of the interactions and activities therein.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT: CHARACTERS, COSTUMES AND SETS

I employ several writing genres in this dissertation to explore the meaning of the *hammam* in contemporary Moroccan and French society: narratives based on in-person interviews with hammam visitors and workers, my own personal observations and narrative experiences, and an unconventional experimental, reflexive psychological analysis of the experience as a whole. In this chapter, I set the scene by outlining some of the most important people, places and contexts.

Personal Time Line in the Field

Over the years, I have intermittently lived and traveled in Morocco as a tourist, student, researcher, anthropologist, teacher, wife, mother, sister-in-law, aunt and wanderer. This study includes not only more recent formal dissertation research, but also comparative observations of change witnessed over the span of these twenty years. My first experience in Morocco dates back to 1973, when, as a 5 year old, I lived outside of Rabat for a summer where my father taught Arabic to American students through a program at the University of Texas at Austin. I was comforted by these early memories of dusty bright roads, ripe red tomatoes and warm bread, passionate guttural voices, cigarette smoke, blaring rhythmic radios, and games of princess with the other girls in the courtyards. In my twenties I began romanticizing Morocco, believing that my existential angst and lack of purpose in Seattle might be relieved or remedied if I returned. To a great degree, this project serves to track the story of that return, and a subsequent personal crisis in the midst of the last phase of fieldwork.

As an adult, I returned to Morocco in the summer of 1994 to study Arabic, at which time, on the first day I set foot in Fez, I met my husband-to-be Rachid, a native born Fassi. I subsequently returned to Meknes as a student for an academic year in 1995 at Moulay Ismail

University under the auspices of a graduate exchange program at the University of Texas in Austin, after a year of which I moved to Fez and began teaching English and conducting field work for my master's thesis on the *zerzaya*, a guild of laborers that transport goods in the oldest part of the city and play a liminal role in the social affairs of Fez.

In 1999, Rachid and I were married in a quick ceremony by a justice of the peace in Gibraltar, after which I returned to finish my MA at UT Austin. I returned to Fez in the summer of 2001 to continue my Arabic study and to conduct research for a paper about academic writing in Arabic. At the conclusion of that summer, we (Rachid and I, and his entire extended family) held a traditional Moroccan wedding ceremony in the old medina of Fez on Saturday, September 8th, 2001, for local family and friends. I was the planner of my own Moroccan wedding, a research project of a different order, with the help of a cousin of the family, a prominent wedding caterer and contractor in Fez. Many friends and relatives made the trip from the United States and Europe, and many were forced to extend their stay in Morocco because the flights were canceled for a week after the tragic 9/11 events, which took place three days after the wedding ceremony. We returned to the US after the wedding, living, working and studying in Seattle. In the winter of 2005, I returned to conduct pilot research in Fez, focusing on food, the politics of the kitchen, and the holiday 'Aid l-Kbir, for which Muslims slaughter a sacrificial lamb, transforming the streets of Fez with blood. Then, between February, 2012 - September 2012 I conducted the formal dissertation research in Morocco focusing on the hammam.

Needless to say, I am indebted to my immediate and extended family in Morocco for the access it has afforded into intimate aspects of social life in Morocco. I was consistently welcomed into their home from the summer of 1995 onward, and am in close touch with the family today. In the years since, I have brought our daughter to visit the family in Fez on several

occasions, even after divorcing her father, Rachid. Over the years I have had the pleasure of being included in family ceremonies – the slaughter of the lamb and feast on ‘Aid l-Kbir, *ḥadra* dance ceremonies to appease the spirits - jinn, family and neighborhood weddings, henna parties, circumcisions, as well as countless daily meals and quiet evenings with family. This familial relationship has allowed me generous access to the social life of Fez, and the family has stood by me and cared for me in ways my own family did not or could not, with an endless outpouring of support and acceptance. They remain the most cherished element of my experiences in Morocco.

My fieldwork in 2012 was conducted in multiple sites, in both Morocco and France, looking at different categories of hammam in each. In all sites I interviewed laborers and visitors alike and conducted extensive participant observation. In Morocco I worked in two major urban centers: Fez and Marrakesh. I did the most extensive research in the popular neighborhood *hammams* in Fez, where I was already intimately familiar with the terrain and could draw upon networks of acquaintances, friends and other contacts. People still recognized me as I walked through the old medina of Fez, and it felt like home. I also conducted field visits and interviews in the boutique hotel *hammams* of both Fez and Marrakesh. The dramatic development of the tourist industry in Marrakesh provided for a robust selection of tourist based hammams, but the lively old city, or *medina*, still hosts a number of hammams catering exclusively to the local population.

Cast of Characters and Costumes: Morocco

My discussion of the social life of the hammam in Fez and in Marrakesh revolves primarily around middle and lower class neighborhoods in the medina and in the older suburbs. I later discuss the tourist experience of the hammam in Fez, and the Bobo class of Paris and Marseille and their unique relationship to the hammam.

My interlocutors in Fez and Marrakesh were primarily middle class Moroccans living in popular neighborhoods. In Fez, they hailed from ‘Ain Qadus, Hay Agadir and the old medina of Fez and were friends or contacts made through my familial connections in Fez or through my relationship with the American Language Center, where I taught for a number of years. In Marrakesh I spoke mostly with hammam owners and workers in the old medina. Many of my interlocutors were average Moroccan citizens – teachers, students, professors, small business owners, and government workers. Many were workers in the hammam-- *tayyabat* (pl.; *tayyaba*, sing.), the female workers in the hammam. These are the women who can be hired to fetch buckets of water for individuals from the hot and cold water cisterns, who can be hired to thoroughly exfoliate your body from head to toe, and who act as a liaison between the *farnatchi* (the man in charge of fueling and watching the fire) and the needs of the hammam bathers, and who generally watch over the life of the hammam, ensure its functionality, cleanliness and the social equilibrium.

My Moroccan family in Fez was well acquainted with a *kiyyas*, the male equivalent of a *tayyaba*, but he did not think it prudent to speak with me directly. Instead, he answered a set of questions I sent along with a family member, who took notes and returned them to me. I spoke directly with many *farnatchi*, the men who tend the fire that heats the water for the hammam.

The *farnatchi*, *tayyabat* and *kiyyasa* are all laborers, who represent a struggling socioeconomic class in Morocco, and whose jobs are interrelated conceptually and spatially. One middle-aged man suggested that the proximity and intensity with which the *farnatchi* and *tayyaba* must work and communicate, often leads to romantic entanglements between them. Their jobs are also dependent upon the generosity of the community. They are underpaid and yet receive tips of fluctuating amounts as well as gifts and offering from the families with whom

they regularly interact. The hammam worker becomes, in essence a proxy for the saint of the shrine, or the jinn. They are the actual recipients of sacrifices and offerings to the spirit world as thanks for protection and also as an effort to appease the negative effects of these forces. Like the *zerzaya* (Brame, 1999) their tastes and judgments are aligned more closely with the “Fassi” stratum of society, although they do not rise because of it, nor do their own physical bodies or worlds reflect the more economic or material world of the Fassi elite. Their ascetic life, in fact, is more pious and not privy to any economic or social advantage. By serving the people of the neighborhood, in a religious/servile allegiance rather than serving themselves, they are honored and respected.

On being “Fassi”⁸

The trope of “being Fassi” emerged in many of the interviews I conducted with Moroccans in Fez. Not only is this concept related to the lost glory of Fez, but being a “pure” Fassi is a status symbol signaling a direct blood lineage to the founder of Fez: Moulay Idriss, implying a nobility in breeding, rank, and intellect. Chain of descent or bloodline is important in Islam. As Lila Abu Lughod (1986) writes in her seminal work on the Bedouin of Egypt, “blood is essential to the definition of cultural identity” in Muslim culture (p. 41), since the chain of blood designates belonging to a tribe, a people, a culture. Origin is of great concern in the Arab world, and indeed also in Fez. Tracing one’s lineage back to the prophet Mohammed culls social and religious capital, and in Fez, tracing ones descent back to the founder of the city, Moulay Idriss, or other prominent Fassi family names, familiar to all, plays a similar role. Indeed, it is well documented that Moulay Idriss himself was renowned as a direct descendent of the prophet Mohammed.

⁸ The adjectival form of Fez or Fes; also a noun referring to residents of Fez.

While many residents of Fez drew distinctions between true Fassis, and rural immigrants to Fez, or newcomers, there is a certain amount of inconsistency and contradictions when Fassis defend or discuss their own Fassi lineages. Even though being Fassi is an elite position, associated with power and status, many of the elite families have abandoned Fez for more economically vibrant Casablanca or the politically vital capital of Morocco, Rabat, to undertake business or political opportunities, or have moved outside of the center of the medina for the suburbs, or have simply fallen to harder economic times. “Power in the concrete sense of the term might have bypassed the Fassi,” although that sense of entitlement and power is still actively alive in the imaginary (Newcomb, p. 4).

The pure/impure dichotomy persists, despite the reorganization of the historic Fassi hierarchy economically and socially. One young, married male resident of the Fez medina explained some fundamental attributes of a pure Fassi man, attributes that persist even today: he is “true to his word” (will be on time to appointments and will not make false promises); he does not gesticulate wildly with his hands while talking and is articulate; he is well dressed and doesn’t fidget with his clothing or shoes (doesn’t clean sunglasses with his shirt for example, or slide his shoes off and on); he generally morally upstanding and respectful. Thus, “being Fassi” establishes certain standard for behavior associated with a certain construction of what it means to be pure and authentic. Informants often juxtapose “pure” or “real” Fassi with the conceptual opposite: rural immigrants who have come to work the medina of Fez, and are thought of as less sophisticated, under educated *‘arubia*, or country bumpkins/hillbillies.

Zara, a young, twenty-year-old, light-skinned woman identified strongly as Fassi because of a linguistic marker: her accent. She self reported that her pronunciation of certain consonants was unmistakably Fassi, although she simultaneously denied her Fassi-ness by explaining that

her roots were from Tafilalt, a desert oasis south of Fez. She had a humbleness about admitting her Fassi affiliations, but assertively let it be known that she considered herself equally educated, cultured and moneyed as a pure Fassi. She spoke with me in English, because her English was better than my Arabic, and since she enjoyed the practice. She said:

There are some people who are really proud of being Fassi. I'm from Tafilalt, I'm not Fassi. This is only education [what I have]. And I *do* like all the culture here in Fez, but I can't forget my origins. Even if I were Fassi, it's not really a thing you can be proud of. It isn't something really special.

She denies being Fassi, although she equates her education level with that of other Fassis. She also denies that being Fassi make one intrinsically better than other, but by denying it, she suggests that this is a commonly held belief or even snobbery (on the part of Fassis, in particular).

She goes on:

Let me tell you. This is the capital of spirituality of Morocco. This is where all the good things come from. Every good tradition, every good meal, food, all good traditions everything you can think of comes from Fez. Also science, you know religion, everything. Clothes. Fassi clothing is the best ever. And also, they look, I don't like to say this, I don't like to be this way. They also look better than other Moroccans in their face. They have white skin, blond hair, and grey eyes, blue, green. That's why they are really proud of being this way. They have a reason to be proud. I'm not one of them anyway.

Moroccans often referred to me as blond. I have dark brown hair, light skin and green eyes. Because my overall coloring was slightly lighter than theirs, I was “blond.” Zara herself was lighter than me. She looked and spoke like a Fassi, had a more worldly perspective and education, and was affluent like most powerful Fassi families (her wealth seemed to have been a combination of inheritance and her father’s success in business), yet she painted her Fassi status as ambiguous since her blood lineage, was not “pure” Fassi.

Related to this concept of pure vs. impure is also the dichotomy between *bldi* and *rumi*. Over the years I have seen a growing appreciation for all things *bldi* (of the countryside, natural, native, raw, organic and rugged, authentic, country) and a more pronounced disdain for all things

rumi (unnatural, foreign, manipulated and polluted, Other, sophisticated). Ironically this word “*bldi*” refers also to the rural countryside – the very individuals who threaten the purity of the “Fassi” identity. The tension between *bldi* and *rumi* is especially pronounced in discussing food, and traditional practices such as the hammam, faran, weddings, and architecture. Bread made by hand at home is *bldi*, but bread made in a bakery or factory is polluted and *rumi*. The hammam is distinctly *bldi*, but recently, *rumi* elements have infiltrated the newly constructed hammam - spigots and faucets, shower heads, sit-down (rather than squat) flush toilets, water heated by gas rather than fire, and in the more tourist oriented, hotel hammams and Ville Nouvelle one finds spa massage, decorative elements, shimmery curtains, and candles.

Historically, Fez is renowned as a center of learning, high art, and sophistication. Its Qarawiyyin University – an Islamic institution founded in 859 A.D., is considered the oldest continually functioning university in the world. Residents of Fez are acutely aware of the city’s reputation and their identification and defense of Fez of old and what Fez should be, echoes in much of what they say about its life and identity through discussions of the hammam: “middle class Fassis often defined themselves in terms of the city’s history, drawing on Fes’s past as a center of scholarly knowledge and religion” (Newcomb, ii).

As the wife and then former wife of a son of Fas – a “Fassi” by birth, and possibly more importantly, as the mother of his daughter, a little Fassia, I was automatically an honorary Fassia myself, with certain duties and limitations. However, as a foreign wife, I was often excused from certain domestic duties a Moroccan-born wife would be expected to undertake: cooking, floor cleaning, bread-making. I was not being honored, nor was my non-inclusion an insult, but rather, this was a practicality. To teach me how things should be done correctly would be an extra effort, like teaching a small child. I often had to push my way into doing kitchen tasks, and was often laughed at and hovered over because of my relative lack of proper know-how.

Ultimately, the Fassi identity is closely tied to the old city of Fez, and the hammam is an historical index of the city – a representation of the ancient celebrated version. Practices and buildings still stand - some in the process of being restored or revived, but many are in the process of dying and/or mutating. Such monuments and practices are nostalgically revered as representing the golden civilization that was once Fez, and simultaneously disdained as impractical or irrelevant relics of the past. The identity of Fez, however, and discussions around its traditions such as the hammam, often circles back to this concept of Fassi authenticity.

Jinn

While I cannot say that I ever formally interviewed jinn, I do feel that I have come to know, understand and even accept the concept of jinn and a Fassi definition of possession. Although it was not initially my intention to include jinn prominently in this study, I found that the topic of the jinn came up in almost every interview I made with Moroccans about the hammam. While in the field, I noted the consistency of the topic, but I did not expect that the jinn would evolve into such a central player in the write up of the research until much later. I include jinn as a major character in this story, and realize that the Moroccan, Islamic and even pre-Islamic belief systems about wellness, spirituality, and the body, are closely entwined with a belief in these spirit beings. I discuss jinn in more depth in the chapter entitled *Fire*. Jinn are fully accepted in Islam as beings that live among humans, and according to the Qur'an, jinn are created from smokeless fire, and they engage in activities and live full lives, just like humans. They are among us, watching us, but we cannot see them (Qur'an 7:27). They seek out human bodies through which they can act and influence their hosts, often to their advantage, but to the detriment of their hosts' psychological or physical health. They are often attracted to wet places, and are said to reside in the hammam, and hide in pipes and plumbing, and other desolate, wet

places. If agitated or angered, they might inhabit a human body, rendering him or her *mskun*, possessed/inhabited.

Expats and Tourists

Americans and Europeans who have made Fez their temporary or permanent home were among my interviewees. Some of these individuals frequented the hammam regularly. Others did not like the hammam, but had experienced it at least once. I also interviewed tourists who visited both the renovated spa-hammam, designed for tourists, and the popular neighborhood hammam.

Sets: Morocco and France

Fez, Morocco is a complex field site socially and historically, and yet it is divided geographically into fairly distinct districts. Below, I provide a short history and description to set the stage.

Old Medina, Fez

Today the oldest part of Fez, the “medina” (Arabic for “city”), also known as *Fez al-Bali* lies in a sloped bowl-like valley, bounded by the foothills of Mt. Zalagh (elev. 2746 feet) on the northwest side, and a plateau to the south. The old medina of Fez is bisected by a river, known as either Oued Fez (the River Fez) or the Oued Boukhareb (the Waste Water River).⁹ Early in

⁹ Often places, bridges and rivers have multiple names. Today in Fez, the name *Oued Fez* refers also to the river that runs close to the post protectorate neighborhood ‘Ain Kadous, then under the royal palace in *Fez Jdid* and then flows toward and under the medina. In fact, a newer *hammam* in this neighborhood is called “Hammam Oud Fez”. The river dividing the two sides of the medina is marked as *Boukhareb* on current Google maps, and is currently

Fez's history, two distinct small towns lay situated, one on each bank of the river, facing one another. Sources and theories disagree as to the first founder of Fez, whether it was Idriss I who founded the city on the right bank before 800AD, or his son Idriss II, who founded the left bank city in 808 AD. Eventually, an influx of Arabs from Qarawiyyin in Tunisia, and Muslims and Jews from Andalusia in Spain populated the left and right banks respectively, giving them the names they retain today: the Qarawiyyin side and the Andalusian side. In the eleventh century the Almoravid dynasty, for strategic purposes, destroyed the surrounding defense walls of the two neighboring cities, and built instead, a single surrounding wall, which officially unified the two sides, creating one city.

Fez is also known as the city of water. According to multiple historical sources and urban legend, the old medina of Fez was replete with water sources in addition to the river. All of the Fez medina is situated above a water table and multiple springs. Many of the older houses in Fez had fountains and wells fed from this water table. The water was known to be sweet and sacred, with special spiritual and therapeutic properties. My mother-in-law's sister lived in a house in the medina. I had heard from the family that she had a well, so one afternoon, in the sitting room in the courtyard salon of her home, I asked her to show it to me. She casually leaned over and lifted up a tile on the floor to reveal a deep hole with a rope leading down to a water source. She explained that the water was no longer safe to drink, but that they used the water to keep drinks and other sealed foods cold.

Many of the larger and more extravagant homes included a large decorative tile wall fountain to one side of the central courtyard, with waterspouts attached to the wall. Some of the

undergoing a restoration and clean up project by paved over sections are being uncovered, and new green spaces added.

very large homes had bubbling round pool fountains at the center point of the courtyard, for purely decorative purposes. One of the oldest water clocks in the world is located on the main thoroughfare in Fez, across from the Madrasa Bou Inania, and not far from the place I lived in the summer of 2012. This water clock is known as Dar al-Magana, or house of the clock, and was built in 1357. It kept time through an intricate collection of containers and troughs set on the façade of a house. As long as I have been going to Fez, it has always been in the process of being restored.

Even though the city was historically filled with various water sources and features, most homes were not equipped with a hot water heater or a dedicated space for bathing. Only royal palaces, pasha's homes and extravagant mansions had bathing rooms or hammams. In the early 16th century, the Arab traveler and diplomat Leo Africanus (c.1494- c.1554) lived in Fez and attended the University of al-Qarawiyyin. In his *Description of Africa* he reports an abundance of public bathing facilities in Fez with over 100 public "bathstoves." His narrative of the hammam ritual is not unlike what I experienced in 2012, although in his time the fire was fueled by animal dung and a rope was strung outside the hammam to indicate women's hours (p. 426-7). The historical evidence of hammams is yet another testament to the plethora of water throughout the city. According to the Moroccan National Federation of the Associations of Owners and Operators of Traditional Hammams, in 2008 there were 5000 traditional hammams operating in Morocco in and in greater Fez there are 120 operational hammams. In the old medina there are still 44 traditional hammams in active use (Raftani and Radouine, 57, 61).

Because the earliest inhabitants of the city originated on either side of the river at the base of this bowl or valley, the city grew out from the center. Based on my in-person discussions with Hassan Radouine, the chronologically oldest structures are located in the center of the city at the

bottom of the valley, and this is where the majority of sacred sites are located. On the more vibrant and well maintained Qarawiyyin side, west of the river are the famed Qarawiyyin Mosque and University (built in 859 A.D.), the Zaouia of Moulay Idriss II (place of pilgrimage and prayer for the son of the founding father of Fez, and an important destination for women), The ‘Attarine Madrasa (a fourteenth century Islamic boarding school).

The shrine of Moulay Idriss lies in the heart of the valley, in the hub of the economic and religious life of the *medina*. Nearby is the great Qisariya, or traditional covered market where traditional crafts such as embroidery and gold jewelry have always been sold. The Qarawiyyin Mosque, which has, since its founding in 859 AD, been an important and famous place of worship and religious study, shares the same central locality. No matter which door to the city wall one enters into the old medina of Fez, pedestrian roads wind down into the valley, and one ends up eventually at this cluster of commercial and spiritual sites. Motor vehicles are not allowed within the old medina, and indeed the city has been cited as one of the largest car-free urban area in the world. The shrine dedicated to the city’s founder is significant as an iconic symbol of the city of Fez, and structures spiritual thought and practice in Fez. Since the hammam is so closely connected to purification for religious purposes, the saint shrine of Moulay Idriss takes on a special significance in the interpretation of the hammam as a spiritual and liminal space.

Because of the high concentration of spiritual monuments, in this area, the heart of Fez serves as a site of pilgrimage, a minor Mecca for Fassis, Moroccans and West Africans. Many residents of greater Fez, particularly women, come to visit the Zaouia of Moulay Idriss, at least once per year. This shrine is open and particularly welcoming to women, as it is believed that Moulay Idriss casts influence over matters of female fertility and related matters of health (see

Burckhart, 1992; Gaillaire, 1903; Le Tourneau, 1987). The Qarawiyyin Mosque is perhaps the oldest and most beautiful. It is a destination site for Fassis and foreigners alike who wish to pray or study. North Africans and West Africans make the pilgrimage to visit the Zaouia Ahmed Tijani, which is located in this zone as well, and is the house of pilgrimage and veneration for the Sufi order founded by Tijani in the late 1700s (see Ryan, 2000).

Most of the *suqs* or markets nearby sell commodities associated with these spiritual sites. So, perfume, candles and spices, henna, silk and gold markets line the footpaths, and on certain days at the peak of commercial hours, it can be difficult to walk in the narrow passages in the heart of the city. Here, in the heart of the city, is the historical safe and sacred area, the *haram* of Moulay Idriss, where wooden beams bridge the walking streets, just below the average height of a person. The beams require anyone on horseback to dismount, and most pedestrians of average height must bow their heads to pass under.

My research in the old medina took place on the Qarawiyyin side, where the concentration of spiritual and economic activity was highest. I was already familiar with businesses, neighborhoods and some residents here, and had researched and befriended many members of a guild of porters, the *zerzaya*, as a graduate research project several years before. Although most travel literature focuses on the old medina of Fez, the residents of this part of Fez only represent a fraction (less than 20%) of greater Fez's total population of 1.1 million in 2014. In 1998, Hassan Radoine, the supervising architect for the ADER Fes (Agence pour la Dédensification et la Réhabilitation de la *medina* de Fes), the government and UNESCO funded agency overseeing the restoration projects in the *medina*, stated in a lecture in Fez that the population of *Fez al Bali* alone is estimated at 160,000, but may be much higher and growing (Radoine, 1998). According to the Le Tourneau estimates, before the protectorate the population

of *Fez al-Bali* did not exceed 80,000 inhabitants (1987: p. 159). These figures serve as an index of the demographic shift in the *medina*, with the population of the *medina* today at possibly twice its comfortable carrying capacity. Demographic and social shifts affect daily practice and the quality of life in the city, and likewise influence daily practices in the hammam as well.



Figure 3.1 Map of Fez (Ogrizek, 1955, p. 107).

Fez Jdid and the Ville Nouvelle

Several other vibrant districts outside of the medina walls comprise Fez. Abu Yusuf of the Merinid dynasty built *Fez Jdid* or “new Fez” in 1276. He situated the new administrative center of the city, the palace, and the *Mellah*, or Jewish quarter here on a plateau just west of and contiguous to original *Fez al-Bali*, or the old Fez Medina. *Fez Jdid* covers a much smaller square acreage, and shares a similar medieval style urban construction with human-scale narrow walking streets. There is one busy commercial thoroughfare that allows cars to circulate, giving it a more frenzied chaotic feeling than the medina. The largest gold *suq* in Fez is located here,

and so is a destination for those seeking wedding finery or special gifts. When I visited friends living in *Fez Jdid* it felt a bit like a hybrid between the old medina and the *Ville Nouvelle*.

During the French Protectorate (from 1912-1956), the administrative center shifted yet again when the French constructed a European style city, the *Ville Nouvelle*, or “new city,” (also known as *Dar Debibagh*) which overlooks *Fez al-Bali* and *Fez Jdid* at a distance of approximately three kilometers to the southwest. Some scholars argue that the French intentionally segregated the Europeans from the Moroccans by building separate urban areas in major Moroccan cities, in what Janet Abu Lughod (1980) calls urban apartheid. The French administration itself contends that their purpose was to respect the flow of indigenous traditional and life to continue uninterrupted.

I lived in this European-built district of Fez from 1996-1999 in a mother-in-law style apartment in a large villa near the center. The aesthetics and experience of the *Ville Nouvelle* differ greatly from the old medina. While the old medina now has plumbing and electricity, the infrastructure of the *Ville Nouvelle* was typically more reliable and was built to support new technologies and modern conveniences. Western style toilets, and bathrooms with bathtubs and hot water heaters were not uncommon, but not ubiquitous. Every home had a kitchen with high counters and cabinets. The medina’s well water and polluted river, the shared fountains in alleyways are nowhere to be found. Fez at its height was replete with sweet and precious water, but today, the wells in homes have either gone dry or are not potable. The Oued Fez in the medina has become polluted with untreated sewage and has been treated as a garbage dump, thereby earning its name as the river of garbage. Apparently now that the river has undergone some clean up and the paving over portions running through the medina has been removed it is

being called the River of Diamonds (Chaoi, 2009). It is easy to see why the wealthier Fassis chose to move out of the old city into the Ville Nouvelle or the suburbs.

The streets in the Ville Nouvelle are clearly named and labeled, wide enough to accommodate automobiles and lined with sidewalks for pedestrian traffic. However, the experience of living in the Ville Nouvelle is less European than one might imagine. The neighborhoods were not as dense as the old medina, but each sub neighborhood contained the same mandatory elements: a hammam, a *hanut* (small corner store selling dry goods and vegetables), an assortment of cafés, and a mosque. Instead of a public oven, most neighborhoods had a slightly upscale bakery that baked Moroccan style round flat loaves, traditional Moroccan cookies, alongside French bread, croissants, and delicate bite sized petit-fours-style pastries. The hammam in the new city were not all wood-fueled, but relied on gas, so they did not, it was explained to me by Moroccans, have the same “prettiness” or taste “*duwq*.”

Spidering out from the Ville Nouvelle to the south, east and west were additional suburbs, where numerous wealthy families who once resided in elegant old medina homes, built brand new homes in a Moroccan style, but with luxurious new features and the reliable electrical and plumbing features. The earliest elite suburb was on the Trq Immouzer and any mention of this area immediately implied wealth and escape. In post-Protectorate Morocco, the nuclear and extended Fassi families in the *medina* began building and moving into large new homes on the outskirts of the modern French city. Those who could, fled the substandard infrastructure, dust and grime, general disrepair and sense of poverty in the old medina for a better, cleaner life in the suburbs. In 2012 these suburbs were continuing to grow at an alarming pace in a quiet sprawl. A drive to the airport was filled with views of vacant half constructed homes, empty lots and piles of light sandy dirt. Even the heart of the Ville Nouvelle is undergoing an urban renewal as

many of the large French villas are falling into disrepair and are being sold to developers who are constructing high-rise apartment buildings and shiny new cafes. When I visited my French villa mother-in-law apartment in 2012, it was barely visible, obscured by and sandwiched between a string of multi-story apartments on all sides, like the movie *Up*.

Popular Neighborhoods: Hay Agadir

Towards the end of the Protectorate, dense neighborhoods of cement homes were constructed to the north of Fez Jdid on slope leading eventually to the Jebel Zalagh. The afternoon sun lingers on the flat roofs and southern facing windows of these neighborhoods, and it is here that Rachid's family built their home in 1967, and in this neighborhood that I spent much of my time over the years in Morocco. s.

In the discussion that follows, I am primarily concerned with two areas of Fez: 1) *Fez al-Bali*, which I will refer to henceforth as the “old medina of Fez”, or the “Fez medina”, and 2) the post protectorate popular neighborhoods on the sloping hills to the north of the old medina: *Hay Agadir* and *Hay Hadiqa*. It was in these two areas that my three primary research hammams were located. I selected the hammams in the post protectorate neighborhoods simply because they were already familiar to me, as they were two main hammams that my husband's family frequented, and they represent both the oldest hammam architecture and infrastructure, similar to the Roman style hypocaust baths, as well as the newer style construction. The population using these hammams represented, to me, access to the lifestyle of a “typical” healthy, middle class Moroccan in Fez, outside of the Ville Nouvelle and Medina. Families in these neighborhoods tend to live in spacious homes with a nuclear and sometimes extended family to include grandparents, grandchildren and the neighborhoods include an active social life indoors and outdoors between neighbors and local business.

I selected one hammam in the old medina as an example of an older construction style, representing hammam architecture that dates back at least several hundred years, to the Merenid era (13th – 15th century AD), and perhaps further. Here the visitors would be local residents, probably of a lower socio-economic status than in the postcolonial neighborhood.

Fez as Spectacle: “Frozen in Time”

The old medina of Fez has been essentialized in the popular imagination through Orientalist literature, travel literature, fiction set North Africa, and print and written genres as a prototypical, timeless, Islamic city (for a discussion of the complications of preserving Fez’s heritage see Porter, 2003). The experience of the old medina of Fez is habitually described in popular publications such as National Geographic as a “timeless mosaic” (Zwingle, 1996). Following closely in this tradition, is the New York Times, which also tirelessly perpetuates the idea that Fez is a living remnant of the mystical mysteries of the ancient past: “Fez seems to have stopped marking time several centuries ago...” (Sherwood, 2007) and visiting Fez is like “stepping back in time” (Ryzik, 2013). Novelist Paul Bowles, who lived and worked in Tangier, Morocco for many years of his life, contributed to this discourse when he famously decreed Fez in his novel *The Spider’s House* as an “enchanted labyrinth sheltered from time” (1955).

Interestingly, Moroccan residents in both Fez and Marrakesh throughout my experiences in Morocco and even more so in 2012, tend to reinforce two types of nostalgic discourses about the old medinas. First, they are attached to nostalgia about the medina itself as a source of “Fassi” identity: refinement regarding its people’s behavior, products, education, crafts, music and religious worship. However, they speak with a sense of loss and a tension between true, pure and authentic Fez and lost Fez, true Fassi and outsiders. Even when reflecting on themselves, they seem internally conflicted about whether they belong to the real Fassi group, or the outsiders

group. Second, Moroccans I spoke with tend to subscribe to the aesthetic of mystery and Orientalism by producing hyper-Moroccan experience for the outsiders to Fez and Marrakesh in the public and semi-public architectural spaces: cafes, luxury hotels, restaurants and of particular interest to this work the restored luxury spa hammam. These reinforcements of Moroccan-ness often answer to the expectations of the tourist consumers. Sometimes, Fassi émigrés to Europe return to Fez to buy an old *riyad* or large house in the old medina, restore it to its former glory and convert it to an “authentic” luxury tourist experience hotel, complete with a spa hammam. New Moroccan and European owners have exploited this opportunity to perpetuate the mystery and intrigue of these spaces.

Timothy Mitchell (1988), in his seminal work *Colonising Egypt*, examines the colonizing power as the dissemination of a “...political order that inscribes in the social world a new conception of space...”(Mitchell, ix). Mitchell shows how the colonial project transformed the way Egyptians came to inhabit and perceive space. Modern forms of power rearranged people in relation to space, as well as shaped ways in which they thought about themselves in relation to the built environment. In Fez, most Moroccans no longer want to live in the “timeless” Medina unless they have no other option. In fact, they rarely visit the medina unless they need to buy a particular traditional item such as a *jellaba* (robe), tray or teapot. When I suggested holding my own wedding in the medina, I fought with the entire family to convince them it was worth doing. Most weddings of any importance and size are held in a rented new house in a suburb where both exteriors and interiors are spacious and with a Cartesian order, unlike the seemingly meandering, circuitous order of the medina.

In his article “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” Mitchell (1989) suggests that Orientalism and the colonial project not only reordered the way the colonized experienced space,

and the way orientalists wrote novels, painted paintings, but was also the way the rest of the world was represented to the European. He focuses on the World Exhibitions in which a street in Cairo was reproduced, complete with dirt and donkeys. An Egyptian delegation was “disgusted” with this representation, and especially with the mosque façade, which led into a café space with dancing girls. This Exhibition Universelle, attended by 32 million spectators, is not unlike what the Disney’s Epcot Center in Florida presents as an authentic representation of “Morocco,” or arguably, what the Fez medina has recently started to present as an authentic versions of a Moroccan hammam in all of the recently renovated spa hammam found in the sumptuous hotels owned and restored by Europeans and returned immigrants. Many of these hammams are accessible only to moneyed tourists, and experientially, they do not closely resemble the popular hammam frequented by residents of the old medina in terms of circulation, intense heat, and ritual.

France

In France I conducted fieldwork in the cities with the largest overall populations, as well as largest North African immigrant populations: Marseilles and Paris. In Paris I conducted research in the *hammam* housed in the public and formally regulated Great Mosque complex in the 5th arrondissement. I also researched a non-elite, popular *hammam*, frequented only by North African immigrants and their families, located in "Little Africa" - the Goutte d'Or neighborhood in the 19th arrondissement. I also conducted research in an upscale *hammam* owned by an Arab in the chic Marais neighborhood with an international jet set clientele and North African workers.

In Paris, the Grand Mosque complex is arguably another exhibition of North African Islam. Conceived of as a gift honoring the North African soldiers who fought for the French in WWI in 1926, the complex includes a large mosque, gardens, classrooms, a library, a bakery

café and restaurant, gift shop with traditional crafts, and a hammam. Intended to represent an authentic North African neighborhood, the complex is located in the middle of the West Bank 5th arrondissement, in the student neighborhoods, far from North African immigrant neighborhoods and Muslim populations. Moustafa Bayoumi (2000) applies Mitchell's theory of the exhibitionary order to this architectural complex and argues that it is yet another exhibition of Islam in a string of World Exhibitions. The main difference between the "mosques" of the temporary exhibitions and the grand mosque of Paris is that the latter is a permanent structure with a functional mosque. With this grand mosque came a "dramatic new vocabulary" mirroring North African religious architecture of the 13th century, but located in the middle of urban, modernist Paris, suspiciously far, today, from the Muslims that might enjoy it or benefit from its services. However, in 1926, the contrast may not have been as striking. By 1930 there were as many as 70,000 North African Muslims in the Paris area (Goebel, 2015). According to Hussey (2006) North Africans settled in the Les Halles, rue des Anglais, and Place Maubert areas within Paris proper. The latter two areas were both located in the 5th arrondissement and within walking distance from the Great Mosque, so convenient for mosque-goers. However, many other immigrants from the Maghreb at this time, and later in the twentieth century, settled in the 18th arrondissement in or near the Goutte d'Or neighborhood or in suburbs north of the city limits, such as Gennevilliers, Clichy, Hauts-de-Seine and Saint Denis suburbs - areas more densely populated with North African immigrant today (see also Davidson, 2012).

Bayoumi explains that Paris in the 19th century was in and of itself a display of emerging modernism and a new ideology. With its Haussmann-style boulevards, rational planning, public displays of power and wealth, Paris was a "...living monument to commerce in the nineteenth century" (269). This was a new, open and visible life, open to examination and scrutiny, which

revealed a new social order and social ideals of equality. Bayoumi points out that such colonial modernity hinges on a contradiction: modernity dismisses absolute power and puts it into the hands of a body politic. It redefines subjects as citizens who have individual rights. But despite the noble outward gestures towards a universal humanity, European colonialists defined the colonized as different - racially, culturally or religiously. Since the colonized were and are, generally, far afield, it was easy to define their culture and its production through literature, plays, paintings and travel accounts, whereby a universality of human rights can be selectively applied. He questions whether the colonizer applies these universal principles when the colonized has a direct presence within the space of the colonizer.

In order to receive funding from the state and city (Bayoumi, Bowen) the complex had to be presented as an educational center rather than a religious institution because of the policies of *laïcité* (the French term for secularism) that insisted on a separation of religion and state. So, in this way, the mosque complex became an *object of study* for students and non-Muslims, a place representative of a day in the life of a Muslim – where Islam can be witnessed, observed, studied, categorized and ordered, managed, contained, and codified. Thus, Islam could be “captured.” The *other* Muslims, since they are not visible here, are invisible (in the outlying arrondissements, and will be watched by the surveillance organization).

My own research included a study of the hammam within this Great Mosque complex. In addition to participant observation, I conducted interviews with employees of North African descent from various parts of the complex: primarily in the hammam, but also in the mosque, restaurant and gift shop. I also interviewed French-born, non-Islamic hammam visitors, Islamic visitors to the complex, an American cultural diplomat, American visitors to the complex, and neighborhood business owners. I also visited two other hammams in Paris: 1) Les Bains du

Marais, an upscale Lebanese-owned establishment in the trendy and expensive Marais district, where most hammam employees were of North African descent, and 2) Le Bain du Barbès, in the 18th arrondissement in the primarily African and North African Goutte d'Or neighborhood, where all of the hammam employees and clients were of North African descent.

In Marseille and Paris, I conducted participant observation in cafes, public spaces and boutiques where the bourgeois bohemians (Bobos) spent time. There is an upsurge in interest in the cultures of the minority, in this case the colonized Other, so much so that friends make an effort to engage in practices that embrace and support these cultures, such as hammam outings, socializing and shisha smoking in cafes with an Orientalist ambiance, shopping in boutiques with Moroccan style modernized designs.

Concluding Thoughts

By exploring these hammam sites in Morocco and France, I trace the story of Moroccan identity through the physical and metaphysical treatment of body. I look at the performance of Moroccan-ness by a variety of players – Moroccan, French, and American, in postcolonial and transnational contexts. In the next chapters, I will do a close descriptive analysis of four major aspects of the traditional hammam as experienced in Morocco. I have divided the hammam into constituent elements that correlate with the Aristotelian humors: fire, water, air and earth. I use this as a springboard to a more personal narrative of the treatment of bodies in and out of the hammam, including my own bodily reactions. I then move into an analysis of the hammam transnationally, and how Moroccan and North African identity is performed in France.

CHAPTER 4: HAMMAM ELEMENTS

Network of Elements

As an organizational principle and poetic device, I have used the four classical Greek elements Fire, Water, Air and Earth as the building blocks of the discussion of the hammam that follows. These were believed by classical philosophers, doctors and scientists to be the constituent elements of all substances, beings and objects of the material world, including the human body, and a balance between them was said to promote wellness in body and mind. These ideas are also related to the philosophy of the humors – substances that correspond to the elements and the body. This classical knowledge of medicine was preserved through Arab writings, but was often also integrated with Indian Ayurveda traditions. I have divided this chapter on the traditional hammam into sections corresponding to the four elements as a way of thinking about the relationship between these elements and also as a way of categorizing interactions, substances, beliefs, influences, activities, events, and phenomena, within this institution so closely associated with wellness, the body, purification and piety.

In Morocco, the theory of the body and medicine is pluralistic and rooted in a number of traditions: the prophetic textual tradition of the Hadith (Islamic sayings of the prophet) and Qur'an, local saint worship, local *shuwwafat* (female seers), sub Saharan African traditions and the humoric tradition of classical Greek and Roman medicine. The theory of the humors comes through the writings of Hippocrates (d. 370 B.C.) and later Galen, the Greek physician in the Roman Empire (d circa 210 A.D.). This theory relies on the principle of unity (*tawhid*) whereby microcosms mirror the macrocosm. The universe is composed of interacting elements: fire, air, water and earth and all matter on earth, including humans, have the qualities heat, cold, moistness and dryness in accordance with these elements to achieve a unity of balance and

accord. The corresponding human substances are phlegm (water/*ma*: cold, dampness), yellow bile (fire/*nar*: heat, dryness), black bile (earth/*zara*: cold, dryness), blood (air/*riḥ*: heat, dampness). The basic theory of the humors was translated into Arabic in the 9th century AD and came to influence major Arabic medical treatises such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Middle Eastern medical practices and thought via Baghdad and other major urban centers from the Middle East to the Andalus. According to Dieste (2013), many medical treatments are "nothing more than methods for provoking cold or heat" and thus this model of hot and cold underlies understandings and treatments of illness in Morocco (p. 41, 179).

This system of belief underpins much of what I heard on a daily basis in Morocco, and particularly with reference to the hammam and bathing, (but also comes up in discussions about diet, sleep and weather. The dangers of the wind, the cold air on your head, the increased heat of the hammam during one's period, too much exposure to sunlight, might all have negative effects on the internal balance of the body, and cause more serious issues. Moving air, drafts and wind often have the potential to be harmful. Cross breezes inside are discouraged. Leaving the fan on all night in hot weather can cause illness. Wet hair must be covered before leaving the home, because of exposure to cold and wind. There is a sense that the body is vulnerable to entry of evils through the wind - also cold and in sun. Because of the material nature of the hammam – architecturally, and in terms of its connection to the body, it seemed logical to divide a descriptive discussion of its social function into the four humoric elements.

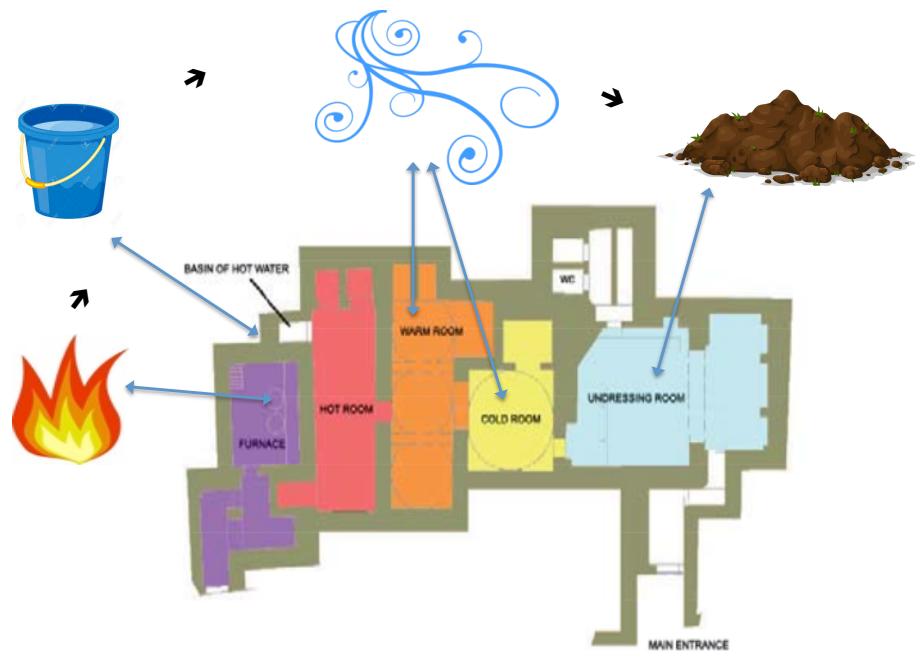
Circulation of Elements Within the Hammam

The wood fueled *hammam* functions as a continually interdependent relationship between water, fire, earth, air and beings (human and non-human (jinn)). **Water** is heated under the floor of the *hammam* by a **fire**. The *farnatchi*, or fire-watcher tends the **fire** and releases water as needed into the big cistern in the hottest chamber. Often the workers inside the *hammam* shout loudly to the *farnatchi* telling him to release more water. **Water** is gathered by hammam workers or bathers from inside the hammam in the hottest, innermost chamber from a large cistern of hot water and an equally large cistern of cold water. These cisterns are the approximate size of a small hot tub - large enough for several adults to submerge themselves - but these are not plunge tubs. Instead, individuals dip and fill buckets in the cisterns, and bring them back to their station on the floor where an array of plastic buckets filled with hot and cold water are mixed to comfortable temperatures, while several are reserved as pure hot, or pure cold for future mixing. Usually, several trips throughout the hammam visit are made to the cisterns for water retrieval. Alternately, one can pay a hammam worker to fill buckets, but most individuals do their own water retrieval. Bodies establish their place on the **ground (earth)**, usually a granite surface, which has been heated in the airspace under the floor by hot circulating steamy smoke and **air**. Often, a layer of salt underneath the granite functions to trap heat. The **air** in the *hammam* is hot, wet and heavy, becoming hotter towards the last, inner room of the *hammam*.

A number of hammam managers explained to me, with detailed pen and paper flow charts how the hammam rooms were heated by fire and air flow. Their explanations mirror the hypocaust system used in ancient Roman public baths. The hot air and smoke from the fire flow beneath the hammam floor and are then extracted through chimneys along the four corners of the hot room.

In addition to an analysis of the elements, the binaries of polluted/clean; and hot/cold are also key themes underlying my own understanding of the *hammam* and serve here, alongside the four elements, as organizing principles for understanding and writing about the Moroccan hammam.

The four elements overlap in unending ways, so to divide them into discrete sections does not mean to suggest that they are in fact divisible. Within each section my discussion of one inevitably bleeds over into another. However, in this chapter the elements serve primarily as an organizational scheme for understanding the flow of elements, substances and bodies through the spaces of the hammam. Below I provide a map (Figure 4.1) of a traditional bathhouse, Hammam Moulay Idriss, located in the Fez medina (Raftani and Radouine, 2008). Most hammams in Fez have the same architectural sequence of rooms and basic organization, so I use this floor plan as an archetype to organize my discussion and trace the flow of heat, air, water, substances, powers, spirits and bodies through its space.



Plan of Hammam Moulay Driss in the Medina of Fez Showing the Sequential Progression of Rooms and Associated Elements: Fire, Water, Air and Earth. (Raftani and Radouine, 2008, p.63 – Original Source, ADER Fes)

Figure 4.1 Floor plan of hammam Moulay Driss (Raftani and Radouine, 2008, p.63). Elements in clipart added by author.

This chapter begins with “Fire –I,” and a visit to the furnace room (often located a level below the main bathing rooms), which houses the **fire** for the hammam. I then transition to “Water –II,” in which I follow the fire’s heat into the hottest chamber of the inner hammam, the location of the hot **water** cistern, the *brma*. From the hottest room, I move to the middle and coldest rooms to discuss **air**, wind, steam, light, sounds, breath, songs, and spirituality in “Air – III.” Finally, I follow bodies out to the changing area where in “Earth – IV,” I discuss **earthly** materiality and objects such as skin, hair, bodies, mats, clothes, food, incense, and wood; I also discuss the touristic hammams, which emphasize an Orientalist aesthetic and decorative crafts and objects.

CHAPTER 5: FIRE, WATER, AIR, EARTH

I-FIRE

"And the jinn we created from the scorching fire." Surat Al-Ĥijr



Figure 5.1 Farnatchi's Fire, Hammam 1001 Nuits, Marrakesh

“Do you want to see the fire?”

“Yes, yes, of course,” I chirped, startled and grateful for this unsolicited invitation into the belly of the beast. The floor plan of this traditional hammam in the Marrakesh medina had been modified. No longer one larger space, it had been divided into two separate establishments: one that catered especially to tourists, with exotic signage “Mille et une Nuits,” a dimly lit lounge area, decorative Moroccan carpets, brass chandeliers, and little massage rooms; the other catered almost exclusively to local residents (foreigners would be allowed but almost ventured inside), had an unmarked entry, and a sparse, simple and utilitarian arrangement similar to that of all the other hammams in middle and lower-class neighborhoods. This hammam, with its two-part, divided nature embodied the tensions between commercialism/Orientalism and pre-colonial tradition.

Kamal, the charismatic 30-something manager led me out the front door of the tourist lobby and into the narrow medina street. We turned left again at the end of the building and right there, flush up against the wall was a precariously steep and uneven, narrow set of crooked steps. We crept down, slowly, hands along the building to steady ourselves, and once down the slope, crouched and slipped inside.

As the hot, smoky, sawdust-filled grotto came into focus, I stood captivated by the crackling *pièce de résistance*: a glowing fire deep within a triangular opening. Elevated above our sightline, this hearth and its fire were decidedly altar-like. Rachid and Hussein, the *farnatchiyin* (pl.; *farnatchi*, sing.), were covered in black soot and welcomed us with big ash-smudged smiles. One was tending the fire, and the other was shoveling wood chips and shavings. Hussein, senior to Rachid, drew closer as I explained my interest in the hammams of Morocco

and my project of writing about them. He proudly showed me every corner of his cave-like domain, and encouraged photos.

I pointed to a pile of what looked like blackened hooved animal legs in an alcove next to the fire. My mind spun with thoughts of jinn who are said to sometimes appear as half goat, half human, like centaurs.

“What’s that?” I asked.

Kamal, who was still with us, explained, openly, that the *farnatchi*’s job paid modestly, so Hussein the head *farnatchi* supplemented his income with this side job: roasting cow and lamb hooves in the fire. Hussein took over and explained and showed the process to me in great detail. First he skewered the lamb legs on long metal rods and put them into the fire until they were blackened. He then stacked them in this dark corner, where they waited to be prepared for the *tanjias*, large earthenware amphorae. The leg meat was then cooked in the amphorae over fire with tomato and other spices and sold in the Jamaa el-Fna square in the medina. Kamal left us to return to his front desk duties upstairs, but I lingered for some time, asking the occasional question as I sat on a bucket procured especially for me. I was awestruck by Hussein’s industriousness, generosity, and kind spirit. I sat quietly in the warmth, much of that time, enchanted by the fire, its surroundings and its caretakers.



Figure 5.2 Hooves at the hammam



Figure 5.3 Hussein holding a hoof-filled tanjia



Figure 5.4 Hussein arranging tanjias

Fire plays a powerful role in the hammam. Not only is fire the source of heat for the floors, walls and water of the hammam, its heat also acts as an agent of purification. The heat is also used as a test and barometer of fortitude and tolerance – women and men brag about how long they were able to endure the heat of the inner chamber. Fire, by virtue of its strength is also a source of danger; too much heat can be damaging to the body. Hell in the Islamic tradition burns with an eternal fire, and according to the Qur'an, fire is also the source of jinn, spirits that live a parallel life among, alongside and sometimes inside human bodies on earth. Fire is also known as the agent of alchemic transformational practices in the Arab tradition (Campo, p. 29). The superficial purpose of alchemy is the transformation of base metals into more precious metal, such as lead into silver or gold, for example. However, according to Arabic and also European sources devoted to alchemy, fire is not only the source of physical transformation, but also

metaphysical, spiritual transformation (see also Paracelsus, 1951 and Goodrick-Clarke, 2008). In the hammam, fire has the power to transform water to steam vapor, cold water into hot water, and through the force of its smoke and heat, distribute and radiate warmth under and alongside the rooms of the hammam to produce hotness throughout. In addition, the fire is a catalyst for transforming bodies from an impure to pure state through its heat and the heated water.

Because early Arabo Islamic thought followed the Aristotelian notion that the earth and all matter were composed of the four elements, fire, water, air and earth, it was believed that all matter (and spirit) had inner unity, so it was possible to manipulate the elements within to issue a new, more perfect and purified substance out of a lesser substance. This process applied to objects as well as the human physical and metaphysical body (Campo, p. 29-30). Fire is the central catalyst to this process of transformation of material objects, body and spirit. Ibn Al Arabi, (b. 1165) in his *Meccan Revelations* engages with metaphysical alchemy when he explains alchemy as “primarily an inner-psyche work which strives to redeem the inner man.” According to Marie-Louise von Franz, “the mystical masters of Islam understood alchemy as a transformative process of the alchemist's psyche. The fire which promoted this transformation was the love of God...the alchemical process takes place within man” (von Franz p. 34). The liminal processes within the hammam start with the fire. The *farnatchi*, as alchemist of the body and spirit, heats the hammam through his fire, where bodies are transformed from impure to pure, in preparation for prayer to Allah.

The *farnatchi*, by virtue of his constant relationship with the flames, has the most powerful role in the life of the hammam. His work is located physically outside of the bathing space, but he is its prime regulator. He is respected for his commitment to this element, his commitment to the people he serves, and for the hard labor the job demands. The *farnatchi* does

not carry high social or economic status or recompense, but because of the transformational and liminal nature of his fire, the profession garners respect. He is the alchemist of the hammam.

The mutual respect between the manager Kamal and the *farnatchiin* on my visit was unmistakable. Hussein explained and shared with me his work and workspace with pride. He could also conduct his side business in the *farnatchi* room openly and was visibly proud of his product. When he offered me tastes of the hooves, I declined, being in the depths of my own anxiety over contagion, but he told me to return anytime where he would host us in his grotto.

The fire tended by the *farnatchi* for the hammam is often also connected to a fire used for a *faran*, or public oven, another site of magical transformation: sticky dough to fragrant bread. Often, a team of *farnatchiin* rotates between the hammam fire and the *faran* fire. The *faran* is covered in more depth in Chapter 5, but it is safe to say that because of his relationship with weekly bathing and bread making, the *farnatchi* typically knows each family in the neighborhood intimately and keeps a close eye on the life of the community. Often the *farnatchi* is given the honorific “*ba*” preceding his first name, and at the Hay Agadir hammam and *faran* the lead *farnatchi* was a well-respected, dark-skinned lithe man lovingly referred to as “Ba Said.” My family felt cared for by Ba Said and in return, they took good care of him. He was an outsider, from another part of town, but was deeply rooted within the neighborhood. The *farnatchi*'s position within the community falls somewhere between selfless saintly servant and assiduous alchemist.

Fire influences Water: Regulation

We now follow the flow of the fire-heated water to the inside of the hammam. The flow of water and heat into the internal rooms of the hammam depends largely on communication between the *farnatchi* and the hammam workers inside. The *farnatchi* watches over the fire that

heats the water, and his counterparts, the female attendants: *ṭayyabat* (pl; sing. *ṭayyaba*), and the male attendants: *kiyyasa* (pl; sing. *kiyyas*) and *kassala* (pl.; sing. *kassal*) watch over the water inside. The relationship between the fire tender and water tenders is crucial in keeping the elements of the hammam harmonious: fire, heat, water flow, water temperature, and comfort levels in the hammam all depend on the coordinated efforts of the *farnatchi* and *ṭayyaba/kiyyas*.

The hammam is always designed such that the fire is located nearest the hottest, inner chamber, but the configuration of each *farnatchi* chamber differs widely. Hussein worked in the depths underneath his hammam. Sometimes the term *farnatchi* itself refers to a large brass or traditionally copper furnace within which the fire is contained. This furnace also heats the water that feeds the internal *brma*. The *farnatchi*, the man, moves between the outside of his furnace room, stacking and loading wood, and the inner furnace room, where he tends the fire and where he controls the release of water into the *brma*. The *farnatchi* room always has a separate entrance; however, it is usually in close enough proximity to the inside of the hammam to be within constant screaming distance from the *kiyyasa* and *ṭayyabat*, the workers inside the hammam. Without adequate fire, there is no heat and no hot water, so the internal workers communicate with him as needed. This sometimes entails one of the inside workers exiting the hammam to find the *farnatchi* and explain what is needed, but usually piercing yells suffice.

On a sweltering summer day in Fez, I was taken by, Ali, a young receptionist for a beautifully restored palace hotel in the medina, to visit many medina hammams – his favorites. We made a longer stop at the Trq Jadida Hammam in R'cif, his childhood neighborhood. In the entryway, just off of the main road, Ali negotiated with the *ṭayyaba* at the doorway and she agreed to take me inside with her. Ushering me in, she chuckled to herself and laughed at me: I must have seemed like a clueless foreigner to her and I was fully clothed. She, herself, was

wearing a headscarf, simple shirt, pantaloons and an apron, but she ran about, unfazed, and wet. The changing room was crowded and overflowing with bodies and flesh. The bodies seemed especially relaxed and very large. I was hot after walking for several miles in the 90-degree medina in long pants and a long sleeved blouse. The walls were blue and wet and the air was at minimum, 110 degrees.

She grabbed me, baring her gap-toothed smile as she dragged me first to the heart of the hammam - the hottest inner room. We stood next to the *brma*, which was overflowing with hot water. The *tayyabat* I have known tended to be physically and socially aggressive. They are not often shy about grabbing, pinching, scrubbing, talking or screaming. We stopped and looked at a large, long, unspectacular rectangular basin, but it was the centerpiece and the first thing she thought I should see on my little tour. The *brma* was significant because it was *the* source of hot water, steam and heat for the back room. The filling of its water and its heat depended on the fire and the oversight of the *farnatchi*. The *brma* was also often the site of mayhem and chaos. Women crowded around it, waiting for the release of water. They fought for their turn to scoop out water. They fought if they took the last bit of water. In this case, the water supply was too abundant and water was spilling over the sides and onto the ground, flowing towards the drains. Suddenly in an effort to rectify this incorrect flow, the *tayyaba* forcefully bellowed out,

“*Shd l'ma! Shd l'ma!*” to the invisible *farnatchi*, “Turn off the water! Turn off the water!”

I flinched, not expecting the screaming right next to my ear. Continual communications via shouting take place between the *tayyaba* and the *farnatchi*. We had passed by this *farnatchi* earlier, and he was smoking and sweating in the alley behind the hammam, taking a break from his dank room. I felt for him; he looked alone and hot, and the smoking on top of the smoke of his room and the heaviness of the day was unbearable to watch.

The *tayyaba* showed me, in gestures, as though I was a little girl, as though I wouldn't understand, (she didn't realize I spoke Arabic) that the water was hot. She went up to it, and began to touch it, then drew back her hand quickly. I told her I could understand her if she spoke to me, and with that, she grabbed me tighter. She immediately liked me better. We made our way through each room, and she led me to see the *qnt d- 'arousa*, the bride's corner, then outside because she had to tell the *farnatchi* something further about the overflowing *brma*.

We slipped back to the waiting room. I was hot and felt faint. She took my hands in hers said, *dur m'a-i* ...to take care of her a bit (tip her). So I fished around in my wallet for some change. I told her I wasn't sure if I had anything, and she just said, "*li kan, li ktab Allah.*" In other words, whatever I had was fine - that which was written by God. She didn't persist; she just smiled and went about her business. Hers was a job done out of duty and service to people, to the patron saint, to the city itself and ultimately for God. I thanked her, found a coin and gave it to her. She seemed happy and the whole room started chiming in with shouts for me to come back for and bathe with them, have a scrub. "We will scrub you! Come back!"

Communication between the *tayyaba/kiyyas* and *farnatchi* keep up the flows of heat and water of the hammam in the proper directions. The internal hammam workers are the powerful mediators between inside and out, moving, screaming, manipulating people (like me) as necessary so that all the elements are coordinated. The *tayyaba* and *kiyyas* also have an important social function in the community as disseminators of news and gossip. They have their fingers on the pulse of the neighborhood, and so they also function to uphold social, moral, and religious standards and expectations. Hicham, my brother in law, told me in Arabic as I translated into English in my notebook:

The *kiyyasa* is like the newspaper of the neighborhood. If you want to ask about someone, or learn news, find someone, find out about someone you ask the *kiyyasa*, because she knows everyone. Just like the *farán*. They know where everyone lives, what their bread looks like...

Hicham stressed the mutual responsibility of hammam workers and the surrounding community to care for one another. Speaking specifically of the role of the *kiyyasa*, or *kissal* he said:

They must be taken care of...they should be given a fair price so that they will take care of you, in return, in an ongoing way...if there is an occasion such as Ramadan or ‘Aid l-Kbir, I always give the *kissal* charity and gifts.

A long time ago, the *kiyyas* looked and watched for men who went in with young boys to have sex. The *kiyyas* banned such men from the hammam if they were caught. The *kiyyas* also looks out for thieves, or boys who are too old to be accompanying their mothers – who are looking at women's bodies. They also keep an eye out for the people with health issues like high blood pressure. The *kissal* has to watch for all this. He has to keep an eye on people.

The jobs such as *farnatchi* or *tayyaba* imitate, in many ways, the master-disciple relationship theorized to exist throughout Morocco (Hammoudi, 1997). In this case, the *tayyaba* is at once the master of her craft, the powerful healer, and also, in terms of Hammoudi's theory, the disciple, serving both the client, but also Allah. Therefore, because of the respect demanded by the disciple towards the master, flexibility of payment is standard. The server never demands payment but asks for “*li kan*” – whatever is possible, according to God's will. The porters of Fez, a similar profession of laborers, are also paid whatever their client feels the service was worth, or

whatever they are able to pay on that particular day. The porter works and serves, not only the client, but the city itself, and its saint (Brame, 1999). By accepting “*li kan*,” the hammam workers display their grace, moral virtue, as well as an allegiance to their community, hammam (and its patron saint if one exists) and to a “master” higher power, to whom their work is ultimately dedicated.

People who hold these types of jobs, doing personal services or heavy labor that relate to the body, dirt, or liminal transformation usually carry a religious valence and potent respect. If the *ṭayyaba* or *kiyyas* scrubs you in the hammam, most customers say *hashak*. Often, people ask others around them to do them the favor of scrubbing their back, and when asking, they say *hashak*. This word is often uttered to mitigate the shame and embarrassment associated with the potential transfer of pollution from yourself to another human who does a service for you. For example if someone touches and cleans a body part or object to which you are related - shines your shoes, sweeps around you, washes your feet, cuts your hair, the recipient of the service says *hashak* to show respect, shame and appreciation.

For the *ṭayyaba* and *farnatchi*, their jobs are polluting because of their proximity and exposure to dangerous and polluting substances and powers: fire, heat, smoke, dust, bodies, dirt, and dirty or dead skin. The labor and tasks associated with these jobs are polluting, unhealthy, and grueling, yet these individuals carry a special status within the community. They are respected for this sacrifice, and because of their liminal status, can and do behave, to some extent, outside of the standard social norms without transgressing moral expectations. *Ṭayyabat* are upstanding citizens, but can also be more aggressive and direct. These professions come with meager salaries, so the *farnatchi* and *ṭayyabat/kiyyasa* depend in large part on generous tipping and charitable offerings from clients. Through their association with the healing elements, fire,

water and touch, and in the old medina, their association and service to the saint associated with the hammam elevate the *farnatchi* and *ṭayyabat/kiyyasa*. It is at the same time a proud and pitiable profession.



Figure 5.5 *Farnatchi* room in Hammam Jedidia, near Rcif, Fez

Fire's Heat: The Inner Chamber

The hottest room in the hammam is also the most important. Extreme heat (*skhuniya*) is usually the indication of a good hammam. Enduring this heat is considered an important marker of strength and fortitude and is also part of the routine experience and process of going to the hammam. The labor of the bathers within the hammam is part of the ritual and purification

process.

Rafiq, a man in his mid 40s, who grew up in the middle class neighborhood Hay Agadir in Fez, remembers the honor of withstanding heat in the hammam, and how this made a boy a man.

There is a competition in Morocco. Who is going to stay longer. People point the finger at you to stay long at the *brma*. You are respected if you can withstand the heat. People put pride in that. They tell you they stayed there two hours...it's something to talk about. Shows you are strong... People will brag that they stayed in the hammam for a long time to impress you. And then if you go to the modern Western showers, you are considered to be *rumi*. And that's bad. You have to hide it. People will make fun of you. This is a while ago. Only nerds went to the douche. Back then you had to hide it...because you will have derogatory comments you don't want to hear. Like "you're a homo" etc...you are weak, or "*wld um-u*" momma's boy.

Proving oneself in the hammam relates directly to withstanding hotness. I have watched many people work on building tolerance to the heat, as though the more they expose themselves, the better they will be, not just regarding health, but also moral or spiritual merit.

A young woman, Zara, who grew up in the Ville Nouvelle in a relatively affluent family, was well educated, forthcoming and kind, explained that in Fez, there are beliefs about hot and cold, but she did not subscribe to them. She said she was free of these belief systems because of her upbringing. Her mother didn't believe in the dangers of cold or wind, so she also didn't. Thus, she did not need to impress me with stories of withstanding heat.

I told her in the course of our conversation "I've noticed Moroccans always say something about heat when I ask them why the hammam is good. They always tell me because it is *hot*."

She said, in English,

We talk about "*dakhlani d-l-hammam*" (the inner reaches of the hammam), which refers to the last room the one with *brma*, the hottest one. You know there are three rooms in hammam. The first one is the coldest one. Personally I cannot go to the hottest one with *brma*. It's too hot.

This isn't surprising because many people are unable to withstand the intense heat near the cistern of fire heated water, although most seem to pride themselves on staying in the hottest room for a substantial length of time. Zara doesn't need to impress me with this because of her self-proclaimed liberation from such tradition, and also, I suspect because of her relaxed self-confidence in the socio economic position she was born into. She goes on to explain how the *tayyaba* and the hottest room, *dakhlani*, are referenced in daily communication to indicate intensity, or vulgarity.

When there is a vulgar person that acts inappropriately we say she is like "*tayyaba d-l-hammam*" (*tayyaba* of the hammam) because the *tayyaba* is known to be involved with fights with other women in the hammam...or we say, when someone is angry: "*glssa f-dakhlani d-l-hammam*," which means is she is sitting in the *brma* room where most fights happen...they usually fight about who's turn is it to get hot water.

The heat in this inner room is the site of passionate conflict, intense and belabored relaxation, and danger because of the threat of the jinn. This heat is also associated with the *tayyaba* who is known as loud, combative and transgressive – often touching, teasing and talking more than others might. She behaves in ways seen to be outside of social norms - as Zara says, "inappropriately." This is not necessarily because she is a vulgar person, but because her role in the hammam is a liminal one. She transitions people from impure to pure states, from unmarried to married, and she watches the cycle of birth and death in local families on a weekly basis.

Zara did explain, however, that her father loves heat and talks about literally heating his bones:

My father likes everything that is hot. He wears a lot of clothes even in the summer. They [Moroccans] say "*Kay-khmed-u 'adhem-hum...*" - they heat their bones. That's why I told you my grandmother likes Nausikaa because of the hot [sic] on her bones.

Nausikaa is an upscale hammam in the Ville Nouvelle that caters to wealthy Moroccans and foreigners. It has a fitness center, weight room, swimming pool, salon, hammam, and cafeteria. It also has a slick website with an enticing and exotic animation whisking the viewer from the old medina of Fez to the elegant interiors of the Nausikaa spa (<http://nausikaaspa.com>). While Zara does not buy into the discourse on heat and fortitude, or other superstitions around cold and wind, she clearly aligns herself with the elegance, prestige and “gout de luxe” of the Nausikaa spa, by mentioning her grandmother’s preference. The deep heating of the body, down to the bones is also a common discourse associated with health and heat among people in Fez. Everyone seems to seek out the thoroughly hottest possible bodily experience.

Ali, the hotel receptionist explained to me that non-Moroccan visitors and tourists in general did not understand the hammam *bldi* (traditional/natural hammam), particularly in terms of the heat and what it means to be truly relaxed as a result of vigorous scrubbing and heat, or to be deeply heated from the inside out. I translated his Moroccan Arabic directly into English as I took notes in my notebook:

About the tourist...they don't know our culture. They like our hammam, and they like our relaxation but they feel a different kind of relaxation themselves (...) European people don't scrub and exfoliate as we do (...) They don't feel hot (*skhun*) inside...They go and heat up themselves a little bit, but they don't heat themselves up from the inside. They don't scrub and exfoliate. They don't heat themselves up from inside to feel really relaxed.

Through his explanation Ali reveals the correlation between extreme exertion and relaxation. He says of the *nesrani* (the foreign Christian):

They always want something easy. This is the important thing about clients. Something easy. Neither traditional nor modern (*bildi wla 'asri*)... hot water or cold water...they don't want to do

something difficult requiring effort. They don't want anything that takes effort (*majhud*). The Moroccan people...we fill the water by ourselves...For the men, when they go inside the hammam, they go directly to the *brma*...they fill the water [buckets] for themselves and for the others around them, so that they get really hot. If someone asks me to scrub them (*hak*), I do it, because I will clean myself through doing it...because of effort (*majhud*)...Even if you fill 30 buckets, or more! Really...it cleanses you, it heats you. Relaxation (*raha*)...has a relationship with effort and exertion. You can't have relaxation without exertion. In the traditional hammam we don't do massage. One of the reasons you feel relaxed as *nesrani* is massage.

The traditional hammam experience is not a spa experience. You work. You sweat. You endure.

It's loud and hot and the floor is hard. The heat and the heat from one's own exertion, in particular, make it possible to fully succumb to relaxation.

Fire=>Water

Heat comes from the external fire but also the internal fire of exerting the body. The fire's heat travels by virtue of the architectural design and the hammam workers, but its influence in this hottest room acts most dominantly on the *brma*, the physical receptacle for scalding hot water. The *brma*, is the heart of the hammam and source of its purifying **water**.

II WATER

Mohammed said, “Purity is half of faith”
al-ṭahar nisf al-iman



Figure 5.6 Brma, Hammam Hay Agadir, Fez

For this well-known saying of the prophet “Purity (or cleanliness) is half of faith” there are various interpretations. One interpretation says that the cleanliness, purity or purification referred to in this hadith is the ritual ablution performed with water. Some scholars suggest that this type of purification is half of faith because it purifies the outside of the body, whereas the other half of faith is to purify the inside: mind and spirit. In this section, I will discuss tales from

the altar of hot water: the *brma*. This is the source of bodily purification with water, but also a liminal site where jinn appear and wreak havoc, where ceremonies are performed, and where good behavior and observance of traditional values are both contested and regulated.

Hot Water: *Brma*

The *brma* is the ultimate source of water for ritual purification in Fez. It is the most important landmark and destination within the hammam, but also its conceptual focal point. At this source of hot water, bathers gather, sometimes jockeying for a space and access. The brides are led back to this heart of the hammam, to pay it homage. It is visually humble and unremarkable, yet it is a nexus of activity and power as the source of heat and purifying water, and even a place where ritual activities, songs and prayers take place.

The connection between the fire room and the hot water room is apparent through screams and the religious rejoicing that follow. If the *brma* is empty of water, suddenly yelps erupt from the *tayyaba* and women, then the water comes and chanting to the prophet Mohammed and women's ululations follow. Cacophony rather than tranquility is the norm within these rooms. Sloshing, screaming, singing, fighting, talking, announcements and echoes are commonplace. Rahim, the Fez born Arabic teacher, described the chants and calls for water and then the loud rejoicing when the water finally arrives:

“Sometimes you are in the middle of soaping up. And there is no water. The *brma* gets empty. [The *farnatchi*] is out smoking or something. He has to *tlq l-ma* [turn on the water]. Then everyone says: *salla 'an nabi*. [Peace be upon the prophet Mohammad]. While it is coming out, steam appears. It makes people go crazy like eureka. Like alchemy.” When steam starts appearing, the whole hammam rejoices and they begin singing/chanting: "*Allah msalli 'alayk a-rsul Allah*" [God bless the prophet of Allah].

The degree of religious significance attached to the release of the water indicates the respect accorded the *farnatchi*, the man tending the fire and releasing the water, but also the importance

of the water itself. Although the screams are loud and piercing, and not at all relaxing, they are nonetheless mitigated and softened by using the prayer to the prophet Mohammed. When the water is finally released, everyone erupts, as if through the magic of the steam, with more chanting of prayers and rejoicing. The sight of steamy water evokes such celebration and joy that it becomes an almost religious celebration, and the hammam turns temporarily into a communally shared celebration of gratitude. The *brma*'s significance is also underscored by the numerous jinn sightings and stories associated with it. Since the jinn are believed to be made of fire but are so closely associated with dwelling in and near dark, wet spaces near the *brma*, I include them first in this discussion of water, as a conceptual and metaphysical bridge between the "Fire" of the farnatchi and scalding "Water" of the *brma* in the inner room.

Initially I did not intend to write about the jinn as part of this study, but in Fez, the topic came up more frequently in conjunction with the hammam than almost any other. Jinn, with all their disruptions and appearances at the hammam, seem to regulate the path to purification. They punish those who do not follow protocol, tradition, or right behavior, and those who do not pay proper attention and homage to these invisible spirits that govern the space of the hammam.

According to the Qur'an, jinn are beings created from smokeless fire, whereas humans are made of mud, clay or dust, and angels of light. This fire is described as a brilliant intense flame "mixed with a smouldering wind" and thus the jinn are composed not only of the intense flame, but also of intense wind (El-Zein, 2009, Lim, 2005). They are also known to have existed before human beings: "whereas the jinn We have created, long before that, out of the fire of scorching winds" (Qur'an 15:27), and their association with fire and wind, align them with passion and intensity, often sexual (Crapanzano, 1973, 1975).

Of the many stories I have heard, certain themes were often repeated, and stories were sometimes contradictory. Often, I heard that jinn were just like us living in the same world, but mostly invisible and able to travel quickly from place to place. Like us, they have jobs nationalities, and families. They are said to live, do good and bad, just like humans, and seek out bodies through which they can speak and exert influence (Spadola, 2004). Rahim said (in English):

The Qur'an mentioned *jinn* are like people - we can't see them. They were born from fire. We [humans] were born from mud (*teen*). The *jinn* like dark places because they are ugly. They don't want to be seen. Some of them are Muslim and some are Christian and some are non-believers. The bad ones hurt people and the good don't hurt people [just like humans].

The jinn seek out wet places to live and hide, and if angered or provoked, they will appear in human or animal form, or worse, inhabit a human body, rendering him or her haunted/inhabited, or *mskun*. In Morocco, jinn often appear with human bodies but with goat, camel or sheep legs, similar to satyrs. When I first noticed the pile of hooved legs in the farnatchi's cave I could not keep my imagination from associating these with jinn that may have perished.

I have heard about specific recurring characters from a pantheon of jinn characters well known to most Moroccans; these can be male or female, each associated with a complex history, personality, song, rhythm, and color. The classic example is A'isha Qandisha, a character that most Moroccans are reticent to discuss, possibly because she is associated with dangerous and potent sexuality. She is said to visit men in their sleep, make love to them, and prevent them from developing relationships with human women (Crapanzano, 1975). Some jinn do not belong to this pantheon, but are individuals with a foreign or local identity, language and story. Those who are convinced or suspicious of being *mskun* seek out a variety of remedies for exorcising jinn, including possession ceremonies – nights of dancing and music (*lila* or *ḥadra*), visits to a

fqih (religious healers who recite Qur'an and diagnose when a patient was possessed and by whom), or visits to *shawafa*, seers or magicians – usually illiterate women (Kapchan 1996, Spadola 2004).

The *hammam*, with its wetness and dim lighting, creates an ideal environment, apparently, for jinn to thrive. In Fez, I found a rich discourse around jinn and the *hammam*. Many *hammam* workers (*tayyaba/kiyassa*) and working class Fassis are reluctant to discuss jinn, since the topic is sensitive, and considered dangerous. Other, more educated Fassis scoff at the topic as belonging to an ignorant and primitive Moroccan past. Often, the more educated Moroccans, or emigrants from Morocco abroad, will be much more inclined to share stories, as they do not worry as much about or believe in their influence and are likely to consider them to be a benign folkloric phenomenon. In an interview with an educated, forty-year old Fassi, about why people shun discussion of the jinn, he said, in English:

Jinn - it is a sensitive topic, because it is scary. If you talk about it you might be haunted by jinn. They [women] don't want to talk to anyone about it. They think they will be haunted by one. They have a fear. As though they have no protection. When we were kids if you mentioned *jinn* or *shaytan* [the devil], my mom would say shhhhhh...[pause] It was like we were saying a bad swear word. When we were kids we couldn't mention it. Two things you can't talk about in Morocco: jinn and the King. People are afraid of saying the name of the king – *qaddasa*. It is like holiness, but mostly fear. You can't talk about the jinn. Both of them are fear.

Rahim claims that there is an automatic association and invocation of magic if jinn enter the conversation.

Jinn and Fear

Fear itself is enough to bring about possession by jinn. It is said that fear makes a body more vulnerable. A Moroccan *tayyaba* in France told me a story of her own recent encounter with a possessed woman who had been inhabited by a jinn in the *hammam* she managed in Paris. She said:

Yesterday someone came in to the hammam. She was acting weird, as though she was possessed. She said, no, don't call anyone. She didn't want to go to the hospital. She was inhabited (*mskuna*) and she was scared. When she was alone and afraid, that gave the jinn the chance to enter her. She had a crisis in [the hammam]. The jinn was speaking through her, and her eyes got really big. She kept speaking, but nobody knew what she was saying – it didn't make any sense.

The *tayyaba* in France was more willing to share stories with me about sensitive topics. So not only is fear associated with uttering the word jinn, but also that fear itself can make the body vulnerable to being inhabited by one.

Alongside this intense fear of speaking of and about the jinn, there is also shame, particularly with regard to belief in non-religious healers, such as the *shawafa*. My students, when I taught English as a foreign language in Fez (1996-1999), always bristled when textbooks used fortune telling themes such as palm readings and crystal balls to teach the future tense. Predicting the future of their classmate using simple palm-reading techniques was met with nervous laughter and even complaints such as, “We don't believe in this... This is the work of the devil... This is silly stuff,” they would say. After many years of confusion surrounding these reactions, I finally recognized that these “fun” future tense activities might appear to reinforce traditional beliefs, challenging the modern ideologies of these young, educated Moroccan students. A tradition of fortune telling still persists in Morocco, but is associated with previous generations' beliefs and superstitions, spirits, magic, and curses. It is a source of shame for those who are making efforts to learn English, to become educated, modernized, globalized, and leave behind traditional Morocco, which they perceive to be attached to a western Orientalist construct of backwardness. Those who have grown up with an extraordinarily high level of economic and educational standing, I have noticed, may still view such traditions as based in superstition and imagination, but can also express appreciation for tradition in ways that middle and lower classes do not. They are also able to speak more freely about superstitions, jinn, magic and alternative

belief systems, because they either do not feel as subject to their influence, as constrained by them, or because they are not ashamed by tradition, seeing it simultaneously as an object of study and also as a marker of identity.

Jinn: Modernity Versus Tradition

A young, affluent Fassi woman, Zara, who distanced herself from traditional superstitions, stories of jinn, by proclaiming her freedom from them and disbelief, nonetheless explained to me, in English, the details of how to take care of the hammam so that the jinn would not invade the *brma*.

Early in the morning when they open the hammam the *tayyaba* knocks on the door. At the door they burn the incense (*bkhur*). On the first opening day [of the hammam] they bring Gnawa [musicians] and couscous. If they don't do this, *jnun* will try to damage the *brma*. They can get into the water.

Zara's ability to talk freely about such traditions and beliefs was a mark of her self-reported educational and economic distance from old Morocco. However, because of this distance, she never spoke derogatorily about such belief systems, and admitted to loving them and feeling a part of them. Although she wasn't constrained by these traditions, she admitted to tradition shaping her own identity, when she said "I like everything related to tradition. It reminds me of who I am."

The divide between tradition and modernity was further highlighted by Aziza, my sister-in-law, an educated schoolteacher in her fifties, who explained that jinn did not haunt the hammams in the neighborhoods *outside* of the medina.

In the medina there are haunted (*mskuna*) hammamat, but not here [in the more modern neighborhoods]. Where there are those dank, dark (*dlam*) little streets (*druba*). That's where it is haunted (*meskuna*). When someone dies there they have to force him out through the narrow streets, and then they could ... [be there].

She associates jinn with the oldest narrowest streets of the Fez medina, where, to her, death and darkness linger. She went on to say:

Derb al Horra¹⁰ there's something haunted (*maskuna*) there. A school there...people go there and then they come out crazy. There is a toilet there or something dark ... [thinking as though she were recalling a story she had heard] there is something haunted. The medina is bad. There are a lot of crazy people there. It is really bad. There are really scary places there.

Aziza had heard stories told about this area of the medina, and was recalling them as she spoke, but I could tell she was withholding details, possibly related to the hammam, so as not to scare me or reveal an aspect of medina life that I was better off not knowing. Her direct reference to Derb al Horra may have been a sideways comment referring back to my wedding, which had been many years earlier on that very street. I had insisted on holding it in the open courtyard of an old, traditional house in the old medina at the protest of almost every family member. Young couples usually wanted to rent a newly constructed house in the suburbs, a much more fashionable and convenient choice. A wedding in the medina on a small narrow street was evocative of the frightening, the poor, and the old, something I did not respect because I was, at that time, so easily seduced and enchanted by all things “traditional,” historic and crumbling.

Another story I had heard multiple times was directly related to the *brma* and the wedding ritual of a bride-to-be. This story had been told to me, but applied to two or three different hammams in the medina. One of these was the Mernissi Hammam, located very close to the neighborhood that Aziza said was haunted. This was a hammam she used to frequent with her mother and aunt Mina, who lived in the medina. The women of the family described the

¹⁰ A small street that connects the two main arteries of the medina, Talaa Seghira and Talaa Kabira. This happens to be the street where my wedding took place (also mentioned in Chapter 7)

Mernissi Hammam as beautiful, with traditional tile work (*zellij*) and mirrors, but it was small and dark. The story went that something horrible had happened there, so a hush of fear came over people whenever they mentioned this hammam. It had been recently shut down and finally, after skirting the issue many times, they told me that a young bride had died or disappeared there, but the implication was that something bad had happened to her, as a result of not attending to proper ritual tradition, and the hammam was the site of her demise. Her hair was found floating in the *brma*, but she was never found.

A similar version of this story was told to me by the young affluent Zara. Her story enforced the punishment of the bride for failing to make the correct offerings to appease the jinn. She said that her 100-year-old great aunt had told her this story:

In the old medina there is a hammam called Hammam l'Arusa (hammam of the bride) near Bab Khokha. And they say that once when a bride went there, she was kidnapped by jnun and only her hair was left in the water of the *brma*. Then they closed the hammam and nobody went there again. [My great-aunt and her son] swore she saw the hair of that 'arusa. You know when the boys are little they can go to the women's hammam, and he said he saw the hair too when he was a little boy. It was still in the water. She said they took the 'arusa because they may not have performed a ritual they should have. Maybe not enough incense (*bkhur*).

Curious to know the other obligatory rituals that this bride could have neglected, I asked Zara if her aunt had explained these to her.

Yes. She said that they take with them a block of sugar (*qalab-sukkar*). It is sugar in the shape of a cone, or like a pyramid. They take this, and they take umm...cookies (*ka 'abghzal, ghriba*) yes, all these things, and she said that the bride, when she takes off her clothes, she shouldn't put them back on again. She has to leave them in the hammam, and not to wear them again. She should wear new clothes [...] [The bridal party] brings with them milk, and orange blossom water or rose water (*ma zahr* or *ma wrd*). And she puts henna in her hair. And all her family goes with her, her cousins, you know, only girls, aunts, mother, grandmother, her neighbors. You know, friends, also...

All of these items, sugar, cookies, milk, flower infused waters, are similar to offerings brought to saint shrines as offerings when asking for blessing. In this case, they are offerings to the jinn to defend against their interference. Henna is known for its protective qualities. Often, hammam

workers use henna to stain their hands as a protection against pollution and jinn. It is known as a fortification for the hair, but also as protection against the evil eye and bad spirits, like a layer of extra protection - temporary amulet. At the 1001 Nights hammam, the *farnatachi*'s fingernails were hennaed (see Figure 5.3). I have also noticed hennaed fingernails and large henna circles stained on the palms of the hands of *tayyabat*. Following this ritual of gifts and reverence to the spirits of the hammam, Zara explained that the bride should pay respects to the *brma* by bowing to it.

Then, like Chinese people, [my aunt] said, she has to bow three times to the *brma* and she has to close her eyes when she is doing this. And [the *tayyabat* and wedding party] recite the prayer: *slaa, slaam...lah maah jah la'ali...* and she has to close her eyes. She doesn't make any effort. Her eyes close automatically.

These stories all reflect the centrality of the *brma* in the imagination and in usage. Bowing to the *brma*, the site of jinn, water, heat, activity, mimics pays homage to an altar, or symbolic divinity. Respect is paid to the *brma*, gifts are offered to the jinn to appease them, but these offerings are also shared with hammam workers as charitable gifts so this triangle of offerings and ritual giving are somewhat conflated. These stories also serve to show the importance of adhering to ritual protocol. I will return to this discussion of the bridal pre-wedding ritual and the prayers that accompany them in the next section Air, where I explore spirituality in the rooms of the hammam, along with its sounds, songs, and vibrations.

Various activities and offerings are associated with pleasing the jinn so that they will not interact with or inhabit your body. In the hammam these offerings seem to be centered around protecting the *brma*, the core and symbolic altar of the hammam. Similar prophylactic measures against the influence of jinn creep into everyday life as well. For example, boiling water is never poured down a drain for fear the jinn who live in the plumbing will be angry and retaliate by inhabiting the water-pouring wrongdoer. In homes, the sinks are almost sacred loci where special

attention and respect are paid, but the *brma* demands even more, with the threat of a jinn possession or outright disappearance in the face of disrespecting respect or tradition.

Disrespecting tradition and also being alone, naked or wet in dark and drafty spaces makes humans vulnerable to visits or inhabitation by jinn. Rahim, the middle-aged Arabic teacher continued (in English):

There are so many stories of the people of going to the *hammam*, being the first one there and hearing people bathing. Then when they go to *brma*, nobody was there. Nobody ever lays down near *brma* alone. Once, I was the last one to leave [the *hammam*] and it was scary. You feel like there is stuff going on around you. The silence and high ceilings - it is like being in a church. The *hammam* is bad [alone] because if you are naked you don't feel safe. You are exposed.

If I was ever the first one at the *hammam* when it opened, I would wait, sometimes 20 minutes, because I didn't want to go in by myself.

“Why?” I asked.

Because I was scared, people saw goats and this and that. People felt that someone was scrubbing their back, turned around and there was nobody. Even now, I wouldn't go to the *hammam* by myself. If there was only one other person inside, I would run away, because I would think it was a jinn. I would back up and I would be suspicious of whether it is a human being or a jinn. You have to say *bismillah* (in the name of God) before you enter the *hammam*.

Zara told me several other stories revealing the violent potential of jinn when humans are alone in the *hammam*, and when they rebel against rules they are given. The jinn, although associated with fire and the devil, seem also to be protectors of tradition and rules. This story seems to have been passed down as urban legend:

The first one happened in Hammam al-Qati, near al Gazira, in the old medina. It is near R'cif. She said that a woman [also] went early in the morning [...]. The *tayyaba* asked her not to enter, but she said, no I'm going to go in. When she entered she found another woman who was bathing near the *brma* and that woman asked her to scrub her back [...] When the woman was scrubbing her back, she noticed that her legs were like goat legs [and became scared]. She ran away and closed the door and left the *jinniya* inside the *hammam* and that *jinniya* is reported to have said, in Arabic: "*hakat-li, w hakit l-ha, wa 'and ji'af, hrbaat liya*" (She scrubbed me, and I scrubbed her back, and when I tried to strangle her she ran away from me.) The *jinniya* said this, the female of jinn. Now that *hammam* is well known as “Ji'af” - Hammam Ji'af, because of that story.

Zara's 100-year-old aunt claimed to have seen the following and recounted the story to her. Here the jinn functioned to reign in greedy behavior. The story takes place in a hammam near R'cif that I had been shown from the outside, described as one of the oldest and most beloved in the medina. Later, I found that it was the same one referred to, affectionately, in Ben Jelloun's novel *About My Mother* (2016). It was closed at the time I visited, and I had wondered about it, so I was happy to have been given a story with which to paint a mental picture of the inside. Zara told me this story in English:

In Hammam Mukhfiya, it is in another place in the old medina... I don't know where exactly it is in the medina. I couldn't hear her well, my aunt, and she doesn't hear well, she is 100 years old. She told me she was sitting next to a woman, and she was thirsty. She gave the woman a cup and told the daughter of this woman to go get her some cold water from outside the hammam. When the little daughter went to get the water, she found some people who were jnun and they took that cup, and they put in some Louis¹¹, we call them Louis, it means gold, gold coins.

When that little daughter brought the gold to her mother, the mother asked her again to get more gold. She went a second time, and came back. And the third time when she was going, my great aunt told the mother to stop telling her to go out [to get coins]. They [the jnun] might do something bad to her. The mother said, no, no, they give us gold, I can send her a third time. But when she went the third time, the jnun took the girl and the pot, and she never came back. The mother started crying.

I asked Zara if her aunt had really seen this, and she said,

“Yes, she was sitting next to the woman.”

“Do they think it was jnun who really took the girl?” I asked.

“Certainly. Who else could give her gold but jnun? I don't think someone can give gold to a small girl.” Zara didn't doubt that the coins had really come from jnun. From what I could tell, she believed whole-heartedly in this story, set deep in the Fez medina, so many years ago. Her

¹¹ "Louis" refers to the French Louis d'or coins that circulated during the French protectorate 1912-1956. They were valuable and collected by Moroccans and according to urban lore, worn as jewelry.

aunt had been thirsty for a cold drink of water while sitting in a hot room of the Mukhfiya hammam.

Water and Fez

Old Fez was built in a valley. Water flowed into the valley from the Middle Atlas mountain foothills. Under the ground is a network of natural water sources, or *'ayns*, springs. A river runs through the city, and colorful tiled public wall fountains are still dispersed throughout, used on a daily basis by residents to wash dishes, fill water bottles, or wash hands. Almost every neighborhood has a public fountain, since some homes do not have running water inside. Many of the older opulent homes have large open central courtyards with fountains, although few of these fountains still function. Some sumptuous large residences and palaces have been restored and converted into boutique hotels, where tourists can enjoy the fountains and gardens as they once were in 13th century golden age of Fez.



Figure 5.7 Courtyard Fountain, Riad L'aroussa

Some of the smaller (and larger) older houses the heart of the city, the ones over 500 years old, have water wells on the ground floor from which spring water was once drawn. I have seen many of these. My mother-in-law's sister lived in the medina in an ancient crumbling house that emitted a tinge of eeriness, and we often visited her. One of my sister-in-laws described her well:

They have a well in their living room. The water is really cold - you submerge a bottle of soda (*munada*) or a watermelon (*dllah*) and then it comes out really cold, like the refrigerator. It isn't haunted. One day I was sitting there, after tea-time (*casse croute*), and [Mina] said, move over a little, and she moved the table and opened a door in the floor and started pulling out water! The doctor came and tested the water, and said it was fine. They don't drink it though; they just use it to wash things...

Families in the medina no longer drink this water since it is no longer trusted as a drinking source. French sources and Leo Africanus claim that spring water –the well water in Fez homes--was sweet tasting, with special healing properties. Sacred springs in nearby Sidi Harazem (Saint Harazem) are popular destinations and are the site of hammams and spas specifically for wellness treatments. Many families make regular pilgrimages to these springs to treat their health issues and to relax. Sidi Harazem is also a brand of bottled water, bottled at the source of the springs.



Figure 5.8 Public fountain across from my house, Fez Medina

Even today, in the old *medina* of Fez, as it was hundreds of years ago, for those who do not have well access or a fresh running water source in their homes, outdoor public fountains and spigots located in each neighborhood provide clean water for hundreds of residents. Residents gather to fetch water in big orange plastic jugs. Sometimes boys or girls play near the fountains

and drink the water. Conversation and commotion ensue at these water stops. Traditionally, water was either gathered from fountains outside of the home or in buckets from the well in the floor of the home. Homes did not have showers or baths or any sort of bathing facilities unless the house was a mansion or palace.



Figure 5.9 View of the Fez Medina

When I first arrived in Fez to study Arabic in the mid 1990s, I stayed with a family in a “homestay” situation. It was a fairly large house in the new city, the part of town built by the French protectorate in the early 20th century. Even though we were in the city center, in an affluent neighborhood, the house I lived in had no hot water, and the available shower was a fixture directly above the squat toilet. Cafes and restaurants didn’t have hot water or western toilets.

During my first extended stay in Morocco in the mid 1990s I was surprised that public bathrooms had no hot running water. It was also rare to find hot running water in a private home. I couldn't understand how dishes ever got clean, or how people showered. It was summer, and in the 90s or even 100 degrees nearly every day. I took cold showers in my homestay bathroom. The showerhead was centered directly over hole in the ground – the standard squat toilet. A cement plug sat in the hole when not in use, so you could stand on either side of the plug and rinse off. Uncomfortable, but to me, at the time, it was not a huge inconvenience. I was flexible, adaptable, willing to rough it, and used to camping. I had a sink outside my room, out on the rooftop balcony. This was usually where the clothes were washed. The other sink was in the kitchen. The bathroom itself did not have a sink, but just the showerhead and a cold-water spigot next to the squat toilet. None of the water was hot.

In the summer, this isn't so much of a problem, but in the winter, it is unbearable to wash in cold water. Aside from the discomfort, superstitions surrounding bathing in cold conditions abound. The cold can “hit” you and you can become sick or haunted by jinn. In the hammam, hot water is plentiful. Rooms are filled with steamy warmth, so this is the only safe and comfortable site for ritual purification to ready the body and mind for prayer.

Ṭahara: Purification of Body and Spirit

In Fez, on afternoon, I formally sat down with my brother-in-law, Hicham, a slim man in his mid-forties. He was an unmarried elementary school teacher, at the time, a member of the professional handball team in Fez, and an upstanding citizen and religiously adherent man. He always slaughtered the lamb himself for the holiday of the sacrifice, ‘Aid l-Kbir, prayed five times a day, and went to mosque every Friday.

I asked him about the hammam. He immediately launched into, what for him, was central to an understanding of its function. He told me that in Morocco, as in the rest of the Muslim world, “cleanliness” or *tahara* is mandatory, and it is not only cleanliness of the body (*jased*), but of the spirit (*ruh*). According to the Qur’an there are two main ablutions or *wuḍu’*: the big ablution and the small ablution. The big ablution, *wuḍu’ kbir*, is done after being with a woman sexually, or after a woman, herself, finishes her period. The *wuḍu’ sghir*, he told me, is also something done after converting to Islam. He explained that in Morocco, foreigners cannot go to mosques because they haven't done big *wuḍu’*. You cannot touch the Qur’an, or read the Qur’an unless you have done *wuḍu*. So there is a big connection between Islam and bathing.

He said:

A shower isn't enough to satisfy the big *wuḍu’* - there are more steps too. At the end of the shower, you do small wudu, say bismillah, wash, take water and wash your hands three times, wash your mouth out with your fingers, thumbs and pointer fingers. Then you wash your teeth three times and then your nose, inhaling water into your nose and then blowing out three times. Then wash your face three times, then your forearms three times, then put water on your face again from the right to the left. You must always move from right to left. If your hair is long, put your fingers in and scratch around, then return back to the face, just one time. Wash your ears with your fingers – wash the inside and the outside and the back of the ear once. In the summer you can do this twice if you want.

If you are under the shower, you need to wash the right side of the body...under the shower, just half of the body with your hand. Don't use soap – just water. Wash under the arm, down to the toes, and then all of the foot. Then do the left side of your body. Then wash your head and scratch your hair. Wash your back and your feet. Always the right foot first, then the left foot. For both big and little wudu, you need to wash your ankles, elbows and wrists. At this point you must ask for forgiveness (*tuwabiin*) and say: *ashahadu ‘an la illah illa allah w Mohammed rsul Allah, inni men ‘ayad-k l-tuwabiin w l-muṭaherin*.

If you do this, Allah will reward you. At this point you are clean in both body and spirit. You are relaxed. But if you have spiritual impurity due to sexual activity (*jenabah*) everything stops.

The *wudu* is done in the *hammam* also because of privacy issues. If you sleep with (have sex) your wife, you have to do *wudu* afterwards. Maybe there is no place in the house to do this, or you don't want to wake the others to take a shower, or it is easier in the cold weather to go to the *hammam*. Or if there is no shower at home, you have to go to the *hammam*.

Hicham's narrative reveals the precision and specificity of the process of achieving cleanliness, as prescribed by religion. He stresses the connection between bathing, ritual, and religion. He also reveals that not everyone has a place to bathe – especially in the privacy of their home, which for most is either for reasons of size, or for the lack of bathrooms as we experience them in the Western world. In Morocco, there are literally “water rooms” or “*bayt al-ma*” in homes, where a hole in the ground serves as a toilet. There may be a small spigot for rinsing privates. There is usually no sink, and certainly no space for showering, except for the awkward, rarely-used showerheads that often lurked above squat toilets. For me, the phrase that stands out as most significant however is: “it is easier in cold weather to go to the *hammam*.” This is because there is no central heating or hot water in most homes in Fez. Hicham was adamant, however, that the *hammam* was central to spiritual purification in the lives of Moroccans, and as evidence, he enumerated all the ways that *hammams* were celebrated: *melhun* songs, poetry, and palaces with the most beautiful *hammams*.

Water=> Air

As we finish our tour of the hottest room of the *hammam*, with its extreme heat, its jinn, its *brma* as a centerpiece and altar, its importance in ritual purification of body and mind, we move on to the next chambers, for rest and relaxation in the middle and cold rooms, where aspects of Air will be investigated: spirituality, breath, echoes, songs and sounds.

III – AIR

But he fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the facilities of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): Little thanks do ye give! Surah 32:9 Al Sadjah (The Prostration)



Figure 5.1 Domed hammam ceiling

Following the flow of water and the purification of body in the hot room of the hammam, we move now into the middle and cooler rooms. These are spaces for scrubbing and rinsing with water, but they are also spaces filled with repose, echoes, steam, light, songs, and drafts. The attention in this section is towards the Air and what fills it, and the spirit and breath of the hammam, its sounds and vibrations. In this section I will explore the *hammam* as a spiritual site of pilgrimage and purification, and describe the ways in which it touches on the spiritual.

As a bride in my own pre-wedding liminal hammam experience, years before, I was profoundly moved, through the stimulation of all of my senses, but in particular through the vibrations that traveled through me during the ritual itself.

Sirens and Vibrations: Marriage

As mentioned in previous discussions, brides are brought to the hammam the day before the wedding ceremony to be purified and readied for the transition from virgin to bride to wife. Historically, the consummation of a Moroccan marriage was made public the night of the wedding by exhibiting the undergarments of the bride, and many rituals and preparations lead up to this momentous occasion. Every so often, sitting in the coolest room of the hammam one hears the ululations of women coming from the inner rooms, where the *‘arusa*, or bride, sits on a low stool in a small alcove. Next to her is often a burning candle. Two *tayyabat* scrub her and then hold her by either arm, one on each side, and walk her out backwards, singing very loudly “*sla wa slam, ...*”. The song reverberates throughout the hammam as an announcement and a prayer. Other women often join in with high-pitched ululations, filling the space with a siren-like celebratory alarm.

When it was my turn, my purification day, I, also, was scrubbed in the cold room, from head to toe, rinsed, then led by two *tayyabat*, one on each arm to the hottest room to face the

brma, as they chanted loudly and shrilly, next to my ears. I stood in front of the *brma* through one round of the song, then was led to the *qant d- 'arusa*, the small dark alcove built especially for this purpose, where I was pushed face first, inside to face the corner. One *tayyaba* turned my head forcibly so my chin hovered over my right shoulder, then turned it to the other side, to face the other as they sang to the angel and devil that reside above each, as I looked on, reconciling with each. I was scared, and it was dark, and hot. The song was coming at me from either side, loudly from the vocal chords of each *tayyaba*. My ears rang. I felt a little dizzy from the heat and steam. I was naked (aside from my panties) and visible to anyone in this inner room of the hammam. As they walked me backwards (a protective measure) to my wedding party, I felt sufficiently shaken up and in-vibrated.

(Bride's) Celebratory Prayer Song

*Sla w slam 'ala rassul Allah
la jayh illa jah sid-na Mohammed
Allah mah jah la'ali
{zaghayt lallallallallala}*

Translation:

Prayers and peace be upon the messenger of Allah
There is nothing greater than our Prophet Mohammed
Allah has the highest power
{Ululations}

This prayer, associated with wedding ritual in the hammam, is also recited on other occasions by women to express happiness or in celebration of a graduation, good grades, or other accomplishments. Zara, who had told me so many of her aunt's stories of jinn explained to me that only women sing this song. She said, "Mohammed is our prophet, and God told us we have to pray for him all the time. We get credits for good deeds (*hassanat*) when we pray for him...if we do this prayer."



Figure 5.2 Hay Agadir Hammam: *brma* (left) and *qant d-'arusa* (right)

Somehow, I had not expected to be treated like a Moroccan bride, as I was clearly a foreigner, but they had put me through the ritual like any other. Most memorable was submitting completely to the two women on either arm, to their manipulation of my body, pushing and pulling me backwards (not being able to see) over wet slippery floors, turning my head back and forth while stuffed in a dark corner, and even more powerful was my submission to the sounds they produced as we moved.

Screams and Echoes

Children will often play with sound and echoes, screaming in the hammam to hear the sounds. In a spontaneous description of the memory of the sounds of the hammam, Rahim described a memory from his youth. After smoking hashish, which is apparently commonplace among young men, the echoes have a calming effect:

A lot of people go to hammam when they are stoned... They close their eyes and they "sleep" when they are stoned... The echoes in the hammam makes them higher. There is an echo if you go

to the hammam, there are three rooms, and one with the water. Birma. And then when you go, there is the sound of the water and the steam *bkhar*, and then the people talking. Some people scream so they can hear the echo, like in the mountains, and we used to do this when we were kids. But I think the echoes makes the people more stoned. I think it is a good feeling. Especially in the wintertime, you lie down and then when you leave the hammam you eat tangerines.

Rahim talks more generally about the sound and feeling of the hammam in relation to a church.

As a Muslim, he had not been to a church until he was an adult so earlier in life did not have this point of reference. Interestingly, he describes the hammam as a similarly sacred space as a church, although not as sacred as a Mosque:

The *Hammam* has a different sound. It's like a church with people naked in it. After I saw a church ...it has a similar high ceiling. Silence. Holiness. High ceilings. The light. Architecturally. Like a Coptic church – (*Aqbat*). The steam - it is like the incense in the Orthodox Church. “What about the mosque?” I asked.

You can't compare the mosque to the *hammam*. The Mosque is a true feeling. The mosque is simple. There are carpets. You don't see carpets and chandeliers in the *hammam*. Even the light in the church is similar to the light in the *hammam*. The church for me isn't serious. The church is beautiful, but just a space.

Rahim's descriptions suggest both a sacred silence and a cacophony in the vibrations of the hammam. His tone suggests both the sinister and the sacred. He suggests that it is church-like but not sacred because churches aren't serious spaces to him. He compares the incense of the church to the steam in the hammam, as though this incense mysterious. His reference to rejoicing when the steam billows up from the *brma* indicates that water seems like an ecstatic celebration, but he adds that it is like alchemy or magic.

The wetness in the hammam prevents the laying of carpet or other indoor or religious elements, although everyone brings a plastic mat or a stool to sit on. The plastic mats are the size, shape and pattern of the prayer rugs most Muslims use in Morocco for their daily prayers at home or in the mosque. This small, human scale rug provides a barrier between the polluted ground and the human body. Although the hammam has many of the sacred elements that a church or mosque might (protective carpets, incense and steam, sacred quiet and echoes,

exhilaration and exaltation (in the case of the hammam - at the heat or release of water) Rahim's description of the *hammam* strips it of some of the civilizing elements, such as chandeliers and carpets. For whatever reason, it is a lesser space for him than the mosque, and is thus more formidable and potentially polluting. He elevates the familiar mosque space above the church. The church, he says, isn't "serious." Although there are a number of Christian churches in Fez, Rahim explained that he had only entered the Christian church a few times in his life because entry is forbidden for Muslims in Morocco. He describes the feeling of the church spaces as unsettling rather than relaxing, but the hammam as a deeply relaxing experience.

Holy Pilgrimage

In Morocco, there is a long history of visiting local saint shrines. Aside from the more obvious religious associations between cleanliness and purity, the hammam has some similarities to local saint shrines. Some Moroccans make yearly or more frequent visits to particular shrines, making offerings and saying prayers. The architectural structure or marker, sometimes a burial site, is dedicated to a holy man or woman, and usually the name of the site refers both to the structure and the person, who was a teacher or leader in a religious *zaouia* (brotherhood) and are associated with a *tariqah* (path or way).

Some Moroccans often make annual pilgrimages to particular shrines in their local traditions, or family tradition, and bring offerings to the *sayyad*. Similarly, women, particularly those in liminal states (in the week before a marriage ceremony, after giving birth, after the death of a husband), bring offerings to the hammam – or to the *sayyad* of the hammam. Saint shrines are controversial, as they are often considered holdovers and remnants from local religious traditions that predate Islam. These practices include offerings of animal sacrifices, food, incense, and candles (Westermarck, 1926).

Architecturally, the hammam mirrors some saint shrines, in so much as they are both partially domed structures that mark the memory of a man or woman and are the sites of offerings and visits from the community. However, the architectural comparison stops there, since the shrines are often open portico structures, perched on a hill. Because of their religious significance, these shrines, often called *marabouts* (and originating from the Arabic *mrabet*, have become holy sites believed to hold the *baraka*, of the saint. *Baraka* is considered a healing, positive energy that can be transferred by physical touch and proximity. Pilgrims visit these sites for prayer, reflection, or to acquire some of this *baraka*. The *sayyad* and structure imparts positive energy and also absorbs the illnesses of the community into the shrine and/or body through physical touch and close association, and even in some reported cases, by walking in his footprints or swallowing his saliva (Amster, 2013, p. 69).

Many of the older hammams in the old city of Fez are associated with a *sayyad*, or saint who is considered a direct descendent of the prophet. In the Islamic tradition, blood lineage is important to trace direct descent from the prophet Mohammed. Even in Fez, many families boast of their direct line to the Prophet. In this way, the *hammam* itself becomes a site of pilgrimage to appease and pay homage to a saint. Indeed, one common, although vanishing tradition is to bring offerings to the *sayyad* before weddings, after giving birth, and at other liminal or transitional life junctures.

Indeed, many of the older hammam in Fez are named after holy men or women, and these holy men or women are recognized and even venerated in the title of the hammam itself with the title “*sidi*¹²” or “*moulay*¹³” for men, and “*lalla*” for women. *Sidi* is an abbreviated version of the

¹³ *Moulay* is usually applied to descendants of the Prophet, but can be used as a polite form of address for any respected or elderly person.

more formal Modern Standard Arabic word *sayyid*, which is also commonly used in Moroccan Arabic. One of my primary research sites in the old medina of Fez was Hammam Sidi Azzouz (Hammam of Saint Azzouz). Its proximity to Bab Boujeloud, one of the main gates of the medina, indicated to me that it was probably not the oldest of the hammams, which would have been closer to the core retail center. However, according to a *tayyaba* who has worked in this hammam for over forty years, this place dated back to “the beginnings.” Of the many traditional hammams still operational within the Fez Medina, many have names that indicate a patron saint, for example, Hammam Moulay Idriss, and Hammam Sidi Ahmed Chaoui (Raftani and Radoine, 2008, p.61). The role of these patrons most closely approximates patron saint, because quasi-religious offerings are made to the *sidi* of the hammam on appropriate occasions. Also implicit within this idea of spirit is the divine spirit, Allah, since the hammam is a place to cleanse and perform the major ablutions in preparation for prayer and spiritual union with the divine. Last but not least, the living human spirits that enter the hammam on a weekly basis are interacting both with these other metaphysical, invisible spirit energies, as well as renewing, recharging and cleansing their own spirits.

Amira, the *tayyaba* and the woman who I became closest with at Sidi Azzouz, described the tradition and ceremony surrounding new mothers when they return to the hammam after childbirth. The new mother, still in a state of recovery and vulnerability, gives offerings to the *sayyad* directly, although they are distributed between the hammam workers. This work is done in service of the social body, and is as lowly as can be, but becomes closely associated with spiritual goodness and thereby elevates the laborer to a saintly status. These offerings transfer

*baraka*¹⁴, social and spiritual capital. Thus, the hammam workers are given offerings as representatives in association and in the service of the Sidi.

Amira describes the process of the *nafisa*'s (new mother) offering as follows:

Kat-ji-na nafisa, kay-jib-u siniya, fi-ha munada, w hia 'alash qadat. Hia bezaf hea 'aqal...al muhem, kan-jib-u swab, 'awd tani, kan-dakhl-u siniya b-tatqil, zagharit, (pause) katsha'al sham'iat l-had l-sayyad

Translation: The *nafisa*¹⁵ comes [to us, to the hammam] and she (they) brings a tray with multiple soda bottles and whatever else she can afford. If it's a lot or a little, it doesn't matter, most importantly, we bring offerings as a polite gesture, again, we bring in the tray, with *tatqil*¹⁶, ululations¹⁷, (pause) and then she (the *nafisa*) lights the candles for the *sayyad* (for the hammam's saint – as an offering).

Her direct reference to the “*sayyad*” was significant, implying the veneration of a saint outside of the prescribed Muslim traditions – a signal of a syncretic amalgam of unorthodox, pre-

¹⁴ *Baraka* is a healing, positive energy transferred through touch, often from one person to another. A saint or holy person is said to have *baraka*. Touching places or objects associated with a saint can transfer *baraka* from the object to the person.

¹⁵ *Nafisa* refers to a woman in the three months following childbirth. Women in this stage of life are considered more fragile and vulnerable, or “precious” as was explained to me. A pregnant woman (*hamala*) or a woman in her first three months of mourning (*armala*) are considered to be in this same vulnerable state.

¹⁶ *Tatqil* refers to the chant in praise of the prophet Mohammed: *Allahoma sali 'alayk ya rasul allah* meaning peace be upon the prophet Mohammed

¹⁷ *Zagharit* are ululations are the high pitched and loud female vocalizations made by moving the tongue and uvula quickly back and forth. Ululations are commonly made by women on happy and transitional or liminal occasions such as weddings, henna parties, circumcisions, and engagements.

Islamic saint worship. The offering honors and appeases the saint, and asks for his protection in a vulnerable state of life. Offerings are then, in practice, shared with the hammam workers, but symbolically they are offered to the spirit of the sayyad and ultimately to the hammam itself.

Other Airs: The Linguistic Dimension

Thus far I have examined sounds, saints and spirituality as aspects of Air. Investigating the aspect of “Air” in the hammam and in Moroccan culture, more broadly, gives insight to how people negotiate the divide between the physical and the metaphysical; Air itself is a substance betwixt and between, crossing the divide between visible and invisible. The spaces of the hammam and its various “airs” evoke the sublime and sacred, but also the base and profane aspects of the spirit world and spirituality.

Multiple words in Arabic evoke “air” in daily conversation. These also appear in the Qur’an and they mediate the physical and metaphysical world by virtue of their layered meaning. Many of the “air” words connect to a more profound spiritual or internal self. This discussion provides an expansion on the conceptual and spiritual significance of air, and traces the strong linguistic and poetic relationship between the words for air, breath, spirit, wind, identity, and self in Arabic.

***Nafas* - Breath**

Nafas in daily usage means breath, or breathing. *Nafs*, a closely related word and derived from the same root letters, relates to the idea of the self, psyche, identity, human individual, selfish desire. One can correlate this word with the Freudian definition of “ego”; *nafs* relates to the carnal physical body with its desires and actions, integrated by the mitigated, checked, trained, and civilized moral being. Inspired breath, breathing and identity are closely related concepts, and in my own experience of the *hammam*, breathing in the steamy humidity was often

difficult – making me more aware of my own breath, my physicality and my self. “Traditional Sufi healing methods [to extract jinn] include *azima* (blowing one’s breath while one hand rests on the patient’s head),” (Lim, 2015, p. 22).

***Rih*: Wind**

Rih (sing.; *riyah*, pl. in Modern Standard Arabic or *ruwah* in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic) in daily usage means strong wind. *Rih* is closely related to the word *ruh*, which translates to divine spirit, and/or soul, and is derived from the same root letters. *Ruh* relates more closely to an external divine spirit that can inspire and be breathed into human beings – and it could potentially be argued that this spirit relates to the Freudian “super ego,” which is responsible for monitoring moral behavior and establishing the ideal self (which could be argued to be modeled after the prophet Mohammed). Crapanzano writes that the jnun function like “extrapolated superegos” – externalized consciences with a “harsh sense of justice,” because they are so relentlessly punishing to bodies and minds of those they inhabit (1980, p. 18).

In the humoric literature, the Arabic translation for Aristotle’s element “air” is *rih* (connoting an idea of movement or wind). In pre-Islamic poetry, the closely related word, *ruh*, refers to breath or wind. After the Qur’anic revelation, this word is used in the Qur’an and became more closely associated with the notion of a divine spirit, Allah. It is said that Muhammed was divinely inspired by the breath of Allah, or the *ruh* was blown into him to inspire the Qur’an (Mateo, p. 34-36). Thus, a sense of being made to live, inspired and brought to spiritual life, literally breathed into by a divine wind, imbues wind, air, and breath with a life-giving and spiritual significance within this tradition. It is not a stretch to suggest that one of the feelings people come away from the hammam with, is the sense of being refreshed, newly inspired with spirit.

Certain hadith emphasize the association between wind and spirit. Spirit is from the same “genus” as wind. According to the hadith collection of Al-Shaykh Al-Saduq, a tenth century Shi’a scholar from present day Iran,

I asked Aba Ja’far (al-Baqir) [a] about the saying of Allah, Mighty and Exalted, "and breathed into him of My spirit" [15:29] - How was this breathing? He replied: Indeed the spirit moves like the wind. We name it (spirit) 'Rooh' because its name is derived from 'Reeh' (wind). This derivative is selected because the spirits are of the same genus of the Reeh (wind).

In daily life, Moroccans refer to the power and potency of winds. They are not always positive and holy spirits; winds can carry and inspire negative outcomes. In the many years I have spent in Morocco, I became increasingly aware of the dangers that might be hidden in the nexus of humans and winds, that is, what might happen if humans are exposed to these airs, cross breezes, fans or air conditioners. Such warnings occurred often and punctuated casual conversations.

All this to say, the winds and airs enter daily discourse in Morocco not only in religious discourse, but also in conversations in daily life. It is common in Morocco to hear “*‘andi ruwah*” – “I have the airs/winds” when someone has a cold or illness. Or, if someone has gotten sick, it is attributed to cold entering the body: “*drb-ni l-brd*” – I was hit by the cold (implying it forcefully blew in somehow). In my research, I came across these colloquialisms in Fez: *khrijat ruh-u* (the soul – last breath (wind) left him) = he died; *drb-ni l-hawa* (the air hit me = I need time to contemplate and reconsider something). *Ruwah*, winds are often a euphemism for the jinn (Mateo Dieste 2013; Kapchan, 2007, p. 239), which are associated with wind and water and are, according to the Qur’an, made from smokeless fire (Qur’an, 72: 1-19). Indeed, according to one of my interlocutors, a common way to express jinn possession is “*f-ya r-ruwah*” (literally: in me are the winds). This is identical to the way one would indicate that they have the common cold.

Cold, or wind, or jinn are believed to be the cause of the common cold and other ailments. Often a treatment is related to the humoric belief system, so treatment to balance the heat or cold in the body is evaluated and applied, as needed. Zara, my young interlocutor in Fez, doesn't believe many traditional superstitions surrounding the influence of cold and wind. I ask her why she is so different. She thinks and then thoughtfully says,

You know, I think this is about education. For example, me and my cousins, they do like hot things just like my father and grandmother and aunts, because when they were young they used to care a lot about being covered, about covering everything from cold and wind.

Thus she associates a preference on the part of her family for hot things and the need to be covered from cold and wind. Hot is the antidote for cold and wind. But then she explains that her sophisticated mother did not believe in these ideas:

But when I was young, my mother set me free from all this. I didn't used to put on all these clothes [to cover from the wind and cold]. Now I can go out with my hair wet. Oh, but most people say you are going to be sick, but I never get sick, because I am used to this.

What she said surprised me at the time because I had never heard anyone deny these beliefs. Most people are extremely careful about not exposing wet hair out in the open air. If I ever went outside with wet hair, people would jump all over me to cover up. As Najdi said in stanza eight of his hammam poem (see Appendix), the first stanza of which opens Chapter 1:

The attendant goes out and brings the visitor's clothes
So the winds from outside do not penetrate and haunt him

A lack of protection from the elements: wind, wet, dark, might put humans at risk for a bodily invasion of a bad spirit. The poem continues:

If she exits the hammam at night
Thieves and danger are attracted to her

“Danger” refers not only to rabble-rousers, thieves and foul play, but the dangers of the dark night. Having any sort of transformation made to the body, the hair, whether a haircut, a hair

wash, or beautification: makeup, new clothes, attracts the attention of danger, of envy, of evil spirits invading the body. Thus, walking through the night, freshly washed, shaven, perfumed and purified, beautiful through the healthy flush of the skin, and still damp from the water, women (and men) are more vulnerable to spirits.

Spirit: Renewed and Regulated

Air is related to the heart in the Greek humoric tradition, and the heart is the source of all the bodily spirits. Avicenna's eleventh century *Canon of Medicine* is founded on Aristotelian cosmology whereby the components of the cosmos and the body consist of the four elements earth, water, fire, and air, which mutually influence the body fluids, or humors. Tracing the importance of heat and cold as instruments of balance and health in the hammam, Avicenna suggests that "one must not forget that the most fundamental agents of the formation of the humours are heat and cold" (as quoted in Gruner, 1973, p. 90) He even includes a section on the hammam and the effects of different temperatures and kinds of baths (Gruner, 1973, p. 232).

He draws a relationship between the purity of the mind and the body: he explains the four types of spirits associated with the body and the humors, and implies that these spirits are in constant flux between a state of purity of the soul, *ruh*, and the impurity of the body, or the *nafs*.

One is brutal spirit residing in the heart and it is the origin of all spirits. Another ... is sensual spirit residing in the brain. The third ... is natural spirit residing in the liver. The fourth is generative – i.e. procreative – spirits residing in the gonads. These four spirits go between the soul of absolute purity and the body of absolute impurity (quoted in Shoja, et al, 2009, p. 300).

The hammam offers a physical and social location for this reordering and recalibration of these spirits, thus has spiritual significance on multiple levels. First, it is a place to become ritually cleansed in preparation for prayer to Allah. Beyond this most obvious purpose of spiritual cleansing, I posit that the hammam is a physical location for the temporary reregulation and

balancing of spirits and humors. The air is a potentially vehicle for carrying either good or evil, holy spirit or jinn. The human psyches/selves and internal desires (*nafs*, sing; *nufus*, pl.) are sorted and correctly ordered by right behaviors and cleansing, and re-entering and co-mingling with the social body (bodies) – as a reminder of social order and moral obligations and expectations. The hammam appears to be a particularly attractive and populated house for these spirits and winds (*riḥ*, *ruh*), especially the jinn, but also the spirit of the *sayyads*.

Thus, there is also tension in the hammam between *nafs* (the physical body, its spirit and desires) and *ruh* (a divine or holy spirit, baraka), and between servant (human bathers, the laborers) and higher power (patron, patron saint, Allah). The jinn figure into this equation as well, as invisible players in the air, but also as part and parcel of the water, and fire. They are good and bad, and must be pacified and given offerings such as candles or incense, just as the *sayyad* of the hammam are also given offerings, in exchange for protection or healing. I have seen candles burned next to brides in the hammam, as a protective measure, but the incense is burned outside the door to the hammam before opening the rooms to bathers.

Hit With Cold Air

This brings us to the threshold between the hot steamy hammam rooms and the changing room where the contrast in air temperature is severe. Opening up the big door to exit the coolest of the hot rooms of the hammam, I stepped through and was struck immediately by a rush of cold air. Walking just a few feet across the floor to grab my one thin towel from the hook was a long walk in the coolness without my clothes. It occurred to me that the drastic temperature differential must be considered dangerous, although nobody had ever warned me about the exit from the hammam to the changing rooms. In some hammams, towels were stored away in lockers or storage areas. This always necessitated a stop at the *glsa*'s counter so she could grab

my bag, which I then dug through, as quickly as possible, to find a towel and fresh clothing to covered up my goose bumps and my exposed body from the cool drafts and the eyes upon me. Women cooled down, reclined and lounged in the changing rooms, wrapped in multiple layers of towels and clothing.

Air=>Earth

In the next section, Earth, the focus will shift to the earthly materiality of the body and the objects associated with the middle and cooler room of the hammam, the changing room, and the hammam in general – a focus on the stuff of the temporary, rather than the eternal.

IV – EARTH

And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud. Al-Hijr 15:26



Figure 5.3 Wood stacked for the *farnatchi*, Hammam Ouedi Fez, near my family's neighborhood

Earth is about those things close to the ground: dirt, objects, food, and the body. Here, at the entry to the hammam, incense, created from wood and resin, is burned to placate the jinn. We have followed the flow, from fire, heat, workers, jinn, water, sounds, spirituality, steam, and now we exit the hot rooms of the hammam into the changing room and entry of the hammam, back to materiality, grittiness, and substance: the fourth element, Earth.

Purification: Incense and Salt

One of the first traditions described to me by Zara, the young Fassi, was the lighting of incense to keep the jinn at bay in the hammam. She explained that the *ṭayyaba* first knocked on the door of the hammam rooms to inform the jinn of her presence, then she lit various incense including *l'ud*, a special wood resin imported from Saudi Arabia, which when burned emits a deep, spicy smoky aroma reminiscent of patchouli; *serghina*, a mixture of tiny yellow, green and red wood-like chips; and *shiba*, sandarac gum resin – from a Cyprus-like tree. Le Tourneau (1954) mentions this tradition as well.

The baths were not only the site of the big ablutions, but also one of the predatory places of the jinn, which gave rise to superstitions outside of strict orthodox Islamic belief. Arriving early and taking one's bath alone was considered an act of courage. To console the jinn it was important to burn incense and light a candle (p. 250).¹⁸

Incense is often burned in homes at important ceremonies, holidays, or transitional life events to protect and purify. I was told that on the occasion of a death, a return from the Haj (the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca), or after the birth of a baby, *l'ud* is burned to keep away the jinn and the 'ain, evil eye. The day before Ramadan begins is also an important time to burn *l'ud* and *serghina* (Figure 5.13) to avert the jinn in the transition from the normal daily routines to the holy month of fasting. Lailat al-Qadr is considered one of the holiest nights of Ramadan. It marks the night when the angel Gabriel first revealed the Qur'an to Mohammed, and angels are said to descend from heaven but *shaytan* and jinn are "locked out." Angels will only inhabit spaces that are free of contamination, so purifying the space with incense is important. This is also the night when prayers are more effective and valuable, and are most likely to be answered since the gates of heaven are open. Prepubescent girls are still too young to fast during Ramadan,

¹⁸ My translation, from the French

but are allowed to try out a partial or full fast on the day leading up to Lailat al Qadr. They celebrate this taste of adulthood by having their hands decorated with henna, eating special sweets, and dressing in fine new clothing. The night is associated with transitions, prayers and wishes, the supernatural, angels and magic. Some claim that Islam condemns belief in the supernatural; however, this evening is still often associated with women's magical spells and sorcery, another liminal domain.

Some business enterprises in the medina also burn *l'ud*. They walk the plumes of smoke around to each corner of the store, with the intention of keeping the evil eye at bay, and encouraging abundance and prosperity. So, incense plays an important role at liminal life junctures, transitional holidays, and in corners and spaces where jinn or other outside influences can affect people.



Figure 5.4 Serghina incense

In my family's home in Hay Agadir, Fez, in the main room, the salon, we were all sitting in a circle on the banquet couches that line all four walls of the room. Sometimes the family just

sat silently, sometimes just worked silently, and sometimes talked loudly. On the low round table in front of us lay the small paper cones filled with incense I had purchased earlier that day from a candle and incense shop in the medina. Only a few smooth, tiny pieces of *l'ud* filled the first packet, since it was so expensive, along with a larger paper packet of *serghina*, and another small cone of *shiba*. I liked the way bulk items were often wrapped in recycled school notebook paper with notes or mathematical calculations, decorating the inside and outside of whatever was bought. In colder weather, I frequently bought hot candied peanuts, sold by weight, from street vendors. A couple of dirhams would buy me a substantial snack wrapped in a small piece of graph paper with blue Arabic writing - two treats for me, for the price of one.

As I unwrapped the little paper cones of incense, showing the family the contents, they excitedly encouraged me to burn some so I could smell them and learn to distinguish between them. They brought out the hollow round silver incense burner, a *mbekhira*, which always reminded me of silver Christmas tree ornament - a bulbous filigree star that might sit on top. *L'ud* was my favorite incense, and we burned a big chip in the *mbekhira* as I fanned the smoke into my face with my hand, breathing in deeply. Incense is often burned at home for purification purposes, and burned in the hammam before it opens for the day. I never actually smelled incense in the hammam, but nonetheless, the burning woodchips constituted a combination of its airy protection and earthy materiality.

I had been asking questions and talking incessantly about the hammam now for weeks, imposing my project on the entire family, so the topic was often a side dish on the table. Ramadan, the month of fasting was drawing close, and Aziza, my older sister-in-law was cleaning *jenjellan*, sesame seeds, on a large tray on the round eating table. She was separating out the twigs, pebbles and dirty specks. The good seeds would be used to make *sellu*, a sweet

sandy textured desert eaten with a spoon, especially during Ramadan. Its sweetness complimented the acidic *harira*, a tomato and chickpea soup, eaten by almost every family to break the fast. She said “I’m making *sellu*, even though nobody eats it anymore because they are all diabetic...” and she laughs.

This family definitely did not lack for sense of humor in the face of tragic circumstances or topics. I asked her to remind me of all the ingredients in *sellu*. I had made it once in Seattle after the birth of our daughter, and had called the family in Fez to get the recipe. I was told I should absolutely make it because of the nutrients in the sesame and nuts are important for postpartum recovery. After birth, the mother must wait forty days before returning to the hammam, but she can eat *sellu* right away, to gain back strength from its nutrients. She listed the ingredients for me: *jenjellan* (sesame seeds), *luz* (almonds), *naf’a* (anise), *qarfa* (cinnamon), *kawkaw* (peanuts) -if you like, *zit* (oil), *zbda* (butter), *skkar* (sugar), *guza* (nutmeg), *‘asl* (honey), *maka* (gum arabic), and browned flour. *Sellu*, this sweet dessert, is associated with Ramadan, with childbirth, and also, albeit tangentially, the hammam. States of the body – illness, menstruation, childbirth, and other conditions such as amputation, asthma, or heart disease, prevent individuals from partaking in this neighborhood institution. The hammam’s rules impose upon, limit and regulate self-treatment of the body, and communal experiences of the body with a social body.

Following this line of discussion about materiality in association with the hammam: various objects, consumables, commercialism, and the body, I highlight the jokes of a family member, a teenager, about sacred bathing sites to highlight the significance of the hammam in the daily imaginary. As we were sitting around, cleaning sesame seeds and burning incense, he

began petitioning for the bike he so badly wanted the family to buy for him. As an argument in his favor, he says to his mother,

Gather your things, I'll take you (on the bike) to Sidi Harazem and show you around. I'll take you to Moulay Yaqoub on the bike. Lalla* on the front since she's light, and mom on the back.
(*Lalla is his 75 year old grandmother)

Everyone chuckled at the thought of the three of them on a small bike. Sidi Harazem and Moulay Yaqoub are local sacred springs where many citizens of Fez and the surrounding areas make yearly outings to bathe in healing waters and bathhouses. Youssef's offer was odd and unexpected. I would have guessed offers of rides to the café, big grocery store or new mall, but not to the sacred springs. Clearly, these were the most coveted of destinations— the places filled with hammams – and these were the places his mother and grandmother loved the most.

His grandfather (and my father in law), the Haj Abdeslam, laughed and chimed in, “Yes, let's go! I'll take you, A'icha!” He looked at his wife, who was helping to clean sesame seeds, and he laughed long and heartily, dimples showing. You could see him imaging the journey. His eyes sparkled. He smiled. Then, slowly, but with conviction, he shook his head and said, “No, it's over for us. It's done.” His leg had been amputated over a year before, a complication of diabetes, and he was just starting to be able to get around, but daily life was now a struggle. He now bathed at home instead of the hammam and rarely ventured farther than the front stoop, standing or sitting outside to breathe in fresh air, look at the view and the neighborhood. Most of the time he sat indoors, proudly, in his spot on the couch, reading the newspaper with his magnifying glass, or holding prayer beads or a prayer rock. In saying it was “over,” he was expressing not only lost youth, but also the very real loss of his material body. Losing his leg had excluded him from the central cultural practice of going to the baths at Sidi Harazem and any hammam, even in the neighborhood. My understanding that it was a matter of hygiene and mobility rather than shame.

I asked the family about Sidi Harazem, and the traditional hammams in general, and he free-associated about the traditional hammams in Taza that he remembered from his childhood. He grew up outside of Taza, the next major city to the East of Fez. He claimed that the most beautiful hammams were there, with special locker rooms, mirrors, *hesirat* (mat of reeds – a similar feature of the majority of mosques), towels and *qerqab*, special wooden sandals for inside the hammam. People slept at the hammam, he said, like a guest inn or hotel. His family originated from the rugged hills outside of Taza, so a day trip into the city and a visit to the hammam would be an all-day affair. Sleeping in the hammam was an easy way to stay overnight and benefit from the advantages of the city.

He talked at length and with nostalgia about the *gheraf*, the little wooden ladle-like instrument for pouring water to rinse the body – how nice it was and how much more effective than the plastic junk people now used. He also lamented the loss of the *hesira*, the reed mats used on the ground of the hammam like rugs. And then there were other plants used to make mats, “*helfa* and *semara*...these aren't around anymore,” he said. He was always an advocate of tradition, of all things *blidi* – natural/traditional. In recent years plastic mats, cups, flip-flops and buckets had replaced all of the traditional implements, although the hammam rituals remained more or less intact.

Contributing to the discussion, A‘icha, his decidedly pragmatic and far less nostalgic wife, my mother-in-law, explained the importance of scrubbing the body *f-znqa*, literally, “in the street.” By this she meant outside of the home, in the hot hammam. She emphasized the importance of salt incorporated within the structure of the hammam floors as a means of trapping the heat so important to facilitate exfoliation of the top layer of skin and to an overall deep cleansing of the body. She was not the only woman to have emphasized to me the importance of

salt as a heat retention system within the architecture of the hammam. In Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, *derija*, she explained:

We scrub ourselves [in the hammam] because we don't wash [our bodies with water at home]. At home you don't scrub and exfoliate. When you scrub, that dirt/skin (*mskh*) comes off, and that makes you feel light. It's wonderful. If you wash at home, it isn't like the street (hammam) ...they make [the hammam] with salt. They put salt in it, under the floor, so it will be hot. Tons of salt! And then they put cement or stone on top. They do this in the faran too. They all use salt to hold in heat.

The salt has a practical purpose of holding in the heat of the rooms of the hammam, but its use in Morocco as a purifier of space and a protection against jinn is also significant. According to Rahim, salt is often sprinkled in the corners of the house before sweeping, especially before holidays, to keep jinn away. Dead bodies are also sprinkled with salt, also to scare the jinn (Westermarck, 1929, p. 404). Indeed, even in the West, salt is used to preserve and prevent contamination, especially of food. Western and Eastern folk medicine uses salt for sore throat gargles, cleaning wounds, and modern dentists worldwide prescribe salt-water gargles after tooth extractions. Scientifically, salt reduces unbound water so that less is available for bacterial growth. Circling back to my own personal fear of contagion and contamination, I thought, perhaps the jinn are related to and made of wafts of invisible bacteria and contagion, hence their fear of salt and heat. Boil and salt any substance enough, and all the bad bacteria will die off.

Haj Abdeslam pointed to the picture of himself that hung in the center of the sitting room: a lone photograph of the family patriarch. Pictures hanging in isolation on otherwise bare walls were ubiquitous in Morocco. Every store, restaurant, hotel or public place of business was required to hang a picture of the king. Almost every family hung a picture of their patriarch. He said, "this was taken in 1952," and I assume he was helping to contextualize the era of the wood- and plant-based hammam objects he missed and had just described to me, and to explain the happier times when he was first married and used to take A'icha out to have fun. "This was taken

during the French Protectorate. It was the year we had our wedding,” he said. On several occasions he had described the times when the French were in Morocco, his blessed marriage and young children running about, and the many French he had befriended. He was often filled with nostalgia for lost objects or foods, lost times, lost friends, lost traditions, but now his material loss was literally his body.

Pollution: Blood and Sex

Menstruation, like amputation or the loss of a limb, from my Western perspective, was experienced as a disability or weakness that prevents access to the hammam. In Islam, and in Morocco, women are considered to be in a state of ritual impurity when they are menstruating. After her period is finished, a woman must engage in *ghusl*, or a ritual bath, or what Moroccans referred to as *wuḍu' kbir* (the big ablution), before being able to pray, or engage in other public religious practices, such as fasting.

As a white middle class female in urban North America, I was taught, in the era I came of age, that menstruation provided no limitations whatsoever to my involvement in daily activities, whether public, private, physical, spiritual or intellectual. There was no sense of purity or impurity in relation to my own blood, and I went about my life, forging ahead, trying to ignore or deal with the potential inconveniences of my own body. I used tampons if I swam, danced or ran, and sometimes just for convenience's sake. Thus, exercise, bathing, even sexual activities were never off limits during menstruation. “You can do all your normal activities during your period...you shouldn't stop just for your period” said all the women and health teachers I encountered, and this was the dominant discourse of my upbringing. In my early sexual experiences, my boyfriend was not bothered by menstrual blood, or so he said, so I had not developed any awareness of a bodily or social difference at these times in my cycle.

Thus, according to my own socialization, my impulse was to interpret Moroccan beliefs about menstruation as inequities and limitations on women. Islamic interpretations do not always equate ritual impurity with pollution, and in fact, some literature explains the Islamic limitations on menstruating women to be a benefit and celebration, an acknowledgement of the body. Not engaging in fasting, bathing, or praying during pregnancy or menstruation was an act of caring for, honoring and cherishing the body. Nonetheless, I could not help sensing that this “polluted” state made me seen as a pariah, inferior, or outside of the normal social body because of my abnormal body. This feeling was never more pronounced than the first time my Muslim husband dared to have sex with me during my period. He was subsequently visibly terrified and raced to wash off traces of blood as soon as possible. I never reconciled this feeling of being a source of contamination, and so this colored my observations of behaviors around menstruation. My ex-husband’s reaction to my blood was not dissimilar to his reaction to seeing or thinking about forbidden pork as a thing to be eaten as food, when we walked by the stall where it was sold in the more sophisticated Ville Nouvelle public market. I felt dangerous and diseased – an earthly envoy of the devil.

Often when young women around me were on their periods, they would imply as much by being melodramatic about their exhaustion. If they climbed a flight of stairs, for example, they would say “*skhft*” (I’ve fainted...I’ve collapsed). I could never fully translate this in my mind, since nobody was really fainting in front of me. What an extreme way of expressing exhaustion, I thought. I came to recognize that this expression was often a euphemism for “I’m having my period and thus easily and extremely fatigued.” Thus, when Nour, my sister in law, warned me that I should not go to the hammam during my period for fear I would “faint,” I put it all together. Again, I could not strip myself of my white North American lens, and saw as

illogical and ridiculous that women are weak during their periods, and shouldn't exert themselves, that they should stay home and withdraw from normal life (particularly bathing), despite smelling of body odor.

Even though I moaned and complained to the family of my greasy discomfort, I was still prevented from any bodily cleansing - even boiling water on my own and washing in the toilet room. I was told that the contrasting temperatures were too dangerous – that the cold would “hit me” (cause me to be sick, or worse, haunted). The family continued to engineer the situation (or so it seemed) to protect me from engaging in any water warming or bathing projects. To this day, I wonder what they were not explaining to me, although, clearly they believed that my vulnerable state of menstruation in addition to the cold interior temperatures in the house, presented real threats to my well-being, and they were taking responsibility to avoid any missteps in the wrong direction. They were taking care of me.

Informants in Morocco tended to be more shy and modest when discussing sex, menstruation, bathing and private parts. In Paris, the hammam workers I engaged with tended to be more forthcoming with detailed information about women's issues. In particular, Nawal in the Paris mosque hammam, seemed to take pleasure in explaining belief systems related to the body as long as she maintained the connection to Islam and purity. She would not allow me to record our interviews, so I took quick notes in my notebook, translating as I wrote. I asked her a general question about the spiritual meaning of cleanliness in the hammam, and she immediately explained the need for ritual purification in women, using the hammam, particularly after menstruation and sex. Interestingly, she pointed out the scent of menstruation on the skin of women, something necessary to wash off:

Islam asks for cleanliness from us, and the hammam is an opportunity to be clean. During the period...when it is finished, you have to go to the hammam. It is the "big ablution" (kabir)

according to Islam. You can smell the scent of menstruation on the skin. It is a special smell for the period. It is a bad smell so you have to go to the hammam to get rid of it.

To my surprise, she then elaborated on how to identify whether you are ready to do the big ablutions in the hammam:

You put a piece of cotton with musk inside [of your vagina], and if the cotton comes out white... then after [the ablutions in the hammam] you can pray. The rasul (Prophet Mohammed) said to do this. It is the educated (religiously) who do this. This is propriety/right behavior (adab) and decorum of Islam.

That her first response to my question about spiritual meaning related to menstruation, implied to me the relative importance of the hammam as a place to re-enter the relationship to Allah, and prayer, the relationship to husbands (sexual relationships), and general re-socialization. These big ablutions are necessary not only after menstruation, but also after giving birth, after sex or sexual acts (for both men and women), after losing consciousness, after death. So, the hammam is a liminal space for transition back into a body that is pure. She described its transformative nature, not only as a purifier of the body, but also transformative and uplifting for the spirit and outlook:

I go, and sometimes when I'm feeling awful or down, if I go to the hammam it completely changes me - changes my mood. I see the world differently. It lifts my spirits. It has a role in cleanliness of the body, but also cleanliness of the spirit. You have to be clean in order to pray.

Amira made it clear that the hammam transformed and purified body *and mind* for prayer. This sparked a memory about her parents and her first realization that they both went to the hammam on days that they had sex.

And also after you have sex you have to clean. You know mothers don't talk to their daughters about sex before the daughter is married. It is a forbidden topic. I once realized something when I was in secondary school (*thanawiya*). We were sitting around the table, at lunch, my family of 6, and I had noticed that my parents had both gone to the hammam on the same day. I asked why, and my sister told me to shut up – don't ask (*skoot!*). I didn't understand why. I went to school and asked my friends and learned that they had had sex and both of them had to wash.

The hammam was the place to go for transformation back to a state of purity. Washing in accordance with the proscriptions of Islam, the big ablution, was critical. However, the scrubbing and sloughing off of dead skin seemed equally obligatory at each hammam visit in order to achieve true cleanliness.

The Body: Dead Skin and Skin to Skin

As my mother-in-law had underscored as a part of her description of salt floors in the hammam, an important part of the purification process in the middle rooms of the hammam is exfoliation and scrubbing off dead skin from every inch of the body. The *ṭayyaba* can be hired to do the sloughing off of skin, or a friend or relative can scrub you. Nobody can reach his or her own back to give it the proper degree of necessary attention, so asking a stranger in the hammam to scour your back is perfectly acceptable. If your body has not been exfoliated regularly, the top layer of skin will come off in long skinny snake-like sheets. The skin looks dark and dirty, and whoever was scrubbing me, since I did not exfoliate every week, as I should, often shrieked in horror at the filthy *wskh*. Together we always exclaimed loudly, how dirty I was, and I would bristle, while trying to laugh to myself, knowing that I was probably being judged as terribly impure. Sometimes these pools of dead skin along with clumps of hair, soap scum, soap wrappers, henna and other residues from patrons linger on the hammam floors. To avoid contact with these potential contagions, women usually rinse off the floor where they intend to wash with several buckets of hot water, and they set down a plastic mat or small stool from home to provide a clean place to sit.

At my own pre-wedding hammam outing, each woman was scrubbed by the *ṭayyabat* hired by the family. Nawal explained this traditional ritual to me with all its material details. I took notes as she spoke in *derija*, and wrote the translation in English:

The bride has to go to the hammam with her unmarried friends - divorced women can't be included. (...)The mother makes a trousseau, including a silk robe of pink with some white stripes, and a copper cup. They scrub her, and take off all of her body hair and do henna. Brand new towels are used for the bride. This is special. She must use the towel for the first time when she is the bride. You have to do a mask of henna and sugar (*caramel*) for removing the hair, or use a razor. The men say that women come out of the hammam beautiful when they are soft and smell good and also they taste nice.

Few of these details applied to my group; several women were divorced, and I hadn't been given a copper cup, silk robe or new towels, but everyone in my party was exfoliated in a way they would never forget. My Texas relatives were stunned by the ritual, even though admitting to enjoying the feeling afterwards. My blond Texan cousin still talks about the shock she experienced in the first room of the hammam - the scrubbing, movement and manipulation of bodies were so foreign to her. She explained how the *hammam* workers lined them up in a row, naked (except for underwear), trying to determine whom to scrub first. Meanwhile, I was washed and scrubbed right away then whisked off with chanting, walking backwards to the *brma* and bride's alcove at the hottest recesses of the hammam. I was kept occupied, so didn't learn until later that my American relatives were mortified, not knowing what to do, while standing in the middle of that first room of the hammam. Michelle, confused and scared, wondering what was coming next recounted to me, in an in-person interview, many years after the event, with humor and clarity:

... there was an area where there was steam and buckets...And we were all lined up like victims in a concentration camp. You know how they...might fumigate you. What is going to happen next? We were all against the wall, standing up, 7 or 8 of us. Someone said who's first? I raised my hand because I wanted to get it over with. This big overweight Moroccan lady with boobs the size of my butt, each boob the size of my butt...she takes me...I wanted to go first because I was so afraid - I wanted to get it over with.

I don't think her reference to concentration camps was in any way an attempt to equate Moroccans with Nazis, but instead, indicated her feelings of extreme vulnerability, due to the unintelligible language, and the odd and grittily stark surroundings. We were under the tutelage

of two large semi-clothed women who had no shame about touching and leading us about, or displaying their own bodies. Michelle's modesty is highlighted by the *tayyaba*'s comfort with aggressive touch. She non-sexually and non-sensually scrubbed us, leaning in as necessary to get all the *wskh* off. In this contrast of ideas about bodily proxemics, modesty and touch, the power and aggression of the *tayyaba* is foregrounded.

I didn't know there would be boys there. That's okay they're little boys, who cares, but... The freakiest part, was *not* the lack of sanitation...they put you on the floor...no, the grossest part was the naked lady rubbing up against you. (...) Her boobs were going up and down your back. You're not feeling the pain of the scrubbing of the hand brush, but you're distracted by the wet boobs....It's a strange lady I don't know!...and then everyone is staring at me because I was first... but they poured big ol' hot hot buckets of water on me. And I liked that, because I love *love* hot water.

Michelle found the dirtiness of the floors and the lying on the ground unpleasant, but the worst part for her was the feeling of a naked stranger's body against hers. She had not realized that the boys go with their mothers to the hammam, and she was surprised to see boys there, something that in her conservative Texas upbringing, she would not have seen. In her experience boys (and even girls) were forbidden, even at a young age from places where women might be partially dressed or unclothed: the women's locker room or even in bedrooms or bathrooms at home. I hadn't realized that this might be odd to her, or anyone. I had never given it thought.

She went on to highlight what she liked about the intense exfoliation and feeling of being thoroughly clean, but she ultimately suggested that she would have been more comfortable with other foreigners in a tourist style hammam:

I was very impressed by the sheets of skin [that were scrubbed off of me]. I had never had a scrub, but now that's my favorite thing. I wasn't worried about germs. I think she scrubbed me and then she flicked the skin. It looks more like little snakes than sheets. I thought she did a damn good job...but I didn't know how much you paid for this! There was no soap or anything like that. That was weird... I didn't look at the ladies, because I didn't want them looking at me. But I felt so clean afterwards.

I got the feeling this was a neighborhood place where everyone knew everyone. We stuck out. I didn't care, but if you hadn't been there, I wouldn't have gone. I would have gone to a tourist one. Because I would belong there. How more exposed can you be?

Michelle felt disgusted, vulnerable, examined, and exposed. She wanted to honor the traditions associated with my highly unusual wedding, so she participated, and even volunteered to go first. However, she would have been happier at one of the more upscale establishments designed specifically for foreigners who didn't want the intensity and vulnerability of the *bldi* hammam.

New Hammams: A Complicated Prism

At one time this panoply of options and types of hammams in Morocco did not exist. There was just the one neighborhood hammam and everyone went (in addition to infrequent but coveted trips to destination hammam resorts like Sidi Harazem and Moulay Yaqub). In the late 90s and in the new millennium, two new types of hammams began to emerge: spa type hammams for Moroccans, and "authentic" style hammams for tourists. Upscale spa type hammams with plunge pools, exercise rooms and salon services catered to the new global educated upper middle class population of urban Moroccans. Renovated riads and palaces in the old medinas of Fez and Marrakesh, on the other hand, were transformed into glamorous boutique hotels equipped with traditional-seeming hammams; stand-alone tourist hammams also began emerging in the old medinas so that tourists could engage with a reinvented, streamlined Moroccan experience, without the rough edges or drudgery. The hammams catering to tourists were often run by Moroccans but the boutique hotels were often owned and opened by French or Europeans who made it their lives and passion to run a small hotel in Morocco. I knew of some Moroccans who had lived in Europe for some time, who returned to buy and renovate their own house as a hotel for tourists.

Hicham, my brother-in-law, described how the hammam had changed in recent years but how it was at one time the equalizer of the neighborhood:

The bride, before her wedding, had to go to the hammam, even in the countryside. [The hammam] was an even playing field. Everyone from all socio economic levels met there. Before, it was a simpler life...now there are divisions. Rich, intellectual, poor, uneducated [all met at the hammam]. Now life is not so simple. Now there is a *complicated prism of different hammams*. * Now the [traditional] hammam is not prestigious – it is just for poor people. The nice hammams are for people to show off. The new hammams are for tourism and prestige.

In the neighborhood Adarissa there is a hammam called "Khalifi" where you can have a hammam, massage, and have someone scrub you. It is 100 dirham. There is a new kind of woman now.

They don't go for the same kinds of reasons. They go to show off.

*my emphasis

He was astounded at the price of this showy hammam in the Adarissa suburb, and suggests this “new kind of woman” – a new middle class urban global citizen, breaking from tradition. In suggesting that “they don’t go for the same kinds of reasons” he implied that the reasons are not superficial, that the visits to the hammam have substance, are rooted to family, religion, *tahara*, humble right-guidedness. His own favorite hammam, an unpretentious traditional, but clean hammam in his neighborhood had a simple and affordable price of 10 dirhams for adults and 5 for children, a tenth of the price of an upscale spa-type hammam.



Figure 5.5 Price List, Hammam Ouedi Fez

In contrast, the Nausikaa Hammam in the Ville Nouvelle of Fez charges 100 dirhams for a hammam with scrub and massage. This is where Zara and her grandmother, exemplars of this new social class, go on a regular basis. The price was forbiddingly steep for most Fassis to frequent on a regular basis. Similarly, a working professional woman now working and living in Casablanca, but who had grown up in Fez frequenting the hammam in my family's neighborhood, now frequented an upscale spa hammam in her new neighborhood in Casablanca. There she utilized the massage and pedicure services and explained to me that her hammam played classical Western music like Mozart in the common areas, and this was soothing and enjoyable. Another example of this "new kind of woman," she was independent and educated, unmarried, and renting her own apartment - enjoying a life that was distanced from the traditions that she grew up with in Fez.

Many of the elements that tourists and outsiders imagined to be a part of the hammam in Morocco - pools of water, sensuous massage, oils and luxury - are actually significantly absent in the austere, traditional, neighborhood hammams. Relaxation style massage has never been a part of the hammam tradition, although thorough exfoliating and deep washing of the scalp and all body parts has. For men, the attendants stretch and manipulate the body similar to a chiropractic treatment. For women, the *tayyaba* do a manipulation on the uterus after childbirth so she is ready for sex with her husband again, according to a Moroccan hammam worker:

Forty days after giving birth you go to the kiyass to have a special massage to put the uterus back in place. So it goes. This process puts everything back in place so that you can sleep with your husband again. [Kiyassat] learn how to do this from each other, and from generation to generation.

While she refers to this as a “massage” the purpose is not relaxation, but restoration. However, most tourist hammams and spa hammams include massage now on their price lists and menus because “that’s what tourists want.”

Materiality is the key to these new style hammams, especially those designed for tourists. The touristic hammams range from glitzy to elegant, but few have the traditional floor plan with the three rooms and hypocaust heating system. Often, the architectural space of a precolonial hammam is renovated and the rooms reorganized and repurposed to accommodate the expectations and desires of tourists. Only one hot sauna room remains to make space for showers, private changing rooms, massage tables, massage rooms, and individual rinsing stations. Often the domed ceiling, which usually corresponds to a changing room in the pre-colonial traditional hammam, has been converted to another purpose – a waiting room, sitting room or a sauna room.

In many of the tourist hammams, hand crafted Moroccan decorative and functional objects adorn the walls, tables and floors. Rugs, tea cups, tea pots, pottery are strategically

positioned for authentic effect, but some exotic or Orientalist elements are often added: shimmery curtains, beaded doors and burning candles and rose petals. Steam is actually piped into the sauna and open massage rooms with a little steam machine, as there is no *brma* or hot water basin. Wall faucets are available, and in some cases small individual basins for each guest. Very few of these tourist hammams are fueled by a wood fueled *farnatchi*. Instead, water is heated with gas. Some of the more elegant hotel hammams are exquisitely decorated by virtue of their design and craftsmanship using traditional colorful blue, green, red and yellow tile work, known as *zellij*, woodwork and plaster carving. Many small and large homes in the medinas of Fez and Marrakesh have similarly been renovated and turned into unique and expensive hotels at great cost to restore or enhance the original craftsmanship.

While the stuff and material of the new style hammams are colorful and luxurious, in contrast, the traditional neighborhood hammam *bldi* are stark, dark and humble. The grueling effort and sweat required of these monastic but communal places are replaced in the spa hammams by a more self-oriented, relaxing, soothing, but consumable experience.



<i>Soins du Corps</i>	
Hamam Traditionnel.....	100 Dhs
Gommage, savonnage et modelage corporel.	
Hamam Oriental.....	150 Dhs
Gommage, savonnage et modelage corporel, mise à disposition d'un peignoir, serviette, gant shampooing et gel douche.	
Balnéothérapie (30 min)	250 Dhs
Hamam Nausikaa.....	180 Dhs
Gommage, savonnage et modelage corporel suivi d'un enveloppement d'argile à l'eau de rose, mise à disposition d'un peignoir, serviette, gant shampooing et gel douche.	
Soin du dos purifiant (45 min)	350 Dhs
Gommage vapeur, masque spécifique et modelage.	

Figure 5.6 Online price list, Hammam Nausikaa, Fez Ville Nouvelle <http://nausikaaspa.com/hammam>

While in Marrakesh, I visited Hammam Ziani, the most highly rated hammam (on [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com)) in the medina, and one of the most “authentic” according to the site. An American woman I had befriended also wanted to go, and she was thrilled to be having an authentic experience. We could see an array of traditional baskets displayed behind the counter, along with the offer of a package deal – a “basket.” They were lovely handmade baskets stuffed with all the implements one might need: a towel, robe, shampoo and underwear. This seems like a nice deal, and I thought the basket itself would really come in handy, but once we paid, no basket materialized and we were sent to a dark, deep red waiting room with couches, small brass tables, popular French magazine, local fossils embedded in the rough brown walls, a marble fountain repurposed as a candelabra, and sparkly curtains. A sweet woman with green eyes brought out a silver tray with a shiny silver teapot filled with sweet mint tea along with small glass teacups decorated with delicate gold designs. Next to us was an Italian woman. We were all waiting for the Hammam Ziani to switch over from men to women at 6 pm before we could change and go inside. In the meantime we chatted and sipped tea. She complained that she had been to another hammam Bains Blues, which was disappointing because it was not traditional and authentic enough.

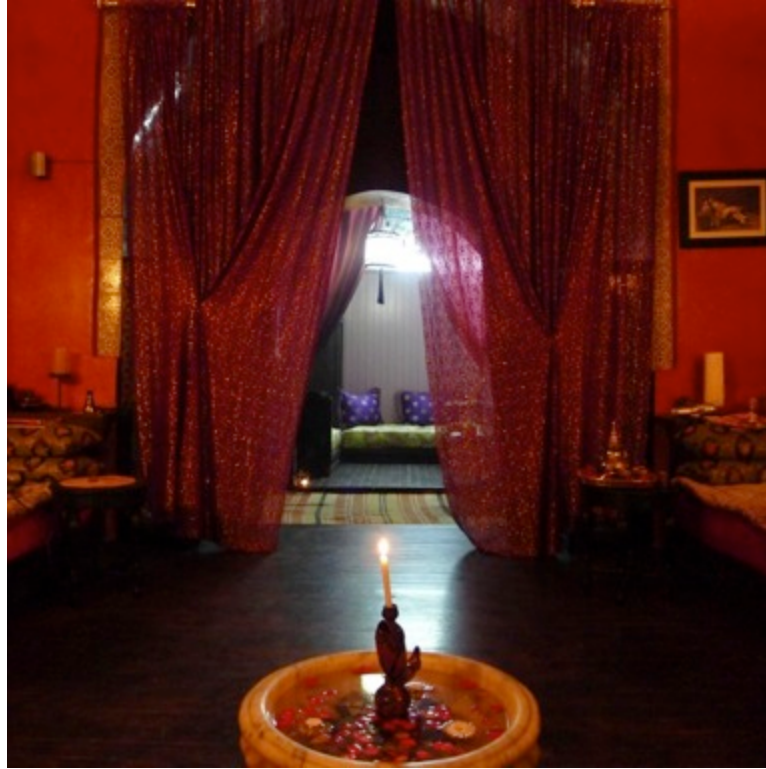


Figure 5.7 Waiting room, Hammam Ziani, Marrakesh

The items from the basket were doled out piecemeal once it was our turn to go to the changing room where we were handed disposable black thong underwear. We laughed at each other and popped out of our dressing rooms modeling the strange garments. The print advertisements for this hammam promised a handsome muscled man, holding a towel. No men ever appeared, nor were any women holding towels for us.



Figure 5.8 Website, Hammam Ziani, <http://Aziza.hammamziani.ma/>

After changing into our black thongs, we were immediately led through a steamy room with three massage tables and some mostly naked bodies being massaged with oil. Next to it was a round room with two showerheads and so much steam it was difficult to see each other. We were told to sit and wait. Natural light poked through the holes in the low domed ceiling. Feeling claustrophobic, uncomfortable and bored, I wondered how and why this beautiful ceiling had been altered so drastically, brought down so low to the ground. The room had been truncated so that we were about ten feet higher off the ground and closer to the ceiling than we should have been. Our attendant left, and just three of us remained in the small room to relax. The temperature felt cool, and the shower heads could be moved around and used in our seated places, but they were only cold. A few minutes later the attendant came back to rub some *sabon bldi*, sticky traditional olive oil soap, on our bodies. She then led us into another room to rinse us off. I felt irritated at all the meandering and contrasting temperatures of every room and every rinse. I felt chilled, and worried about the drafts. We all climbed up onto hard stone massage tables where we were assertively exfoliated, then, we climbed down again, and were rinsed off with

small plastic bowls dipped into small, individual basins of water with water spigots and five pointed stars above them.

We climbed back onto our massage tables where we were massaged. This consisted of being rubbed lightly with copious amounts of oil. My masseuse was lovely, cheerful and corpulent. As I lay on my back, she massaged my head and neck, while her covered breasts bounced unapologetically against me. All of the attendants were all wearing the same “uniform” of white bra, white camisole, green and yellow scarf wrapped around the waist and a white apron. All were quite ample bodies, strong and loud.

I took this opportunity to talk to my attendant, rather than relax and enjoy the oil rub massage. I started by asking about the other old hammams in the medina. Where did she go when *she* wanted a hammam? She replied without hesitation, Hammam Azbezt, a hammam that others had also mentioned to me, as one of the oldest and most popular. But then she laughed loudly when she realized I was serious about going when I asked her for directions. She said it’s too crowded and busy for me – *zham*. That I couldn’t go alone. It would be *too much* for me. She and the other masseuses joked incessantly with me and one another about this. The thought of me in their hammam was ridiculous and it was somehow hysterical that a foreigner would even consider going to a traditional hammam. I was perceived as lacking the fortitude for that. Then they joked with me about children. My masseuse claimed that she had five children, but quickly changed her story to three and cackled loudly. The number of children they had, to the whole group of *tayyabat* was an important point of discussion, and clearly of identity. My masseuse’s mother in law, she explained, gave birth to fifteen children, total. More eruptions of laughter ensued. At this point, I laughed too, nervously at the impossible thought of that many children. She praised and blessed her mother in law for her strength, health and vigor up until her death.

And her skin. Her skin had been beautiful. Children, strength, health, and skin were markers of success within their Moroccan community.

My friend, who was trying to shush us, was lying right next to me relaxing into her massage. She had talked me into trying out this particular hammam, because of how real and authentic she had heard it to be. I wasn't sure what her point of comparison was, but I didn't argue. For me, the social element of the traditional hammam was entirely missing in Hammam Ziani...except for this small community of *tayyabat*, who joked with one another (and me) about childbirth and tourists and made fun of my tourist qualities of weakness and inability to handle a "real" hammam.

My sister-in-law in Fez had also balked at the thought of tourists going to a hammam bldi - the traditional hammam. She explained that the steam in the tourist hammams was fake, from a machine. She said that steam, in the hammam bldi, comes from the hot water of the *brma*.

[The tourist hammam] is half-half . They (tourists) don't know the difference...and they can't really do a hammam anyway...get the water and all that!? (she stops to laugh...). Can you imagine a tourist sitting on the ground and scrubbing? And getting water? (more laughter...)

To my sister-in-law, Aziza, the thought of tourists in a traditional hammam was just as hysterical as it had been to the massage therapists. Apparently I was not seen as a tourist in her mind's eye, having been to the hammam with her many times, sitting on the ground, scrubbing, even fetching water. However, she did most of the heavy lifting of buckets for me, because, as she said, she knew how to walk on the slippery floors, she knew how to jockey for a place in line at the *brma*, and how to speak with other aggressive hammam visitors. She always insisted on scrubbing me the correct way, because she knew I wouldn't be as thorough, and it was important. Even if I told her I could manage, I could scrub myself, she would grab me and pull me back like a mother cat grooming a kitten. She did this with her nieces as well. A thorough scrub was as

crucial and good for me – a necessity for well-being and peace of mind. She couldn't understand when I ran off, claiming to be all done. She still needed at least a half hour or hour longer than I did in the steam and water, to scrub and sweat. My sister-in-law was fully grounded in the vocabulary of the hammam. She lived it. The litany of body movements in the traditional hammam was a work in progress for me; I was not yet fully inducted, and needed stern guidance.

Aziza would have laughed and criticized our treatment of exfoliation and light oily massage in the Marrakesh tourist hammam, Ziani. After the massage there, on the high marble tables, we were invited to take lukewarm showers in cramped little stalls, and then ushered into the waiting room, the place where we had started out, and offered more green tea with mint.

Aziza had also told me:

After the hammam, you feel light, like you're going to fall asleep. You need coffee or a tea. You should drink Moroccan green tea with mint (a-tay). That will restore you. Then you eat, whatever.

Interestingly, the lightness made her feel sleepy, but the coffee or tea helped ground her to feel less sleepy and restored. For me, lightness was not how I would describe feeling after the hammam –my own sensation was a hot, sleep-inducing heaviness. She was also clear about what not to drink while inside the hammam:

Don't drink water in the hammam. Nothing until you come out. It makes you heavy. Some people bring a bottle of ice and drink it, but it makes your stomach expand and then you can't wash.

Some women bring fruit, tangerines and oranges, which they put in a bucket of cold water to eat in the first room of the hammam after washing, or in the changing room after their hammam. Especially in Hammam Agadir, in the family neighborhood in Fez, I often saw orange peels littered on the floor throughout the coolest room, next to the women and all their plastic implements, and their henna and *ghasoul*, the gritty rose-scented clay used to wash and soften

the skin. Fragrant orange peels and sour henna often wafted across the wet stone floors. Sporadically, trays of treats from the faran next door migrated into the changing room at holiday time, or upon the occasion of a wedding, and the entire room eagerly sampled cookies. Nobody drank tea in the neighborhood hammam itself, but upon entering the home again, tea was always prepared immediately, and we all leaned back or reclined on the couches, hair still wet and wrapped in headscarves to keep the cold out.

In the waiting room of the Hammam Ziani, hot tea was served, but I saw no cozy trays of cookies hot from the faran or refreshing oranges freshly plucked from cold water. The waiting room was just a soulless mishmash of objects littering the room: French magazines, overstuffed color-saturated pillows, burning candles, brass wall sconces, large tinted mirrors, dried potpourri, Orientalist paintings of men in turbans, vases and flowers. The reviews for this place were good. Tourists liked it. This aesthetic must have been seductive enough.

Social and Economic Changes

Accommodations for foreigners to smooth out the rough edges of Morocco were a necessity in the burgeoning tourism economy in Morocco, and the hammam was one area where these adjustments were apparent, particularly touristic hammams like Ziani. The spa hammams in the new cities designed for the emerging middle-class educated young Moroccans was another marker of economic and social change. As a matter of course, I asked hammam workers what they thought the future of the hammam would be in Morocco. One manager of a tourist hammam explained his theory that social change was a big “problem” in Morocco. He, and others, had explained that extended families were selling off their inherited medina houses, and dividing up their earnings and in turn each buying their own apartments, and living “alone” in separate nuclear families. In this way, tradition was dying and nobody was left as a central figure in

charge of the family. Nobody kept track. The dissolution of the Moroccan family, in his eyes, was leading to the dissolution of other Moroccan traditions such as the hammam and faran. Another manager at yet another hammam blamed the government imposed salary limitations, a meager minimum wage of around 2,000 dirham per month, on this breakdown of tradition and the family unit, which subsequently affects all family traditions, including going to the hammam. People want their own places in the suburbs, but families are no longer cooperatively working together, pooling money. Without larger salaries, nobody can support a large family on their own. Men cannot even afford to get married anymore, so how could tradition be upheld?

Tourists in Fez: Confusion in a Traditional Hammam

So many Moroccans I encountered thought it hysterical to imagine foreigners in the traditional hammam. Even though, and perhaps because the hammam traditions have been learned since infancy, so ingrained and embodied, it was obvious that others had not learned them. In Morocco non-Muslims are still prohibited from entering mosques – a holdover from the French protectorate, which believed that Islam and local cultural traditions should be protected and regulated. A Christian outsider, also known in derija as a *nasrani*, seemed just as forbidden and awkward in a hammam as a *nasrani* entering a mosque. In the rare circumstances that a *nasrani* ventured inside, for whatever reason, narratives like my cousin Michelle's were not uncommon – filled with confusion, shock, the feeling that the body is no longer one's own. This vulnerability of the body and psyche to the power of dominant but unwritten cultural practices permeating the spaces of the traditional hammam, are highlighted through narratives of other tourists or visitors who have visited both types of hammams.

Two female American tourists, Samantha and her teenaged daughter Jane paid a visit, at my suggestion, to the Hammam Sidi Azzouz in the Fez medina. Going on their own, the two of

them found the system and essence of this local traditional hammam impenetrable and confusing. Samantha wanted something “authentic,” and yet, she found that the people and atmosphere were decidedly otherworldly, much like walking into a carnivalesque sideshow. She described the entry, the changing rooms, and the workers she first encountered:

So then we go in, and there’s a big room with the lockers and cubbies and a really heavy set woman, an old lady, with facial hair, if I remember her right. [She seemed out of a] different era, different generation (...) It had a sideshow feeling to it. Nobody could explain what to do. They didn't know what I wanted (...) This lady, a third lady, was barking at us (...) she was in charge of overseeing the locker areas. (...) She was sort of brusque about what we were supposed to do. We were startled and confused.

The workers were so taken aback by these unlikely visitors that they had difficulty imagining what Samantha and her daughter wanted. Eventually, the tourists negotiated with the women and found the entry to the first room of the hammam. Nothing was clear to them, and the hammam workers did not know how to explain, since it was second nature to everyone else, not to mention a significant linguistic barrier.

I guess we figured you go in the [first] room. There was all that tile. The walls. ..laughing...There were a couple of women leaning against the wall. They may have had towels around themselves. They weren't totally naked...one woman was naked, across from us. She was talking to herself. She may have been praying. But it sounded like she was talking to herself like she was crazy. She may have been talking to us. Of course I had no idea. I had fantasies (...) that she was sort of delusional. Nobody seemed to care.

The behavior of the people, the stark aesthetics and lack of Western comforts in this hammam were so unusual to Samantha that she seemed to find comfort and resolution in her fantasies and her view of characters as people in a circus, or insane asylum.

We felt really looked at, and the room felt like a shower in an insane asylum from out of the 50s, as I imagine it. Bare tile. Nothing cushy. We were in the first room. I was too scared to go into the other rooms. What goes on in the other rooms?

Samantha and Jane’s experience was limited to the changing room and first, coolest room of the hammam. They were not invited back or encouraged to go to the depths of the *brma*, nor did they

feel inclined or allowed to explore. This absence of agency was possibly a function of their fear of making a cultural misstep, fear of the space itself and its dominant characters, or an actual resistance on the part of the *tayyabat* to encourage them to explore a very markedly Moroccan space and a difficult to penetrate set of rules. When I asked if the space was aesthetically displeasing, Samantha said:

It was rustic. Very rustic. ...but that was charming. I was fine. I had...I didn't feel like it needed to be fancy. [long pause] And I think I thought that the women, the girls had their hair down when they came back [in to the hammam rooms]. I was very into that fact that they could take their hair down [from their headscarves]. (...) There was this story line in my head that they really could be themselves in there. (...) This is where she can be free. I liked that cultural idea. The crazy lady was a whole other piece. I don't know what she's like out there (on the street). Does she button up when she goes out there? I had no idea.

Her own fantasies about these people and their backstories is a fascinating glimpse into the Western fantasy of Morocco and Islamic women being free of the constraints of daily life, from their men when within the refuge of the hammam. She liked the idea that their headscarves were taken off and hair was literally loosened and let down. Here the women, to her, seemed to be liberated – at least this is what she painted onto the scene. The Oriental hammam as portrayed in art and literature (Ingres, Gerome, Delacroix, Edith Wharton) has supplied an understanding, if not directly, then subconsciously to the Occident, that the bathhouse is where women engage their sensual or sexual side, the place where they can be themselves, feel unguarded and “unbuttoned,” talking and experiencing freedom.

While the clothes (with the exception of below the waist undergarments) and headscarves do come off inside the hammam, this is more a function of needing to wash those areas, perhaps more than outright social liberation. In contrast to the Orientalist texts and paintings, the traditional Moroccan hammam is decidedly unsexy and unglamorous. As Samantha articulates, the hammam is actually quite a rustic, spare, and even aesthetically flat space. The practices

within the rooms consist more of grueling work (washing and scrubbing other family members, looking after small children, and carrying heavy water buckets) than sensual lounging.

Without a frame of reference for these mustached, and barking women, almost all characters encountered by Samantha and Jane were shocking and confusing. Nobody was luxuriating and the "treatment" seemed to consist of light scrubbing and pouring buckets of water over their heads. Instead of judging all of this as wrong or bad, the experience seems to have been one of complete disorientation and physical, social and spiritual limitation. As a Westerner in this private Islamic, Moroccan women's realm, Samantha felt ill equipped to navigate codes of conduct that were clearly in place, but completely unclear to her. There was a fantasy also, of rituals that were clearly extant but impenetrable because of language barriers and a sense of not wanting to cross boundaries, interfere or upset the equilibrium. They were respectful as visitors to a deeper layer of foreign world and were afraid of doing something outside of the local code of conduct at every turn. Samantha's perception of the hammam suggests an interesting tension between a fantasy of Moroccan Muslim women as free, more liberated than in their lives outside of the hammam yet herself, the Western liberated woman feeling oppressed by an unknown system of language and unclear and unwritten social and religious codes.

Thresholds and Entryways

Clearly, the spatial aesthetics and materiality of the tourist hammam differ significantly from that of the more austere traditional hammam. Through the UNESCO funded ADER Fez rehabilitation projects, some traditional hammams in the Fez medina such as the Seffarine Hammam, have been restored, with no added luxury features. Instead they retain a simple functionality. Especially the facades and entryways of these traditional hammams in the Fez or Marrakesh medinas are simple. Unmarked and difficult to find or identify without previous

knowledge of their existence, these subtle entries provide some discretion and anonymity upon entry and exit. The facades of the touristic hammams, on the other hand, are glitzy and well-marked for obvious reasons. Some are elaborately painted, and decorated with hanging brass lanterns. The Hammam Ziani even has a Moroccan carpet laid over its threshold.



Figure 5.9 Entry, Hammam Ziani, Marrakesh

Some hammams in the suburbs of Marrakesh and Fez have well marked facades and are named for their internal characteristics, rather than the immediate neighborhood. The Hammam

Douche Ar-Raha (the Hammam Shower of Relaxation) in the Marrakesh suburb of Awatif, for example, offers modern showers and promises relaxation, not to mention a spatial gender division, publicized through images above their respective doorways. These gender divisions are implicit in the older more traditional, unmarked hammams in the medinas, although they are temporal divisions; times of day are reserved for men (usually early morning and late evening) and others are reserved for women (usually late mornings through the late afternoon).



Figure 5.10 Façade, Hammam Douche A-raha, Awatif, Marrakesh



Figure 5.11 Entry, Hammam Sidi 'Azzouz, Fez Medina

Last Steps: First Steps

At one time, after washing in the hammam, resting and putting on clothing, visitors would engage in one last step before crossing the final threshold into the outside world.

Hammam attendants helped visitors wash their feet in a small portable bowl before putting on their outdoor shoes and reentering the public space of the city. This last step creates a mitigating

ritual bridge between the sacred and profane before crossing the threshold out into the world of potential *fitna* – temptations, trials, stresses and chaos.

Having followed the flow of the hammam from Fire to Water to Air and Earth, we have explored the heat, the jinn, the water and purification, the sounds and the sacredness, the body and materiality, and we find ourselves in the changing room, ready to cross over the threshold of the hammam, and reenter into the streets and social life of the city. I recall the lines from the eighth stanza of Najdi's poem (see Appendix A):

And the attendant prepares a bucket of water to wash his feet
So he can face the problems of Fez

When discussing the meaning of these lines with Moroccans in Fez, they explained to me that the sacred state of the purified body and particularly the feet, would be extended upon exit from the hammam. These purity and blessings would be transferred to the very earth one steps upon. This concept of bodily practice and bodily movement inscribing spaces, objects and even the earth with spiritual blessings is associated with *zikr* – chanting and remembrance of Allah (Werbner, 2003). The movement of the body through the world, touching of the material earth, marks it with the body's piety. In this way the bodily practice of the hammam is not limited only to individual, subjective transcendence and purity. The body has the potential to engage not only with other social bodies, but also with the immediate material environment.

Back in Fez, at the family hammam, with clean feet, we crossed the threshold and trooped outside into the cold sunny day, stamping the ground with our blessings as we walked. Haj Abdelsalaam was waiting, sitting in his place on the couch, with his prayer beads, newspaper and cane, warmly welcoming us back.



Figure 5.12 Family members covered up and protected from the wind and cold, walking home from Hammam Agadir, Fez, stamping the ground with our blessings.

In special memory of Haj Abdeslam Rhenifel, who no longer walks among us, but whose spirit is not forgotten.

CHAPTER 6: BREAD AND BLOOD: CLEAN AND DIRTY BODIES

In this chapter, I show how mundane daily activities and ceremonial rituals enact community, identity, and religious desire. Blood, bread and water, are substances important to the most routine activities of daily life in Fez – bathing, eating, slaughtering and preparing food, but they are also intimately entangled in sacred rituals and the treatment of sacred bodies, including the purification of the human body in the hammam with water. I use the unique trajectories of these three substance's through the lives of people, as a lens to examine purity and pollution within the system of daily life in Fez. Appadurai (1986) in his introduction to the *Social Life of Things* calls for the importance of following the circulation of everyday objects. By understanding their uses and their trajectories we understand their human and social context (1986, 5). In the spirit of the essays in Appadurai's edited collection, I am executing his proposal but expanding upon it by following and documenting the lives and routes of the *substances* bread, blood and water in the neighborhoods of Fez, rather than "things." I discuss not only the circulation of these substances, but also how they circulate through people, by virtue of people, around people and even how I moved them, and how they followed and moved me.

Bread, blood, and water play integral roles in daily and sacred religious practices in Fez, and as substances function as indices of clean and dirty. As a brief introduction to these substances in their Fassi context: **Bread:** bread undergoes a lengthy transformational process, an alchemy of substance, to reach its edible state. In Morocco one can watch the full progression in its entirety, from wheat to flour, to 'ajina (dough), to rested and risen dough, to flat rounds, to the communal ovens, back home, then finally to the table, and even beyond – dried and stored. According to the hadith, or sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, bread should be revered: *akrimu l'khabz*, respect bread/treat bread with respect, and Allah will, in turn, respect you. **Blood:** The

initial blood spilled from a sacrificial animal is considered sacred, but blood itself is considered *haraam*, or polluted, and consumption by human beings is forbidden. **Water:** Water is the substance through which the human body becomes purified in preparation for prayer, a spiritual union with Allah, and is a main constituent of the hammam experience. In my accounting of these substances, the home, the *farán*, public ovens (bread), and the hammam, public baths (water) are key spatio-architectural sites. These “third places” are public but intimate social gathering spaces involve these substances in some way, alongside formal or informal routines and rituals before, during or after entry (Oldenberg, 1989; Soja, 1996).

I start with longitudinal observations of pollution and contamination over the course of my time in Morocco, and end with my more recent experiences during my last research period. These experiences all relate to the locus of the domestic spaces and their extensions, in which I include the hammam. The spatial and historical relationship between home, the hammam, *farán* (wood fired communal bread ovens), and mosque, is intimate.

Often, the hammam and *farán* physically share a fire – such that the man tending the bread oven is also overseeing the fire heating the water for the hammam. This is the case at the *farán* and hammam in the Agadir neighborhood, closest to my Moroccan family. Typically the mosque is located close to the hammam, since in order to pray on Fridays, the big ablutions need to be performed and those are only made possible with running water. Every neighborhood in the old medina of Fez is closely knit through the continual traffic between the hammam, *farán*, *hanut* (small dry goods store often with a selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, milk, oil and butter), and mosque. Not only are the medina neighborhoods designed in this way, but also the popular neighborhoods, such as Hay Agadir, my family’s neighborhood, which was built

towards the end of the protectorate. It has a similar feeling of residential density and the same composition of architectural and social elements.

Through this descriptive analysis, I not only provide a rich description of purity and pollution, but also a taste of life in the domestic sphere, tracing the things and their circulation to and from these spaces, illustrating the relationship between them, their importance, and highlighting, thereby, the treatment of sacred and profane, and my own reactions to these treatments. Ultimately, through painting a picture of the local community in Hay Agadir, from a perspective of the textures of daily life, I build on Anderson's explanation that pre-national communities built collective identity and belonging through religion. In a country like Morocco, where Islam is so omnipresent and dictated by law, Anderson's theories about pre-national communities still hold true today. In Fez, everyday enactments and annual religious holidays reinforce this sense of local community and belonging, but also a belonging to a much larger Muslim community, the *Ummah* (Anderson, 1983, pp 12-19).



Figure 6.1 *Allah, Al Watan, Al Malik*, (God, the Country, the King), Hillside, City of Agadir, Morocco, <https://Aziza.pinterest.com/pin/38210296817904399>

Indeed, Morocco's official motto is: *Allah, Al Watan, Al Malik*, which translates to "God, the Country, the King" (Figure 6.1). Implied within this dictum, and physically writ large outside in every major city in Morocco, is the ideology that the peoples' first allegiance is to Allah, who presides over more than just Morocco. Their second allegiance goes to the country or homeland, Morocco, itself, and finally their third allegiance is to the King. I posit that the socio religious activities around bread, blood and water generate both a sense of local and national belonging, which in turn extends to a sense of belonging to a larger transnational Moroccan and Muslim community extending beyond the borders of the neighborhood. While not an explicitly religious symbol in Islam, bread nonetheless carries religious and spiritual significance in North Africa. Sacrificial blood, on the other hand, *is* the direct result of a religious ritual practice, and bathing in the hammam with water creates the condition by which individuals become prepared to pray, so has direct ties to religion. Today, when transnational flows and citizenships are no longer as fixed as they once were, Anderson's theories of identity formation and belonging in a pre-national context are especially relevant. To be Moroccan is not defined, necessarily, by living within the borders of the Moroccan state. The way blood and bread are treated is integral to producing Moroccan-ness and belonging into that community. Benedict Anderson's premise that religious practice generates a collective sense of identity in social contexts, applies also to the porous borders of a hyper-connected transnational world.

Local identity is also formed through mutually agreed upon organization of the world. In this case, an examination of the activities of daily life, such as bread-making, eating, bathing, and ritual sacrifice, issues of purity and pollution elucidate how local Fassi culture organizes and defines clean and dirty. Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* argues that the concept of dirt operates within a culturally relative system. Dirt itself is relative – nothing is inherently dirty

without the operational social and religious system surrounding it. She also suggests that a European idea of “dirt” is informed by our “knowledge of pathogenic organisms” (Douglas, 1966, 35). In many cases in Morocco, behaviors do not reflect an understanding of dirt as a pathogenic propagator and magical, superstitious or religious ideas about bodies, food and objects being protected by *baraka* seem stronger or more potent than Western ideas of medicine.

Daily ritual and mundane activities such as bread making, baking, cooking, eating, produce behaviors in adherence to the community’s belief systems. Saba Mahmoud, in her erudite volume *Politics of Piety*, theorizes that women participants in the mosque movement of Egypt produce a desire to be pious through their performance of commonplace daily activities such as cooking, cleaning and errands (4, 122-126). She suggests that piety is not an *a priori* state of mind, but rather, is generated by bodily practices that “become a condition of being” (122). My own work fills in the descriptive gaps that elucidate how these mundane daily activities produce a devoutness or religious integrity, and how the everyday elucidates this belief system. I add a new conceptual angle by describing also how these activities generate a logic, or a system for understanding what is sacred and what is polluted.

Towards the end of my research in Morocco in the summer of 2012, I became pathologically obsessed with contamination. Perhaps the concentrated focus on the hammam drew my attention disproportionately to the topic of purity and pollution. Perhaps my anxiety had become unmanageable, and I compensated by becoming hyper-aware of external sources of danger and contagion. Ultimately, I became dysfunctional in my ability to participate in the routine of my own daily life. Eating and bathing were increasingly difficult because of the paranoia. I could no longer put my lips to the coffee cups in cafés or trust food prepared in a restaurant, or even trust basic ingredients or products bought in a store. I couldn’t go to the

hammam without breaking out in bouts of itching. It took over four years to slowly recover from these excessive stress reactions until finally I was able to eat without panic. There are a number of diagnoses for my condition at that time, including a Western psychiatric approach and in Morocco, the belief that spirit possession causes such breaks from normative behavior. The more that issues of purity and contamination came up in my research, the more my own issues were activated and my own definitions of clean and dirty were challenged and disordered.

Part I: Bread

Throughout my stay in Fez, I was captivated by the public bread ovens, known in the colloquial as the *faran* (sing.; *faranat* pl.). The *faran* is a site where every family in the neighborhood interacted to some extent on a daily basis, to bring wooden boards or large metal sheet pans stacked with round loaves of unbaked bread, large sheet pans of cookies, or deep dishes of fish or meat to be cooked over the open flames. The alchemy of transforming raw to cooked, the delicious smells, the golden loaves of browned bread, waiting for their makers, their consumers, their eaters, the hands and mouths. The *faran* is impossible to ignore in conjunction with research on the hammam in Hay Agadir, whose entrance stood just twenty feet from the arched window to the faran. In front of the large structure housing the faran and the hammam was a small open square, where neighborhood kids played soccer, or hung out, adult men gathered and smoked, women congregated and talked. A little dry goods store, or *hanut* was located to the south of the hammam, and kids who had dropped off bread ran to buy a hard candy or piece of gum with the change left over from their payment for the bread baking service. In fact, this neighborhood was often referred to unofficially as *hay dyal l-faran*, neighborhood of the faran, because of the vibrant social life around the square in front of the faran and hammam.

I spent considerable time in a number of different *farán* in Fez. An uncle of the family owned a large *farán* in the Kasbah area of the old medina, several miles away. I also befriended and spent time in an additional *farán* in the old medina, close to the Hammam Sidi Azzouz on Talaa Saghira near Bab Boujoulud, but the *farán* in hay Agadir was the closest to my heart because it was in this *farán* within which my own family's bread was brought and baked.

Bread and *Baraka*

Bread is central to every day life in Morocco. A meal without bread isn't a meal. Moroccans pay respect to bread above all other foods. Bread is said to carry *baraka* - a blessing that comes both from Allah and from the touch of the woman's hand that made it. When I first noticed family members licking crumbs from their fingers at the table, I was shocked at their strange manners, but later asked about this interest in crumbs and was told that little bits of bread could not be thrown away because each individual crumb contains the spirit and blessing of the woman who imparted it with her labor and care - *baraka*. If a single bit of bread is left on the table, it is then even more heavily laden with *baraka* and should therefore not be left uneaten. If crumbs are dropped on the table, they are deliberately smashed into the obligatory plastic topped tablecloth until they stick to the tips of the fingers, and then licked off. It is said that if these little crumbs of bread or cake are eaten with fingers directly off the table itself, then angels will eat with you and watch over you.

In neighboring Algeria, according to Scholliers (2001), bread is considered to have *baraka* because it is such a staple of the diet and crucial for survival (p. 200). Indeed, the conversation around the rain or lack of rain in Morocco is incessant and relates to the success or failure of the year's wheat crop. If there is no rain, there is no wheat, and if there is no wheat, there is no bread and historically, a large proportion of the population might starve. Thus bread

has an economic and religious significance. Internalizing and embodying bread is a way of gaining unity with the divine, or closeness with the spiritual world, but maintaining and sustaining oneself in the material world. Eating of the material world brings one closer to the divine.

Many scholars address this concept of *baraka* with reference to North African spiritual practices and beliefs (see Crapanzano 1980, Geertz 1968, Hammoudi 1997, Jansen, 2001, Kapchan 1996, Scholliers 2001), but I was surprised when I learned that food can also be imbued with this property. Some unspoken rules about bread, over the years became apparent: bread should never be discarded, wasted or thrown away. Bread that is too dry or old to eat is saved in a bag and given away to or sold to a local individual who comes by each house to collect it weekly. It is then sold to make feed for domesticated animals, or fed directly to them.

If bread rises well, it is particularly valuable and good. Abdelhai Diouri (1994) explores the symbolic fecundity of bread, and of leavening in his article dealing with Ramadan in Morocco. *Khmira*, the word for yeast and other leavening, is used in Moroccan Arabic idioms and metaphors of procreation, richness and prosperity and is often associated with *baraka* and blessings (249). Whether or not something rises (grows, matures, moves forward, succeeds, procreates, etc.) literally or symbolically is important, whether it be bread baked at the faran, butter cake baked at home or the thriving of a child.

Bread made by hand *khbz dyal dar* (literally: bread of the home) has *baraka*, but commercial bread, or *khbz dyal znqa* (literally: street bread), which is made in part with the help of machines and lacks substantial human touch is thus considered less wholesome and lacking in *baraka*. Also, the purity, cleanliness and character of the baker is questioned. Ironically, bread touched and fashioned by human hands is considered less spiritually contaminated than bread

that is mass-produced. More obviously, street bread is considered impure because of a lack of quality in the flour, yeast, or other ingredients. The fact that the bread is made in an industrial setting relegates it to a lesser status and *kima*, value. One interlocutor, who lived in the countryside, made the assumption that city dwellers always ate this commercial bread, or that they made their bread at home in gas ovens: “You eat butagaz bread...your bread is mixed with sand.” Anything made on gas rather than fire, and anything made by machine was considered inferior. There was often a clear dichotomy constructed between what is made at home and what is made commercially not only regarding bread – one being sacred and the other polluted. Indeed, I have found little stones in my commercially bought bread, a disturbing and unsettling discovery.

Related to this idea of purity and protection emanating from that which is touched by a body, by real hands, with human care, is the concept of *niya* or intention. In Islam good, pious intention is often considered as important as good action. If a Muslim makes a mistake, it is said that Allah is forgiving as long as the intention was pure. Incorporating good intention and care into a work: bread, food, a product, imbues that work with *baraka* and protection. When something is touched by a good intentioned person, it is more authentic than something produced by a machine.

The notion of *baraka* in food falls into relief through the tensions between clean and dirty, sacred and polluted. For example, it was clear through my interviews that the bread baked in the *farān* was clean, good, and healthy. Bread bought in the stores was contaminated with sand, or poisoned by *butagaz*. Despite the elevation of homemade bread to a sacred status, women often prepare their bread while sitting on the bare ground of the kitchen or sitting room. One of the most striking things about watching the bread dough kneaded was the fact that the kneading often takes place on a large, round, rust-colored earthenware plate, often on the *floor* of the

kitchen. Women sit with their legs wide spread and the plate between them. Their body weight forward, they lean into the bread dough and knead it with a steady rhythm. This is particularly striking since the opening of the legs and placement of the bread between them, is evocative of birthing, and the private parts associated with sexuality, menstruation and contamination. The process of bread-making is not unlike child rearing and birthing, however. It takes not only a certain amount of labor, but also patience and careful tending of the dough in its various stages of preparation.

In fact, much food preparation takes place on kitchen floors rather than on the counters. The ground of the flat outdoor roof space is also used to cook for larger gatherings or parties. Seeing women making food on the floor violates most Western sensibilities about high and low, clean and dirty. In fact, in prior observations, I have seen cooked food in pots, bowls or plates, or food that is cooling or waiting for some other preparation set down on the ground space while the women attend to other tasks. While this makes sense, given the limited counter space, it nonetheless challenged my own comfort levels regarding acceptable and safe food preparation. Where in the West we let a pie cool by the open window, or leave something on a counter top, in Fez, pots of stews, uncovered roasted green peppers, cooked and uncooked chickens on trays, and salads sit on the ground for their next phase of preparation or in waiting to be served. With this proximity to the ground came a sense of unease that dirt or dust or refuse might contaminate the raw or cooked food. This may or may not be an indication of my predilection for fear of contamination.



Figure 6.2 Tea time in Fez: *qreshl* in its baking tray on the kitchen floor, and *sfinj* on plates.

In my Fassi family's home, bread was treated like a family member. It was carried upstairs, out of the kitchen to the warm second floor, to rest and slowly rise. The bread slept on a large metal pan, covered in thin, light pink or white fabric, cut to size. In the winter, the bread stayed in the kitchen to rise, since that was the warmest room in the house. Often I would come down from my bedroom in the morning, where the bread was snuggled warmly under a blue microfleece robe. The women of the house wore the robe at other times of day, but when the bread needed the warmth, they seemed happy to share.

During one period of time I stayed at the house, the tailor's teenaged apprentice, who worked just a few feet around the corner, was summoned regularly to come and pick up the

bread that had risen and was ready to be baked in the oven. Haj, the patriarch of the house, went slowly outside, down the stairs with his cane and his white robes, and asked the boy if he would *wssl* or deliver the bread to the *faran*. The boy always agreed to take the bread to and then pick it up again an hour or so later, for which he was given a small bit of change. Often it is the one of the boys of the house delivers the bread to the *faran*, or one of the women, but in this case all of the older boys were at school and the men and women at work.

One day Haj went down to look for the tailor's apprentice to take the bread to *faran*, but the young man was nowhere to be found. I offered to go in his place, but he wouldn't think of letting me. He kept insisting that it was *hashuma* (shameful for me to go) that they could light the *butagaz* (propane) oven up on the third floor where the bread could bake. But I knew from all of my discussions with many Moroccans about bread that the preference was to bake bread on fire, not in a gas-fueled oven. So, finally I convinced him, after many rounds of "yes," "no," and "*hashuma*," that I truly wanted to go, that it was interesting for my research and that he should let me. So I carried the four large round uncovered flat breads, stacked in two layers of two, separated by a rectangular piece of cut-up white cotton cloth. This may have been an old sheet, trimmed down to fit. They sat, expectant and plump, in a large rectangular metal tray, black and dented with use. I put on my brown *jellaba* (long robe for outside chores) and carried it to the side of my body, balancing the tray lengthwise on my hip. Amine, the five-year-old grandson of the Haj was told to accompany me, to make sure I didn't lose my way, even though I knew perfectly well where I was going. The Haj probably worried that I might meet some difficulties and he was sending Amine along as an added security measure so that I wouldn't make a misstep and so that the neighborhood knew to associate me with the family – so I would not be seen as an outsider who was questioned. While I had been seen in the neighborhood, and certainly

everyone knew that the son of the Haj had married an American, many had never seen me carrying bread to the ovens or walking that route. It might draw new attention to me or to the family.

Young Amine could have delivered the bread himself, but he was still too little to reliably carry the large tray on his own - too squirrely to be trusted. He darted up and down the steps as we climbed up the hill, then circled around me like a puppy, grabbing sticks on the ground and hitting branches with them, babbling loudly about the news of the neighborhood, the *farán*, the bread. We tunneled under the grapevine trellises and past the neighbor's fig trees and some chickens running about. Finally we arrived at the *farán* window where we dropped off the tray. "*Khbz dyal Rhenifel*" said Amine loudly, to no one in particular: "Rhenifel's Bread!" The he left me standing there and quickly sprinted off to the *hanut* across the dirt way to buy a small piece of candy, while I lingered to be sure the appropriate person knew whose bread it was that I was bringing. The young assistant at the *farán* grabbed the tray and slid it down on the ground near the other trays waiting in line for the fire. Ba Hamid, a dark black aged man with a dark wool cap, stood in a pit tending the fire, sliding, loading, moving and protecting the dozens of round loaves in the hot glowing oven. I stood a moment looking at our bread sitting there on the ground. It seemed anticlimactic to just let it go like that. It worried me that someone would lose track of it. How would all four loaves end up back on the same tray and not get mixed up with others?

Ba Hamid (literally father Hamid) told me with full authority that he can recognize the breads of each family just by sight. When asked how he did this he explained that each individual woman's bread has a specific form and design. Some families use a distinct type of wheat. Some add *smida*, a kind of heavy semolina flour, others grind their own wheat to certain identifiable textures. Plus there were also a number of varieties of wheat. Others add the wheat

husks or bran to the top of the bread. But mostly, he said, bread is like penmanship: each has his or her own handwriting even if all the letters or ingredients are the same. I asked him to explain some of the breads to me as they were coming out of the oven. He said, for example, “that is Fatima’s bread from the BenSaid family. She doesn’t knead her bread long enough. Zahara in that house is a better bread baker. This is so-and-so’s bread, but it never rises enough.” For 27 years he had been working in this neighborhood so he could describe with great precision the bread of each individual baker of each family. He knew all of the children in this generation as well, because they were often the ones to deliver the bread. So, regardless of the face of the bearer of bread (even faces he didn’t recognize), he would recognize the bread itself and to whose family it belonged. In this case I had brought Nour’s bread from the Rhenifel family, and there would be no confusion.

Cookies in the Hammam

There were times in the neighborhood when an unusual number of trays with little cookies would be carried back and forth from homes to the faran – trays balanced on heads and upon shoulders – an unequivocal sign that that a neighbor would soon be married or that a holiday or ceremony was coming. Men and women alike carried these trays – on the way to the faran, filled with melting ping-pong ball sized blobs–goopy and greasy on an enormous rectangular sheet pan. In each pan a rough piece of brown thick cardboard the size of a playing card sat in a corner with the family’s name scribbled in Arabic in blue Bic pen ink. The one in charge of the *farán*, the *farnatchi*, might be able to identify everyone’s bread, but no family would risk losing a full tray of cookies made with expensive butter and nuts.

When a tray is picked up from the faran, warm and smelling delicious, the kids along the route call out “*duwq-ni!*” - give me a taste! If someone asks, in Morocco, for food or water,

there is an obligation to share. So, there is always a calculation for how many cookies might be lost along the way. One afternoon I was with a group of women from the family at the hammam. We had just finished a several hour sweat and scrub in the hot rooms of the bathhouse, and we were sitting on the long white wooden benches, heavy and sleepy, hair still dripping and towels drenched, in the large rectangular changing room. Other women were moving about, changing, chattering, moving bags and towels about. The changing process was, and usually is, languid. Some women just sat or laid for a few minutes making the transition back to the cooler air and the outer world. I was shuffling through the shared bag, looking for my clean clothes, while wrapped in towels. In walked a neighbor woman with a big tray of cookies that she had just picked up from the faran, just a few feet away. Some of her family had just finished in the hammam too, and she came inside to talk with them while they got dressed. She gave tastes of her precious cookies not only to her family members, but everyone in the changing room – perhaps fifteen of us. The tray was carried around and everyone was offered a small sweet morsel – warm and fresh out of the oven. This was a memorable cookie, because everything tastes amazing after sweating for a couple of hours. The first taste that passes your lips is like the first drink of water after crossing the desert. With the entrance of the cookies to the hammam, it was as if a party had started: cackles and laughter, snacking, discussion of the delicious cookies, and the upcoming wedding. I was offered a second cookie – a dense, golden brown, round, almond *ghriba*. The upcoming festivities and celebrations were often tangible in the rooms of the hammam, and on the streets of the neighborhood, and the experience was collective, and joined us all through our vulnerable states of undress and through *shared food*.

Ramadan: Breaking Bread with Brothers and Sisters

There is no better example than Ramadan to illustrate how the mundane act of eating can create a profound, collective, religious experience. In Fez and Meknes, families usually started by breaking the fast with dates and milk (and sometimes coffee and a cigarette) followed by *harira*, a tomato and chickpea soup, paired with *shabakiya*, a honey-soaked rose shaped cookie. The table overflowed with other delicacies including olives, salads, and wide array of leavened and unleavened breads. Some were fried and doughnut-shaped (*sfinj*) and some were large thick yeast crepes folded in quarters (*bghrir*). Some were flat, large and flakey (*mlawi*), some round leavened (*msimin*) or my favorite, the square dense flat crusty breads (*bghrir*). Special variations of all of these: *mlawi*, *bghrir* and *msimin*, normally plain flat breads eaten with honey, olive oil and olives at tea time, were flavored, filled and often fried during Ramadan with fruits, nuts and sweet spices, or with savory, heavy ingredients like meats, tomato sauces and fat (*mlawi b-shahma*). Women lined the streets in the medina and the Ville Nouvelle at sunset selling their freshly made breads under the large decorative lights, hung especially for Ramadan. The streets bustled with activity as families gathered last-minute breads, sweets and other essentials for the breaking of the fast.

The behaviors of the Prophet Mohammad are paradigmatic for all Muslims, and everyone strives to emulate Mohammed's behavior and good deeds on earth. He was in his cave at Mount Hira near Mecca when the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed through the angel Gabriel, during the month of Ramadan on the Lailat al Qadar (Campo, 2009). Presumably Mohammed had little access to food or drink during his retreat in the cave. Mohammed wanted all of his followers to experience such hunger as a way of developing empathy with the poor and gratitude

for other material blessings, so Ramadan functions both to commemorate the first Qur'anic revelations and to foster compassion and thankfulness.

One Ramadan I decided to fast along with the rest of Morocco. Prior to this, I had been invited by families to break the fast at sun down, and it had been delicious and interesting, but when I participated in the fast, the experience was entirely transcendent. On one evening I went to a working-class restaurant on the main street, Hassan II in the Ville Nouvelle, sat down, and proceeded to wait, sit and wait with the population of the whole city of Fez, indeed the whole country of Morocco, hungry, at a table, for the unmistakable sound of the cannon boom, signaling that the sun has gone down below the horizon and once more food, drink, cigarettes and other substances may pass the lips. Everyone looks at one another, says bismillah, in the name of God, and then partakes simultaneously of milk, dates, bread, and any other food or drink at arm's length. In this single moment I had never quite felt so empathetically bonded with humanity – and it sent chills up my spine. It was a collective feeling of union that did not match any of my experiences, and I was hooked. I couldn't wait to fast another day so I could experience this tremendous satisfaction of tasting food simultaneously with millions of other Muslims. Even though I was not Muslim myself, I felt I belonged to something. I was humbled and inspired. It was the feeling of becoming one with something much larger than myself. At this time, I did not think about the breads or cookies I bought from the women on the street. I bought and ate them with the rest of the crowds, and without too much consequence (although I was sometimes so full, I needed to lie down).

Dirty Hands in the *Hanut*

Certainly during Ramadan, many speciality cookies are baked at the faran. During this more recent visit to Fez, when watching cookies or bread go by me in the streets, only sometimes,

I noticed, were the trays covered up. Often they were open to the air, and to the dust and wind, and the peering eyes. This concerned me – and caused me to worry about contamination. When doing research in the faran I frequently noticed how often bread drops to the floor but is quickly picked up without hesitation – the three-second rule is universal. In general, when bread is sold, the hands touch bread directly and pass it along without the use of the sterile plastic gloves, thin parchment papers, or paper bags we are accustomed to in the West. I have been told by numerous sources in Fez that bread does not transmit disease, that it has *baraka* and thus if dropped or touched by contaminated hands, it will remain pure.

Bread is so revered, holy and imbued with *baraka*, that it has somehow become invincible to disease and contagion, pathogens and dirt. Once baked, is not coddled or handled lovingly, the way one would expect a *baraka*-laden object to be. It is as though the bread is fortified and sturdy, and can be flung through the world *because* it is so strong. At the dining room table, bread is assertively slid, almost thrown to all corners of the table so each person has access to adequate wedges.

In my first year in Morocco, when told that bread “does not carry disease,” I found that to be interesting information, but didn’t question it, as I knew that I couldn’t change how bread was handled or sold. It served me well to accept this truth, and I was at that time under the spell of this fascinating country, Morocco. Indeed, in the 1830 Edinburgh Encyclopedia entry on the plague, it is claimed that in the Levant (eastern Mediterranean countries), bread is not believed to spread the plague, but that in Marseille, doctors disagreed with this opinion (p. 618). I looked past the dirty hands touching and handing my bread at the *hanut*, and even reveled in it, even after those hands handled my money and made change, even after handling eggs and butter and cleaning supplies, sweeping floors and weighing vegetables. I saw bread transported and thrown

into the back of hatchback cars, shoved into big old plastic bags, into big baskets or bins, placed on dirty counters in the *hanut*, on top of plastic bags or wrappings, on other items for sale: cigarettes, candy. It is flung about, and the flat round loaves are sometimes used as a tray upon which to balance other items. Only in the most French of bakeries do you see care taken to place a barrier between bread and the naked hand – usually a small square piece of thin brown paper - a little *carette*, to politely capture the bread. But in the little corner store, the *hanut*, young hands sometimes use a little square of newspaper or a recycled piece of paper from someone's school notebook, to grab and handle these round breads, but often they are just grabbed with the naked hand, like they are Frisbees at the park.



Figure 6.3 French *kumir* and Moroccan *khubz* at the medina *hanut*

In the summer of 2012, for the first time, I felt intense revulsion at the sight of bread being handled with dirty hands – an action that registered to me as disrespectful, to the bread, but also shockingly unsanitary. I especially felt disgust in the medina, when buying bread from the little shops. The *hanut* down the street from my house in the medina sold bread, but each time I tried, I couldn't buy it. I walked down my street, it led to the Talaa kabira, the main thoroughfare. Where my street t-boned with this main thoroughfare was a lively *hanut* selling candies, cigarettes, cleaning supplies, dried beans, flour, butter, candles, canned food, bottled water, lighters, and always French baguettes, *kumir*, and traditional round Moroccan bread loaves. With almost every trip past this store, I watched a transaction whereby bread was handed to a customer with thick, dirt encrusted hands. Hands that had not been washed. Hands that touched coins and paper bills and any number of dusty, grimy surfaces. The more I walked past this store, the more abhorrent I became of the bread and the dirt and the lack of sanitation. The idea that contagion is transferred from surface to surface or person to person isn't often acknowledged or addressed in many contexts in Morocco. Hands are ceremoniously washed before a formal meal by pouring cold water from a brass decanter over each guest's hands. A servant or family member pours the water as the right hand is briefly rinsed. Then a towel is passed around the circle, and used by one person after the next. In the daily routine of life, I don't recall any other family members washing their hands at the sink before the meal except me. And food is eaten using the right hand.

My revulsion did not end with the dirty hands handling the bread in the *hanut*. At this time, in the summer of 2012, I had rented a room in a beautifully restored house in the old city. While the interior space of the house was pristine and lovely, restored to the original architectural splendor of a traditional Fassi house, the immediate exterior streets were anything

but clean. Across the street, the public fountain was a space where neighbors gathered to collect water, but I also saw people using the area to prepare food. I felt disgust at the sight of a man cutting up raw tomatoes on an aluminum lid, on a ledge next to the filthy fountain. I felt disgust at the lack of soap in public bathrooms, at the pools of brown water from other bodies in the hammam. But what seemed to go unnoticed by others gave me pause to consider, what was it that disgusted others, Moroccans, about me?

Part II: Blood

According to the Qur'an, blood of animals is *haraam*, so prohibited from human consumption. With the exception of the blood that results from the loss of virginity and the first blood that spurts from the neck of a sacrificial animal, blood is considered impure. Menstrual blood is considered polluting as is the blood draining from an animal whose meat will later be consumed. I once stood next to a sheep on 'Aid l-Kbir as it was sacrificed, and my khaki pants become blood stained and warm from the spray of blood. I was horrified, thinking that I was somehow cursed, covered in dangerous blood of an animal that was still moving, but the family assured me that I was the recipient of good luck and *baraka* had been bestowed upon me.

The most important Muslim holiday of the year, 'Aid l-Kbir (Modern Standard Arabic: *'Id al-Adha*) falls approximately two months after the end of the month of Ramadan in the Islamic lunar calendar and is the holiday in which every family ritually sacrifices a sheep. Preparation for the sacrifice began several weeks before the actual event, starting with the buying and fattening of the sheep along with food and pastry preparation. This was often food preparation on a large scale and as a broadly shared experience among neighborhood members, Fassis, and Moroccans, and among the larger community of Muslims, the *Ummah*.

This holiday reenacts the myth as told in the Qur'an (Sura 37: 100-112) of Ibrahim who receives a message from Allah through a dream. He is ordered to sacrifice his only son Ismail. Honoring Allah's request above all else, Ibrahim begins the sacrifice but Allah saves Ismail, by putting a sheep in his place. Thus Ibrahim is rewarded for his devout and unquestioning faith, and becomes a model for other Muslims. The Prophet Mohammad at one point ordered the *Ummah*, or Muslim community, to engage in a yearly ritual emulating this event, giving birth to the holiday, as it is now known. If they can afford it, each family unit is required to slaughter a sheep on the day of the holiday. Celebrating and reenacting the devotion and faith of Ibrahim, this ritual renews and bolsters a sense of belonging to a larger religious community of believers (Anderson, 1983).

I posit that the religious activity around the holiday, in addition to the religious ideologies and activities around bathing and even bread making, is a formative community building practice. Anderson, in his discussion of belonging in the context of pre-nationalism, suggests that religion and its practice formed a foundation for generating a sense of collective identity (12-13). To make his point, Anderson discusses the practice of inserting seemingly incongruous images into religious iconography of European painting and medieval church stained glass. For example religious icons such as Jesus or the Virgin Mary are outfitted in contemporaneous clothing and accessories referencing the location and period of the community who might see them. In this way real local characters are re-contextualized into visual images, contradicting historical accuracy, and intentionally inserted into a religious world that purposefully unites a much larger social body: the group of adherents to one religious faith. Local communities have and continue to paint themselves, quite literally and figuratively, onto the imagery of the profound and eternal truths, making "timeless" stories localized and more accessible (Anderson, 1983).

In Morocco, Islam forbids visual representations of living beings because this kind of iconography is considered to be challenging and undermining the perfection of Allah - the only one who can give life. Therefore, messages that denote a timeless belonging to the religious community are enacted spatially and ritually in events such as the ‘Aid l-Kbir sacrifice, instead of visually through paintings or stained glass. On the local and international level, individuals are painting themselves into the myth of ‘Aid l-Kbir and the story of Ibrahim, and thus entering into this discussion with Allah within a particular religious story. My thick description of such practices, treatment of the sacrificial body, the bread, and the human body itself further Anderson’s discussion of belonging, but I apply these ideas to a post-national context in the city of Fez, and the country of Morocco, where Islam is omnipresent. It is easy to imagine that the sheep slaughter is the same in all Islamic countries, but in fact, Morocco has its own religious traditions, and even the neighborhood of Hay Agadir performs its own localized traditions and practices contributing to identity formation, many of which bring to light compelling perspectives on pollution and purity, clean and dirty.

Surrounding this enactment or performance of this timeless ritual sacrifice, are a number of local commercial activities and players that spring up and interact. The interplay, in these ritual spaces and times, between the sacred and the commercial is pronounced. Several days before the holiday, the space of the neighborhood shows obvious commercial hints of the upcoming sacrifice. These commercial posts are set up such that most every neighborhood resident is guaranteed to pass by and pay a visit. In the three days before the day of the ‘Aid, I noticed the charcoal sellers on the side of the road, with their heaps of blackened featherweight wood. I walked with the eldest woman of the house, the mother, to get *fkhr*, or charcoal. We hovered with the other neighbors, waiting for our turn. The seller was saying, “this was the

finest quality...the best you can buy"...and we bought several kilos, which were weighed on a counterweight scale then stuffed into big black plastic bags that I then carried the three blocks down the dirt roads and cement steps to the house. This charcoal was used on the first day of the 'Aid to cook the cumin-, salt- and paprika-seasoned lamb heart, lacy fat and liver on kebabs.

A few days before 'Aid l-Kbir, just outside of the entrance to the hammam, the knife sharpeners, with their semi-truck tire sized whetstones set up a large knife sharpening station, in the open air. Everyone in the neighborhood delivered their knives to this jovial, smiling knife sharpener, individually wrapped in newspaper and labeled, dropped them off and picked them up later. The knife sharpener was positioned in between the *hammam*, or public bathhouse, and the *faran*, or public oven. Each time I passed by the knife sharpener I felt a twinge of anticipation. There was something tangible "in the air." This was not my holiday. I didn't have a repository of memories associated with this day to draw upon for reference. Still, I had the feeling that something was coming, almost like a string of Christmas lights might signal Christmas in my own hometown. Each time I passed by the whetstone knife-sharpening station, local children, men, bathers leaving the hammam, and other hangers-on surrounded it. The local community became more and more visible outside of the home as the holiday drew near through the emergence of small but necessary business enterprises. The day of the 'Aid, after the morning sacrifice, decapitated sheeps' heads were brought to small fires that dotted the streets, manned by neighborhood children. For a few coins, they cooked the sheep head in the fire until it was properly blackened and charred, then delivered it directly to the door. Individuals of many generations interacted through these highly localized upstart enterprises and yet all of these commercial ties linked into the larger story of Ibrahim, who in turn represents the exemplar in spiritual devotion and the union with Allah through his sacrifice.

Sacrificial Blood: Body of the Animal

In a highly structuralist and Freudian interpretation of the sacrifice associated with this holiday, in Morocco, Coombs-Schilling suggests that the sacrifice is a means of asserting male dominance and is an “active attempt at intercourse with the sacred” (248). Thrusting of knife and spilling of blood echoes the first blood of sexual intercourse on the wedding night, which was a prominent feature in traditional Moroccan weddings (Hammoudi, 1993, p. 122). The blood shed on the pantaloons-like undergarments of the virgin bride must be displayed to guests to announce her purity and to prove that the marriage has been consummated. Thus the blood shed through the vagina by the breaking of the hymen symbolizes purity and sacred union. Outside of these two examples, blood is considered impure. Menstrual blood is to be washed away, as is the blood drained from animal carcasses meant for human consumption.

The concept of sacrifice is foundational in Morocco, and its practice and the blood and bodies it generates suggest beliefs around pollution and purity, dirty and clean.

Ritual sacrifice connects the material and metaphysical worlds.

Coombs-Schilling and Hammoudi refute Hubert and Mauss’ classic suggestion that sacrifice is a gift. Rather, Coombs-Schilling suggests, echoing Anderson, sacrifice operates on multiple nuanced levels of interpretation whereby every sacrificial event on the occasion of this holiday reconnects the local actors with the original characters in the Ibrahim myth and thus makes a connection with the divine (242-248).

While Coombs-Schilling mentions “Moroccans” and sacrifice in her essay, her discussion does not give detailed ethnographic descriptions of such sacrificial events on the ground. Her assertions suggest further lines of questioning and observation for future research. First, to what

extent is the event a male-dominated one? In both sacrifices I have witnessed in Morocco, although the person holding the knife was male, the women were all actively taking part in helping to prepare the scene and in fact, they were often times the ones *directing the action*. I thereby examine whether sacrifice is a male dominated activity by considering the female players in the performance.

Lambs to Slaughter

The days leading up to the sacrifice were filled with scenes of sheep: sheep on mens' shoulders, sheep walked along the streets on rope-leashes, sheep on the fronts of bikes, sheep in carts, on car roofs, in trucks. Sheep were bleating on the streets, bleating from the rooftops, from the open windows, from deep inside homes. There were also sheep *suqs*, at various points around town. Each day a group of trucks gathered in the large open space near the neighborhood. The men of the household made several trips to the *suq* to examine the animals, to ask prices, to be privy to the bargaining, and to see who was buying and what was available. At the *suq* were vendors cooking sausages over smoky charcoal and selling them to hungry consumers. Only a few blocks away from the house where I was staying, I perched myself at an overlook at a point from which I could look down at the sheep market, 50 feet below. I saw a throng of bodies milling about. The animals were distributed around an outer ring of this crowded open space, the trucks were parked beyond the sheep and the shoppers milled about in the middle. Thick smoke billowed up from the kebab and sausage vendors, and the scene evoked for me the act of buying a Christmas tree in December. My own family in the Seattle used to spend several hours examining many trees before selecting just the right one with which to honor the occasion of Christmas, but also the occasion of coming together as a family. The tree went on the top of the car, and on the way home, we passed cars that had similarly just selected their perfect tree, just

as in Morocco people passed by others who were also leading their sheep home. In fact, the open-air market was not the only place to buy your animal in Morocco. Just like Christmas trees are now often available from the front lots of grocery stores, sheep are also sold at Moroccan megastores (stores that carry food, drugs, furniture, clothing, etc.) such as *Marjane*. The sheep are gathered and displayed under a plastic yellow and white striped temporary tent, for a non-negotiable fixed price.

In recent years, religion and capitalism have begun to overlap in new visible ways in Morocco. What were once, private aspects of religious life, such as the sacrificial sheep, have become commercialized. Advertisements I noticed in Fez in the years from 2009-2012 opened up a window into the private domain, painting new, wide reaching narratives of familiar scenes. One such ad, from a national newspaper, depicted large holiday sheep alongside a man, who was walking it home. Both are looking directly into the camera, so appealing directly to the desires of the consumer, who presumably would also like to be walking home with a fat, healthy and expensive sheep. The ad suggested that consumers could buy a sheep using credit with no interest (for an extra fee) through a private bank. Because interest-bearing credit is forbidden by Islam, businesses in Morocco have found clever ways of circumventing the interest. They charge “fees” rather than interest. Similarly, dishwashers and refrigerators have become more attainable for the average Moroccan family and many advertisements promote similar credit offers. Thus the economic/commercial realm and the spiritual/private realm are overlapping in new ways at a variety of junctures.

Buying a sheep, according to the families I spoke with, was often an all-day affair, usually attended by the men of the family, and the big purchase is preceded by much discussion and contemplation between family members. There are various types of sheep. Some are given

an all grain diet, others are allowed to graze on grass alone (the equivalent of the U.S. “free-range”) although these, I am told, are not desirable since they never get fat enough to be tender. There are others that are fattened up on commercial feed. My family avoided this type and opted for a hybrid version that had grazed part of its life, but was then fattened up on corn and grains its last few months.

The day before the sacrifice, the sheep arrived at the door with Hicham. He was also the one who would be performing the sacrifice the next day. Although he was not the oldest male in the household, he was the only male capable of performing the duty. The oldest male was too ill. The others were not devout enough in their practice of Islam. According to the family, only a household member who is a practicing Muslim (one who goes to Mosque regularly and does not drink) may actually sacrifice the sheep (and thereby occupy the symbolic position of Ibrahim).

The sheep entered the house and stayed with a small group of about 6 of us for about a quarter of an hour, in the entry to the living room. Hicham calmed it down, rubbed its head, while holding it by its horns and letting the children touch it. The sheep was agitated and it defecated several times on the cold tile floor. The mother of the house quickly cleaned up the mess. Eventually the sheep was led up two flights of stairs and tied securely to the exposed pipes in a small room on third floor, near the roof top terrace, all of which was directed by the woman of the house. This small room has a floor drain and a showerhead and is sometimes used for bathing in the summer. With a supply of water and straw, the sheep was kept locked inside this room for the night, but at around 2 A.M. I heard the sheep throwing itself against the walls with violent desperation. The house shook. Its bleats echoed and I couldn't sleep. I felt certain that the sheep would kill itself from all its thrashing, or that out of pure fear, it would be sure to die by morning. But all was well when I woke up in the morning and went downstairs to find the

usual spread of breakfast on the table: a shiny silver pot and white plastic pot on a silver tray lined with a white lacy rubber place mat. The pots were filled with hot sweet mint tea and coffee with milk; there were hard-boiled eggs, olive oil, black olives, honey, and orange marmalade, all presented lovingly on flower-rimmed or orange iridescent plates. Homemade bread and French baguettes overflowed from a cloth napkin lined basket. A jar of *Happy* (a hydrogenated oil, chocolate and hazelnut spread) also sat on the table. I drank my mint tea and dipped my bread in olive oil and marmalade, then quickly climbed the stairs to watch the preparations on the roof.

The mother of the family prepared a henna paste, and applied some to the forehead of the sheep. She then bustled about as four brothers, including Hicham, held various parts of the sheep steady. The sheep was pressed to the ground on its side, facing towards Mecca. A firm grip on its neck and six hands pushed down the head and body so that the jugular was easily accessible. Hicham said “bismillah” in the name of Allah...and then the knife, sharpened the day before, up by the *hammam*, deftly punctured the neck and sliced a wide gash into the flesh. Blood rushed out and onto the floor of the roof¹⁹. The sheep’s legs kicked wildly and clattered against the rooftop. We all watched. I clenched my jaw, took a step back, and choked back a tear. I wasn’t sure if it was a tear of sadness for the loss of life or a knee-jerk reaction to the gushing blood. I stood next to the two daughters of the eldest brother. The daughters were 15 and 13 at the time, and planted firmly next to me, not flinching and not taking their eyes off of the event. I asked them if it made them sad to see the animal die. They said “no,” blankly, “because he is already in paradise.”

¹⁹ In the past, the mother used to save this first sacrificial blood because it is said to have healing and protective properties, especially for the feet. She would apply the blood to her feet. She no longer does this.

I witnessed two sacrifices on that particular holiday in 2009, one at the home of my large family and the other at the home of the eldest son who lived in the same neighborhood several doors away. It was the same routine in both homes: After the sheep's throat is slit, while uttering bismillah, they waited until it stopped kicking and moving, then it was quickly decapitated. The head was placed away from the body, and was arranged, in this case, by a woman, to face the audience of human onlookers. I watched the placement of the head. It was moved yet again, to a more elevated position, but also facing the audience, so it could see us, and we could see its eyes.

After the sheep is skinned, blown up, skinned, disemboweled, then strung up with rope to hang from a pole for the blood to drain, the head, hoofs and organ meats, in both cases, were collected by the woman of the house and brought down to the kitchen in large blue plastic bowls. The youngest brother Younnes, a young man of around 26, the two young daughters, and I walked a blue plastic bowl containing the head and four hoofs outside and down the block. There, the group of boys had already started roasting several heads, and the neighborhood reeked of burning wool and flesh. It had rained the night before, so small puddles dotted the gutters, sidewalks and streets and by now many of the puddles had turned red from the blood runoff. The girls exclaimed that there wasn't the "feeling of 'Aid" in the air. I asked them what they meant. They said it just didn't feel festive – maybe it was the gloomy day and the heaviness of the rain and blood.

From the rooftops we had seen neighbors stringing up their carcasses. As far as I could see, the rooftops had the same scene: families in various stages of sacrifice. Along the streets, those without roofs took turns sharing the courtyard space to slaughter their animals. Up the road, we walked by many-storied apartment buildings with several sheep still waiting their turn outside. Blood, wetness, and the heaviness of death were everywhere, with small fires every

block or so, along the side of the road. I noticed the man in charge of the public ovens sitting on a low wall, watching people coming and going. He was quiet and contemplative. His ovens were still not lit, as everyone was too busy with their sheep. Nobody was baking bread this morning as it wasn't necessary for the morning meal. Youssef, the youngest brother told me that the day of the sacrifice it is said that all the cats hide. There were, indeed, no cats to be seen. They are afraid of the smell of death. They appear, he said, the next day, to seek out the freshly cooked meat. The scene was an eerie and heavy display. Carcasses could be seen hanging everywhere: on rooftops, through doorways, outside front doors. The air was wet and cold and lethargic. Blood was on the roads and in houses.

I was relieved to return to the house, which was full of life and energy. The low round table in the living room, which serves as the dining table as well, had been moved from its normal place in the main salon to the entry vestibule. Another table from a more interior salon space had been set contiguous to it so that a maximum work area was created. A coal-burning brazier had been taken out and set up in the kitchen to roast the organ meats. Every family member, men, women and children, including the brother's family down the street, sat around those two tables and watched or helped in the preparation of the liver and the heart meat. This was the only time I had seen men more actively engaged in food preparation than women. One of the elder brothers was in charge of the entire affair: he directed the cutting, seasoning and the skewering of the cubed organ meat while the older women popped in and out of the kitchen, readying the brazier and prepared the intestines and stomach, intermittently checking on the men and their organ meats.

Later that evening once the sun had set and we had eaten our fill of heart meat, a group of us drove to visit a sister on the other side of town. She had sacrificed her own small sheep with

her husband and two boys. Her neighborhood bordered the medina, or old city of Fez, and was a more densely populated, poorer neighborhood. It was raining and dark when we arrived and as I stepped out of the car, the scene was pure carnage. The drainage here was not as effective as that of the neighborhood where I was living. The contrast between the pious and sacred against commercialism was striking. People walked about in their best clothes among remnants of death. Entrails, tufts of wool, candy wrappers and dead rats were strewn through the cobblestone alleyways. It smelled of urine and blood, burnt wool and coffee. My senses were overwhelmed by what seemed to me to be a dangerous level of contamination in the streets.

I realize now, in retrospect, that this horror was a precursor to my full-blown panic reaction to contamination and pollution a few years later. I was still able, at that time, to stifle my anxiety and find some solace in the observation that those around me were calm and accepting of the situation. Since all of the animals that day had been sacrificed in the name of Allah, was it impossible, perhaps, for anyone else to think of such things? Was everything we avoided stepping upon blessed because of its religious associations? I was in such a state of disgusted shock that I didn't have the stomach to ask at that time. I seemed to be the only one tiptoeing with paranoia over bits of wool, puddles of blood and a smattering of bonbon sized excrement on the uneven dark cobblestone. We rounded a bend and wet wool hides were stacked on the side of the street, waist high. The sheer numbers of fresh remnants of death served as yet another shock. Never has the gravity of pollution and the longing for cleanliness been more defined for me. The scene seemed entirely normal for everyone else. Is it merely an extension of the re-enactment story, Ibrahim's unity with the divine? Did the aftermath of the story always look like this: the commerce on the side of the road, the filth and the stench? Is it all sacred, thus clean and blessed? Why is there is somehow no sense of disgust or shock on the part of anyone else?

Years later I asked some family members about the sight of blood on the streets in the evening of ‘Aid l-Kbir – whether it bothered them. They didn’t have much to say except that “it’s normal” and some people are bothered by the act itself.

It was raining lightly, that evening, another blessing from Allah, and the windows on the cars were steamed up and foggy. It was cold outside and the streets were filled with people walking, and the cafes were the only places of business to open that evening. Butchers would be closed for a week following the ‘Aid. The *hanut*, or small neighborhood grocery stores where milk, dry goods, shampoo and other necessities can ordinarily be bought at almost anytime, would also closed for the next few days. People were walking the streets, families were out, festivities were somehow in the air, and yet it was wet, dark and dense. The hides stacked up on the side of the road were slowly being stacked into small delivery trucks where they will be driven to and unloaded into the tanneries at the edge of the medina, not further than half a mile away.

Finally we enter the home of Aziza where the contrast between inside and out, clean and polluted, light and dark could not have been more pronounced. Her apartment was reached after climbing two flights of stairs in complete darkness. Upon crossing the threshold of her door, light and order reigned. The red couches were arranged geometrically along the back walls of the large living room. Small pretty plates of yellow popcorn were stationed in regular intervals on the small coffee tables. A shimmering crystal chandelier glimmered above. In the kitchen was a large oval plate heaped with flower shaped cookies. Each cookie had a dot of jam in the center. The plate was placed on top of the low refrigerator opposite the sheep carcass, which was hanging next to the sink from an iron bar. The iron bar crossed over the length of the kitchen and was supported on window frames on either end of the room. I washed my hands in the sink

as my left forearm brushed the flesh of the hanging body. It was a small, young sheep. Aziza's family could not afford anything larger. This holy dead body was placed where it was impossible not to come in contact with it. Was this the only place it could hang?

Aziza showed me the sheep's brain, which she was keeping in the refrigerator until the morning. She had cut the skull in half, she explained, to remove the brain. Would I like some, cooked with eggs? I declined, although I felt honored to have been offered her favorite part. We returned to the salon, or living room, and drank sweet mint tea, ate flower cookies and popcorn in the brightness without saying much to each other. It was a relaxed silence.

Sleeping with the Sacrificial Body

The next morning, back at the home in Hay Agadir, on my way to the second floor sink at the top of the stairway, I encountered Hicham who was sleepily making his way down the stairs from the third floor. I asked if he had slept up there with the sheep carcass? He said no, until I asked him again. He had. The mother was just on her way up to with a large knife to cut off some shoulder and neck meat for the tajine stew for lunch that day. We all went up to the small bedroom on the third floor where the sheep had rested that night. It was placed on a small coffee table, on its side. Hicham had slept in the bed next to it that night. I asked if it bothered him to sleep in the same room as the dead animal, but his response was that "we are good friends" and indeed, they had shared an intimate moment of death and to utilize the Ibrahim metaphor fully, they had reached a simultaneous union with Allah. But was this assertion of Coombs-Schilling's – that an intercourse with the divine was at play? Did Hicham feel so close to the spirit of this body that he was drawn to sleep near it? Is sleeping with the sacrifice necessary or preferred, by doctrine? Several days later I asked a family member why he could have been possessed to sleep with the dead animal in the same room and was told quite simply that Hicham wanted to "guard

the sheep.” Apparently the theft of sacrificial sheep was becoming more and more common. Thieves climb onto rooftops and break into rooms to take the meat and sell it. Thus this was not so much about a spiritual union with the medium to Allah, but rather the protection of an economic and spiritual asset. Again this tension between economics and the spiritual raises itself.

Bread after Blood

The day after the sacrifice, Fazia, one of the sisters who lives on the Atlantic coast with her family of six came to visit the family. Particularly large breads were made that morning to accommodate the occasion. The breads were particularly lovely and golden. A younger sister who still lives at home, Nour, had made them. “Who made the bread?” asked Assia, Fazia’s 16-year old daughter. The reply from Nour was, “Well, who makes bread here? I did, of course.” It was a given that Nour made the bread, even though each weekday when Nour was at work her mother made the bread. The task of bread-making traditionally falls to the daughter-in-law or the daughters if they are in the house. At other times I had stayed with this family there had been young girls, household help, or *khddamaat*, that would take on the task of bread-making. Assia grabbed the bread and began scoring it for lunch. The tajine was almost ready and the three of us were in the kitchen together. She scored the round breads, which were the size of a vinyl record in circumference, deeply with a sharp knife - once in one direction, and twice in the opposite. This was the standard geometry of bread-scoring for the family. It is thus easily broken at the table with hands into six pieces. Once at the table, the bread is usually distributed by the head of the household, or by someone of authority. It is placed in front of the person on the table itself, or offered to them by hand. Sometimes bread is tossed down, or slid into place in front of a diner. Bread is a utensil. There is usually no silverware on the table. When I first joined the family for meals, they provided me with a spoon and a little plate so that I would feel more comfortable

eating. This always made me feel relegated to the role of a small pet, coddled because of my cultural handicap. I wanted to learn how to eat like everyone else, and never used the spoon. Eventually it stopped showing up in front of my place at the table.

Small pieces of bread are broken off, and with the thumb, index finger and middle finger of the right hand, the eater commences to *ghammes*, or use the bread to absorb the sauce and pick up meat and vegetables from the communal bowl. There are, of course, unspoken rules about double-dipping and leaving your crumbs behind to swim in the tajine. Nobody ever runs out of bread. Before finishing a piece of bread, another one appears in front of you, thanks to your host or your father or a family member. If the bread supply is dwindling, someone, usually a young boy of the family, is quickly sent to the store to buy some *khbz dyal znqa* “commercial bread/bread of the street” just in case. Better to eat the commercial bread than to run out of bread.

As a result of eating without silverware or plates, from a communal bowl, anything discarded after the meal: bones, orange rinds, shells, olive pits, crumbs, spills, will end up covering the table. Once the communal dish is lifted and taken away, what is left looked to me like the remnants of a kill. Bones and other scraps are strewn everywhere over the round table covered with a two-tiered table cloth system. One thick, vinyl decorative table cloth covered with a thin clear plastic covering. The table is swept of bones and refuse, first with a small broom into a dustpan, then wiped clean with a wet rag. The first few times I saw this, my internal schemata screamed “primitive...dirty!” The bones, pits, and apple cores strewn about then swept up, violated my sense of order and hygiene. I found it humorous and entertaining though, instead of threatening. The abandon with which refuse is strewn reminded me of the fallout from ‘Aid l-Kbir, when the blood of sacrificial animals spilled into the streets.

Menstruation and Contamination

Sometimes it was me who felt like a source of contamination. I already knew I was considered impure when during my period. When I was still married, I often felt like a rotting piece of meat while menstruating. Immediately after, he would shower to wash off the impurity. If he happened to fall asleep, I found myself hopeful that he would forget and come to accept me for all of my imperfections, my dirt, but I would always awaken before sunrise to hear him in the shower. He never missed that shower...after sex, during my period or during Ramadan. I viewed this event in terms of my own contamination that needed to be washed off, but I now reflect less on me, and more on his perception of his body, feeling that it needed purification.

Women are unofficially not allowed to bathe in the hammam while they are menstruating. The reason given to me was that women tend to faint if they go into the heat, since they are in a more vulnerable state. There was no mention of pollution or impurity. I noticed that women would often complain of feeling faint or exhausted while on their periods. Walking up a flight of stairs was trying and resulted in loud complaints. Other women had headaches that required lying down for much of the day. Growing up believing that I could participate fully in all activities regardless of where I was in my menstrual cycle, this seemed to me to be extreme, histrionic behavior. Blood from my body didn't feel contaminating or impure, or limiting. I had experienced cramping, but I took a pill and moved on with whatever it was I needed to do. I wasn't presented, in Morocco, with the proposal that menstruation was impure, exactly, but there was a discourse supporting women and vulnerability, requiring special care and fear. Women do not fast during Ramadan if menstruating, do not enter the hammam, and do as little physical work as possible. And of course, their men may not want to have sex with them – and this was what made me feel I was an object of disgust, but perhaps I was just an agent of danger.

Inside Out and Outside In: Can Water Purify?

In the hammam, I was also perceived with disgust when the *tayyaba* saw all my sheets of exfoliated dead skin she was actively peeling off of me. The first time I went to the hammam, the *tayyaba* who scrubbed me practically shrieked in horror at the dirty dead skin, the filth, falling off my arms and legs. I felt a failure as a Western ambassador. She must have thought that Europeans (a category into which I was often included) are all dirty with layer upon layer of built up dead skin. The *tayyabat* and other friends and relatives all wanted to scrub me hard – harder than was comfortable - and they laughed when I flinched at the intensity, or told them to stop. They rarely listened to my complaints. They were surprised if I didn't wash and re-wash my hair multiple times. They were surprised at my inability to stay in the hammam for a long period. They were horrified if I wanted to leave the heat...and would scream and grab at me, “no!...come back here...I haven't scrubbed your back yet,” and I often had to slip deftly away. It was unthinkable to that I would leave the hammam without being properly scrubbed. Nobody was truly clean without the deep heating and scrubbing. I wonder if my family or any of those *tayyabat* ever thought of me as clean.

A clean body had little to do with superficially soaping and rinsing – the kind of clean achieved by showering, American style. Clean in the context of the hammam comes from the inside out, and does not rely on putting water on the body (our Western obsession with hand washing or showering), but focuses on the transformation achieved through what seems like suffering: an ability to endure heat, scrubbing, sweating and the labor of lifting water buckets. Heating the body from within, through equal parts labor and pure heat, is perhaps as important as the use of hot water externally.

As an extension of Mary Douglas' suggestion that the "primitive" world had not adapted to ideas about contagion being transferred through superficial bacteria, in Morocco, the permeability of the body and skin to disease – the concept that disease can travel from person to person through vectors seems a relatively new paradigm, despite efforts by the French during the protectorate to impose health standards and contain contagion. An historic system of understanding wellness and pollution is rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, still evident in some of the practices around bathing. The heating of the body from within, through the bones, sweating and scrubbing the skin is a much more important step to wellness and cleanliness than washing germs off of ones hands.

Concluding Thoughts

In exploring the bodies evoked through: bread and blood, I have begun to untangle some of the tensions between clean and polluted, inside and outside, sacred and commercial. Escobar (2001) explores the notion that belonging, the feeling of being settled in our place and in our surroundings relates to belonging in a material sense. We are a part of much wider flows and circuits consisting of the foods we eat, the sounds we hear, the surfaces and objects we touch, the stories we reenact. They inhabit us and we inhabit them. The spaces and places where these categories revealed themselves, were often unexpected. Your "bread" is the body of your family – it is submission to the community. Your home life is exposed through your bread, through the faran, and through the very act of walking through the neighborhood, passing open doors, passing the mosque, the store, the hammam. The man in charge of the ovens knows your bread, knows what your family eats, and when. The body of the sacrificial sheep, is not only the dead sheep and its meat, but the sounds of its bleating in the bathroom in the days leading up to its death, it is the smiling knife sharpener outside of the hammam, how the sheep rests on the bed

with the living after its death, how it is displayed hanging on the roof for public and private consumption, where its blood drains, how it is stored, prepared, spiced, cooked, served, and tasted, and where the blood of all its cousins mingles in the puddles on the streets. The mutual interplay between sacred and commercial, inside and outside, clean and dirty, unfold by following the material culture of daily life.

I am using Anderson's explanation of pre-national community as being applicable now, in the age of nationalism and in a transnational (post-national) world where borders are porous and flows of people, information and ideas move rapidly. To be Moroccan is not defined, necessarily, by living within the borders of the Moroccan state. Capitalism, Westernization, and transnationalism, are changing the way people live, eat and bathe. The younger generation, my nieces- and nephews-in-law, do not cook and do not know how to make bread. None of the younger generation is adherent enough to religious observance to perform the sacrifice of the sheep, so this job will be relegated to religious men for hire. In the Ville Nouvelle, where I rented my apartment in the 90s, my landlady hired a religious official to slaughter her sheep. Its full then partial body hung draining in the shared courtyard for several days, and I greeted it whenever I entered. In her case, she had no male family willing to sacrifice the sheep, and she had the money to pay for the service. So, as capitalism and Western practices filter into Morocco, some of these traditional practices are necessarily lost or replaced: bread making is a dying art, bathing in a wood heated hammam is less common and beliefs about the dangers of wet hair or cold air are dismissed. Along with other binding factors, the practices around treating blood and bread is integral to being Moroccan, on local levels, in Morocco and outside of Morocco, but as these practices are amended, will ideas of Moroccan-ness also change?

My own distancing from the Moroccan perception, due to extreme stress, actually drew me closer to the younger generation, who often perceive the old medina as dirty, the traditional practices as outmoded wastes of time and energy. They do not participate actively in some of these rituals, but watch passively as their elders do: they buy their bread ready made, eat in restaurants and elegant cafes, no longer believe in the purifying effects of the hammam, and do not subscribe to some of the superstitions around coldness or jinn. I had spent many years entrenched in a romantic salvage paradigm – cherishing the traditions that were still alive and turning a blind eye to the dead cats in the street, the poverty, and grime straddling tradition. I finally understood the longing for Europe and the West and why the medina, for many, is a “dirty” embarrassment to be avoided.

CHAPTER 7: ESCAPE FROM FEZ TO FRANCE

In the following reflexive detour, I demonstrate how the emotional constitution of the ethnographic research instrument, the anthropologist herself, can cause a radical shift in how the world is perceived and experienced, thereby shaping the flavor and tone of research and data. In my case, personal trauma directly informed and informs this ethnography. The story I tell in this chapter delves more directly into how my psyche was affected by the tragedy that preceded and overlapped with my research and how this altered my filter. My altered positionality influenced, in surprising ways, areas salient to my research on the hammam: jinn, purity, contamination, heat, piety, desire and Orientalism.

A number of ethnographers have made a case for reflexivity, the ability to be transparent about the subjectivity and flaws of the inherently subjective research instrument, in ethnography. For Renato Rosaldo it was also personal trauma that deepened his understanding of Ilongot culture, as he demonstrates in “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage” (1989). It was not until the death of his wife that he could fully empathize or begin to comprehend the intense rage fundamental to Ilongot head hunting.

Ruth Behar (1996) in *The Vulnerable Observer* calls for the inclusion of emotional involvement of the ethnographer in ethnography, suggesting that a distanced and objective observer was incomplete.

In more recent years, “autoethnography” has taken on importance as a term to describe and expand on this “method of research that involves self observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing” (Maréchal, 2010). Autoethnographer Carolyn Ellis (2004) defines it as “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (p. xix). Thus, this chapter

openly acknowledges the degree to which all ethnography is by its very nature, subjective, biased, and inherently never objective because of the lens of its most important research instrument, the ethnographer, who is in emotional flux. Ethnography is dynamically and dialogically generated between the observer and the observed, and in this, my own autoethnographic exploration, my personal struggles with the objects of my research are laid bare and personally contextualized. I take this moment to muse and reflect on the ethnographic process and how deeply important the emotional state of the instrument is in relation to the object of study. This story also makes sense of what it takes, or in my case, what it took, to induce a radical shift in perception based on personal experience.

I had lived four deliriously happy years in Morocco from 1995-1999, full of a nostalgic longing to be a part of the grit and beauty of Morocco: from the urine stench in the streets, the warm odors of bread and roasted green peppers in my husband's family neighborhood, the "charming" dusty streets, the elegant mosaic tile floors of the old medina architecture, the warmth and generosity of anyone and everyone, the sensual guttural sounds of Arabic, the passionate orality – the screaming, fighting, and conversing about everything and nothing, the desolate views of the mountains and the black plastic bags blowing in the wind. I had been unequivocally seduced by Morocco, and accepted the country and its people as it was, as they were, for what they were, for better and for worse. My life had been rich, inspiring, and challenging in Fez: I studied, taught, conducted research, learned to prepare Moroccan tajines and cookies, French béchamel sauce, plum tarts, finally came to wear lipstick with resolve, led a lively social life and enjoyed a long-term romantic entanglement that resulted in a marriage. So, when I returned, at this new stage, to do my dissertation research, I expected to adapt and reintegrate seamlessly into this world that I knew and loved. Instead, I had a radical shift in

perception about Morocco, based on recent personal experiences, and with this shift, and even this repulsion and terror, I lost some of my naïve enchantment, and *some* of my perceptions, ironically, or logically, became more closely aligned with the traditional Moroccan beliefs of some of my interlocutors.

Beginnings: Seattle

Laila and I left Seattle for Morocco in the winter of 2012 - a delayed departure of several months because of my mother's sudden major surgery. I was worried about her and couldn't leave until I knew she was in stable health. We spent the months of January and February visiting her and packing up all of our worldly belongings into boxes. I feared that my house would go into foreclosure while I was away in Morocco for a year and had to plan for this eventuality. I was also trying to help my long-term boyfriend go through severe alcohol withdrawal. He kept having hallucinations of shadows and voices (and some triggered by real events from weeks before: the sounds of road workers pounding on the freeway at night, and knocks on the front door), delirium tremens (DTs). He had racing heartbeats, severe paranoia and anxiety, the shakes, nausea, vomiting. He had it all. And I was leaving in just a few days.

Rewind a year and a few months earlier, to August, 2010: I received a phone call at around 9:30 pm one warm summer night. My father's wife was on the phone, hysterical.

"Your daddy is dead."

"What?" I said, "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. He's dead."

"But how? What..?"

"He shot himself...just now."

My father committed suicide with a revolver to the head. I flew down to Las Vegas, and slipped into action mode – sleuthing and taking care of business. I figured out, unbeknownst to the rest of the family, that the suicide notes (along with the weapon – which they knew about) had been taken away as evidence. I secured copies of the notes, and said a few words at the small service in the house. A few weeks later I read the autopsy report. I could not look away. The words that reverberated in my head came from the section entitled *Injury Report*, subheading: *Gunshot Wound of Head*. Here I read through details I never would have dreamed I would read about my daddy. The precise measurements of the entrance wound left by the bullet, along with the associated injuries to the brain and temporal bone, and parietal bone. And then this: “soft tissue hemorrhage around medial aspects of both eyelids.” The windows of the soul...seeping out red. The part that really stuck was the “trajectory” of the bullet: “The wound track travels from the decedent’s right to left, front to back and slightly upward.” That this bullet had a pathway of its own, a powerful and damaging journey, brought the scene to life and made it real.

I also read the detective’s report. His section entitled *The Scene* read like a crime novel, gruesome and violent, yet dispassionate. This detective, like an ethnographer, did not yet understand the importance of these details: “He was located lying prone, with his head against the door...a blue-steel revolver handgun was situated in his right hand with his index finger within the trigger guard. The head was surrounded by a large amount of apparent blood.” My daddy’s head was lying in a pool of blood and his finger was still on the trigger. This was an image I could not purge.

My father was 66 years old when he took his life. It had been a full life and lived on his terms, for the most part. I was not without my complaints about his fathering skills, but he was a gentle soul and didn’t overtly want others to suffer. However, the violence of his death echoed

well beyond the little bathroom where the gunshot sounded. The fallout, the ricochets have been swirling actively in my subconscious and conscious. The description of the weapon included a magnificent metaphor: “There was a large amount of blowback inside and outside of the barrel.” As we all know, the blowback from a self-inflicted bullet wound to the head is certainly *not* limited to the immediate victim of the gunshot wound. The blowback extends far beyond the barrel, the body, the room, and further afar. That blowback also travels into the future. It penetrated my brain too.

Inventorying these events of my life here – the complicated and tragic situations with a house, a boyfriend, a mother, and a father – supplies a reasonable explanation for the anxiety, panic, paranoia, and obsessive compulsive behaviors I presented with in Morocco. When I collect and mix together these events into one massive coagulate, I realize that my body and brain could not possibly have broken down and processed them all adequately before landing in Morocco. Then, with my little nine-year-old daughter in tow, in Morocco, as a single woman, the complications were amplified. Within three months in Morocco, my anxiety and my daughter’s anxiety were both debilitating. I took her back to the United States, got her mental health treatment, and saw my own analyst for mental health triage.

For me, a return to Morocco was mandatory. I had dreamed about the opportunities afforded by a Fulbright Hays grant for dissertation work, and my dream had come true. It was a luxury and an honor to pursue my work exploring the ritual practices in the hammam, pursuing ideas of purity, piety, wellness and the body, and the embodiment of pious desire. I expected that unencumbered by my daughter, and knowing that she was in a familiar environment and in good hands with my mother, I could forge ahead and dig deeply into observation, interviews, and find distraction and even solace and peace of mind. The crux of my research was to understand the

difference between Moroccan Muslim motivations for cleansing in the hammam, versus the tourists' approach to a more commercialized, yet relaxing experience. This, boiled down, at least in my head, to the definitive paradigmatic differences in meaning making. How do people relax? How do they find purity and meaning? And by going back, I thought, what could be better for me at this stage, than to find some meaning and tranquility, myself, through studying meaning-making in others. I expected my own mental stability to return, and that delving systematically into ethnographic research would provide the focus my out-of-control mind needed to calm down.

Mental Health in Morocco

Moroccans often attribute mental illness and bad luck to spirit possession by jinn, and/or the result of black magic or the evil eye. Jinn, in Islam, as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, are predominately invisible beings who live alongside humans. There are malevolent, evil-wishing jinn and moral, virtuous jinn who inflict no harm. The jinn live among us, but if upset, covertly inhabit the antagonist's body where they come to intermittently or consistently dominate the individual's thoughts and actions. Urban lore and historic sources assert that local treatments to exorcise or appease the jinn in Morocco have been practiced for centuries, predating Islam. Some treatments are sanctioned by Islam. According to orthodox belief, only prayer and piety should be invoked to keep them away and *fqih*, who are versed in personalized treatments of these types of issues, might visit and read from the Qur'an. However, other methods to "treat," appease, or exorcise the jinn, involve live music and ecstatic dance rituals, and pilgrimages and offerings to saint shrines. These are widespread and popular treatments and also considered controversial, even heretical today, and considered to have origins in pagan pre-Islamic traditions.

Only a small percentage of the educated elite in Morocco, or those educated outside of Morocco, might consider visiting a medical doctor or psychiatrist to treat mental disturbances such as visions, voices, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and so forth. In Morocco, seeking Western methods to treat mental health is still stigmatized. Psychiatrists and psychologists are few and far between²⁰ and mental health facilities are scarce. As of 2006 there were only nine mental hospitals in Morocco and only “four percent of the training for both medical doctors and nurses is devoted to mental health” (WHO, p. 5). There are no legislative provisions for persons with mental disorders concerning employment, housing, or financial support. Morocco still faces challenges in basic areas of primary health care, and other basic social provisions such as employment, education, poverty, and social justice. Despite formal collaborations with government and private entities to improve mental health, there has been little in the way of education about mental health or improved access to mental health care in recent years (WHO, pp. 5-6). As mental health problems took hold of me during my dissertation research, I found myself straddling two different epistemologies of the mind. On the one hand I relied on my psychoanalyst, who could talk me down from anxiety and panic, and on the other, I wondered if Moroccan spirits had taken hold of me, and if the only way to remedy this situation was through local remedies such as ecstatic dancing and religious readings from the Qur’anic.

The Prophet, Suicide, and Possession

In Fez, tracing or claiming blood lineage back to the Arabian Peninsula, to the Prophet Mohammed and other major religious figures, establishes social capital. Ties to the original Fassis, to their founder, Moulay Idriss and his cohort, automatically ties local families back to

²⁰ According to Moussaoui (2007) there were no more than 350 practicing psychiatrists in Morocco and 60 clinical psychologists.

the Prophet Mohammed, as the bloodlines from Idriss are firmly “established.” Mohammed himself is considered the exemplary model to be emulated by all Muslims, and thus he is the paradigmatic perfect human (O’Meara, p. 40).

In one of the earliest accounts of Mohammed’s life, the *Sira*, by Ibn Ishaq, Mohammed is described as desperate and despairing, after seeing and hearing the angel Gabriel speak to him. Ibn Ishaq was born about seventy years after the death of Mohammed, so he was not a contemporary biographer. However, he used hadith (words of the prophet Mohammed) and other stories about the prophet, with a reliable *isnad* (chain(s) of oral and written transmission) and transmitted this to others who wrote it down. Scholars debate the reliability of Ibn Ishaq’s *isnad*, however. Also, the fact that Ibn Ishaq’s original written version of the *Sira* did not survive, but was transcribed and annotated by Ibn Hisham, further calls into question its accuracy. Nevertheless, despite disputes about the accuracy of this biography of Mohammed, the story was generated from a historical time that reveals ideologies of personhood in the Arabian Peninsula at this time. It reveals how the early Muslim community thought about religious behavior, written and oral poetry, inspiration, and mental illness.

According to Ibn Ishaq’s account, Mohammed was certain that he was possessed because of his aural and visual visitations. As a result, he became suicidal and wanted to throw himself off a mountain. In pre-Islamic Jahiliyya in the Arabian Gulf, poets were often considered to be possessed by spirits that spoke through them, so when the verses of the Qur’an were revealed to Mohammed by Gabriel, his first thought was that he was possessed by jinn, a fate too horrific to bear.

Woe is me poet or possessed. Never shall Quraysh say this of me! I will go to the top of the mountain and throw myself down that I may kill myself and gain rest. So I went forth to do so and then) when I was midway on the mountain, I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘O Muhammad! thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel’(p. 106).

This sheds light on a number of points. First, that Mohammed was adamant about distancing himself from poets – so that the poetry of the Qur’an was not considered to be generated as a byproduct of spirit possession (Slyomovics, 1987, p. 13). Secondly, hallucinations, voices, and so forth, were, on the Arabian Peninsula, routinely attributed to spirits, as they are today in Morocco.

Mohammed, as the quintessential Muslim, sets the stage, in a sense, for dealings of the self and the psyche. In Mohammed’s time, and in Morocco today, psychological conditions were attributed to the influence of an outside force or spirit. In the West, schools of psychiatry and psychology generally theorize that mental issues are bounded by the self, self limited, considered to be the result of internal structural and chemical organizational issues, in tandem with external relationships. This is in direct opposition to the Moroccan, or, as we see, pre- and early Islamic belief systems, that mental illness was caused by an invading body or interloping spirit making use of the body (see Crapanzano, 1975, 1980). Interestingly, sometimes these two perspectives overlap. For me, only recently, several years after my return from Morocco, did Freudian and Moroccan diagnoses finally merge. Dr. Robert Janes, my classically trained psychoanalyst in Seattle told me, during a session, that I have a “malignant introject.” This is what Dr. Roy Schafer, a renowned psychoanalyst, has termed a “hostile introject.”

According to Schafer, the “introjects” are a “strange world of beings” and “something apart” from the subjective experience. This sounds coincidentally similar to the Moroccan discourse on jinn and spirit possession. Amazed when Dr. Janes suggested this introject to me, I promptly asked if, I was, in a sense, possessed or inhabited by this other being. He said, “yes, you could think of it like that.” He told me that I needed to get to know this “introject” so that I

could more easily identify it, separate myself from it, thus collapse it, or make it leave.

Ultimately I could have more control over it, so that my own ego would dominate.

Pilgrimage to Morocco

I now return to the beginning of my dissertation fieldwork, to recount in more detail the conditions that incited my change in perception and mental introject/jinn possession. Leaving the US behind, I flew with my daughter, Laila, to Casablanca, immediately marveling but panicking at the luggage carousel, still snaking around in an odd shaped circle from outside on the tarmac to inside the baggage claim room. The flaps were carelessly and irresponsibly blowing open, so every so often the view of the tarmac and suitcases under the powerful Maghrebi sun came into view. I wondered if this boundless, porousness, this mindless blowing, was an omen. Hicham, my ex husband's closest brother, Laila's uncle, picked us up and drove us on the new super highway to Fez. Laila slept with her head on our carry-on bags, in the back seat of the brown grimy Fiat, during the three or four hour drive to the house of her grandparents and extended family. Our plan was to spend a week with the family, find an apartment, set up Laila in school, and get started on my research. But the next few weeks brought delays, difficulties, illness and an increased lack of control over all situations from what to eat, when to bathe (no hot water), no Internet, and no access to transportation.

In Fez: Friday, March 2, 2012

Friday is always couscous day, and we went shopping at the open vegetable market in the neighborhood of Hay Agadir with uncle Aziz holding Laila's hand on one side, and me holding her hand on the other. We bought two huge bunches of *qanaria* – a plant native to North Africa and the Mediterranean regions of Southern Europe - known as cardoon or artichoke thistle in English. My family described it as wild artichoke stalks, and complained of the difficulty in

preparing it properly, but everyone loves it in lamb tajine. I had requested it...because they always ask, “What do you want? What can we make?” Since it takes time to clean and prepare the *qanaria* for tajine, we would eat it in the next day or so. For lunch today, we were also tasked with buying some chickens.

Still hand in hand, Laila and I walked through the market. Big and small cats were swimming sleekly in and out of every corner. We love cats, so this helped make the market fun and attractive. Some cats were scrappy and muddy, missing eyes, limping, and diseased. The most well-groomed, fattened and pretty ones were hanging out by the fish vendor’s slab, milling about waiting for scraps. Laila and I marveled at the tabby cat nimbly squeezing out from between boxes of potatoes and peppers, and tiptoeing through the full box of onions to hop to the ground. The chickens, caged but open to view, quietly pecked at their feed next to the box of onions. The odors of cats, chickens, fish and vegetables, and especially cilantro intermingled and we feasted on the colors of the mini mountains of deep red tomatoes, green mint, and huge bisected pumpkins – sold as pieces by the kilo. We examined and picked out two nice, healthy looking white chickens. Laila found it fascinating that the chicken vendor was weighing them, alive, to calculate their price. Suddenly she realized what was coming next and her hands went cold. So, we quickly walked away from the de-feathering machine so we wouldn’t hear the thumping of the bodies. We went to look for more kitty cats. This was the start of a heightened awareness of the overlap of clean and dirty, and closeness of death, and it enlisted horror and shock. Laila was there when I received the phone call about my father, and she was now reluctant to look death in the eye. She was also a little girl and this was new and strange.

When we arrived home with our warm plastic bags filled with freshly killed chickens, and three-foot long stalks of *qanaria*, I was immediately convinced that I was doomed to be

unhappy here. I was utterly unenthusiastic. I was not excited about couscous. I was not excited about hammams – my research! I was tired before I even got started. I had no desire to go anywhere. I didn't want to look at stores or food or markets, or cafes, the way I used to. The fumes from the cars nauseated me. The scattered garbage and plastic in the streets troubled me. The smells in the bathrooms disgusted me. The sticky film on everything in the kitchen irritated me. None of this had mattered to me in former years – I hadn't even remarked at any of it as a nuisance. In fact, I embraced the grime, the grit - they enhanced the experience. The one thing I still enjoyed was sitting with the father of the house, l-Haj and hearing him talk about the “old days.” He sat very still, his brown hat and cane in hand, reminiscing about the Jews he had worked with some fifty years before. He remembered them as his good friends. He remembered the French too – in his memory, they built good roads and helped people. He was married in the 50s and remembered the foreigners as good, helpful people. But then he contributed to my negative outlook. He said that all the good people have left Morocco and only the bad ones remain. He comforted me just by sitting with me, sometimes just sitting and staring. He was calm, gentle and cheerful, even though his leg was freshly amputated – a complication of diabetes. He was empathetic and so very patient. He was and remains a grounded and a calm presence for me. I think of him often today. But that amputation was horrifying and the world still felt unsafe to me.

Friday was hammam day as well as couscous day. The hammam was so crowded, and we found ourselves backed into a little corner surrounded by buckets and other women. That day the scene looked closer to the Ingres' *Turkish Bath* (Figure 2.1) than I remembered, mostly because women had on their headscarves. I squinted my eyes and let everything blur in front of me: corpulent women in various positions, some active, some in repose. Women have a way of

carrying themselves here, the heavier ones, that conveys tired, heavy and burdened. I don't know if there is a sense that if they show their burden they will gain sympathy, or if they don't show happiness, they won't be envied. Fear of the evil eye is real. Nobody wants to show happiness or reveal the good fortune they have attained for fear that a jealous soul will cast a spell, and they might become possessed by the jinn. I was not sure what was going on, but this was something I still didn't understand. The young girls didn't carry themselves with such heaviness and pessimism. When we arrived home from the hammam we ate the chicken that we saw feeding earlier in the day, at the *sug*. Freshly killed chicken couscous.

March 11

Time had been passing and we were still in Fez. I knew I would have relished these days as my former self. The women were in the kitchen, early in the morning, banging away with the mortar and pestle, grinding herbs. Fava beans and potatoes were cooking. It smelled wonderful, but I felt sick, and cloistered. I wanted to set us up with our own apartment, but I was waiting until Laila felt better. She came down with food poisoning. Haj kept saying "this too shall pass" which comforted me, but I was still in a state of panic because I felt out of control. The responsibility of being a mother was heavy enough in the United States where access to health care was ample, where I have a car and Internet access. Here I had constructed a sense of helplessness. I was sick with worry. Laila cried constantly. She was homesick. She was sick. She hid and cried alone in our bedroom, where we shared a wool stuffed mattress. She told me that she had been hearing a voice talking to her. She wasn't sure whose voice, but she thought it must be God, telling her what to do. She was frightened that if she didn't do what the voice told her, something bad would happen, but she also worried that I would want her to do something different. She couldn't reconcile the two voices.

I felt powerless to help her, and I worried that she may be suffering from a serious mental illness, like schizophrenia. I wanted to turn the situation around and make all of this work for us somehow, but I was at a loss. If I had only had half of my former energy, I could battle the demons. Laila almost passed out the other day after walking up the stairs, and she has barely eaten because she was afraid she would throw up again. If only we could just escape to France for a while, I thought. France would be safer, I imagined. I didn't know what to do. We were watching movies in our room on my laptop, and then movies on the satellite TV and trying to forget where we are. It was a strange form of prison since I couldn't cook what I wanted, (the kitchen was so foreign to me and I would have been stepping on toes in there), I couldn't go where I wanted, I couldn't move, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't have coffee when I wanted. I couldn't decide if I was more depressed, anxious, or angry.

Laila complained of trouble breathing and felt faint. She started pulling out her hair, strand by strand. She said it comforted her – it was fun. I dragged her around to the hammam, to the old city. She never lasted long, and we ended up in cafes sipping sweet orange and lemon sodas instead. We also went to the fanciest hotels to look at the hammams there. Eventually, I discovered that she had pulled out enough hair on her head to create a little quarter sized bald patch.

Laila became sick again. This time with a high fever that hovered between 102 and 105 and lasted for more than ten days. I couldn't sleep. She couldn't sleep. She was dizzy. At this point the family encouraged me to use the kitchen since they knew I needed an outlet. They told me I was making myself sick. As soon as her fever broke and she could walk, I got us both on a plane to Germany, and then one to Seattle. By now the bald spot on her head was the size of a medium sized pancake. In Seattle I bought her several cute headscarves, which happened, by

sheer luck that season, to be stylish, so she could pull off the look. She also looked like a little Muslim girl wearing a hijab. I quickly found a therapist for her and went back to mine. I woke up every morning with my heart racing, and adrenalin surging through my body. Dr. Janes says that according to a 1960s diagnosis, I am having a “nervous breakdown” or a severe stress reaction. He suggested that electroshock therapy would have been suggested for me back in the day. Instead, he suggested an anti depressant that would also help with anxiety – an SSRI, which I was too afraid to take. I had to return to Morocco as soon as possible, so I made sure Laila was settled in at my mom’s house, made sure she was on track with her therapist and that she had stopped pulling out her hair and started gaining back some weight. We ate lots of oatmeal with butter, blueberries and raspberries, salmon, biscuits, rice, potatoes and sweet cinnamon rolls. All of these seemed like healing comforting foods. I returned to Morocco in the heat of June.

Wall of Heat and the Medina

I called Dr. Janes almost immediately upon arrival in Fez. He reassured me I wasn’t dying but just having a panic attack. It started minutes after landing in Fez. I climbed down the stairs of the airplane, and I was hit by another 104-degree surprise. This time not an internal fever, but an external heat and heaviness I couldn’t support. My heart was racing. Again, Hicham picked me up in the little Fiat. No air conditioning, and open windows just blew hot wind in my face. I cried, staring out the window at the big houses and empty lots. Family was visiting from Rabat and the house had only one small air conditioning unit in the sitting room. It was kept off unless desperately needed. That was now. So for me, they turned it on, but I could barely wait the half hour for it to cool down to 90 or 85. This sitting room was where most everyone would be sleeping – more than ten people. I couldn’t relax. I couldn’t cool down. It felt like my heart was going to explode, and my head hurt. I violently grabbed Hicham and forcibly

pulled him outside of the house. On the front stoop I told him to please take me to a hotel, which he did. I holed up in the hotel by the train station for several days trying to calm down. I ventured out to buy yogurt and bread, but stayed in my room panicking, trying to read, trying to watch TV, trying to quiet whatever it was that had taken over my body. Hicham came to visit me, making me leave my room and sit in the café of the hotel. I couldn't eat.

I soon felt barely well, but I forced myself to venture out, and I rented a room in a traditional house in the old medina, owned by an American woman who had restored it with her much younger Moroccan husband. It was a small but beautiful home with colorful traditional blue and green tile work known as *zellij*, a central courtyard, and decorative gypsom carvings on the walls. She was busy teaching most of the day and so we didn't see each other much. It was a perfect location, close to an old hammam, Sidi Azzouz.

The temperatures, however, never seemed to go down. I stayed in the medina house for much of the day, because inside this old house was often the coolest place I could find. I had a fan. It was cool in the mornings, and it took effort muster the courage to go out. I gave myself small tasks that seemed feasible. Go buy water down the street. Go find a new hammam. While I used to relish drinking my morning coffee in a café, this had become traumatic due to my awareness of sanitation practices. I watched the café workers cleaning teacups in a standing bucket of water. The same standing water was used to plunge each dirty glass, and then the same rag was used to wipe down the rims, before the cups were stacked for reuse. I had watched this ten years before, with fascination, but not with terror. So, instead of going out for coffee, I just bought a jar of Nescafe and mixed a tablespoon with hot water at home. It was fine. But all the *joie de vivre* – my coffee joy- was gone. On my short walks to the *hanut* I was hit immediately by heat, and for the first time also hit with the realization that the medina was a slum. It was

dusty. There was rotting garbage lining the streets - plastic bags filled with old meat, vegetable peels, and diapers. Kids were running around, covered in dirt. The cats were in bloom that summer – dozens of little kittens, covered in scum, dirty, and tired in the heat. They all looked like they were on the verge of passing out, even dying. The mothers of the kittens looked like kittens themselves. The life span of a cat, I imagined, couldn't be long. The healthiest cats, as in the markets in the family neighborhood of Hay Agadir, lived up the street a few blocks, by the row of butchers on Talaa Kabira and they sat under the short counter waiting. Or sleeping. They were shiny, clean, and content. The health of the cats usually reflected the economic health of the neighborhood. I bought a bottle of water from the *hanut*, and after watching the boy and his dirty fingernails and dirty hands load up my plastic bag with the bottle, decided not to buy anything else. My stomach churned.



Figure 7.1 Meat and herbs, Fez Medina, Talaa Kebira

Feeling that I'd better try to see something nice, something comforting, I walked on, past the *hanut*, and up by the market area to see the fatter, healthier cats near the center of meat commerce. I looked at the live chickens, roosters, pigeons, the detached sheep hooves, the heads, the other parts being butchered, and there in the mix were piles of mint and cilantro in baskets, sitting next to the meat. The cilantro, heated by the sun, was the most aromatic I had ever smelled it. Maybe it was the vacuum created by the narrow streets in the medina, that rush of

wind drawing out scents. I couldn't dream of buying that cilantro, however, as it had been sitting next to dirty birds and raw meat. The raw meat (which needed cooking) was too close to the raw cilantro (which could be eaten raw).



Figure 7.2 Fruit and vegetable stands, Talaa Kebira, Fez Medina

The peaches, plums and melons up the way, past the meat market, also smelled strongly, and I couldn't convince myself, my competing voice, my introject, my jinn(?), to buy or eat a

plum or a melon. I had been walking by mounds of luscious fruits every day, denying myself all of the fruits or vegetables that couldn't be peeled or boiled. I was limiting myself to bananas and yogurt and an occasional packaged chocolate bar. Had I been sick from food in Morocco in the past four some odd years of living there? No. Was I being irrational? Yes. Was it a good idea to play it safe with food in Morocco? Yes. Was I clinging to the protection I tried to provide for Laila when she was still in Morocco? Maybe. Was I terrified of the world because of the sudden death of my father? Perhaps. Was I inhabited by some spirit that was eclipsing the old me in Morocco? Perhaps. It was the height of peach and watermelon season. Watermelon used to carry cholera, and its rind can harbor E.coli, and despite eating peaches, watermelon, and all the other varieties of melon available in Morocco with pure gusto in the past, I'm now out of control with paranoia. I walked through the narrow streets breathing in the scents and looking, trying to enjoy, but not tasting.

My fear collided with contempt. The dirt and the discord, the poverty and cacophony weren't seductive. They frightened and enraged me. My tolerance, my patience, had waned. My curiosity was still intact, but my stamina was almost gone. The walled-in houses in the medina made me claustrophobic. With no vistas, except from the roof, I felt imprisoned, like a starved and senseless rat. In retrospect, I was imprisoned more by my self-denial, and by the voices that prohibited me from relaxing, enjoying, eating. I tried to take myself to the big beautiful gardens in the restored palaces, like the Jardin des Biens, or the Laarousa, with the huge expanses, that made me feel less trapped.

The family had given me a few rounds of *khhz dyal dar*, home made bread loaves. I trusted this bread implicitly, since I knew whose hands had touched it, and I was safe for a few days, not needing to buy from the boy with the dirty fingernails, at the *hanut*. I kept the breads

in the dimly lit second floor kitchen, in a plastic bag. I tore off a piece of the bread, spread apricot jam on it, put it on a plate, and carried it down with a cup of instant coffee to the courtyard table. I sat and dove into the bread. After a few bites, I noted the distinct taste of mold, and spit out what I could. But what had I already swallowed? How extensive was my mold poisoning? What should I do? Find alcohol to kill it? Throw up? I panicked. I instant messaged friends in the United States. I used my slow Internet to look up the dangers of eating moldy bread. Even though many times in my life I had bitten into moldy things, and I had always been fine, I sat in the house, waiting to get sick.

The next morning I woke up early just as the sun was rising. I was still alive. So I got up, and dragged myself up the steep winding dark stairway to the kitchen. I ate yogurt and still felt hungry. With no bread and nothing else to eat, I ate some chocolate bar that I had put in the small refrigerator. Thank god Ali texted me to confirm our appointment at the Fardaus Café in Batha, a ten-minute walk from my house, for our interview, or else I probably wouldn't have pulled myself together to get out at all.

On the way there and on the way anywhere, I walked past a little man, three doors down, who was always sitting opposite a tiny little shop selling just eggs. Lots of brown eggs, in 12x12 flats, stacked atop one another. All day long on a white plastic chair, he sat, watching his store, and watching the people go by. He was shriveled and small, and I estimated he was 75 years old. Finally, that day, he said “bonjour” to me. I ambled past him, saying bonjour back. Ten years ago, I would have responded in Arabic, but now I just accepted that I looked like the colonizer, and so responded politely in kind, in the language he expected to hear from my mouth. I had been questioning whether speaking Arabic was an offense, an affront, and an imposition. I used to think I was polite, using the local language, that it made me less of an outsider, but now, I have

fallen under a new spell. I heard some boys around the corner today say "she is the one who speaks Arabic..." Was it respect? Or was it shock? I decided that I should have been speaking French so as to be more honest about who I was. I felt horrible and foreign and crumbling, and dying in this brutal, hot and dusty ecosystem.



Figure 7.3 Egg seller across from my house, Fez Medina

Nonetheless, this “bonjour” was a sign from the neighborhood that I had been acknowledged, and politely. I was touched. I had been *seen*. Today, the streets were particularly

heavy with lethargic kittens. Some seemed dead, curled up on drainage grills, some lying on heaps of garbage, and some on little portable shelves and boxes, sleeping the day away in patches of shade, in the heat. As I walked to my meeting, I tried to combat the horror of those dusty streets, and to remember how I could have been happy in Fez. How had I eaten? How had I survived? I was disturbed now, the city felt sinister. I thought, if I could just remember what I ate. What had I cooked? I remembered slowly, buying fresh baguettes and sweet butter imported from New Zealand, at my Ville Nouvelle *hanut* – from the Susi boys, also with dirty hands and fingernails. I remembered shopping at the fish market with Rachid. We enjoyed picking out a fresh whole fish at the suq. He taught me to look at the clarity of the eyes to assess freshness. We took it home, and then baked it with sliced potatoes, peppers and tomatoes, olives and *sharmula* – cilantro, garlic, lemon and paprika. It came out divinely every time, and we enjoyed eating together with our hands, dipping baguettes into the sauce, letting night fall, and moving to a fruit course – melons and bananas. Smoking cigarettes. Those tastes and that calm, and that pleasure was so close but so foreign, and far off and impossible to find.

As I made my way to the café to meet Ali, I realized that I had cut through the little street, Derb al Horra, where the wedding had been. Aziza, in a recent interview had told me that this street was haunted. That people came away from here changed. I hadn't known her feelings about this street back when I had fought to convince the family I wanted to hold the wedding here, in the medina, in this house. They felt it was an embarrassment. They wanted to rent a big, newly constructed house in the Trq Immouzer. This was the more popular trend – to have ample space and functional amenities for guests and caterers: bathrooms, kitchens, seating, and air conditioning. They could not understand the logic of renting an old crumbling mansion in the

dusty old medina, making transportation more difficult for older people to arrive, with poverty lurking around every haunted corner. I selfishly held my ground, wanting a medina experience.

I let myself think back to that night - how I had crossed the threshold of that door, the guests already assembled at big round tables in a large courtyard with a clear view of the stars. I was ushered quickly, across the courtyard, passed a central fountain filled with four dozen red roses, into a changing room where I put on the first outfit – a Western style, puffy and outrageous white wedding dress, a rhinestone crown and red lipstick. Four strong young Fassi men carried me out on a palanquin, and then at the end of an all night dance party, and many changes of dresses and jewelry, all the guests sat to eat *harira*, a tomato and chickpea soup. Rachid and I both rode white horses out of the enormous door as the sun rose, while guests ran behind us, waving goodbye, as our horses clip clopped up the cobblestone streets to the Bab Boujouloud, where we caught a red taxi cab to our favorite hotel: Zalagh. It took me an hour in front of a hotel mirror to pick all of the bobbypins out of my up-do hair that night.

Snippets of that night rapidly flashed through me, as I walked past that door again, the wide and now heavy and sinister wedding door with its big black metal hinges and its big rivets. And then, about twenty yards further, I stopped and paused, then exploded into tears. I quickly collected myself, and continued along the path the horses took, up the hill, and towards the café.



Figure 7.4 *Shabakiya*, Fez Medina

Signs of Ramadan were everywhere near the mouth of the medina, near its periphery. It was still a more than a week away, but already there were tables lined with enormous mounds of pastries for sale – kilo upon kilo of brown sticky *shabakiya* and *breewat*, sitting in the sunshine all day long. *Shabakiya* are traditionally eaten with *harira* – the tomato soup eaten to break the Ramadan fast at sunset. These anise and cinnamon flavored rose-flower cookies, are deep-fried, then dipped in honey and sprinkled with sesame seeds. The young attending boys waved away the flies, but I saw them crawling into the crevices of the cookies. I have never been fond of *shabakiya*. They are extremely sweet, and the street version is often not soaked in real (expensive) honey but some sort of cheap simple syrup, corn syrup, honey substitute. It turned my stomach to look. Everyone else walked around the cookies, feeling festive, but I wanted to puke every time I passed those melting messy piles of cookies. I was grateful to get to the café,

where I met Ali in the upstairs balcony. This upstairs area was the only respectable place to sit as a woman with a Moroccan man. When alone, I did not observe this rule, but it wouldn't be prudent for a married man to be seen with a foreign woman. Sadly, but in keeping with my day, it smelled like urine and I felt queasy again, but felt a mental distraction from the thoughts in my head, and from the cats and "contaminated" pastry.

On the way back home, I walked by a slipper market before seeing many more of the cats, vegetables, the live chickens, meat market. The slipper market always has an air of sophistication. It is calm and organized, with beautiful pairs of leather and suede slippers lining the walls, in rich burgundies, blues, browns, greens, cream and white, and some are embroidered with golden thread. The salesmen were clean and well dressed in traditional robes. They didn't slouch against the walls. They stood or sat upright, sipped tea and chatted with one another, and they looked elegant doing so. It was an oh-so-brief respite from the rest of the discord, the smells and the sounds of my walk.

I forced myself to buy vegetables on the way back. I found my favorite vegetable seller who had a dark circle under his eyes (from working so hard?) and dark circle on his forehead from praying so regularly. If I didn't buy something now, I feared I would starve. I liked him. He let me choose, with my own hands, which potatoes or tomatoes I wanted, and I filled up the scale myself. He seemed to intuit that I needed to be in control. He was kind to me. I felt honored to be attended to and respected and understood. I walked past the egg man, and once again he said bonjour to me. I guessed I get a "bonjour" now, every time I pass. I've been inducted. That was kind too. He was kind. Each little moment was magnified. Each detail was important.

Then, I saw the dead kittens. Many had fallen asleep along the side of the road, never to wake up. I wonder where would they go? Into the garbage heap with the rest of the scraps, no

doubt. Poor souls. I got through the door, to my home, and I was conflicted between wanting to cry out of misery, for the dead cats, lost marriage, lost father, stressed out daughter, and my own magnified paranoia, and wanting to cry out of gratitude, for the acts of kindness the day brought – the egg man’s bonjour, the vegetable man’s patience, the candid interview in the cafe. For a moment the world was gentle. I fried up some potatoes and onions and ate more chocolate and choked back the tears, wondering how much longer I could survive.

I sat, thinking about the day. Little tiny kids, I noticed, were running around on their own, unsupervised. A little 3-year-old was outside of the house by the fountain, gathering styrofoam, talking to himself. There is more self-sufficiency and time to do work with your body, as a kid in Morocco. Time is less structured. It is looser. There is running, and wandering, and noises.

I opened the window to hear the street noise. On these hot evenings, people were out late, at eleven, at midnight, talking, greeting one another. In between shouts and squabbles, I heard ceremonial hellos and greetings being exchanged. There was a politesse amidst the squalor and noise, an acknowledgement that I didn’t see in my own culture, my Seattle culture where I now come from. It was *loud* out there. People were chasing each other...playing. Fake fighting. Real fighting. Screaming about a bride...‘*arusa*...Two women were talking about crying...don't cry she said...And the smells. I smelled food, and cleaning fluid, and dust and acrid wet dirt through that little window. It wasn't a fresh breeze. It was a smelly breeze. I heard snippets of conversation by the fountain:

"I didn't go out, I swear...no...it was mine..."

Dirt Outside and Inside

The more I washed my body, the more it smelled. *I just couldn't get clean.* I thought I was dying and rotting. I went to Hammam Sidi Azzouz with my French-Tunisian friend who was

visiting from Paris. We hired Amira to attend to us. She brought buckets of water, surrounded us with them in a circle, and that was that. She didn't bring endless buckets, as the family usually would. She grabbed the *sabon bldi*, which I had bought for 30dh from the boy up the street. It was scented with rose, and it smelled good. It looked awful - like brown glop. It felt like Vaseline, which made me nervous. I began to wonder if it was just Vaseline, or something worse. Supposedly this is made from olive pits mixed with ash. I had my doubts and started getting hot and paranoid as Amira rubbed it all over my body.

Without words, she shoved me and Zara in the direction of the hot room, with the *brma*. Go, and get hot for a while. She said. So we went. I felt bullied, but it felt nice in the hot room. I relaxed for a moment. Then I started to itch furiously. The soap was making me itch, I was sure, to the point that I could no longer relax and I rushed over to our spot and rinsed off all the soap, practically dumping the whole bucket on my body, with fear and panic in my eyes. Amira reappeared and she ordered me down on the ground on my back. She began her job of removing all my "*mskh*" ...

“Look at all the dirt,” she said, “I'm getting you really clean.”

“Is there a lot?”

“Yes, there is a lot, look!” Rolls of dead skin were coming off, and I imagined skin that wasn't dead was also being stripped off my body. She was really scrubbing me. It hurt, especially when she attacked my chest and my breasts. I let her, but I winced and made faces, and wished I could escape.

Other foreigners always reported that they felt taken care of and like a child again when they got the exfoliation treatment. I didn't feel that way. I felt like a piece of meat, or a vegetable being peeled. I feel slapped around. Amira, in particular was not the most loving or gentle or

caring of the *tayyaba*'s I had experienced. She tapped my leg when she wanted me to flip. I flipped. As she was scrubbing the back of my leg, my knee was pressed into the hard ground and it hurt. I winced again. I had pain in my knee later that day. This couldn't be good. She was pressing too hard. I didn't say anything. I couldn't wait to be done. She didn't scrub my face, or my hair – so I didn't need to be paranoid about water entering my mouth or eyes. And she didn't have me lie in her lap, as some had, so her breasts didn't flap in my face, which I sometimes find quite endearing and intimate, in a non-sexual way. *Tayyabat* tend to be sturdy and they usually only wear underwear bottoms, an apron, and a headscarf. Their breasts hang and move freely. I find it comfortable, even sweet. No, but Amira wasn't as intimate. She seemed to know – to be a little more aware of herself as different from me, from us. She tried to soap me up with the bldi soap again, but I refused. She says, no, it is good, but I refused again, and insisted and we almost fought. I stood my ground when it came to the itch inducer.

Then I soaped up with my own *rumi* soap – a bright pink half-used bar that I brought from the house, and I washed well with it, feeling comforted that my Western soap would help me. I noticed my skin was turning bright red, with red dots on my stomach and arms. I wondered if this could be heat rash, or something worse. Oh lord. Ever since the soap made me itchy I was uncomfortable, antsy, worried, and ready to run out. As soon as I washed off, head to foot, I got out of the hammam and into the changing room and put on my clothes. The watch woman asked for her “*haq*” – her share, or right. I asked her how much, and she said “whatever you want.” I gave her five dirham. It was too much, but I didn't care. I'd have given her one hundred or more to get out of there quickly. I left and the voice in my head said, I'm never doing another hammam again. I left feeling panicked and obsessed with how I would ever go back. I examined my rash back at the house. I checked it every ten minutes or more. The next day, the rash had subsided,

but there were still a few bright red spots on my stomach. I awoke from nightmares that I was losing control of my bodily functions. I started spotting in reality, bleeding, and I couldn't tell if I was really getting my period, or if perhaps I had begun to bleed internally. My body was out of my control and the heat was making me worse. I feared I would start bleeding out all over the bed, the room, and die here in Fez, oozing out all over the medina what emotional and physical integrity I had left. I was overheated, out of balance. Where once I had subscribed, along side most Moroccans, to the belief that heat was purifying, that it could yield balance and equilibrium within the bodily systems, now, this heat had become a portent of death - threatening, oppressive and dangerous.

I remembered the first time I had been in Hammam Riyad, in the family's neighborhood. I was alarmed when I saw people lying down in the hammam changing room, all wrapped up, all red in the face. They were "taking a rest." Relaxing, after the hot bath. They were not ill. My first reaction was to worry that they were sick, over heated, dehydrated. Did they need help? No. This was what people did. They lay down. It's a wrapped up kind of relaxation. There is a fear that the body will catch cold, "*brd*" after being so hot. The change in temperature should be gradual. There is an openness in the inner closed space of the hammam - the undressing, the opening up, the uncovering, the unveiling, is only safe in the heat. The heat protects and heals, and is a catalyst for deep states of relaxation, to purification. The heat is good. The cold is bad.

It is the heat I am terrified of, from which I want to run. Perhaps because it was not a gradual re-entry. The arrival in Fez was a 104 degree slap in the face...from mild Seattle breezes, cinnamon rolls and blueberries to fly-infested *shabakiya* in the blistering Fez sun. I was frightened, not comforted by the heat. It did not soothe me or heal me. It hurt me and scared me.

In the hammam, the hot room became similarly too much. I needed to escape to a cool room. The *tayyaba* attributed this to being foreign...not being used to it, not being strong enough.

A few days later, I could barely eat. I was afraid to walk around in the heat. I was even distrustful of the bottled water, which I boiled. I began looking for tickets to France. Ramadan was only a few days away. During Ramadan things would be harder and more deserted during the day. The entire city would be cycling on the Ramadan schedule, and I would be cycling out of control in my mind. I needed to get out before I died. Maybe just a few days away would help. I bought a one-way ticket to Marseille.

Marseille, France

I wanted so badly to gain some distance from my paranoia in the medina, to reclaim my old self, to relax and drink cappuccino, eat croissants and look at the sea, so I came to Marseille. Instead, in a perfect ironic twist, I landed in the apartment of a friend and fellow anthropologist, in a fourth floor walk-up apartment on Longues des Capucins, the heart of "little Algeria" in Marseille. The apartment overlooked the busiest and most medina-like street in all of Marseille, perhaps all of France. Along with colorful storefronts, there were stalls and tables of olives, herbs, bread, flowers, pastries, fruits and vegetables. In between were makeshift tables selling an assortment of used electronics and other "previously owned" items. The street was in constant motion and commotion. At all hours, I heard a steady stream of Arabic discussions, arguments, shouts and music. This France wasn't what my post-colonialist escapist self had imagined France would be for me. This was an even more magnified version of Moroccan-ness than Morocco itself. Had I been able to at the time, I would have laughed.

North Africa in Marseille – Longues des Capucins

My friend and host Emmanuelle studied North African immigrant farm workers in Spain and so she was attuned to the geopolitics of food in Marseille. She told me that bread and cheese were not so great here in Marseille, but the goat cheese was. She apologetically admitted that she walked a good distance to the upscale neighborhood to buy good French baguettes. The olives were good. Fish was good. She boycotted the produce sold on her street by Algerians because it was industrially produced in Spain and Morocco specifically for export. It doesn't taste good, she said, and was grown using dangerous chemicals. Instead, she bought from an organic cooperative, and she made me a gorgeous, fresh tomato salad with basil, that I managed to barely taste, but couldn't finish. I pushed it around on the plate, and she watched in horror as much of it went to waste. I was much more concerned with the more immediate bacterial contamination of food than the arguably more dangerous chemicals used to grow the food.

She was excited to tell me about the neighborhood, and explained that this neighborhood hadn't been studied by anyone in fifteen years. I wondered why she couldn't do so herself, but she seemed to want me to do it. Locals suggested that a centrally located immigrant neighborhood was a better integration "solution" than what had happened in all of the other French cities where Muslims were not only socially and economically marginalized, but also spatially marginalized. This had not been an effective way of controlling crime. In Marseille, because of the lack of jobs and industry, the Arab immigrants from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco set up a marketplace on their own, despite the resistance and protest of the government and the citizens.

She explained that the European Union had two main narratives about how migration was managed. I perked up because I was concerned and interested in the dialogic relationship

between practices like the *hammam* between Moroccan communities in Morocco and in diaspora. With borders so porous and immigrants returning to Morocco annually or even more frequently, influences seep and bleed back and forth. First, she said, legalized migration through worker contracts existed, for example in the case of the strawberry pickers that she studied in Spain. Second, there was a tremendous amount of money going into development in the source country of migrants. The EU apparently poured money into coastal and even inland Morocco from Al Hoceima to Oujda to *prevent* migration to Europe, to keep people happy there. Hence all the building projects in Fez and Oujda and other cities. In 2012, I had witnessed a major commercial center being built between the Ville Nouvelle and Medina in Fez: a grand modern mall complex. This also explained the growth in commercialism and tourism I had seen in Marrakesh. The Ville Nouvelle of Marrakesh had many upscale boutiques, a brand new Zara store for women's clothes, and many slick and expensive restaurants and bars. This policy also explained the proliferation of upscale hammams designed in part to satisfy the tourist industry but also to develop the commercialization of traditional institutions: for example bread, bathing/relaxation, and restaurants.

Trapped: Resistance and Surveillance

In this vast French city, the second largest in France, I somehow found myself captured in the one tiny neighborhood, barely a square mile, dense with North African people, food, music and language. Not only that, this little district, along the rue Longues des Capucins, mirrored and mimicked in multiple ways, the place from which I had just tried to escape: the Fez medina. The rue Longue des Capucins was built for car traffic, but had been completely taken over by the North African population as an open air market that sold vegetables, fish, meat, bread, olives, dates, clothing, pottery, dry goods, and many other assorted items. It was reminiscent of the

Talaa Kabira, in Fez, the main medina thoroughfare, with the same absence of cars, but with all the same bunched cilantro and mint, the same heaps of spices and buckets of olives, jars of preserved lemon and dried meat, the same bustle and energy, the same noises and language. All I heard was Arabic. However, here in Marseille, the population, although predominantly North Africa Muslim, was interspersed with a few blonde European men and women, black Africans, and a variety of others. There were no live animals for sale, but I was sure there would be if it were legal. Thank goodness, I did not encounter dead cats.

I was surprised to learn that to ostensibly protect the citizens of Marseille, cameras have been built into the lampposts lining the streets. This unapologetic effort to control and surveil the immigrant population, made me feel even more uncomfortable. I couldn't escape from Fez, and even in the density of this faux-real Arab neighborhood, I cannot hide in France – my heretofore imagined refuge in the imaginary of my planned escape. I stood out for being white and foreign, and was staying with white French people within this Little North Africa, but I was American on top of it all, so also being watched by Marseille's cameras. I was a double outlaw – escaped from North Africa to North Africa *and* I clearly didn't belong to this new little enclave where I had landed, and was being watched by the French – my fellow colonists, with whom I had felt an imagined affinity, whom I thought would save me, who were part of the land that I thought would be my remedy. I was being held by the invisible force of North Africa, and away from salvation – all because of this chance encounter with the tiniest island of North Africa within France. I wondered if I had stepped into the twilight zone.

The official government discourse suggests that the cameras were looking for illegal transactions – thus I was not afraid of being arrested, *per se*, but I was also part of illegal operations, at least very peripherally. There was indeed contraband. A plethora of contraband.

Illegal goods were sold all along the street: cigarettes, jeans, cell phones and other electronics, and I was living in an apartment where to some extent, contraband was being stored. A friend of Emmanuelle's, an Afghani refugee, stored his inventory there. We saw each other several times a day, since he had a key and came and went to get his supplies, drink water, and use the bathroom. He set up outside of the door to the apartment building in between a fruit stand and an olive stand. When I left the apartment, I had to turn my body to squeeze past him and his set-up. He had a makeshift wooden slab balanced on boxes on which he set up his various cell phones, computer power cords, and a few other electronics. His wife, two kids, and brother had just joined him from Afghanistan a week prior. He was full of energy and barely my height. We spoke a broken mixture of French and English, with a smattering of Arabic words. He sensed my disorientation - maybe saw how exhausted I was. He treated me gently and kindly, as one of his own. He helped me get my cell phone working – inserting and programming the new sim card for me, and he wanted know how I was every day. Because of him, I felt I was suddenly complicit in the operations outside in the street. He was of and among them, and he was also my ally.

I watched sketchy transactions in the street every evening from the window – hand-offs of money and drugs, and boys on bikes riding quickly away. Apparently the TV news often showed little boy thieves caught because of the cameras, stealing from women. It justified the existence of the cameras, and it contributed to my paranoia, my itchiness, and I wanted to escape again.

I had heard rumors while in Fez that surveillance cameras had been installed on the two main thoroughfares of the medina: on the Talaa Kabira and the Talaa Seghira. Emmanuelle told me that this was in fact true – that the configuration of surveillance was similar in Marseille and

Fez. I checked via email with friends in Fez, and they confirmed that the cameras extended from Bab Boujeloud to the Moulay Idriss sanctuary near the base of the valley of the old city. The surveillance, according to them, was a precaution to keep foreign tourists safe – in other words, to protect the French, the Colonizer, not the Moroccans. In Marseille, the surveillance also serviced the French, protecting them from North African petty criminals. Big Brother was in fact watching, and I wondered who watched me sob along Derb al Horra, passing the house where I had been married. This new realization that technology was recording me as I made my way, emotionally and physically through this maze of North Africa and French North Africa, framed me as a player in a game, a rat in a maze, an exhibit for someone's entertainment or control.

Resistance to the control and surveillance was evident in small ways in this Marseille neighborhood. In efforts to prevent parking along the streets and to prevent pop-up commerce, posts were constructed, at close intervals, along the streets. However, resisters filed some of them away, night by night, like prisoners digging their way slowly out of a prison cell, patiently scooping out spoonful by spoonful of dirt until the tunnel was completed. You could see the traces of the poles that had been removed, although most still remained, and sellers set up their stands in between them anyway. Marseille immigrants had insisted on perpetuating this market space despite all the state interventions, control and road blocks.

I slept on a mat in the living room, but pulled down a massive mosquito net over my body because of the abundance of mosquitos multiplying by virtue of the humidity and standing water along the street at the end of the market day. I was bitterly bitten everywhere, despite the netting, so my itching continued. Garbage collection took place every night, very late – sometimes near midnight. The trucks sprayed water in the street below the apartment, and created an oppressive loud noise. Even Emmanuelle, who seemed to really love this

neighborhood, felt oppressed by the noise and the unbearable mosquitos. She said that this institutionalized noise and the resulting mosquito infestation was the hazard of living there – one whiff of the word “hazard” and all my fears were triggered. One of the sanitation workers had told her she was so brave to be living on this street...and she thought to herself that yes, she was suffering because of the noise of his trucks, not because of the street itself.

My Afghani friend was welcomed in this neighborhood. The newest immigrants to Marseille lived here. However, the government and the Marseilles citizens in general considered this street as an eyesore and didn't want outsiders to come here. Apparently, if asked directions to a place that necessitated going through this area, a Marseille resident would direct you around it so you didn't have to see it. The Italians were the last big wave to live here in this neighborhood. I was told that the newest immigrants had the least prestige in the city. So, the newest waves (black African and Chinese) are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Hence all the pizza restaurants in Marseille were located in Noailles, amidst the Algerian markets, left over from the Italian wave. Now the Italians were integrated into the French Marseilles culture.

There was a direct and vibrant link between the Moroccan markets and the Marseille market. The airline industry responds to the needs of travelers. You can fly direct almost daily from Marseille to almost every major city in Morocco: Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, Fez, Nador, Tangier. There is a burgeoning connection between these urban centers. Easy Jet, Ryan Air, Air France, Royal Air Maroc, keep the Moroccan immigrants connected with their home country. Partnerships between the Marseille and Fez mayors were created in 2005 to work on rehabilitation of the Fez medina, to partner in business, to exchange knowledge about archives and libraries, for crafts and artisanal partnerships. So, the connections between Fez and Marseille were real. I escaped Fez, and I have traded it in for a new Fez even more intense and unbearable

to me. Had I come from a tranquil beach vacation, I might have had more energy, but I was starving again and eating only hermetically sealed food.

Night

Rai music (a popular North African genre of music symbolizing freedom and resistance) was blasting up and down the street. The whole block was partying, slowing moving down the street. I could see the neighbors across the street out on their balconies, drinking, eating, and talking. We weren't far from each other. It was like we were in trees, swinging around and waving. Still, the music was so loud I had to close the windows to hear myself think. I should have really been out there seeing what kind of activity was going on, but I was emotionally drained. I was waiting to Skype with my little daughter on her birthday. It was a loud and sad night; I sat and ate chocolate-filled cookies and drank tea in the hot sticky room.

The next day I felt trapped again. I was in the ghetto again. I didn't want to live in the ghetto. I needed a break and some fresh air. I chastised myself for not being able to stick it out, for not being the relativistic anthropologist with all the tolerance and eagerness to embrace difference. I could not play that role, nor the role of the Bobo at that moment. I needed some familiarity and some comfort. Eventually, I decided I should go to Paris, to someplace I knew a little, where I would feel more at ease, less panicked, more protected and sheltered from the barrage of North Africa, contagion, contamination, and mosquitoes. I kept running away from whatever disturbed me. I second-guessed how tortured I was. I kept running, and that wasn't good either. I wondered what it really was that I was running from. I kept finding the same fears regardless of where I went. I was told by my Senegalese friend, over Skype, that pressure, this pressure I felt to leave, was a privilege. It could create ways out, an outlet, a solution. I decided

that I would get over myself and try to visit a hammam here and then I would escape once more and leave for Paris.

Sanitary of Starbucks: Gritty Hammam

Marseille was not charming. Or rather, I was not charmed by Marseille. It was mixed up, tired and dim. Maybe I was mixed up, tired and dim. I didn't want to see dog shit or human shit on the street. I was sick of smelling piss everywhere. I was sick of ugly cafes on dark ugly corners. I walked in and made an appointment for a massage at the Bains du Harem, the baths of the Harem! Perfect, I thought. So Orientalist. But I found that once I returned to the doorway at my appointed time, I couldn't go back inside, because it looked gritty and contaminated. I couldn't imagine going in with all my mosquito bites, already itching, and then itching more from the heat and the dirty water. I was afraid. I just *couldn't*.

I questioned if my fear of dirt was new or if I was just disillusioned – maybe delirious? What was happening to me? Staying with Emmanuelle in a shared student apartment kept me further on edge. There were old moldy vegetables in the refrigerator, and it looked as though it hadn't been cleaned. Ever. Food stayed out on the counters for hours, including dairy products. I know I had once lived like this myself, and I had survived, and it was going to be fine. But I couldn't now. Counters weren't wiped down. The sponge was bacteria ridden, smelly, and falling apart. Bathrooms were lined with magazines, books, and old toilet paper rolls.

That is why I found myself in a Starbucks, in the middle of France! I watched muffins depanned by latex gloved hands, where everything had a secure lid, or a plastic package, or a wrapper. I was comfortable here – the only solace in Marseille. I could calm down. I didn't love Starbucks because of its sterility and homogeneity, but I *needed* the comfort of familiarity now so I could breathe.

On Escape

I reflected more on my need to run, to escape. I thought about the heat here, in Marseille. Why had I thought it would be less oppressive than in Fez? I wanted to leave Marseille, and with almost more urgency than I had felt in Morocco. Not only did I still feel hot, I now felt unceasingly itchy. In a panic, on a Friday afternoon, I searched for a doctor who could look at the red lines I had noticed creeping up my left arm. Finally, after making frantic phone calls on my petite phone, I found a doctor who was still in his office. He said he would close in fifteen minutes, so I should hurry if I wanted to be seen. I shoved the phone in my bag, found the office on a paper map, memorized how to get there, then raced out the door, down the four flights of stairs, past the fruit and vegetable stands, and ran, at a fast jog, through the streets of Marseille. I reached the office, red in the face, sweating profusely, and itching even more than before. The doctor himself opened the door, and looked down at me with his kind brown eyes and brown creamy skin. He looked Moroccan. He also seemed frightened at the sight of me. I felt like a ghost, scaring us both. He told me, in good English, to try to calm down, take some antihistamine, showed me on the map where the hospital with the best emergency rooms was located, and then charged me 20 Euro, for the visit. I had forgotten that I would need to pay him. I had exactly 6 Euro in my bag, which I gave to him, then I started to cry, promising to bring him the rest on Monday. I was secretly grateful that I had a reason to return to see him, my only connection to protection and safety in this dangerous, itchy, steamy place. I decided I would not survive long here either, and must escape. I walked back to the apartment and studied the train schedule for Paris.

Paris

It was obvious, the moment I entered France, but especially when I entered Paris, that North Africa and France really were connected. It wasn't just my imagination and it wasn't just Marseille. I walked out from the Gare de Lyon, found the taxi line, and got in it. Within a few minutes I was pointed in the direction of a shiny new taxi, with a dark haired driver. I helped load my bags into the back of the taxi, and got in. I started throwing out words, wildly, in my best horrible French, and hoped for the best. I gave him the address, and I answered a few questions. He plugged the address into GPS, and we were off. He spewed questions my way, and talked. Where was I coming from. Would I be staying long. We talked about the weather. It was raining in Paris, and it had also been unusually hot. It had been 90 just the other day, like Marseille. Now cooler. I explained I was doing a project on the hammam. Oh! And I had been in Morocco! Oh! He was happy and he became instantly friendlier, looking frequently into his rearview mirror at me. I asked him what his origins were. He was Algerian. Kabyle. Berber. He offered that he didn't speak Arabic. Just Berber. Okay. I wonder if that might really be true, given that almost all the Berbers I had known in Fez could speak better Arabic than I could. If they had been to school they would have learned some. I had a moment of doubt, but perhaps he was from a small village and moved to France before going to school.

The taxi driver told me, in French, "I don't know if the hammam is really functional and operative here in Paris, but there are many. And they are expensive. They are for the French." His pessimism about Europe and the European economy was obvious. He kept repeating...the economic boom is over – "c'est fini. Tout ça...c'est fini." He gestured as we drove past cafes, restaurants, shops...He said all the people were still here. It was vacation time, but nobody was leaving Paris. Nobody had money. It was better to be in Morocco now. There were more

opportunities there. You could start a business. Here if you start a business, there was too much competition. Someone would start one just like yours, right next door. In Morocco there was still a chance. It was better to be there. Life was cheaper. He suggested I just go back - that it would be better for me to live there. I chuckled to myself, and wondered if he was right. Maybe I was just digging myself deeper into a new kind of misery by coming here, but the heat and my head been killing me – even in the south of France. I had become weak from lack of nourishment and my hair was beginning to fall out in clumps that worried me. At the same time I felt like one of the pampered tourists I used to watch file through Fez, with their canvas sun hats and sensible shoes, and air-conditioned hotel rooms. By arriving in Paris, I felt I had become the colonialist snob I used to disdain. I was no longer a hippy student wanderer who could tolerate the dirt and the germs and the heat.

I asked him if he was fasting, since it was still Ramadan. He said yes, no big deal. He was used to it. But it was hard, yes. I then of course, started to worry about the fact that it was early evening 6 pm, and he was driving on no food. Despite using GPS to get us to the address, he missed a turn. We had to wait for many cars to go around us. He was aggressive and unapologetic for himself, and I appreciated that he didn't apologize for the space he took up or for his opinions. It reminded me of Morocco, and I had a short pang of appreciation and was glad that my Morocco had seeped into Paris, but that was superseded by a worry that he would crash us into a wall because his blood sugar was low.

He said suddenly “Oh, you are wearing a *khmisa*” – a gold filigree necklace in the shape of a hand, believed to ward off the evil eye. My father bought it for me when we were in Morocco the summer I was three years old, and I never took it off. Somehow this necklace lent me legitimacy, as though he now really believed my story. He offered his phone number and his

help with my hammam project. He helped carry my suitcase up the stairs to the apartment. He gave me a “high five” because it was so “cool” that I’m doing what I’m doing, working with a North African topic. He seemed confused by me, like he didn’t know what to think, or he found it amusing and unusual. I wondered how prudent it was of me to have allowed him to carry my suitcases up the stairs to the door of the apartment. He even suggested I be careful living with people. “Watch out!” he warned. Watch your bag. Watch your stuff. It reminded me of the Haj the father of the house in Fez, who told me the same thing when I left for France. He told me not to trust anyone. Don't trust them. There are good and bad people everywhere. In France. In Morocco. In the USA.

My naïveté was more obvious here, but more tolerable. I thought that as soon as I had boarded that plane in Fez, that I would be out of Morocco, but the diversity of France, the saturation and integration of North African culture into France, was a jarring surprise in in Marseille. In Paris, the North African element is less visible, so more tolerable to me in this moment. The imaginary construct of Europe, of France, of a “French city” reminded me of the tourists in search of the thousand and one nights in Fez. I was dreaming of the essentialized postcard version of France from cartoons and movies, despite knowing the reality of Paris. I had spent time here, and knew what to expect, but was still convinced it would provide the perfect escape.

It was cooler in Paris than in Marseille or Fez, but my body was still burning up. I had the sensation that my scalp was on fire. My arms burned, even my face. Especially in the evenings, the itchy burning sensation invaded my thoughts and prevented me from going out, from doing anything. I paced. I was sure that I was about to die. I felt weak and panicked. I woke up in the middle of the night unable to breathe. During the day I ate peeled cucumbers, peeled

apples, peeled peaches, goat yogurt and toasted baguette with butter. I boiled some white beans and ate those for dinner. I considered calling Dr. Janes, but I knew he would only tell me to take anxiety medication, and I would resist. My mind and body were only calmed by a few activities. Peeling apples with a sharp knife temporarily transported me elsewhere; washing the dishes also helped. These required enough of my concentration to allow all my other voices to rest.

Infected Baguette: Plastic

I had found an elegant, upscale French bakery on the rue Montorgueil, about a mile from the apartment. I walked there frequently to buy my bread. One day, I was eating a section of toasted baguette when I found a little triangular, sharp, hard piece of plastic, already in my mouth. Did I swallow other pieces? My face turned hot, and I am flushed everywhere. I felt I had to start looking death straight in the eye, or figure out what God or some higher power was trying to tell me here. I flashed back to Fez, when we found a black rock in our bread. Does everyone have plastic and rocks in their bread? Is it only because I'm paranoid that I noticed? How many other rocks have I already eaten? Who put them there? Are they cursed? Am I cursed? Are these signs? Yet another indication that France was not the clean and purified place I expected it to be. Street bread here is just as contaminated, apparently, as street bread in Morocco.

Signs

Signs of suffering and death seemed to show up everywhere during my fieldwork. In Morocco, walking home, rounding the corner to my street, I had seen a scooter rider, down, on the ground, and people crowding around him. My worst fears were realized in front of me. Dead on the road. Was that a sign? Or walking out my door in the Fez medina, and seeing a dead kitten. Or walking out of the apartment building here, in Paris, and seeing a pigeon flapping in alarm,

struggling, dying. Suffering and signs of impending death were everywhere. It was right here, down the street. It was the next phone call, telling you your daddy was dead. It was the next phone call after that that your best friend wouldn't be able to come see you, because he was too busy. It was disappointment and it was the world out of control. It was the world of your safe childhood unraveling. The stitching was so loose, and wouldn't stay together. Soon you were barely wearing a toga, and it slipped off. You were weak and couldn't carry your bag. You bought eggs, and then re-thought that, and bought milk, and heated it, and bought apricots and put them in boiling water to kill the germs, and then you bought beans and boiled them too long, until they burned. You cooked and boiled and washed and sterilized the world until it was too scorched to touch anymore. You burned out all the nutrients, all the goodness, all the lightness, and all the beauty. I was burning up – too hot.

I heard myself talking to myself: you are *so* scared. You want safety. You want someone to save you. You want that helicopter to hover down and tell you that the game is over, you can come up now. But what about the good signs? That day in Fez, the one when I arrived in the 104 degree heat, I thought I was going to die of heat stroke and then it suddenly started raining. Hard. I went outside and drenched myself in the cool rain.

Bacchanalia Dance: Paris Dreams

I dreamed that Rachid was crying because he had shot someone with a gun. Well, yeah, he had killed *me* off. I'm not his wife anymore, I thought. Or maybe he was really my dad, crying with regret for shooting himself. Then, I danced with my friends – a couple: Mark and Tracy. They were both so beautiful in the dream. We danced, wildly, outside with masks and costumes as though it was Carnival, and there was a fire pit and drumming and music.

Anne, my roommate in the Paris apartment told me that I should reframe this heat and fear as an opportunity to talk to the “great spirit.” She said I should talk directly to death. I wondered who this great spirit was; could the spirit that I really needed to address actually be the jinn that had attached onto me and crawled inside me along this journey? I wondered if the bacchanalia dance I dreamed was like a *ḥadra* – a dance to appease or exorcise my jinn.

Food, Wine and Blood

Shortly thereafter, my cousin decided that someone needed to check on me, to make sure I was okay. She arrived in Paris, and we went out and walked and tried to eat our way through the city. My dad was her uncle. We went to dinner. She made me drink wine. Eat food – steak and pot au chocolat with potentially undercooked eggs. Blood and food were helping me. Those substances that had terrified me in Morocco are beginning to revive me now. Relieved, this allowed me to conduct some productive hammam research in Paris, before having to return to Seattle. Luckily, the temperatures in Paris had been much cooler than anywhere else, and my body started coming down from the shock. I carefully packed my field notebooks and loose scraps of paper into my carry-on bag. The day of my flight back to Seattle, I had another panic attack in the middle of the airport, and felt that my heart was going to explode, but I decided I had to get on that plane anyway, and hoped that I would survive the flight, so I could seek out better health in my home base and reunite with my daughter.

Seattle: Malignant Introject

Back in Seattle, I returned to Dr. Janes, my gentle, even-tempered and dependable Freudian psychoanalyst. I always knew that when I was in Morocco, at the height of my paranoia, I would have been diagnosed there, as being inhabited by a jinn, but that in the United States, my diagnosis was “generalized anxiety disorder” with a little post-traumatic stress. It was a few

years after my return that my analyst suggested that I had a malignant introject. He was prompted to say this after I described a conversation I had with myself on the way to teach a class. It was the first time I had described how I silenced the critical and deprecating voice, the “introject” by instead finding all the aspects of my walk to work that I was grateful for. The idea of the introject was not fully developed by Freud himself, but several prominent analysts (Sandler 1988, Schafer 1982) in the Kleinian camp have written seminal works on the introject. Schafer (1982), in his book *Aspects of Internalization* defines the introject as:

an inner presence with which one feels in a continuous or intermittent dynamic relationship The subject conceives of this presence as a person, a physical or psychological part of a person...or a person like thing or creature. He experiences it as existing within the confines of his body or mind or both, but not as an aspect of expression of his subjective self. ...the introject is experienced as capable of exerting a particular influence on the subject’s state and behavior, and of doing so more or less independently of his conscious effort to control it...not infrequent is the subject’s experience of consciously attempting, and perhaps being able to influence the state and apparently independent behavior of the introject (e.g., by telling it to shut up) (p. 72).

This definition is almost interchangeable with the explanation for mental disturbances and odd behaviors in Morocco: possession by jinn. Dr. Janes called the introject the “demonization” of Western psychiatry, and did not deny the similarity. I had told my own introject to “shut up” many times in the past years. Although it had taken me time to find it and hear it as separate from me and my various other internal representations. This was the critical voice that told me I was unable to teach, or that I was a bad tennis player, or how generally stupid I was. As time went on, I could more frequently catch this voice as not mine, and tell it to stop, to be quiet. I spoke out loud and told myself that I had done a good job, even just for

walking to class, or getting out of bed. This was combatting this introject. The day I told Dr. Janes about this self-talk was the day he told me I was possessed. He explained that I was now in a more dynamic relationship with my introject, and now that we were separating, I could start to control it and maybe even make it leave. Although recently he had also told me that the introjects were eternal. They never died.

According to Schafer, the introjects of psychotics are easily identified as an internalization of a voice or character – a separate identity. But, adult neurotics (amongst whom I must, logically, count myself) are also susceptible to the introject, but these are harder to diagnose since these introjects “lurk in the shadows,” and are not as seemingly “powerful, malignant, grotesque and omnipotent” (p. 71). My analyst, Dr. Janes, did not immediately suggest the presence of this introject until we had worked together for a number of years. He explained that my introject steered me away from behaviors that would benefit me. It was convincing me of dangers that may not exist, of my inadequacies, that my paranoias were logical. So, I asked, “it’s like I have a voice that isn’t my own inside, talking to me?” He said “yes, and the sooner you can separate from it, even name it, as a separate entity, the easier it will be to recognize when it is speaking.” However, my own voice and the voice of the introject were still often indistinguishable. One often masqueraded as the other.

I asked if it was helpful to try to drown out this voice with music and dancing, because those were the things that made me feel better, that made me ecstatically happy and that made me feel like myself again. The more I drowned out the introject with the music, the more in control I became. I wondered if the music I was drawn to is the music and rhythms preferred by my assigned jinn. And weren’t my jinn and my introject one and the same? Also, the more I understood and noticed that certain tragic events triggered and inflated my introject (news of

suicides in the community, fires, accidents, even stomach flu and assorted disasters close to home) the sooner the introject deflated. Because of my awareness of it, the paranoid voice withered and fell away quickly.

Irrational behaviors like mine were often considered absurd, and especially by people who had known me prior to this episode. They told me often to just think about it rationally...or snap out of it. People questioned how I could have changed so much. Didn't I realize that I would be okay if I ate at the restaurant I had been to a thousand times before? I didn't understand this myself. How could my rational voice not take hold over the power of the other voice, the introject? I knew that becoming hysterically panicked after eating moldy bread or biting into a piece of plastic in a baguette was irrational. My rational mind and voice could not combat the power of my introject. The introject consumed and strangled rational me. Schafer describes this phenomenon as "splitting of the ego." In my particular case, where I am the "hysteric," "a phobia may be mystifying to the anxiety hysteric and yet be binding in its power" (pp. 97-98). The oscillation between these two ego projections (rational vs. paranoid) was so rapid that the oscillation could not be detected by me, the subject. There was a synthesis between the two that was not taking place. Rationally, I knew that the bread that dropped to the ground for a split second was probably safe to eat, would certainly not kill me, but I was more terrified of the power of the invisible and unknown contaminants, stuck to that bread. I found myself on the precipice of hyperventilation many times.

This chapter provides a deeper analysis of perceptions of clean and dirty along trajectory of my personal experiences from Morocco to Paris. It reveals and confesses some of my own Orientalist assumptions about contamination and purity, but also challenges the logic of the naïve anthropologist, attached to traditionalism and under the spell of a "salvage paradigm" – by which

she was once blinded because of her resistance to Westernization and romanticization of the anti-antiseptic charm of Morocco. It wasn't until I became pathologically and irrationally terrified of contamination that I could begin to understand why Moroccan family members and other Moroccans questioned my affection for the "dirty" medina.

Thus, this indulgent narrative demonstrates how the emotional state of the anthropologist herself, caused a major adaptive shift in how she could function in her research environment, and in the world at large. Personal trauma – my daughter's stress, my father's sudden death, the acknowledgement that my marriage had really dissolved, the unraveling of another love affair, directly influenced my work and my perspective and my psychological equilibrium. Although limiting, my mental instability also drew me into a more intimate understanding of the very themes I had set out to investigate: spiritual desire, purity, contamination, and it put me in a very intimate relationship with the invisible actors inhabiting me, whether they be jinn or introjects, or something else entirely.

While I was in the last weeks of my stay in Paris, doing research on the hammam, I began to recognize and reorganize my own assumptions about Orientalism and the space of the colonizer, the relationship between the colonizer and colonized in this space, and how the experience of North Africa and Islam was represented and produced in Paris. I also began to sort out, in a more theoretical sense, the intersection of the various "desires" linked to the hammam - capitalist versus spiritual, vis-à-vis my own biases.

CHAPTER 8: PARIS HAMMAMS: PANTIES AND BOURGEOIS BOHEMIANS

Overview

In this chapter, the hammam in Paris acts as a lens to investigate how Moroccan identity has traveled (in diaspora) to Paris and interfaced with French identity. I consider how hammams have been transported into France – what types exist, how they represent themselves, how Islam is represented through them, and how their utilization ties into theories of desire, not just for an upstanding life of piety (Mahmoud, 2004), but also for exotic escape, relaxation and communion with the Other. I also consider how the hammams of Paris contribute to and participate in the diversity of Paris. Through partaking in the cultural ritual of the hammam, non-Muslims shift their historically distanced “Orientalist” behavior towards the North African to one of inclusion and participation.

Introduction

The social and physical space of the hammam in Paris, France, is the location of an imaginary traditional Oriental body, where ideas about North African Islam are presented, represented and produced. I investigate three hammams in Paris: 1) the hammam within the Great Mosque complex, 2) the Bains du Marais in the chic Marais district, and 3) the Bains du Barbès in the Goutte d’Or neighborhood of the 18th arrondissement, a neighborhood comprised primarily of North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants. These three hammams represent three distinctly different hammam types, each offering a unique perspective onto how the Oriental or North African body is performed. Through the details of bodily practice in these spaces and interviews with workers and customers, I contrast the intentions of the colonized and the colonizers by tracing the production of and the intersection of different “desires” where they meet in the spaces of the hammam. I approach this investigation of Parisian hammams, in part, as a continuation of the history of European Orientalist harem representations.

Desires on the part of the French colonizer in contrast to the Muslim colonized diverge at some points but also merge at other junctures. The hammam is a site where the once distancing activities associated with the Orientalist voyeurism of the nineteenth and twentieth century Europeans (through painting, travel writing, literature and postcard photography) have now engaged non-Muslim men and women in France as willing and active participants in this “cultural” activity. Meanwhile, marginalized North Africans in diaspora have appropriated and repurposed an Orientalist ideology to economic or social advantage, as is also the case in the touristic hammams in Morocco. Through this lens, it can also be seen that North Africans have, to some degree, integrated into French life, but remain critical of Western economic and social ideologies.

As an *entrée* into this world of the hammam in Paris, I first introduce the idea of the Bourgeois Bohemian, or Bobo, a member of the young, educated social class in France that define themselves, in part, by their acceptance and understanding of marginalized peoples and cultures. In this way, they are the principal consumers and proponents of the hammam experience, desiring more than a visual or intellectual understanding of the culture, but also a somatic, embodied connection - a therapeutic experience that helps subvert colonial guilt and also supplies an illusion of closeness and compassion towards the Other. People intentionally embody the Orient, and “Orientalize” themselves in the name of moral virtue.

I then provide a brief overview of the institutional and state management of Islam in France, followed by a brief history and contextualization of the Great Mosque, the first hammam site in this ethnographic tour, and its relationship to Orientalism. I contextualize the mosque complex as a hyper-real display of North African Islam, a present-day extension of the world

exhibits of 19th century Paris. I then address theories of desire that relate to the interaction between the colonized and colonizer.

Next, I offer a more personal descriptive tour of the neighborhoods and interiors of the three aforementioned hammams, through my own filter and through the voices of their respective workers and clientele. Where bodies are most vulnerable in various states of undress, the hammam provides a living representation of a wide spectrum of an exotic North African Other – this representation sometimes embodied by the colonizer, sometimes by the colonized. This study attempts to describe and give voice to “hidden women” who, in the past, have been relegated to silent members of the “harem,” captured only in Oriental paintings, writings and postcard photographs. This time the hammam women, through the filter of this white female anthropologist, are able to comment on the colonizer, instead of just the other way around.

Bobo Culture

Despite the unusually cool late-August temperatures, the Paris scene was like many of the parties I had stumbled across in while in college in New York City - educated, socially conscious, beautiful people hanging out and drinking. The sun shining, plastic cups of beer and wine in hands, napkins fluttering away in the cool gusts, I watched groups, couples, hip thirty-somethings enjoying their early evening "apero" – the social drink before dinner hour. These are the Bobos, or the bourgeois bohemian. As the name implies, this is an educated class of people – a new French middle class – composed of the creative, liberal, young, environmentally mindful, but ironically, also wealthy individuals. David Brooks (2000), in his book *Bobos in Paradise*, defines them as “highly educated folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success” (p. 2, 2000). He says that although “defying expectations, and maybe logic, [Bobos] seemed to have combined the

countercultural sixties and the achieving eighties into one cultural ethos" (p. 2). Some say Brooks coined the term Bobo to describe the caste of educated elite succeeding the "yuppies," although the term actually appeared much earlier, in the 1885 novel *Bel-Ami* by French writer Guy de Maupassant as well as the 1918 novel "Tarr" by Wyndham Lewis. I had never heard this term in the United States, but in Paris and Marseille, Bobo is thrown about frequently, and has been wholeheartedly adopted within the lexicon of educated French of all ages.

The concept is not unlike some of the American social identifiers, like "hipster" or "preppie," which refer to a style of dress, a way of being, an ideology that shapes lifestyle, leisure, style, political activities, and relationships. In 2012 Paris, entire neighborhoods were referred to as Bobo – implying that a hip, educated, youthful, elite, cultured and cutting edge crowd had infiltrated and was inspiring the current flavor of businesses and activities in their midst. However, Bobos are highly self-conscious and uncomfortable with their privilege. As a result, they prefer to associate themselves with working class ideals (according to my Parisian source, Zara), feeling uneasy about the choices they have as young Western, educated, and middle-class, and they are aware of the discrepancy between their lives, and struggling minority populations. So, they tend to travel on a shoestring budget, even if they can afford a luxury vacation. The Bobos value experiences over possessions and make a point of incorporating culturally rich and socially conscious activities into their daily lives in an effort to combine activism with their socializing. They recognize the spiritual importance of small-scale local connections, as a way of enhancing meaning in their own lives, and also bettering the greater community. Spirituality for the Bobo is pluralistic. There are many paths to God, and Bobos feel comfortable mixing and matching new age genres and practices with more traditional belief

systems, selecting the aspects of each that work for them, in a highly individualized form of spirituality.

A Bobo Scene

On the upper terrace of the enormous Cafe 25 Degrés Est, overlooking Stalingrad Square, I waited to meet my friend Yasmin, who, like me, was working towards a Ph.D. in the social sciences. Her father was Tunisian-born Muslim and her mother French-born Catholic, but she did not grow up with either of her parents' religion. She had visited her Tunisian relatives often, so identified with her Tunisianness but did not consider herself Muslim. The café was in the 19th arrondissement, bordering the slightly more upscale 10th, where Zara and many other students and a large youthful Bobo contingent, resided.

On my walk to the café, I had discovered a hammam called Les Bains d'Orient. I stopped to take some pictures from the outside to record the Orientalist font on the signage above the door.



Figure 8.1 Les Bains d'Orient, Paris



Figure 8.2 Sidewalk view, Les Bains d'Orient, Paris

I tried to peer into windows, but they were frosted and covered in black doodly line designs, so I couldn't see much of anything more than business hours tacked to the door and some off-white walls and doors. The hammam lacked any architectural distinction along a row of businesses: a stationery store, a parking garage, and a simple café - all closed on a Sunday afternoon. This neighborhood had recently undergone a gentrification process, but still had a larger Arab population than the more central Parisian neighborhoods. The shops were not pristine or slick, but bore the marks of a less fruitful past. I walked further, alone, under an imposing dark grey

metal metro overpass to the large, open brick Stalingrad Square where groups of young North African men – in their late teens and twenties sat and stood in large groups of ten or more. They were joking, laughing, leaning up against low cement walls and juggling soccer balls with their feet. One said "bonjour" and motioned me to come over. I was reminded of Morocco where vocalizations and invitations were common, flirty, perhaps irritating, but not serious. Lately, I interpreted such "come-ons" as performances of gender-perfunctory social noises. I used to assume such noises were a signaling of my category as a Western woman, or implied assumptions about my sexual promiscuity. I experimented with different responses to the catcalls I received in Morocco over the many years I lived there. Sometimes it felt like more effort to walk with my head down, ignoring them. To my surprise, when I boldly took young boys up on their offers to join them, they were often in so much shock that they quickly slunk away, head downcast, embarrassed, not knowing what to do with me. In any case, I am no longer threatened by these gestures as I had been years earlier. Here in Paris, I nodded to the boys quickly, smiled halfheartedly, and said "bonjour" and that was that. No further interactions ensued. Some older men were milling around as well, quietly watching the scene.

I arrived at the Cafe 25 Degrés Est, to its upper terrace overlooking the Bassin de la Villette, a large, ordered rectangular body of water extending from the Canal St. Martin. The Bassin consists of pools with active fountains shooting symmetrical sprays. But the scene was stark and controlled and I was feeling chilled and off-center. Young people in their 20s and 30s were arriving in droves, hanging about along the railings looking out over the bright water. Some were already standing at shiny tall round silver tables, cups in hand, weight to one side, hip hyper-extended. Others were sitting at tables, gesturing animatedly, with colorful scarves

flapping in the wind. The interior section of the café was small and simple – a streamlined structure serving only to distribute alcohol and house a simple bar with a choice of wine or beer.



Figure 8.3 Cafe 25 Degrés Est, Paris, <http://Aziza.barsparis.com/bar-paris/25-degres-est/>

Clean but bleak, lacking the historic charm and human scale of older Paris, this felt like new culture – and new architecture. In the distance were two tall seventies-style high-rise structures, which Zara told me are social housing in plain view of this leisurely gathering of Parisian Bobos. Within Paris, recent elections had favored diversity within the city boundaries, which included projects to make affordable housing in its center. The Socialist mayor had a social housing program in place that offered housing at lower than market prices. There were several criteria for securing this social housing. One had to have a job in Paris, children, and unofficially, ethnic minorities had priority. The state was once criticized for building socially and geographically isolated ghettos by way of the huge social housing projects built in the late 20th century along the city outskirts. Now, new construction was more human scale and low-income housing was to be distributed throughout regular apartment buildings in some of the wealthiest central and west Paris neighborhoods.



Figure 8.4 The Cafe 25 Degrés Est, social housing project in the distance

The cultural and economic underpinnings of Bobo are central to understanding Moroccan tourism and hammam culture in the largest cities of France: Paris and Marseilles. The Bobos are, for the most part, the people who consume and even help to promote the culture of minority, which includes but is not limited to, North Africa. Zara even said, "Bobo[s] can be identified through cultural taste" (thus, they are not simply an economic or political class) (see also Bourdieu). According to Zara, the right wing had been using the word Bobo as a disqualifying pejorative word, and some used it to indicate that a behavior or a person was phony – trying to be

something they aren't. She explained the phenomenon in more detail through a political analysis as follows: people can't afford to live in central Paris anymore, so as a result the people who remain in the center are wealthier. In spite of this, more people in Paris are voting socialist, and Paris has become more and more left leaning in the past fifteen years. In every election this seemed to be the case, but it was not a working class movement that was producing this result, since Paris was inordinately expensive and those who could afford to live there were no longer working-class. So, this increase in leftist political leanings was composed of a middle class, voting against their own class interest, in order to do the "right thing" to promote diversity.

Standing at the silver metal tables, paranoid and afraid to sip my white wine because the wind had blown bits of leaves and mysterious refuse into my plastic cup, I asked Zara about the neighborhood and the Bobo factor, as this was my first visit to the 19th arrondissement. I then realized that this Bobo sensibility that I first heard about in Marseilles was relevant to the refashioning, remarketing and reimagining of Orientalist products, experience and practice in France; the Bobo were the consumers and the producers of such cultural practices. They were the clientele for the Mosque Hammam, for example, and even in Morocco, these were the foreigners who were driving the tourist market, the consumers of the touristic hammam experiences in the "authentic" but renovated traditional houses and palaces, in order to have all the Moroccan charm, but all the comforts of a Western hotel.

Within Paris, the Bobos were trying to support working class neighborhoods and keep the general feeling of these places, to encourage diversity through supporting fair and inclusive housing initiatives. According to Joe, an American friend and long-time expat, the Canal St. Martin, in the 10th arrondissement, where he had lived for many years, had many affordable working class bars and restaurants, and affordable housing as recently as ten or fifteen years ago.

By the 2000s they were all gone, in favor of trendy, hip bars. Nothing was particularly slick or modern – there was still an intentionally grungy working-class vibe, but at middle class prices. Today, the 10th arrondissement, along the Canal St. Martin, was considered the heart of hip, Bobo Paris.

Surprisingly (since Islam formally forbids drinking alcohol) many of the bartenders in this neighborhood were North African, and indeed the bartender and owner at one of the most popular bars in this area, Le Carillon, was Algerian and a friend of Joe's. Zara verified that North African bartenders were common everywhere in Paris, not just in the Bobo neighborhoods. After Algerian independence in 1962, a law passed making it easier for Algerians to sell tobacco, facilitating much needed employment. Somehow this bled over into the bar industry and so there are many Algerians still working with alcohol and tobacco. Ironically, one of the occupations that has become associated with North Africans, involves a substance (alcohol) that is forbidden according to most interpretations of Islamic texts. In Morocco drinking alcohol is illegal. Technically, wine, beer and spirits are available for sale in liquor stores and at bars and restaurants, but only to only to non-Muslims. However, many Moroccans I knew drank, and laws are relaxed at best. Since the French state disregards religion, in the name of separation of church and state, unlike countries like Morocco, it does not place importance on preferences or taboos born of religious affiliation and Muslims simply take advantage of the job opportunities available to them.

Several years after my rendezvous with Joe at Le Carillon in the Bobo 10th arrondissement, the bar was the unfortunate target of a terrorist attack on November 13, 2015, one in a series of violent attacks in Paris that month. It closed for two months for repairs, but was open and functional at the time of this writing. So despite having a North African Muslim

clientele and North African employees, this relatively small but popular bar was a target of terrorism. Sites such as this, not necessarily on the international tourist circuit, and not necessarily stadiums with enormous crowds, could be sites of political tension and even targets. Perhaps even because of the intersection of cultures at these sites, where the French citizenship of North African employees undermined or subverted their Muslim identity, this produced further tensions.

Zara said, “Bobos are students, teachers, artists, writers, and intellectuals” and that they tended to live in the formerly working class neighborhoods where certain trades were still maintained and patronized by wealthier residents: locksmiths, shoe repair shops, hardware stores. The working class character was maintained in these neighborhoods, along with some ethnic and socioeconomic diversity because Bobos embraced these differences (as important and interesting) and they seemed to consume them as *charmant* and cool, and as part of their socially conscientious and charitable duty.

According to Zara, Bobos were interested in helping facilitate more diversity, naturally and personally, rather than through institutionalizing or forcing assimilation. In this way, they became consumers of the cultures around them. Zara, with a smirk, reluctantly and grudgingly admitted to being a Bobo herself. She seemed embarrassed to have jumped fully into something that was so clearly an identifiable and trendy “movement.” The inclusivity of which she spoke seemed to apply more to consumptive practices, rather than crossing ethnic and economic class lines in terms of social life. Her friends tended to be mostly white and educated Bobos like herself, although her origins were ethnically mixed – Tunisian-Arab/French, but her education and cultural taste were clearly high-level Bobo. Her boyfriend, however, was Jewish, so this pairing supplied a star-crossed lovers scenario. She said that she used to go to the Hammam at

the Great Mosque with her friends as a fun thing to do because "it's so nice." Her explanation of the experience did not extend beyond a superficial "nice," which marked to me, the superficial degree to which the Bobo supported their cause, and yet their mission seemed rooted in a sincere belief in social and economic equality and freedom.

The Bobos were like the grassroots foot soldiers, single handedly, through their daily purchases, activities, choices of lovers and bars, attempting to uphold France's famed revolutionary motto: *liberté, égalité, fraternité* – liberty, equality and fraternity. They approached this mission with an eye to social and cultural inclusion, rather than a heavy-handed attempt at political or religious involvement. The state itself takes an ambiguous approach to the direct management of Islam. The adherence to *laïcité*, or secularism, is a core principle of the French constitution, and prohibits the state management or funding of religion. In 2004, as a controversial extension of this concept, the French government banned headscarves and other religious symbols in public schools and in 2011 made it illegal to cover the face in public (Bowen, 2007, 2010; Roy, 2007). To what degree can this kind of control of behavior be said to be non-involvement? But, more importantly, in the case of the hammam, what are the encounters on the ground in a highly culturally charged, even religiously imbued space? The hammam is a place where humans can potentially feel equal, leaving headscarves, religious symbols, and verily, all clothing at the door, with the exception of panties. Panties must stay on as a gesture of modesty - something that all hammams in Morocco require as well.

Management of Islam in France: The Great Mosque of Paris

Legally, in order to keep church and state entirely separate, the French cannot include questions about religious affiliation in the official census, so numbers are polled estimates. In 2006, it was estimated that approximately five million individuals of Muslims descent lived in

France, the majority of which were North African immigrants (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006, p.15). Muslim North Africans represent a significant portion of the minority populations that the Bobo communities embrace through their leftist leanings and hammam excursions. So, how does France formally manage the consumption, interpretation and representation of Islam?

Through a bit of luck, an American friend I had known in Morocco put me in touch with his colleague and friend, an American diplomat at the embassy in Paris. This diplomat kindly agreed to meet me for a brief interview, but did not want to be identified in my study, because of the sensitive nature of inter-Islamic politics in France. I will call him “MM” for “Mosque Meeting” at the café. Our conversation clarified to me the degree to which Islam in Paris was indeed institutionally managed and that the Great Mosque, as one of three important sites of this controlled management, played a critical role as the face and disseminator of French Islam.

According to MM, there are three prongs to the political representation of Islam in France. The first prong is the Great Mosque, which in 2012 and at the date of this writing was headed by Algerian-born rector Dalil Boubakir. The second prong is the CFCM, *le Conseil français du culte musulman*, or French Council of Muslim Faith, started by Sarkozy in 2003, and considered at that time to be a victory by the state. The body itself was not intended to be “representative” of Muslim populations, but simply an advisory body made up of Muslim leaders, and it was considered an enormous step towards controlling and assimilating North African Islam into the French republic. By 2012, when I met with MM, the CFCM was presided over by a Moroccan, Mohammed Moussawi, and at this writing in 2017 by another Moroccan, Anouar Kbibeche. The third prong is L'Institut du Monde Arabe, a monumental and popular modern cultural center and museum space founded in 1980 by Mitterrand as part of his *grand travaux*. Thus, the Mosque, the site of a hammam resembling an Orientalist painting, holds a remarkably important political

function in the representation of Islam in Paris, and even France as a whole. I only focus here on one prong – the Great Mosque, since this is the site of a hammam, and the other prongs are not.

The day MM met me was sweltering, and we sat in the café of the Great Mosque, in the outdoor courtyard, which was covered in awnings that magnified the heat and covered us in orange light. I felt sticky and nervous, and MM seemed pained by the situation he was describing to me – as though the politics of high-ranking Parisian Islamic leaders were a million miles from the fountain, pastries and gardens that surrounded us. The refuge of the inner hammam suddenly seemed even more like a Disney-like prop than I had imagined it to be. It was Ramadan, when Muslims fast during the daytime, but the café was full of families and young people sipping tea, coffee, soda and eating pastry.

MM was surprisingly candid with me, and gave a summary of politics within the landscape of Paris's Muslim power players. According to MM, there was an outward face of unity, but relatively little coordination and agreement between Muslim leaders in France. The myth of unity corresponded with my own naïve Orientalist imaginings of a cohesive Muslim North African people/culture. The reality of the situation shattered my illusions. I had always assumed that my history in Morocco would grant me acceptance into Tunisian or Algerian company, by virtue of a shared language and similar cultural experience (different, but close, I thought, and I had Moroccans talk about Tunisia and Algeria as their brethren). But this was politics, and clearly, Algerian, Tunisian and Moroccan interests in France were not always aligned.

Just six weeks prior to this meeting with MM, the Great Mosque had pulled its representation from the CFCM (French Council of Muslim Faith), which was a veritable scandal, according to M, because it exposed the fractured interests between formerly French-occupied

North African countries (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). It also implied that the Mosque was making the choice *not* to participate in a state run body – the operation of which, in past years, had finally signaled success in France in management of and control of Islam. According to Bowen (2007), under Sarkozy, though the formation of the CFMF, a body of Muslim leaders working for the state, there was a sense that Islam had finally come under some control and domestication, thus paving the way for assimilation (pp. 56-58). Recent scandals implied internal conflicts and revealed the reality and challenges of painting a cohesive cultural façade in the name of Islam.

A few days after this scandal, the US ambassador hosted a buffet-style *iftar* meal (the breaking of the fast during Ramadan) to which all of the leaders of the above organizations and many others were invited. The rector of the Great Mosque, Boubakir, did not show up, although he was expected – another scandal. Boubakir, according to M, was said to be driven by Algerian interests and was considered by many to be acting as an agent of Algeria. His absence at the meal, I assumed, signaled his distancing from other leaders (of other nationalities) and unwillingness to participate in a unified Muslim front. The Great Mosque, then, was not so much a North African mosque, but an extension, at the present moment, of Algerian interests.

M complained that the Institute du Monde Arabe, one of the other representational prongs, was also biased because Algeria was its primary funding source, so programming favored and unduly represented Algeria. He mentioned also that Algerians in France complained all the time—they were constantly complaining. My mind quickly scanned all my interactions with Algerians to test his hypothesis. It's true that the last Algerian I had interviewed – a worker at the gift shop at the Mosque - had complained bitterly about his mistreatment and difficulties in France. However, the Moroccans I had spoken with had also complained, returning me to the

illusion of a unified North African experience once again. M, however, seemed clearly perturbed –even perhaps put out, by the degree to which Algerian interests dominated the religio-political landscape of Paris and distressed at the relentless grievances on behalf of Algerians, despite their apparent upper hand in the political arena. Surely his interactions with North Africans were of a different nature than mine, as he was accustomed to attending events with foreign dignitaries, diplomats and politicians. Nonetheless, I gleaned from our conversation that “managing Islam” in Paris really *did* intentionally occur at a certain political level, and it was not clear-cut or simple. The Great Mosque was “prong one” of this management machine, and the hammam was an offshoot of this larger Mosque apparatus. The complex, nonetheless, appeared to be a carefully curated representation of North Africa and Islam.

Mosque History: Orientalism and Display

The Great Mosque of Paris has been critiqued as nothing more than a Disnification of North African Islam – a “permanent exhibition” conceptually extended from the temporary deceptive, and Orientalizing exhibitions at the Egyptian pavilions of 19th century Parisian World Expositions. Located far from the heart of Muslim neighborhoods that are on the outskirts of Paris, the Great Mosque complex is located near the Latin Quarter in the 5th arrondissement, the locus of Parisian universities and student activities, and was built as a model of a Muslim mini-neighborhood. This complex includes a functioning mosque, beautiful well-kept gardens, a restaurant, a pastry shop, a popular café, a gift store, a library, a language and religious institute, and a hammam. Some have suggested, however, that these spaces are no more than an educational and cultural center or “laboratory” to observe the (inauthentic) workings of a Muslim neighborhood (Bayoumi 2000, Bowen 2007, Ossman 2002).

Indeed, in order to receive state funding, to bypass the limitations of the recently established secular laws of *laïcité* in 1905, the Great Mosque complex was conceived of as an educational center, rather than a religious institution. So, it really did become a place to study and an *object of study*, a representation where Muslims could be witnessed, observed, studied, categorized, ordered, managed, contained, and codified, and in a sense, “captured.” The *other* Muslims, since not visible here, were invisible in the outlying arrondissements, and would be watched instead by the surveillance organization (Bayoumi 2000, Bowen 2007). The hammam was another layer within this visible display of Islam, although it was tucked away, behind the pastry cases, and its patrons were hidden, naked, behind closed doors.



Figure 8.5 Elusive hammam entry (left), behind the pastry case, Great Mosque, Paris

The Great Mosque was originally conceived of as a gift honoring the North African soldiers who fought for the French in WWI, and yet nowhere written onto the structure (or in other public texts) was there recognition or mention of the laborers and artisans, imported from North Africa, who devoted their labor to this endeavor. The inauguration of the mosque in 1926

coincided, (without accident) with the 1925 formation of the clandestine surveillance organization that targeted people from North Africa: Service de Surveillance, Protection, et Assistance des Indigènes Nord-Africains (SAINA). There was no display of the bulk of Muslims living in “squalid slums, hidden from public recognition, and...subjected to intimidation, harassment, surveillance and control” (Bayoumi, 286). While the Great Mosque complex did present a positive, tranquil face of Islam, whether or not it was truly a gift to the North Africans, or reflected their culture in France, was another story.

The Great Mosque of Paris, as an exhibit, serves to reify ideas about the culture and people of Islamic North Africa. One can draw parallels with Mitchell’s (1998) argument in his article “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” that the representations of Egypt and the exotic Oriental other at the Paris Exhibition were far from accurate representations, but served to further entrench the discourse on Islamic North Africa, as exotic, erotic, and backwards. Mitchell describes the experience of an Egyptian delegation’s visit to the 1889 “Egyptian Mosque” in the Paris Exposition. They were horrified by what they saw: donkeys in dirty alleyways, and a mosque façade that led not into an actual mosque, but into a scandalous café with drinks and dancing girls.



Figure 8.6 Entry, Great Mosque of Paris

My own experience entering the hammam of the great mosque was similarly disorienting. While not horrified, I was surprised, once I slipped past the pastry case and past the first small antechamber. Suddenly bodies on display opened up in front of me in a large rotunda, visible from the front counter where clients paid. Here, lounging naked bodies were distributed about, on display before even paying for an entry ticket. This scene resembled a painting of the North African hammam or harem by Gerome or Ingres – a living extension not only of the Parisian

exhibitions, but also of Orientalist paintings. So, my experience of opening the door to the hammam was not unlike the experience of the Egyptian delegates opening the door to the exhibitionary mosque and finding a café with girls dancing and spinning dervishes. While the elements or players were more consonant with the environment, the elements were dissonant enough to send up red flags for me. Something was amiss. This did *not* feel like the slice of the “Muslim” life I had come to know in Morocco.

Here in the mosque light and color created a mood: blues and yellows, and a murky sensuality from the decorative chairs and pillows, the mats and fountain. There was no such added décor in a Moroccan hammam, aside from the architecture of the space itself. In Morocco, bodies were hidden from view at the entry point. A heavy and defining door separated the inside of the hammam – the nakedness, the water, the cacophony and the activity, from the world of payment, cool down, and dressing. This was the case in every hammam I had entered in Morocco, even the touristic spa variety. The Paris mosque hammam was borne of a different political and cultural intention and purpose, and its shape and scenery belied this history.

The Great Mosque complex was built in the climate of a new colonial modernity, which redefined subjects as citizens who have individual rights. The architecture at this time attempted to reflect this power shift to the body politic. Bayoumi points out the contradiction represented by the Great Mosque since the mosque complex is a highly managed and unrepresentative window onto the North African body politic and not actually built to functionally accommodate or serve the Moroccans and Algerians in Paris, a population which at the time and still today, live on the margins of Paris and attend mosques and hammams closer to home, if at all. The spirit of architectural projects at the time, promoted equality and attention to marginalized populations, but this complex is so controlled and physically far from the North African

populations that it is not actually adherent to the principles of equality espoused by its creative impetus. It is a “laboratory” where others can observe prayers and partake in bathing practices, but where workers must commute from outside of the city limits. The same problem existed before immigration to France was pervasive, when the colonized lived far and across the water, and it was easy to define their cultural production through literature, plays, paintings and travel accounts, and the universality of human rights could be selectively applied. But when the colonized have a direct presence within the space of the colonizer, these universal principles also seem selectively applied. Bayoumi suggests that the Great Mosque complex is a managed way for cultural difference to be introduced and built into the city, and defined by the colonizer.

An ethnographic account of a site like this brings political issues into focus in novel ways. The presence of a Muslim place of worship like the great mosque in a secular state presents contradictions and necessary management, especially given the other political movements and struggles (e.g. human rights activism, laws forbidding the headscarf, issues of housing, work and worship, see Bowen 2008). There is a sense that, based on republican principles of equality, and adherence to *laïcité*, the state wishes to erase superficial difference, as seen in the headscarf laws of 2004 the laws banning face cover and the burka in of 2010 (Bowen), which prohibit external displays of religious difference. The visible displays of Islam are highly idealized and representative of this *desire* for a tranquil, even transcendent celebration of peaceful multiculturalism. The Great Mosque of Paris was inaugurated in 1926, but discussions around the state-funded (or foreign-funded) construction of a Great Mosque in Marseille (and other French cities with large Muslim populations) have been ongoing for decades.

In 2001, the Marseille project was finally approved by government agencies, and the cornerstone was laid in 2010, but construction stopped there due to various controversies.

Muslim groups opposed the project, accusing the government agencies of ignoring the physical and metaphorical periphery and designing an Islam for the center - a show of state propaganda. The mosque of such scale, it was suggested, would service only the elite, and not the working class majority, as is the case with the Great Mosque in Paris. Muslim organizations maintained that French authorities were controlling the project, and that it would be better for Muslims in France to “establish private, middle-sized Islamic centres, in order to avoid the control of either foreign donors or of the French state” (Maussen 2007, p. 998-9). Additionally, conflicts between North African leaders from Morocco and Algeria over funding and control finally ended in a stalemate, and the project has been abandoned indefinitely. Marseille’s leading local paper *La Provence* recently stated that “the Grand Mosque is nothing more than a mirage” – a comment with multiple implications (Dickey, 2016). The cornerstone has been laid, by the current leader of the Great Mosque in Paris, Dalil Boubakeur, but no physical building exists. However, the mosque and its environs are very real in virtual three-dimensional images. This site renders the desire of state influence and imaginings in an elegantly functioning website:

<http://lamosqueedemarseille.com>. Here, a highly idealized streamlined and modern mosque, with architectural references to the North African traditional ornamentation and mosque towers, glows in the misty Marseille morning, emitting a tranquil message of peace where a sanctuary of worship and repose, and linked to the multicultural melting pot of Marseille itself, appearing heavenly in the background. Islam is integrated here with the rest of the city, and unified virtually, albeit in an idealized way that the state, I suspect, would support. This is a virtual embodiment of what is desired, by many. But the desires of the various Islamic factions could not coalesce. Desires are divided and diverse with regard to the real and imagined Marseilles

mosque. And what of the Great Mosque of Paris, its hammam and the various strands of desire there?

Intersections of Desire

In the space of the hammam, there are two strands of desire related to bodily bathing practices. First, Muslim citizens, immigrants, and visitors desire religious purity as dictated by Islam – a purity associated with the cleanliness of the body, and along these lines a desire and obligation to adhere to cultural bathing standards, which in turn builds inclusion into a community and class (Katz, 2002). Second, the colonizer - French middle and upper-class nationals who do not necessarily identify as Muslim - desire entry into and participation in a cultural experience of the Other, an experience with expectations set up through the exotic, erotic and sensual imagery written into Orientalist literature, art and photography generated by the colonizer during and after the colonization of North Africa. This imaginary has left its trail of associations and remnants from earlier iterations of Orientalist understanding and fantasy. More recently, rather than a distancing gaze through which non-Muslims observe the culture and its activities from afar, the hammam offers a consumable “ritual” experience perceived by its adherents as an effort to promote a cross-cultural dialogue of understanding. In an analysis of the various hammam participants (from pious religious North African Muslims to atheist Europeans) ideas about purity, cleanliness, relaxation and pampering are often in a dissonant relationship. Their desires, aims and outcomes are often incongruent. What happens when these two strands of desire intersect in Paris hammams?

Religious Strand

Saba Mahmood, in her recent ethnography *Politics of Piety*, theorizes how daily rituals involving bodily movement (praying, cooking, cleaning) can generate a desire for religious piety.

She describes how participants in the mosque movement in Cairo are instructed on “how to organize their daily conduct in accord with principles of Islamic piety and virtuous behavior” (2005, 4). Thus, the body generates a religious state of mind and desire for union with Allah. Desire comes not prior to action, but *after* specific actions are performed by the body. The idea that action produces piety is not new in literature about Muslim culture. Others have discussed the importance of the *doing* (be it recitation, dance, poetry competition, or prayer) rather than intellectual belief, as an essential component in the creation of a religious state of being and to true religious submission (see Nelson, 1980). Similarly, the ritual of the hammam is functional, social, but also a religious activity that generates belonging and belief.

The end product of the hammam provides the possibility to pray, to access the love of the divine, and produces the desire for union with God, but often visits to the hammam by the French seem oriented towards beauty for a different kind of amorous experience.

Western Desire

The hammam in France is a more aesthetic, sensual and visual experience than in traditional Moroccan hammams. While a pious desire might be generated *through* daily practice, rather than *preceding* practice for Muslim hammam visitors, this is not necessarily the case for the non-Muslim visitor who seeks repose, beauty and entry into a mysterious and exotic cultural experience. According to Deleuze and Guattari (year), desire is socially productive, rather than fulfillment of a longing for something absent. Women (and men) who frequent the hammam are producing a new conversation about colonial desire, by engaging in an experience more directly. The experience of the hammam— and the religious significance — is bypassed in favor of exotic impressions left from Orientalist paintings and postcards.

Colonial Harem-Hammam: Reversing the Gaze

In 21st century France, Moroccan people, Moroccan aesthetics, mosques, customs, crafts, food, and practices have traveled and rooted themselves in new contexts. In this postcolonial context within the land of the colonizer, desire is not simply a voyeuristic erotic exercise that it once was in the early 20th century travel writing, literature, painting, and postcards (Alloula, 1986). Now, the gaze is reciprocated, although it may not be in symmetrical balance. Power relationships still favor the colonizer, for the most part, on the most basic economic, social and political levels. However, this investigation into the hammam in France opens a window onto a space to look directly at the mutual gazing. Here we can hear the voices of North African men and women about the French, as well as the voices of French/Western men and women about the North Africans. In many instances, there is a sincere motivation on the part of the colonizer to understand and engage with North African culture and ways of life, insomuch as he or she can identify or comprehend the circuits of this reinvented Moroccan life in diaspora. Of course, the success to which this “participation” is achieved is debatable.

The North African Muslim woman has been represented by the French in various ways. Many of the 20th century paintings of Egypt, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco were based on fantasy (Ingres’ Turkish Bath, for example, was not painted based eyewitness visits, but rather on travel accounts written by others). Muslim women in paintings, literary travel accounts and photographs had little control over how they were represented. Some of the first naked photographs of North African women to come to France were postcards from Algeria, produced by Western photographers. They are deliberately posed and stylized erotic images of half naked women heavily bedecked with jewelry, in various positions of repose and conversation, smoking, and generally, to an early 20th century European sensibility, conveyed a loose sexual morality.

These images are part of a long history of Orientalist imagining and contribute to Western expectations of the North African body.

The hammam in France, in many ways, mimics, aesthetically, the images from Orientalist paintings. French women embody the languid poses of women in Ingres' *Turkish Bath*, for example (see Figure 2.1). The idea of the odalisque or the concubine is not far from the imagination – as women recline and wait to receive a scrub or massage. It often feels that the Parisian hammam as an institution provides for the French a performance and enactment of Orientalism, rather than a vehicle for purification.

Workers and attendants in the French hammam tend to originate from North Africa, and are recognizable in their behavior, dress, and posture. The front desk women, at the Mosque Hammam, in particular, act as gatekeepers, both monitoring entry and conduct. In particular, Muslim values and modesty are upheld through these women – they will remind you to keep your panties *on* in the hammam, for example, especially at the mosque hammam. Promiscuity and sexual behavior is frowned upon, although Ingres would have you believe otherwise in his depiction of fully nude women entangled in embraces, and caressing one another's breasts.

In the context of the hammam in France, there was the opportunity to step into the photograph and try to give voice to the colonized, to hear how they view this intersection of desires – a new assemblage of the North African and European women. Malek Alloula (1986), in his analysis of Algerian postcards sent from Algeria during the colonial period, firmly establishes the colonizer's obsession, sexualization and objectification of colonized Algerian women. In fact, he expresses his wish that a similar record, in reverse, existed of the colonized gaze on the colonizer, since the postcards are only a product of the gaze and the fantasy of the colonizer. He explains that these photographs are a French colonial projection of a world that never existed,

that reveal more about imperialistic desires that produced the images than the cultures in which they were produced.

The French photographed Algerian women beginning in the early 20th century and displayed their images on postcards that were sent back to France. Alloula suggests that these cards convey a violent conquest of the West over “the Orient” through possession of both land and female bodies. In a sense, the bodies of North African women within the hammams in France could be theorized as equally captive, but they are not static and have voice.

The shocking scene of naked bodies (but with panties) of the mosque hammam in Paris may be a function of how much topless-ness is associated with French femininity, and liberty. Not only is being topless an embodiment of modern French femininity on public beaches, naked breasts symbolize a more general freedom. Seeing naked bodies is normalized in France in ways that are never seen in Morocco, or even in the United States. Indeed, in the iconic Delacroix painting “Liberty Leading the People” Liberty herself is exposing both breasts as she leads the people, revolutionary flag in one hand, musket in the other. Topless-ness is not only a custom in France, but a symbol of freedom. In any French beach in the south of France, the sight of naked breasts is common and expected. In 2016 burkinis (a swim fashion that covers up the body not unlike a wetsuit or worn by surfers or scuba divers) was banned in various French districts. The argument was that these bathing suits covered too much of the body for the beach and made religious statements that were inappropriate. There is irony and hypocrisy in the history of how clothing has been managed in France; within the first years of the introduction of the bikini – over 70 years ago in 1946 – women were similarly fined for exposing *too much* skin, rather than not *enough* skin. Religious iconography and clothing were banned in schools in 2004, and burkas and face covering were banned in France in 2010. The state is interested in an external

invisibility of Islam, where it blends seamlessly into the background, thereby upholding equality and brotherhood, in a nexus of comingling ethnicities and cultures. The monumental symbols of Islam, then, such as the mosque and its hammam, portray a welcoming, family friendly, aesthetically pleasing experience. This desire for a sensual and casual clean involvement in ethnic cultural activities is historically and currently endorsed by the state and also by the contemporary Bobo contingent. On an official level, representations of Islam are colorfully positive, serene and entertaining. As one of the most visible and most important representations of Islam in all of France, the Great Mosque Hammam was a site of great interest for this study.

Three Hammams in Paris

What follows narrates the story of three distinct hammams in Paris: 1) the hammam of the Great Mosque complex; 2) the Bains du Marais in the trendy Marais neighborhood; 3) the Bains du Barbès in the Goutte d'Or neighborhood of the 18th arrondissement, a neighborhood comprised primarily of North African and sub-Saharan African immigrants.



Figure 8.7 Google Map of Paris marked with three hammam sites: 1) Great Mosque, 2) Bains du Marais, and 3) Bains du Barbès

Hamman 1: Great Mosque of Paris

My interactions with Muslims in the neighborhood of the Mosque itself confirmed what I had suspected. The hammam didn't feel authentic to them either, and was not a destination to those seeking a hammam more closely aligned with the Moroccan neighborhood hammam experience. Past the armed guards and police cars, around the corner, and down the street from the Mosque, was a small grocery store. This French-Moroccan *hanut* had basic food items – pasta, canned

tomato sauce, chips, crackers, cold drinks, chocolate, candy, and cigarettes, and I was thirsty, so I found the refrigerated bottled water, and listened in to the conversation at the counter between the cashier and an older North African woman whom I had seen begging outside the mosque earlier that day. They were speaking Moroccan Arabic. This was not the first time I had seen older women outside the mosque asking for charity; two or three ample women were always milling about, in head scarves and colorful *jellabas* -the traditional Moroccan style gowns worn over an under layer of clothing. They were stout and felt warmly familiar to me, just like women I had seen in Morocco.

As I was paying for my Evian, I struck up a conversation with the clerk and the woman, asking, in Arabic, if they were Moroccan. As is often my strategy when approaching Moroccans I don't yet know, I open by quickly explaining that I had been married to a Moroccan man and I lived in Fez with him. It helps easily justify why I am able to speak Moroccan Arabic, an unusual, even bizarre skill to stumble upon for most Moroccans in Morocco and in diaspora. The flood of questions ensued, as usual: did I live in France, what had I done in Morocco, where was my husband, and so forth.

I explained that I was writing about the hammam, doing a study. The woman immediately referenced Moulay Yacoub and Sidi Harazem in Morocco. Both are sources of hot spring water where health spas and bathing complexes had been built many years ago, because of the health benefits of these waters. These two sites have long histories as pilgrimage sites for those seeking the healing benefits, but others went just to enjoy the baths. These sites pop up in many conversations about the hammam and hold a nostalgic importance in the Moroccan imagination – a clue that mention of the hammam immediately signaled healing, pilgrimage, and wellness. I had been to both places, and I found them to be uncomfortable and even unsettling

because of their rugged facilities and infrastructure. They were, at least at the time I had visited in the 1990s, neither elegant nor decadent. For Moroccans the hammam has immediate associations to healing, to rugged springs, to pilgrimage – rather than decadence and harem repose.

I asked these two if they had been to the mosque hammam. The woman, who explained that she had been in France for a very *long* time, was upbeat, sweet, loud and jocular. She was originally from the area around Casablanca, near the ocean. Yes, she said, yes, she had gone to the mosque hammam once “*fabor*” (for free). Someone had given her a pass, but she thought it was smelly and dirty and she was shocked that it didn’t even have a *brma*. She said that the hammam at Barbès, near the outskirts of Paris, was much better...it was conveniently right by the metro station and “has a *brma* for each person, and the *kiyyasa* was Fassia” – from Fez.

There was a familiarity and convenience for her with the Barbès hammam, but not at the mosque. She told me the mosque hammam was “different” and “not like a Moroccan hammam.” She explained that “the one at Barbès is better...it is clean.” The cleanliness was emphasized. This was ironic to me, not only because she was herself begging, but also because I was similarly disappointed and at times disgusted by the dirtiness of the mosque hammam. She was also critical of the price of the hammam. She said she never would have gone had it not been free for her. She asked me how much it was now, and I told her 18 Euro just to enter. She said, “yes, too much for nothing.” I noticed her fingernails were hennaed and she and she wore gold jewelry. She seemed extraordinarily clean, but this is not necessarily a marker of wealth or status

The elderly shop owner, also Moroccan, seemed interested in our conversation and absolutely ignorant about the existence of the hammam. He asked us questions about it, the services, and the ambiance. Clearly the mosque was not a destination, even for local Moroccans.

The price and the style, divergent from a Moroccan norm and inauthentic, had established the Mosque hammam as a destination outside of and apart from the regular circuit for people like the store cashier and the gold-bedecked begging woman.

Inside the Hammam: Golden Mudflap Girl

The first time there, the reception desk had made a point of informing me of this rule in no uncertain terms, even though she knew I had already been to Moroccan hammams. She seemed to anticipate that I would expect rules to be more relaxed in France, so she told me several times to wear my panties – explaining how important modesty was, especially during Ramadan, which happened to coincide with both of my stays in Paris. I felt punished even though I hadn't broken any rules, just by virtue of being Western and having certain possible assumptions about states of dress.

I had felt defeated this morning and heavy with sadness. I had planned to go to the Mosque hammam, but feared the heat, so I procrastinated. I wandered around in the morning looking at cheese stores and at foods that I might be able to comfortably eat without spiraling into paranoia. Making my way through the Marais, I lingered at the Place des Vosges and watched some tourists reading the chalkboard menus displayed outside charming restaurants. As I made my way closer to the subway to travel to the mosque, I realized that my panties were old and embarrassingly revealing without being pretty, and that the Moroccan ladies working in the hammam would probably not approve. Auspiciously, I stumbled upon a nearby budget department store, Monoprix, as I was walking. It stank strongly of fish and garbage, but I braved the smell and bought a cheap pair of sensible peach cotton panties with little red cherries – they were cute and covered enough skin to be unarguably modest. Still procrastinating, I ambled back over to the Musée Canavalet, a museum dedicated to the history of the city of Paris. It maintains

an extensive collection of every day objects owned by “illustrious” historical, political, literary, intellectual and artistic characters who, according to the museum’s website, “left their mark on the history of Paris.” Robespierre’s shaving dish and Zola’s watch can be found here, among furniture and objects in cordoned-off rooms designed to be replicas of real rooms. One represented the room in which Marie Antoinette was imprisoned after the French revolution, and I paused at this little space for a long time, wondering about her thoughts, how she arched her back in the chair, how she moved. I had walked by this museum often and was attracted to historic objects and artifacts, so without too much thought, I wandered inside. These sorts of historical museums with reproduced settings from lives that were really lived have always appealed to me.

This museum had many parallels with my own quest to tease out the reality behind representations – it was ethnographic in nature, providing material inscriptions and interpretations of people, their contexts and their worlds. However, these worlds were, despite being grounded in historical fact, were still shaped and generated through someone else’s narrative, or lack of narrative, through objects and arrangements of objects, some descriptions (most of which are not read), ultimately setting up a semi open ended narrative for the museum goer. In my own attempt at writing ethnography, I was looking at living people instead of their objects, and rewriting their narrative, against the imaginings that already existed in the larger imaginary, and in paintings and historic travel writings. The hammams themselves were the objects within which the people moved.

Orientalism, in fact, is marked by and was disseminated in large part by exhibitions and museum like situations. Even the Mosque hammam had a distinct museum-like quality – with its Japanese tour busses, postcards, guided tours, gift shop. If not museum, it is an exhibition of

Muslim-ness. Museums have been critiqued extensively. In her essay “A Jumble of Foreignness” Meg Armstrong (1992) suggests that the exotic fantasies were not only produced by objects and displays of non-Western cultures at 19th century fairs and expositions, but also by the “exotic” visual images of other cultures in Opera sets, department stores and other places throughout the city. Visual culture - art and objects - have a powerful effect on our interpretation of the Other. Pieprzak (2010) examines Moroccan museums in post-colonial Morocco in her book *Imagined Museums*. Objects, artifacts or images, she argues, generate imaginings and fantasies about culture and place - even in Moroccan museums themselves. Objects in situ allow for a sense of out of place timelessness, which leads to cultural reification. Artifacts are easily seen to reaffirm essentialist notions about cultures past and present and give the individual museum goer “discursive power to frame the exhibit and generate [her] own narrative” (12). She describes the travel writings of Gardener, who, in his own writings, recounts his visit to a ceramics exhibit in the Oudaya Museum of Rabat, which was once a private residence of Sultan Moulay Ismail. Gardener uses the architecture of the building along with the objects to conjure imaginings about harem life in the era of Moulay Ismail and the women that may have lived within the rooms, despite the exhibit having no relationship to the harem or women: “The room ... managed to evoke the ghost of some richly clad girl with the dark haunting eyes looking from under blackened lashes. And where were the other forgotten wives gnashing their teeth in the ill-lit chambers of... neglect?” He does not focus on the pottery, but instead, focuses on the Islamic barbarism, women, and their imagined ferocity and isolation.

To return to the imprisonment of objects and people in the museum, my own imaginings about Marie Antoinette and my sympathy for her plight, may have been equally perverse. It was the narrative I had created and was living through by looking at a desk, a ring, and a bed. Mine

were just fantasies about her inner thoughts and world. Her life was as distant and exotic and “other” as the imagined North African harems of the Ingres paintings or the Oudaya Museum. Her objects, albeit historically contextualized, still allowed my brain to run rampant, free-associating about her possible emotional experiences – producing in me a potentially very displaced empathy. Maybe, had I lived in revolutionary Paris, I would have sympathized with her captors and found Marie Antoinette abhorrent. I had recently watched Sophia Coppola’s 2006 film “Marie Antoinette,” which made Marie Antoinette a quirky character relatable to 21st century Gen X-ers and Millennials. So, of course, I thought I knew her in some intimate way. In this moment, especially, I felt I identified with her last year of imprisonment – as I had, myself, felt so trapped in Morocco, even in Paris, and even more so by my fears of dying, of food, of stifling heat. I thought I could feel her horror and fear, but they were really just products of my own psychological disorders.

I regretted setting foot in here, because it was only amplifying my existential sorrow. Projecting, I felt for all the poor souls that had slept or wept in the beds on display, wore the rings in the little glass cases, and were imprisoned during the revolution. The personal effects of Marie-Antoinette inspired concern for how she and others had posed, in earnest, for paintings, taken the time to brush and style her hair, read, write, and ultimately all had died, and some like her, executed by guillotine. Now all that was left were rooms with paintings and hordes of humans looking at the books, hairbrushes, beds, chairs and other objects that humans before us had touched, used, treasured and enjoyed. Lines of hundreds of lookers were looking. Paris was lonely and miserable city. A wave of panic made the room unbearably stuffy and hot. I ran for the exit, stairs, claustrophobic, and afraid of those objects. I tried reminding myself that the nine-year-old was the scared one, not the grown woman, and I tried to call up the older self to comfort

the younger. Somehow stunned and emptied of the ability to feel or reason with myself any more, I headed, in autopilot, to the subway and got out at the Place Monge and walked straight to the mosque before my introject, or anyone else was able to persuade me to stay out of the hammam.

This time, I knew where to go and what to do. I slid past the pastry case, and pushed the door open, a secret door – with discrete signage, wedged behind the pastries. The entrance was subtle. I passed through a blue-walled, dimly lit, vaulted, circular antechamber, a sort of awkward waiting-room, then made my way into the main massage room with its very high front counter. Behind the counter was a light skinned, slender, pretty woman in her thirties. The only way I could tell she was North African, was because she spoke Arabic to one of the massage ladies. Relieved that I wouldn't have to use my unexceptional French, I asked her if I could have just a massage, and not the exfoliating scrub (I had already been exfoliated one too many times recently...and didn't think my skin or soul could take it again). I paid for the entry and the



Figure 8.8 Great Mosque Hammam, Paris: first room with fountain; reception desk, background, right. Massage table, middle, left. Private massage-room doorway with plastic beads, foreground, right.
 Source: <http://theparisletter.blogspot.com/2012/04/hammam-experience.html>

massage, and she handed me a little orange square piece of paper. Was this something I needed to keep, I wondered? In Morocco, one hires a *tayyaba* for scrubbing, not for massage. There is no massage option in the traditional hammam. As was the case last time I was here, the stark white bodies in plain sight shocked me. The entire vaulted room was open to view – stout, corpulent, head-scarved women rubbing naked women on raised massage tables. Bodies were being rubbed with oil in plain view of everyone, in a colonnaded colorful room with stained glass, a cupola above, a fountain in the middle, and squishy blue synthetic fabric-covered banquettes for resting, sleeping, waiting, hanging, even changing, as I saw that day. There were four raised massage tables set up in the room, and two large and very bored and tired looking

North African women stationed at two of them. In order to get to the changing room, I

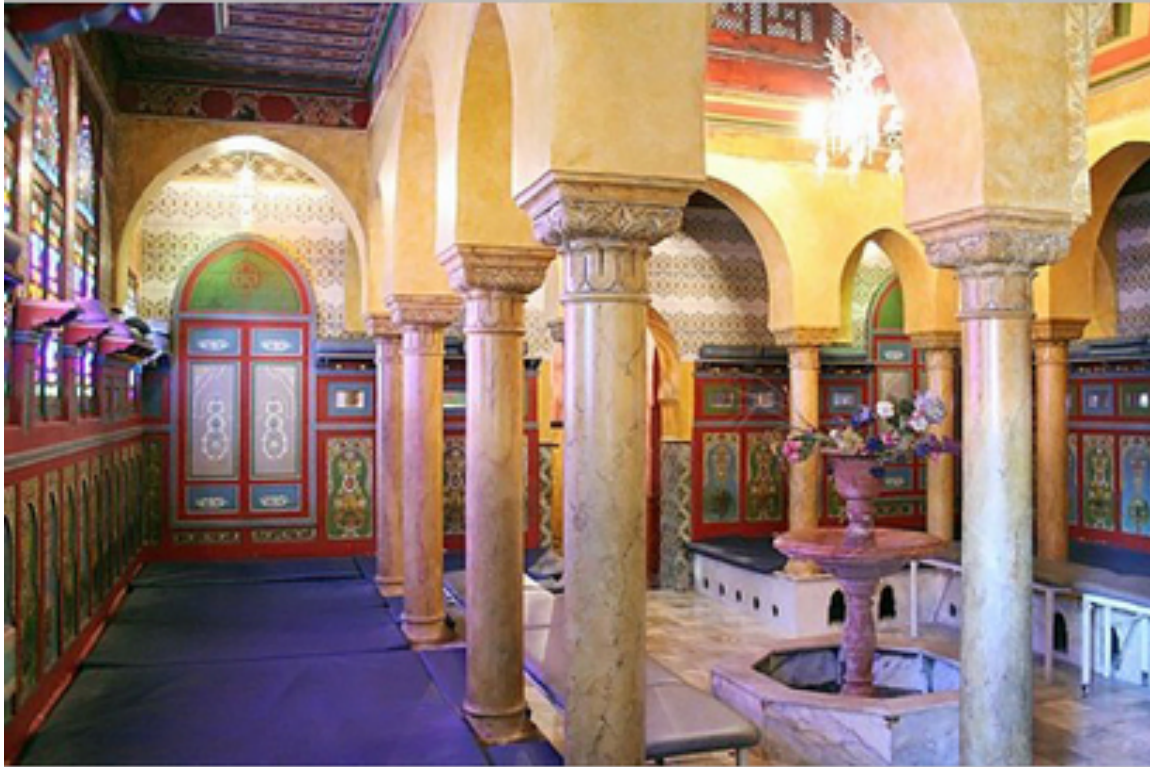


Figure 8.9 Lounging area in first room, Great Mosque Hammam, Paris. Source: <https://girlsguidetoparis.com/hammam-2/>

walked past the naked bodies and into a long, dark, narrow uncomfortable hallway lined with lockers. I took off my shoes, jeans, shirt, socks, bra, panties, and then, thinking myself quite clever, put on the new panties I had just bought at Monoprix. The woman at the front desk had been adamant again, reminding me that it was Ramadan, and that panties must stay on. Panties on. Tops could come off. The floor was damp. I was happy I had borrowed some plastic slip on sandals at the front entry. I put all my clothes in the locker, slid the rubber key chain around my wrist, and confusedly wandered down the long hall and around the corner, looking for the washing area.



Figure 8.10 Changing room and lockers, Mosque Hammam, Paris

Beyond the open massage room was the first washing room. This area consisted of 8 or 10 raised platforms lining either side of the room. Each platform had its own little alcove, almost private, but still open to the room at large, and each alcove with its own hot and cold-water spigots, a basin and a large flat marble surface for lounging and rinsing off. The room was hot and steamy, and I found an empty alcove. I washed my hair with shampoo and I soaped my body. I was not particularly enjoying the process and actually found it annoying, somehow. I realized that nobody was washing themselves, but instead, they were hanging out, talking in pairs, soaking in the heat. I was annoyed because they seemed too inattentive to their job of

washing. It looked like everyone was at the beach lying in the sun. In Morocco women are in constant motion in the hammam. Nobody lies down except when in the hottest room, and not for any great length of time. Some women here were young Parisians in bikinis – also a strange, overly glamorous sight for me – they hadn't stopped for panties at Monoprix! There were also a few middle aged women, in their 40s scrubbing languidly and talking – really talking – as though in a café. Finally, two Arab women in their 50s arrived and scrubbed each other vigorously, then lay down ...one was taking the skin off of the other's feet with a special tool. They were at one point screaming and fighting, filling the space with the raucous sounds of Arabic that I was used to in the hammam. Cacophany. This felt more familiar.

The next room beyond this one was the last and hottest room. There was a plunge bath, which is, I suppose, the equivalent of the Moroccan *brma*. Today, the plunge bath had been emptied, I was told, because it had been tested and had too much bacteria and also needed to be cleaned for “calc” – which I assumed was a build up of calcification or other minerals. I was happy to hear about the testing, and was relieved that I wouldn't have to try out a plunge bath that, with water inside, probably had been filled with potentially harmful bacterial contaminants. Steam filtered up to the ceiling in that hottest back room and there were considerably more women laying there, with hands on head, hair up, looking dead, and relaxed. Most women though, were in various states of conversation in this part of the hammam. Some just looked lost. A large black woman with long braids was wandering around. I had encountered her in the showers earlier and she had asked where the “piscine” was ... I think she was probably in for a disappointment as that pool was empty and there was nothing of a swimming pool here or jacuzzi, although the inner room is rather beautiful with its blue arches and windows. She would have to be satisfied with spigots and a warm floor of marble.

Since I couldn't bear to sit in the hottest steamy room for longer than a few minutes, I quickly headed back to the first room, to get my massage. I gave the wet yellow ticket to the big woman who seemed in charge. My little wet piece of paper said "20 minutes" indicating the length of my massage treatment. She motioned me up on the wet white towels on the massage table (unchanged from the last person). I almost gagged, but luckily I had my own towel and put it down where my head and upper body would be. The temperature here in this big communal massage space was at least ten or fifteen degrees cooler than the bathing rooms. I worried about the drafts, feeling I should cover up, and wondered what had happened to these women in charge that they allowed us to come from such heat to such exposure so rapidly. Was I more Moroccan now than they?

My attendant slathered me in oil and rubbed my body lightly for around 25 minutes, including my face and breasts. This woman was not a masseuse, but a rubber of oil. She kept coughing (luckily away from my face) and seemed generally tired and disinterested. When I told her I had burned my hand, so please be careful not to touch it in that place, she asked if I had been making *'Aid halawiyat*, or sweets for the holiday associated with Ramadan. She assumed I was Muslim because I was speaking in Arabic, and I laughed and said, no I was just cooking this morning and burned myself.

I asked if she was Moroccan and she said no Tunisian. Her eyes were thickly lined with black eye liner and her fingernails were hennaed orange. She asked me about my Arabic, and she immediately guessed that I was married to a Moroccan before I could launch into my standard explanation. Here in France it wasn't as unusual a phenomenon. I told her I was no longer married to him, and that I didn't live here in France. She didn't seem curious to know

much about me, but she was concerned about children. When I told her I had a daughter, she said, “*Meskina*” – poor thing, and was happy to hear that she lived with me.

“Are you re-married?”

“No.”

She said she hoped I would find a good husband and that Allah would provide that for me. She asked if *he* was remarried. I said “No.” This seemed important to her – the marital status of everyone involved. I ended up enjoying the rub, and almost fell asleep. She was motherly and calming, and asked me to return to her soon.

I was done, and went to rinse off the oil in a shower. The blow dryers in the changing room hallway were difficult to manipulate and required the insertion of coins, so I had brought my own hairdryer along. Strangely, there were no outlets in the locker room, so I went to find one of the attendants, who I felt close to, to ask if there was some place to plug it in. Another elderly, small masseuse showed me a private massage room with an outlet, and several times explained that it was unusual to allow me to use it – normally it was *interdit*. She made me feel as though I was trespassing and getting away with something quite special, although nobody was even in the hammam anymore. They were about to close. I snuck out my camera, which was also *interdit*, and took a picture of what seemed so funny to me – a golden silhouette of a dancing girl.



Figure 8.11 View onto the first room from my private massage room

I called her the golden mudflap girl – she was larger than an actual mud flap, and attached to the wall of the massage room. She did not seem Oriental or exotic or Muslim. She seemed wild, free, disco and Las Vegas. I saw another mudflap girl on the door to the staff room. Salons in Morocco certainly have a plethora of photos of Western women in suggestive and sexy poses, so the sight of a sexy silhouette in a Muslim establishment did not surprise me, but somehow because the women had been so concerned for my welfare as a divorcee with a child, and my wearing panties, I was taken aback by this wild girl. Maybe this golden girl had more to do with the spirit of freedom, or *laïcité*, or Islam. I never asked because I was in a forbidden

chamber. In so many ways this place embodied contradictions: exposures to cold, breezes, nakedness brazenly on display, bright bikinis and strange lounging in private alcoves.



Figure 8.12 Golden disco mud flap girl, massage room, Great Mosque hammam, Paris

As I was leaving the hammam, the slender Morocco front desk woman was also getting dressed to leave. I was surprised to see her adjusting her hijab, which was a beautiful pink. She wore a long *jellaba*-like dress also in the same color. Her hair had been pulled back and fully covered with a white band. When inside the hammam she passed for young, fresh and French.

As she was about to exit into the world of the 5th arrondissement of Paris, she looked Muslim, covered and ageless. I watched her walk away and out the front door of the mosque with a handsome man in a gray suit.

Queen in the Pink *Jellaba*

I later spoke at great length with Nawal, the pretty, light-skinned Moroccan woman who took care of the front desk. Of all Moroccans I had spoken with, she was the most detailed and candid about the role of the hammam and sexual life. She had informed me about when the prophet permitted women to enter the hammam after the menstrual cycle (women should put cotton balls in their vagina and when the color was clear, they were allowed). She talked about the smell of women who were on their period – that it was a bad smell. She also talked about jinn openly, that a woman had just come to the hammam and been completely possessed, screaming and out of control. She also explained that heat from the hammam was grounding and sensual, causing women to feel and be more sexual and appealing.

She had an unyielding opinion about the French and their treatment of women. She was adamant that the French don't value each other - quite the opposite of what one would expect from the keeper of the harem. She explained all of this from the perspective of a married Muslim woman. She referenced her religion repeatedly. She said in Islam women have value. She is valued by her husband and he buys everything. He pays for everything. She should wear gold and dress well. There is fidelity in the relationship and it is reciprocated. "My husband is only for me, and vice versa. We have done what God told us to do." She repeated that he is for her and only for her several times. "We see Europeans...and then I lived here and lived with them here in Paris. They don't have values...they don't value each other. The man shouldn't be allowed to take your money, as a woman, even if you are in love."

Hammam 2: Bains du Marais

New York Jew: Like a Teeth Cleaning

Beginning to be able to eat again, after almost starving to death out of fear of contamination in Morocco, I chose to eat out only at the cleanest and most ingredient-obsessed restaurants. Daniel Rose's "Spring" was just such a place. He is a meticulous Chicago native who has made his life and career in Paris. This was partly a challenge to myself (to make it through an 8 course meal that someone else cooked) and partly a celebration of being able to eat again, and a spending of all the money I had saved by not eating at all. This new location of Daniel Rose's restaurant was also appealing to me because of the open kitchen design. I could keep my eye on my food as it was handled. I knew that this wasn't truly possible, but I would have a general sense of how food was being treated and handled and I knew that would help me relax if what I saw was reassuring.

I couldn't have been more thrilled. Daniel Rose, himself, was there, hovering about, engaging with each table. He was obsessed with everyone's dining experience and determined that everything was prepared to perfection. I was thrilled. Not only did we have an immediate rapport, perhaps through our shared American-ness, our mutual obsessions with food, our interest in culture, but he wasn't at all concerned that I didn't like my fish, and he prepared it another way – twice. He lingered and we talked, about his history in Paris, about my research, and finally about hammams in Paris and his experiences in them. Daniel Rose, an international figure, a Jew from Chicago who had studied cuisine in Paris, embodied in many ways what Paris had become: a global cultural mecca. People the world over came to Paris for food, for culture, for experience.

He described going to the hammam regularly, at an earlier point in his residence in Paris, especially to the Bains du Marais. He went on mixed gender days with a female friend. They would get massages and *gommage* (exfoliating scrubs).

He said, “Yeah...you have the North African women beating you up, whipping you, in the room....And then they hose you off. It's quite an experience.” The colonialist flavor of his comments is distinct. The women are hyper-sexualized in his recounting of the experience, although the colonizer/colonized power dynamic is reversed. The power was in and at the hands of the North African woman, wielding a scrubbing mitt and a hose. That he would suggest violence on the part of the women, is, I believe, a remnant of a colonialist legacy of violence and submission, although the roles here have been redistributed and mixed up. This was the embodiment of a cultured Bobo “Western Man,” imagining himself as disempowered victim, at the hands of the North African woman. In his memories, he is demonstrating the imaginings and fantasies of the power of the women behind the veil. His interpretation illustrates not only his victim-ness, but the fear of what hides behind the veil, and perhaps, the fear of the violence we, as Westerners, have done to the colonies, and in this case, even more complex since Daniel is Jewish.

Not only is this a new power dynamic, it is an unheard of pairing. Women do not work on men's bodies in Morocco, but in the Marais, the hammam offered days for coed bathing. Daniel described the sexy side to “that whole scene” near the Bains du Marais. There was a lot of “hanky panky” within the gay scene in the Marais, and that seeps out into the hammam.

But, then he used an interesting analogy that clicked for me:

He said... “Yeah, it's like the dentist. It feels good when you go once a year, and you can feel your teeth are really clean and smooth. But when you scrub what is already gone, it doesn't feel good...it just feels like over-scraping.”

That's how I had felt for the last few months. Over-scraped. Scraped to the core. I was raw.

“But there are also the are the authentic ones...the “real” ones in the 18th arrondissement, where only the Arabs go, where there is no hanky panky or sexuality.” So, for him, the division was clear. The “real” Arab scene and the French over-sexed, over-scrubbed, painful scene of violence and deep satisfaction.



Figure 8.13 Les Bains du Marais, Paris. Source: http://lesvoixdejeanne.com/lens_portfolio/spa-les-bains-du-marais/

Curious, I went to the Bains du Marais to see for myself what Daniel Rose was talking about, and what those North African women who “beat up and whipped you” had to say. What I found was that the female North African workers’ discourse on Parisian life (in the Marais) was marked by ethical judgment. Interestingly, some of the North African *tayyabat* and attendants themselves maintained a very Parisian, chic personal aesthetic - in stark contrast to those at the mosque hammam, who tended to be of an older and more conservative generation. This aesthetic indicated, at least outwardly, assimilation into French life. In accordance with my own

fixations, their discourse also focused on dirt and cleanliness. Or, was I just hearing these comments because of my own personal preoccupations?

A slender, stunning, olive-skinned woman in her thirties hovered over the front desk. Her hips were boyish, and her breasts jutted out aggressively. She emanated elegant condescension as she slinked in and out of the front door for smoke breaks in her silver strappy high heels and red leather pants. I couldn't place her ethnicity, and I was afraid to ask. She may have been of North African descent, but I never heard her speaking Arabic - just French and wonderfully French-accented English. Her orange toenails matched her orange lipstick with astounding precision. She was possibly the most well-groomed human I had encountered in Paris. She conducted herself like the haughty retail sales women who belittle customers, despite their own inability to shop in the stores in which they work. Thinking I might flatter her, I asked if she was the owner of the hammam. She only seemed more irritated with me and explained that the owner was Israeli. I asked if he was Moroccan Israeli, and she dismissed this idea, explaining in her charming, elegant English that this hammam was not a Moroccan hammam but an international hammam. Emphasis and stress on "*international*." She, like Daniel Rose, was another global-chic, ethnicity-free Parisian. Perhaps she had North African roots, but she had co-opted international elegance. Later, inside the baths, I asked the North African hammam attendants in a more intimate and relaxed setting, and they all confirmed for me that the owner was in fact Arab. However, the establishment was indeed international in flavor, and I heard various languages inside the baths, and saw many young, beautiful people.

It was simply accidental that I had landed there on a mixed gender day, but good for research, I imagined. What would it be like to be in the steam bath with men too? The initial entry to the changing room and steam room was confusing. There were few signs but nobody

instructing guests. Thankfully, I found Saida, the woman stationed in the changing rooms. Her job was to keep things tidy, and keep track of towels, lockers, and answer questions too, I suppose. She was sweet and reserved, perhaps my age, with a white uniform and white headscarf. She was not particularly chic, but she was professional and quiet. She helped me find my way, in Arabic, and seemed surprised but did not question me about my language. Everyone else there seemed to already know where to go. This was a group of hip and glamorous regulars.

Many big, hairy, confident men sat in the lounging area between the changing rooms and the sauna room. Elegant reclining chairs and tables with magazines lined a long narrow room. I heard sighs and grunts and noticed the big dirty feet, up on the footrests. I decided that women's day probably would have been more comfortable for me and less revolting to my heightened sensibilities. Fortunately the men weren't in the steam bath – they seemed to stay beached in their chairs. A few men had come with a date – a man or a woman. Others were alone.

However, the clientele today was mostly women. There were a few hirsute men, but the rest was an assortment of slender, tall, blond girls, under thirty, who looked like runway models. There was one who was alone, and zoned out in her own world. She didn't make eye contact with anyone, and I watched her walking in zigzags through the steam bath. She was either drunk or high, and I worried that she would hurt herself, pass out or worse. I sat in the steam room for a while – about ten minutes. I watched two girls lying on a stone bench with their legs up against the wall. They were gossiping and laughing, hair wet, being silly. So much leisure time – something very different, again, from the hard work and activity within the Moroccan hammam. Another woman was lying down on her towel, eyes closed. There were two showers in either corner with extremely wonderful high pressure. Everyone periodically showered off with cool water before easing back into a sweat. The room was not huge and there was no cistern, plunge

bath, Jacuzzi or spigots, just showers, steam and wetness. The mood felt a bit like a pre-party. It was as if we were all taking a long extended shower, together, before getting ready for a cocktail event down the road.

I had purchased a *gommage*, the name for a scrub, from the immaculate front desk lady and gave my ticket to a woman near the steam room, then waited in that long lounge room with the hairy men until Lina called me back for my turn. She wore a one-piece blue speedo cross back swimsuit, and she wrapped herself in a towel and walked around looking like a French client, her short, bobbed hair dyed blond. She was much more hip and youthful in appearance than the women at the mosque hammam

When I mentioned having recently been at the Mosque hammam, she said she used to work there, and she was immediately critical of it – said it was *mskh* – dirty, and seemed grateful and relieved to be working elsewhere. I asked her where she prefers to go when she goes to the hammam herself. She explained, in French, that it really depended, and she didn't seem to want to answer me, but I kept pressing and she finally said Barbès Hammam. Was she embarrassed to admit this? Perhaps. She then explained that the owner of this hammam is a Moroccan Jew, and then, with a disgusted smirk, she went on to explain that a lot of Jews and *zuwamel* came to this hammam. *Zuwamel* is a derogatory word for gay men, and the Marais is well known for its gay male population. Lina made no secret about her disapproval of gay men, and she laughed, explaining how many gay men live and parade around here – and she thought it's wonderfully funny and ridiculous. Her tolerance for difference was lacking, but her humor was intact.

She scrubbed me front and back, completely naked, on a plastic-leather, sticky, cushioned, raised, black table in a private room. The scrub was similar to scrubs in Morocco – rough and thorough. She was candid with me, and her tone about the neighborhood and hammam was

playfully hostile. She registered disapproval and dissatisfaction with her current job (the Jewish owner and clientele did not seem to please her) and with the Marais gay scene overall.

Meanwhile, after scrubbing off several layers of my skin, she literally hosed me down with a big black hose with an adjustable nozzle. As I lay on the table, I felt like an animal in the zoo – somewhat victimized and cornered. I remembered Daniel Rose’s comment about being hosed down at the Bains du Marais, but I didn’t realize he was being literal until that moment. Daniel Rose’s assessment of the ferocity of being “beaten up” by the women at this hammam was actually a reverse violence – a reversal of the violence upon North Africans by the Colonial French. I felt this aggression too – being hosed down was odd and aggressive, although aggression was often the timbre of the *tayyabat* in Morocco as well, with all customers. The women in Morocco had manipulated me, flipped me and scrubbed me just as assertively; they had not used an instrument that shot water at me, however. Daniel had described being whipped and beaten up, and mentioned sexuality of the hammam immediately thereafter.

The North African hammam workers embodied sexual violence for Daniel, and he was the passive recipient of this violence. Foreigners in Morocco also felt manipulated or imposed upon. My cousin complained of the *tayyaba*’s breasts flapping in her face and the way the workers moved our bodies around in space, lined us up, and so forth. In general I have noticed that in the hammam in Morocco, women do not apologize for the space they take up, or the space they take from you. Space is free for the taking and voids are quickly filled. Spatial power negotiations are more visible within the Moroccan hammam, and with Moroccan hammam workers, and are especially tangible for Westerners.

I found it ironic that Lina the hammam worker was so critical of the French around her, and yet I could not outwardly distinguish her from the other clientele, and kept mistaking her for

someone else. After she hosed me off, she told me I hadn't sat in the hammam long enough, implying that I hadn't heated up long enough: "Go back in and sweat more, you aren't heated – *skhun*- enough. It will be good for you."

Back in the dressing rooms after finishing my augmented heating session (which I couldn't bear for long), I crossed paths again with the drunken blond model. She was also in the changing rooms, slowly putting on her makeup at one of the few vanity mirrors surrounded by Hollywood type light bulbs. Every time she got up, she caught her own image in the mirrors. She was mesmerized by herself...and kept acting more bizarre the longer I watched. She had brought a large collection of makeup along, including perfume, and she slowly brought it out, placing it on the table and organizing it mindfully, in rows. I suddenly wished I had perfume too. I remembered the perfume samples at the front desk, so later, as I was leaving, I put on many samples: orange blossom on one wrist, jasmine on the other, white musk on my neck. I began to wonder if the Marais itself was a vortex for self-absorption, or was this the Parisian norm? Perhaps all the strange self-absorbed characters of Paris congregated here at les Bains du Marais.

On another day, I had walked to the Marais, past the charming fashion boutiques and art galleries, the gay nightclubs and bars, and was loitering outside the front entry, near where the hostess was smoking her cigarettes. I struck up a conversation with Karim, the handsome valet. In his early to mid-thirties, he was tall, his father was Algerian Muslim and his mother was French Catholic, and he had been born in Paris. His Arabic was better than mine, but not perfect. He told me stories, in a combination of Arabic and English, about his former career importing carpets from Iran. He told me, with much exuberance, the story of selling carpets to Hassan II, the former king of Morocco. Somehow, through this transaction, he had met one of the Moroccan princes, Rachid, in Rabat, Morocco, where they went out to a disco. Apparently

Rachid liked women, hashish and alcohol. I was wondering about this story...whether it was true. The princes were known as hearty partiers, fairly accessible, and social. His story certainly fit the jet-set identity of this “international” hammam. Karim was getting off work soon, and offered me a ride home on his moped scooter, and then suggested we go dancing later. I wasn’t remotely tempted, by the ride or the dancing, not having the psychic space for any kind of romantic entanglement, flirtation, let alone the space or ability to have that kind of untethered fun.

This Bain du Marais hammam was true to its Parisian neighborhood: it mirrored the diverse, international, high culture of the Marais’ intimate galleries, museums and boutiques. It was a place for gay and straight men and women to parade their beauty, to luxuriate, lounge and chat. The authentic Moroccan or North African elements – steaming, exfoliating, and sweating, had been repurposed into a decadent self indulgent, inward looking experience. The North African workers here seemed more uniformly to embrace an international aesthetic, at least superficially: the front desk woman, Lina, the exfoliator with her hip blonde hair, and Karim with his moped. However, the French a-religious position still butted up against Muslim values: Lina criticized the loose morals and behavior of the Parisian gay population. And Daniel Rose, had, in his retelling of the Bain du Marais hammam workers, described the intensity and aggressive violence of the North African women towards their clientele - an experience that men paid for. In Daniel’s discourse, some of the Orientalist stereotypes still exerted influence, and in Lina’s discourse, she made clear the laughable but dominant behavior of the colonizer. I saw the beginnings of an aesthetic assimilation but cultural boundaries related to moral behavior stood strong.

Hamмам 3: Bains du Barbès

Everyone had mentioned the Barbès hammam as the “authentic” and “real” hammam – the hammam where all the Moroccans go, the hammam worth going to, the clean hammam, the hammam just like “back home.” So I went.

Emerging from the line ground subway at the Barbès-Rochechouart metro, I walked down the flight of stairs to the street, and the contrast to the tasteful elegance of the Marais could not have been more profound. On the outdoor subway platform, alone, was a throng of policemen, presumably there to keep the peace, prevent petty crime, or worse. I paused to take a photo of the four or five Arabic language newspapers and magazines of various languages at the newsstand on the landing. Quickly, I put my camera away, as the cadre of twelve police officers moved closer to me. I felt conspicuous.

On the main cross street corners were popcorn and roasted corn cob venders, and the sidewalks and streets were dense with traffic, activity and pedestrians. Arab men, women, boys, girls, dark black African women with colorful headscarves, black African men, western looking French women, and other immigrants walked by, hurriedly. People either had places to go, and walked with purpose, or they stood, fixed, in big groups of men, talking. It was contraband market day, and one main street, under the elevated Metro structure, was lined with big sheets on the ground: clothes, electronics, books and junk for sale. It was like a gigantic garage sale and reminiscent of Longues des Capucins in the evenings in Marseille, but this is even more cacophonous, and more bodies – more dark bodies and people were everywhere – moving back and forth through the streets. Black African and North African men stood, smoked, shouted, argued, chatted, and somehow surveyed their wares amongst the passersby.

In commercial stores along these main cross streets, I was struck most of all by the tactless flamboyance of the clothing and gold jewelry, especially by the prominence of all things

wedding. Clearly weddings are a big business in this district, with a robust demand for wedding clothing, wedding rings, and other related paraphernalia. The shops are huge and the windows stuffed with headless mannequins dressed in poufy white whipped cream dresses, pink taffeta cotton candy dresses and sparkly bridesmaids dresses in every color imaginable: watermelon pinks, purples, turquoise, and a rainbow of pastel candy colors. Suits, cummerbunds, hats and canes were available for the men. Dress-up is a serious matter, and money is spent in this domain, and occasions must present themselves with enough regularity to support so many party dress shops. I recalled the white puffy dress I was made to wear in my own Moroccan wedding. I rented many of the dresses and all of the jewelry from a *ngafa*, an attending woman who provided everything a bride needed, including makeup and jewelry. The *ngafa* and the *tayyaba* share a similar power, in that they are gatekeepers to a liminal experience. They both maintain a confident unflappable stance in their physical postures. They use an economy of motion, especially the *ngafa*, who is the queen behind the princess bride. They run the show with small gestures, but do heavy lifting when necessary. It was fashionable at the time of my own wedding, in early September of 2001, to wear an outrageous white sparkly Western wedding dress first, and then change into the eight or nine requisite dresses, each representing Moroccan ethnicities and local styles: Berber, Arab, Fassi, and so on. Some were just to show off a bride's beauty in a new color or style. Although these shops in the Barbès neighborhood did not serve North African populations alone, they communicated the importance of wedding ritual, and the sometimes over the top requirements of such transitional rituals. The hammam was part of that tradition in Morocco and I guessed that it must be equally important here, given all the wedding shops.

Someone I asked pointed me in the direction of the hammam. I thought it would be obviously marked, but it was not. I walked down the street past the contraband in what I hoped

was the right direction. The sidewalk was littered with wrappers, bottles, broken glass and all varieties of trash. One half block from the throngs of police and the subway entry, is the hammam. You would never know unless you were looking for it. The outer door is locked. You buzz to get in. Once through the first door, you walk down a long hallway, which feels like an apartment building lobby, and you arrive at an orange neon sign that says “Hamмам.” The obscurity of this entry is odd, but actually in keeping with the anonymity of most traditional hammam entries in Morocco.

I walked in, with some trepidation, shaken and worried by all the vibrant activity outside. Soap, shampoo and scrub mitts were for sale behind the front desk, and a glass case and counter held more supplies. Signs were rudimentary, but business here was more French-style than Moroccan. A male attendant was on duty, even though it was the time for women. This shocked me. He had a real register for payment but was only half-attentive, and he didn't seem concerned with me – even though I thought somehow he would be – as an obviously non-French, non-North African.

I entered into the first room – a changing room, and immediately befriended a young Algerian woman, perhaps in her mid-twenties. She said she has been coming here every week for eight years, with her mother – and it's just like the *blad* – just like back home. She explained that it was the best hammam in all of Paris because it was clean and hot, just like the *blad*...it is very hot in the internal rooms, in the center. She qualified this by saying it was not as hot as the hammams in the *blad*, but it was hot, nonetheless and so good, better than the others.

All the traditional rituals associated with the hammam back in Morocco or Algeria were also performed here, she explained. I was clearly the only white girl in the place, and I explained my study, my history, and she was excited to explain everything to me. She shared that her

cousin's wedding was upcoming, and they had just had the hammam day outing, prior to the wedding. Her cousin wore a special headdress into the hammam, and all her closest girlfriends and female family members attended. She insisted on telling me what she would be wearing to the wedding: a black kaftan with gold shiny trim and gold earrings. Wedding attire, I confirmed, was as important here as it was back in Fez.

The other women in the room began chiming in about the hammam, and they made me meet Khadija, the queen of the *kiyyasat*. She was lying in a corner, wearing multiple headscarves, but otherwise naked except for her white panties. I was reminded immediately of my wedding *ngafa*, who lay back on a bed with a white bedspread, the night of my wedding, acting the role of mistress of all ceremony, dresses, and jewelery. She was the queen bee of all the boys and girls who were my attendants and handmaidens. Khadija had a similar self-possessed air. She greeted me kindly, but said very little – instead, maintaining her position and spread-out stance on big blue plastic-covered mattresses. She did not shrink or back down one bit, but held her position, and didn't move or change her expression. Another *kiyyasa*, quite a bit smaller, had disheveled hennaed hair. She was in her 50's or early 60's. Everyone clearly knew everyone else here – a small neighborhood community set back from the chaos of the street outside. From the hot rooms behind us came echoes of talking and activity and squeeling. Kids were playing in a box and women were scrubbing each other's backs. In this outer room, it was a mix of activity and repose, not unlike the changing rooms in Morocco, although women here had more comfortable spaces to stretch out, so there was a sense of more prolonged lounging, slow changing and dressing, styling and brushing of hair, talking, sitting, and eating of yogurt from small containers. Surprisingly, some of these women were even propped up against the walls, reading novels. Rarely have I seen a woman reading in public in Morocco. This was an active

scene of leisure, but not a sexy, sensual moment of languor like the Orientalist paintings, or empty and elegant like in the Marais. Nobody wore speedo bathing suits or yellow sexy bikinis, just granny panties and headscarves.

Concluding Thoughts

My study of the French hammam gives only a partial, filtered voice to the colonized North African woman in diaspora, what Spivak (1988) would term the “subaltern woman.” She argues that colonized women were subject to a double colonization – first in the domestic sphere under the patriarchy of their own culture, and then publicly under the symbolic patriarchy of the colonial power. The subaltern woman is written and argued about, legislated for, but doesn’t have a position to speak herself, so tends to be absent from the documentary archives and history. This study allows a more direct access (albeit filtered through the lens of this anthropologist) to the voice of the colonized immigrant Muslim hammam worker in France – thereby slowly dismantling the harem myths and imaginary by teasing out real relationships, thoughts and behaviors.

By showing the diversity of experiences within the hammam, I begin to deconstruct the Gerome or the Ingres paintings, the travel writings about the harem, and the Orientalist imaginings about “harem women.” In the hammam the heterogeneity of North African female voices in diaspora comes into focus: from those who maintained an “authentic” Moroccan aesthetic and morality in the Mosque hammam, to those in the Mosque who neglected dangers of drafts and breezes, and to those who, like Lina in the Marais hammam, bought into an international chic-ness, and co-opted a French fashionable style and an irreverent attitude. These multifarious voices embody the heterogeneity of values and personalities of North African women, and the institution of the hammam.

CHAPTER 9: HAMMAM EPILOGUE

Through this ethnographic story of the Moroccan hammam, I have woven together a cultural, metaphysical and psychological tale of my journey from Seattle to Fez, from Fez to Marseille, from Marseille to Paris, and back again. Any ethnography is inherently subjective and has personal, psychological aspects underpinning it, whether made evident or not. In this work, the ethnographic topic, the hammam, is explicitly tied to the anthropological observational process, which I have explored using a reflexive and psychoanalytic approach.

In the first chapters, I painted a picture of the social practices central to and surrounding the traditional hammam in Morocco through the poetic help of the elements fire, water, air and earth. These elements provided scaffolding for descriptions of the physical and metaphysical features of the hammam experience. In France, I explored the hammam in diaspora to investigate the new permutations of the North African hammam and how spatial configuration and practice act to frame, reframe, shape and reshape social interactions and ideas about North Africa among Muslims, non-Muslims, French and non-French, and other hammam visitors. I concluded that the French hammam provided a site for the practice of “secular piety,” a personal desire to develop a system of meaning in the visitors’ private lives. The Bobo set, educated liberal urban professionals of diverse ethnic origin, seek meaning by interacting with non-French cultural practices in an effort to seek self-fulfillment and in some cases, a sense of postcolonial redemption.

Running through these discussions of the hammam and piety was the undercurrent of my own meaning-making – a reflection on the process of doing fieldwork, the doing of which orbited around ideas of purity and danger (clean and dirty) vis-à-vis my own shifting perceptions of what was safe and clean or what was polluted, contaminated and dangerous. The longer I

spent in the field, the more consumed I became by the vulnerability and the porosity of my own body to potentially poisonous external substances. This obsession led me to broaden my discussion within the dissertation to include observations, experiences and struggles with the practices and substances related to and intertwined with the hammam: menstrual and sacrificial blood, the traditions surrounding making and buying bread, as well as traditions surrounding meals and eating. These explorations elucidated some of the neurosis that haunted me. Indeed, the process of writing about how the research experience unfolded was both therapeutic and transformational: processing my experiences, feelings and notes was part of a larger healing process.

So, what was behind my obsession with escaping to France? Did I really believe Europe would be “cleaner”? My visceral reactions of fear of and repulsion towards food and substances in Fez made this seem logical, as though my body would be more protected and less vulnerable if I were physically farther away from the source of contamination. I imagined I would be fortified by the familiarity of Europe, and thereby less vulnerable to inhabitations by foreign bodies, jinn, substances, and germs. Or perhaps, I am ashamed to conjecture, I was reverting to a deeply rooted Orientalist paradigm that suggested Paris was superior, therefore cleaner and safer. Paul Rozin, an expert on “disgust” and the psychological, cultural, and biological determinants of food choice theorizes that “core disgust” is rooted not only in protection of the body from harm, but also in protecting the moral purity of the soul (Rozin, 1996). Never do I recall being consciously aware of my paranoia of contamination being connected to a feeling that my morality was under attack. I wonder, however, if I felt a sense of shame because my body (and soul) had somehow come into contact with dirt, in turn making me irreparably emotionally and spiritually dirty. How much of this was connected to feelings of contamination from the death of

my father, his bloodstains on the rug of the bathroom floor where he died, seeping into me. Or was it the unspoken remnants of my divorce written all over places Rachid and I had experienced together in the medina, or was it because our broken and spoiled marriage was mocking me, and evoking these feelings of disgust as I stared back at myself from the wedding photo that still hung in the salon of the family home in Fez? Rozin suggests the principle of contamination “may appear first in disgust to foods, and is perhaps the original manifestation of the sympathetic magical law of contagion: once in contact, always in contact. When one's mashed potatoes are briefly contacted by an earthworm, “wormness” enters into them, they are permanently “wormed” (p. 23). So, maybe I was somehow “wormed” by the blood of my father and the drained blood from the life of my marriage.

In France, I walked a lot, and as much as possible. I preferred the pace of walking to being whisked by the windowless underground metro. Sometimes in a moment of panic or sadness, I sought out a safe, protected space – a *haram*, or sacred sanctuary²¹. My spaces were often religious sanctuaries, but were sometimes gardens. I sat in this imagined safety in silence, many times, alone: in the hammams of Paris, but also in the outdoor garden spaces of the Great Mosque, in the corners near the prayer spaces of the mosque, and in churches and cathedrals: Sacré-Cœur and Notre Dame, where I circumambulated the nave, walking past all of the saints, many times over, pausing to light candles here and there. Mostly I sat in little churches that I found along my way, happy to be in an anonymous safe place where I felt clean or cleaner.

Since much of this dissertation is consciously and unapologetically entangled with an exploration of my particular psychology, the work is as much an examination of my own bodily and mental control (much of which I felt I had lost), as it is an examination of the treatment of

²¹ For more on *haram* please see discussion in Chapter 2 and Glossary

the body and mind in the hammam. I went into the field feeling confident that my years of prior experience navigating the streets, the language, social and work life in Morocco would provide enough of a foundation for my rational self to feel comfortably in control. Certainly, I would be able to easily manage my daily needs and my daughter's – feed, clothe, and house us with a certain amount of comfort and peace of mind. But in fact, fieldwork in my state of anxiety was an exercise in how to cope with this loss of control, which became also a foray into submission - submission to a situation, but mostly to a body and mind that would not cooperate with my rational self.

I want to clarify that submission here does not refer to submitting to other people abusing or infringing upon one's own body, but rather a submission to a spiritual and psychological freedom or freeing up. Mine was first, a submission to the feelings – being able to sit with fears of being polluted and contaminated, and being able to accept that these perceptions of mine may not have been shared by those around me, by the majority, rather than try to deny or squash them (which was unsuccessful). The fears were real to me, and coming to accept the “abnormal” fears as a new part of me was the one aspect of submission that helped mitigate the panic. Fighting the feelings and trying to behave in accordance with prevailing social standards was futile.

So, instead of self-punishment, and slipping into elaborate but ineffective rationalizations to make myself act “normally,” I tried to accept my own avoidances and just listen to and allow them instead of beating myself up for needing to wash my hands again, or boil the water again. In the cases when I thought I could die from bad meat, a mold spore, or a hard piece of plastic in my bread, I just gave in to that idea – wherever it had come from. I remember sitting at the long, lonely wooden table in the windowless kitchen of the shared Paris apartment, realizing that if I submitted to my own calls – my “you're going to die” calls, and just responded with, “okay God,

goddess, Allah, angels, devils, spirits, jinn, bacteria, disease, fate, self, whomever...just take me, just do it,” then I could actually let my brain and body relax. This temporarily silenced the introject, that indistinguishable voice my therapist diagnosed within me - the suspected source of the fears. Giving in silenced this voice and any and all other voices, allowing me to be more productive and happy. If I was going to die, I thought, I was going to do it as fearlessly and joyfully as possible.

This submission was both permission and forgiveness. It was also a submission to something greater and bigger than me. It was in essence, surrender to the fears as a means of bypassing their power. My preoccupation with the minutia of causal relationships around me gave a tremendous amount of power to those fears. I sometimes thought, if I got on this crowded bus, would I suffocate? If I drank that uncovered glass of water, would the invisible fleck of bacteria irreversibly poison me? When I acknowledged that the fears were genuine to me, gave myself permission to act according to them instead of yearning for some other self that I couldn't find, then I could let go of the fears. Permission to trust myself helped me be able to also put trust in the something outside myself too. It allowed me to submit just a little more to a faith in the future, whatever that future might be for me.

The idea of submission to a “higher power” is also a common feature of some twelve-step programs for addicts and children of addicts, and is part and parcel of the official “steps” to recovery. The serenity prayer, most often attributed to the philosopher and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr: “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference,” has been adopted by 12-step programs as a fundamental tenet. This idea of trust, submission, surrender, is one place where Western traditions of healing intersect and overlap with Islamic teachings of submission. The word “Islam”

in Arabic is a verbal noun derived from the root s-l-m and implies submission or entrusting of one's entirety to a higher force.

This notion of trust in a greater power does not suggest passivity or a dismissal of personal agency or responsibility. In the famous 11th century Sufi manual, *Al-Risala*, Qurayshi elucidated this idea of trust through an allegory in his section on "Trust in Allah" (*tawakkul*), "...a certain man came [to the Prophet] riding his she-camel and asked him: 'Messenger of God, should I leave her loose and put my trust in God?' The Prophet responded: 'Tie her up and trust in God!'" (p. 179). In other words, blind trust and submission is not sufficient. We must exercise vigilance and responsibility for our dependents, our livelihood, and ourselves, by always doing all we have power to do. The rest, however, can be given over to a higher power, whatever that power may be.

Whether I was driven by a jinn, as a Moroccan folk diagnosis might suggest, or by a malignant introject, as my Western psychiatrist suggested, is irrelevant. It may seem contradictory that surrendering to fears would help conquer them. Qurayshi again, addresses the true meaning of trust in and submission to God, in relation to anxiety about worldly concerns: "I heard Muhammad say that someone asked him about the true essence of trust in God. He answered: 'It is when anxiety about things of this world does not prevail over you despite your dire need of them and when your reliance upon God prevails in you despite your dependence on such things'" (p. 179-180). Thus, somehow, by fully accepting my fear, doing everything I could to control the outcome, then handing the reins over to whatever came next, I could finally trust in something larger, and assuage the compulsions.

It has now been five years since I returned from the field. The severity of the anxiety has diminished with the help of therapy. I have submitted to the idea that I may need to do certain

activities to maintain a psychological equilibrium. Little or big traumas, like the news of disasters, untimely deaths, freak accidents or other tragic events - or any moment in which the world feels out of joint - will cause a familiar hyperawareness of potential contaminants around me. The difference now, is that I recognize the thread between the traumatic event and my irrational perceptions. This realization is, I believe, equal parts the result of the writing process and doing psychotherapy. Working through ideas allowed me to make and see new connections between events and my behaviors. Now that I can draw the lines between outside events and my reactions and thoughts, I can often break the obsessive/anxiety cycle quickly. I also know that were the situation reversed, and my father were still alive, but I were not, he would be able to carry on and live fearlessly. This gives *me* permission to do so, as well.

As for Morocco, the hammam in Hay Agadir, Fez where guests in my bridal party and I were scrubbed, has since been shut down. The family disclosed to me that over the years fewer clients patronized it, favoring instead trip to a “cleaner” alternative, even if that meant traveling by car or bus. An ever-increasing awareness, in Fez, of Western ideas of health, cleanliness and bacteria as the cause of contagion (rather than an imbalance of the humors or other belief systems) has made local populations more aware of the dangers of contaminated water in the *brma*, sloughed off dead skin on the ground and other similar concerns about sanitation, making the newly constructed hammams with hot and cold spigots, basins and showers, significantly more popular. Subscribing to Western styles, procedures and ideas is often a barometer of status and fashion as well, so likely both are at play.

At one time the hammam was a leveling instrument – a social equalizer whereby people from all walks of life and economic backgrounds gathered to bathe, to recalibrate and rebalance themselves, to experience the flow of elements, to reinstate their spiritual purity and integrity,

and, by virtue of being a part of the social body, to protect themselves against the dangers of the malevolent jinn (who tend to vex and inhabit those who are alone and/or vulnerable). Today, new global standards of sanitation are acting as cultural levelers in a different way, where most people seek out and subscribe to a bodily “clean,” as backed by Western science. As a result, the landscape of bathing in Morocco is shifting. No longer a singular, uniform architectural typology or social standard, the hammam is now more fragmented socially and materially. The wealthy residents, the tourists, the middle and lower classes, differentiate themselves based on the hammam type they visit or aspire to visit. The modernized, reconfigured hammams raise the question of what it means to be truly clean, given that this traditional site was not only a site for washing the body, but also for maintaining mental, physical, spiritual and social balance. Clean was not just a state of the external body, but a state of internal balance. The decline of traditional hammams in Morocco has far reaching consequences for neighborhood solidarity, beliefs, behaviors, healing and the treatment of body and mind.

APPENDIX A- NAJDI'S POEM: THE PEOPLE'S HAMMAM

Najdi, an elderly man who lived in the family neighborhood of Hay Agadir, Fez, thought it best not to meet or speak with me when he learned that I was researching the hammam. Instead, he offered his guidance in the form of this poem. Najdi had worked with my father-in-law, so was a friend of the family.

My pursuit of the hammam as a dissertation topic was validated in many ways by his composition. That someone would write a poem about this institution also underscores how significant it is to Moroccan culture. Najdi's lines touch on many of the aspects of the hammam that I deal with in the preceding chapters: wellness, fire, heat, water, wind, strength, beauty, relaxation, the body, gender, spirits and danger, power, and the liminal role of hammam workers. So many of the facets of the hammam that I found to be important are also central to this poem.

He explained through my brother-in-law that the poem was composed in the *zajal* form, which is Moroccan Arabic spontaneous free verse²². Najdi was known to "hang out" with poets, and wrote poetry as a hobby. He was intimately familiar with the old medina and in this work recounts the traditional people's hammam of the medina. The original poem was written down by hand in Moroccan Arabic by Najdi. The translation into English is mine.

²² Najdi wanted me to know that this was the type of poem that would be performed in the Moroccan *halqa* or performance circles outside the medina gates. This form is most likely related to the medieval Iberian poetry form (see Constable & Zurro, 2012).

THE PEOPLE'S HAMMAM
by Najdi

1.

The hammam, say people of long ago,
Is the silent²³ doctor and healer.
People go seeking favor and blessing²⁴, whether they are healthy or sick.
He gives all he has and acts as your protective armor,²⁵

2.

Partake of his generosity; he won't take advantage of you²⁶
In the hottest inner chamber, take care not to linger too long.
There is also the cooler outer chamber²⁷
And in the central room your body can relax comfortably

3.

The traditional hammam has laws
Everyone, old and young, knows them well²⁸
The hammam enters our life at the time we are born²⁹
It is a hidden secret³⁰

4.

²³ Aabkam

²⁴ *tqasdou* (you all)

²⁵ alternate translation: [He gives as if he is a generous man who gives you a little extra when they sell you fabric].

²⁶ Alternate translation: [Take from him, but he doesn't take from you]

²⁷ Referring to the hottest inner room and the coolest first room

²⁸ *'adi w badi* = as part of your being/backwards and forwards

²⁹ Muslims must be washed when they are born and when they die.

³⁰ The rules are a secret for the outsider. When you go to the hammam you see your own body's secrets. Nobody knows how dirty you are. Things are revealed in the hammam.

In every neighborhood there is a hammam
 One for women and one for men
 Each hammam has its own fire-master³¹
 And in all seasons he is responsible for heating its water³²

5.
 There is someone trustworthy in the changing room³³
 Responsible for guarding the belongings of people
 And there are attendants³⁴ who know
 The bodies of all the visitors and how to treat them well³⁵

6.
 A heavy-set person, should wait in the middle chamber³⁶
 Until the attendants fill up the buckets for him and start their work
 And if the visitor is sturdy and strong³⁷
 He should start in the hottest inner chamber.³⁸

7.
 The attendant³⁹ stretches and works him with expertise
 He is strong.
 Then the visitor rests in the coolest chamber
 And prepares for soap, relaxation and healing⁴⁰

³¹ *Farnatchi* - The man responsible for tending the fire that heats the water for the hammam

³² literally “in all seasons”

³³ *glsa*: entry way/changing room/seating area

³⁴ *kassala*

³⁵ *'ala ihsas* = feelings- how to make them feel good

³⁶ heavy people can't withstand the heat of the inner room

³⁷ resilient and healthy

³⁸ the hottest room

³⁹ *kiyyas*

8.

The attendant goes out and brings the visitor's clothes
 So the winds from outside do not penetrate and haunt him⁴¹
 And the attendant prepares a bucket of water to wash his feet⁴²
 So he can face the problems of Fez⁴³

9.

The men's hammam becomes the women's hammam
 From sunrise to sunset
 The men go to the hammam at night
 The women always go during the day...this destined by Allah

10.

A seated attendant⁴⁴ has a big role
 She guards the women's clothes and gold and silk.
 She is responsible for everything, my friends
 If she loses something, she is responsible to pay it back, whether expensive or cheap

11.

In the women's hammam there are also attendants⁴⁵
 Who have a cherished but dangerous role⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *shefa'a* This word is often included in a common phrase: *b-raḥa wa shefa'a* (relaxation and healing) which together evokes both bodily and spiritual peace, health, relaxation and wellness

⁴¹ wind is believed to enter vulnerable bodies and infect them with disease or bad spirits

⁴² washing of feet signals the washing away of sin or guilt *kay-ghasl thnub dyal-u*

⁴³ "*l-ḥafra*" literally means "the dug out." This is a nickname for the old medina of Fez because it is located in a valley, the dug out city. If the feet are clean and pure, then when you walk on the earth of the city, you mark it with your blessing

⁴⁴ *glassa*

⁴⁵ *tayyabat*

Because there are brides and there are pregnant women
And there are women decorated with henna, my friends

12.

The fee is complicated - it is not always the same among the attendants - it isn't simple.⁴⁷
Everything has its price, which is to be expected.
The women who do henna for your hair have a fee,
And the women who do decorative henna on the hands and feet have another fee.

13.

The women must go to the hammam during the day⁴⁸
Because it puts them far from all dangers.
If women exit the hammam at night
Thieves and danger⁴⁹ are attracted to them

14.

In this special place in the medina
All types of people gather together in harmony.⁵⁰
There are rich and powerful families⁵¹
Who rent the hammam at night

⁴⁶ This refers to their role in ritual transformation, guiding bodies through states of vulnerability

⁴⁷ price isn't set, but always negotiable and based on what the client is able and willing to pay

⁴⁸ *qaḥar* = of necessity, by force

⁴⁹ spirits, jinn

⁵⁰ b-tammam

⁵¹ kbir

And share a band and dinner and drinks with hammam workers⁵²

15.

In big parties, families meet

The women go in first

Then the men go in

And the party ends, and memories are left.

16.

The families compete in giving charitable gifts⁵³

They bring the fire-master an abundant table of food⁵⁴

And for the female attendants, they bring gifts of silk⁵⁵

⁵² long ago when people rented the hammam they had a little party, and everyone in the hammam shared the food and drinks. This way the rumor reached everyone that xyz was having a wedding or event.

⁵³ khayr

⁵⁴ So that he will take care of them in the future, in the hammam (make the water very hot, and not just fill it up half way, but all the way)

⁵⁵ It could be any gift. Since the bride gets many gifts, she gives one to the *tayyabat* to share.

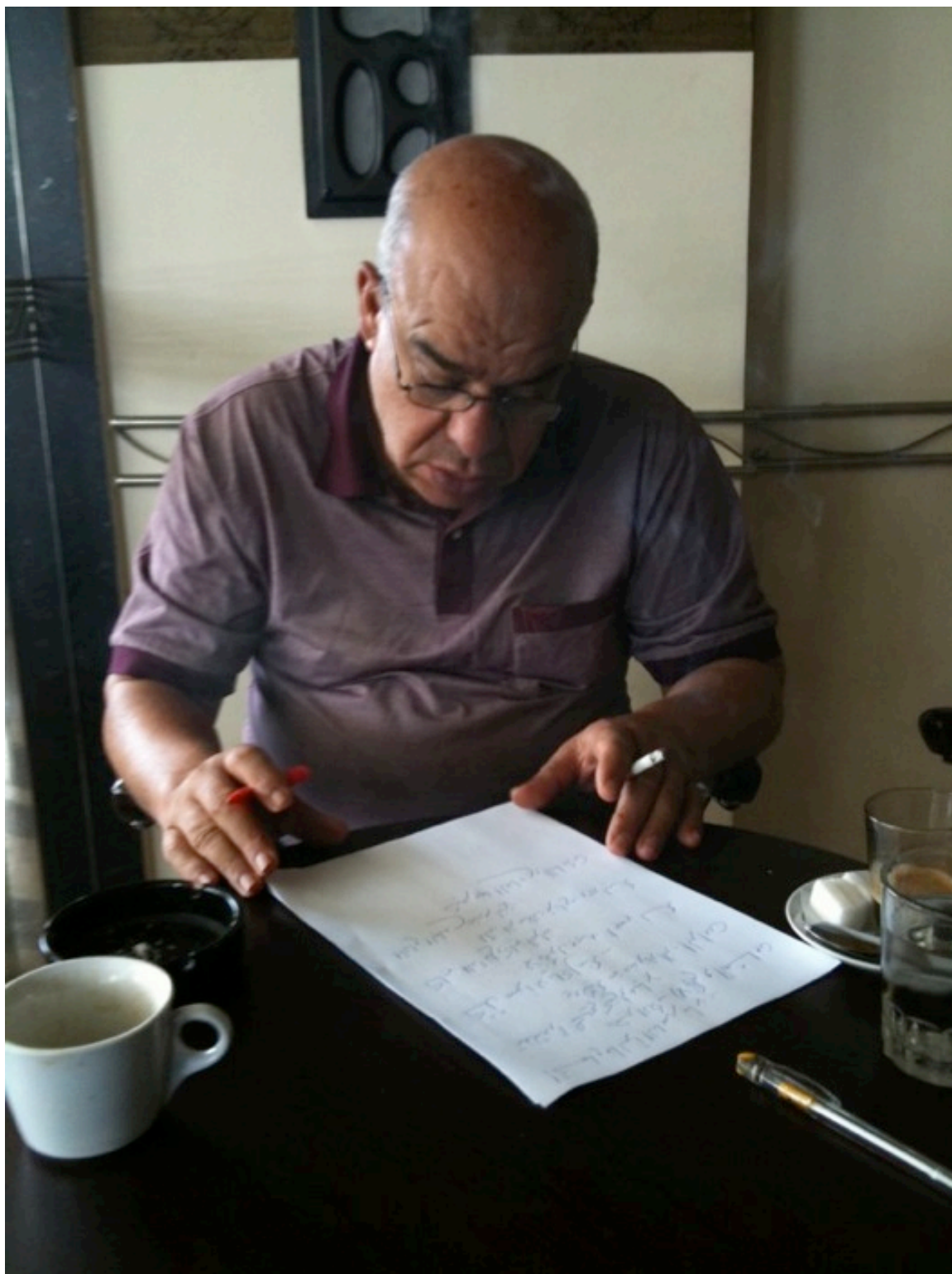


Figure A.1 Najdi writing the first stanzas of the poem. Photo credit: Hamid Rhenifel

Arabic Original/Reverse Translation⁵⁶: The People's Hammam

1

هو الطبيب الأيكم والشافي
تقصدوا صحيح كنت أو عيان
يعطيك من عندو وهو الثوب الواقى

2

كل منوا ولا ياكل منك
لا تطول فيه أحسن لك
كاين الداخل وكاين البراني
لكن الوسطني تراتح فيه ويواتيك

3

الحمام البلدي عندو قوانين
كيعرفها الغادي والبادي*

كنعيشوا بها كل الأعوام من نهار الي تزايدينا
الحمام سر مخفي

⁵⁶ Stanza 1 and 2 and half of 3 are transcribed exactly as the author hand wrote them in Moroccan Arabic, based on the one picture of the first page of the document. I had translated the poem immediately into English upon its receipt. Thus, the latter half of stanza 3 - stanza 16 were translated back into Moroccan Arabic based on my English translation and some Arabic notes in consultation with the poet's friend. The original paper with the original poem has been lost.

4

في كل حومة كايين حمام
واحد لرجال و واحد لعيالات
موجود فلحمام فرناطشي مسؤول عليه
في كل الفصول مسؤول على تصخين الما

5

كايين واحد فيه الثقة فلكلسة د لحوايج
مسؤول على حوايج الناس
وكايين الكسالة الي كي عرفوا
الجسد ديال الناس وكي تعاملوا على الإحساس

6

الغليض كيتسنى فلوسطاني
حتى يعمرروا ليه لقباب وبيداوا يخدموا
والى كان صحيح،
خصو لازم يبدا فدخلاني

7

و الكياس كي جبدو بطريفة معروفة
الكياس قوي
الناس من بعد كيمشيو للبراني
وتوجدوا لصابون و الراحة و الشفا

8

الكياس كيخرج ويجيب لو لحوايج
 باش ما يضر بوش الهوا
 وكبوجد قب دلما باش يغسل رجليه
 باش يواجه مشاكل الحفرة

9

الحمام د رجال كيولي حمام د لعيلات
 من الشروق للغروب
 الرجال كيمشيو للحمام بليل
 والعيلات كيمشيو نيشان بنهار. هذ شي مكتوب

10

كاين لكلاسة اللي عندها دور كبير
 كتحضي لحوايج ديال لعيلات و الذهب و الحرير
 مسؤولة على كلشي يا صحابي
 إلا ضيعات شي حاجة، مسؤولة باش تخلصها. غالية ولا رخيصة

11

كاين الطيبات فلحمام د لعيلات
 عندهم قيمة ودور خطير
 كايين لعيلات الحاملات و العروسات
 و كايين لعيلات مزوقات بلحنا يا صحابي

12

الثنى معقد. ماشي ديما بحال بحال. ماشي بسيط
كل حاجة لها ثمنها و هاد شي ماشي غريب
الناس اللي كيديرو الحنا فريوسهم، عندهم ثمن
الناس اللي كيديرو الحنا لزواق، عندهم ثمن آخر

13

الحمام ديال لعائلات فنهار القهار
كيبعدها على كل الخطر
والا خرجات الحمام بليل
كيترضو ليها الشفارة و الخطر

14

فبلاصة مختصة فلمدينة
كل الخدمة كيتجمعوا بسلام
كاين عائلات كبار ومعروفين
كيكربوا الحمام بليل
كيشركوا الجوق والعشاء والمشروبات مع الخدمة

15

في الحفلات الكبار، العائلات كيطلقوا
العيالات كيدخلوا فلول
ومن بعد كيدخلوا الرجال
الحفلة كتقاضى والذكريات كيبقاوا

16

العائلات كيتنافسوا بزاف باش يديروا الخير
و الفرناطشي كيديروا ليه طبلة ديال الماكلة زوينة و مزينة
والطيابات كيحببوا لهم هدية ديال طرف د الحرير

GLOSSARY: NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'Aid l-Kbir (Eid al Adha):

A Muslim holiday celebrating Ibrahim's (Abraham's) willingness to sacrifice his son, an act showing his faith in Allah and obedience to his request. A sheep or another type of animal is sacrificed in Morocco, by every family, if they can afford to do so.

'aid :

A Muslim holiday

bobo:

The shortened version of "Bourgeois Bohemian," which was popularized by David Brooks (2000) in his book *Bobos in Paradise*. *Bobos* are a new postcolonial French social class composed of socially conscious, educated, and affluent young professionals with non-conformist values and attitudes

brma:

The water cistern located in the third and hottest room of the hammam. The *brma* is the heart and soul of the hammam and the source of its purifying water.

dbiha:

An animal sacrifice ritual, in general, or the sacrificial offering (animal) itself

farán:

A public oven. Historically each neighborhood in Fez contained a *farán*, *hammam*, and *hanut*. Often the same fire fueled the hammam and the farán.

farnatchi (sing.; *farnatchiin*, pl.):

The man in charge of watching over the fire for the hammam and the farán.

fqih:

A Muslim religious leader. A *fqih* is often also a healer who recites the Qur'an and diagnoses when a person was possessed and by whom.

hanut:

A small neighborhood dry goods store. Some also sell fresh necessities such as fresh fruits and vegetables, butter, cheese, hard boiled eggs, bread, and pastries.

hashak:

The term *hashak* is a Moroccan Arabic word with two related usages: 1) It is uttered to a person who does a task for you that is associated with contamination, pollution or dirt. For example, when someone cleans your shoes or washes your hands for you (a tradition before a formal dinner, guests hands are washed in a portable hand washing basin) you say *hashak* to them. This is also a word uttered if you say a word associated with dirt or pollution: dog, donkey, trash, bathroom, and swear words, for example. Kapchan (1996) defines *hashak* as a word meaning in the first usage, "sparing your presence" and in the second "forgive me for mentioning it" (p. 297).

hashuma:

Something shameful or looked upon with disapproval. Also a chiding remark said to someone who has behaved poorly, to mean “shame on you.”

hawli:

a term that refers to a sheep sacrificed for the holiday Eid l-Kabir

isnad:

The chain of named authorities attesting to the historical authenticity of a particular saying by the Prophet Mohammed (hadith).

jellaba:

a loose long gown usually with a hood and full length sleeves, worn by men and women, but especially by women to go outside of the house

jinn* (sing.; *jnun*, pl.)

*Note: *jinn* and *jnun* are not italicized in the body of the text

Jinn can be translated as “genie,” “spirit,” or even “ghost.” *Jinn* are fully accepted in Islam as beings that live among humans, and according to the Qur’an, *jinn* are created from smokeless fire; they engage in activities and live full lives, just like humans. They are among us, watching us, but we cannot see them (Qur’an 7:27).

kassal (sing; *kassala*, pl.):

Male hammam attendants. They are in charge of watching over the inside of the hammam and the water, and for a fee, attending to, scrubbing and doing therapeutic body manipulation on clients. The word *kassal* derives from the Colloquial Moroccan Arabic verb *kssala*, meaning to stretch, so the *kassal* is literally “he who stretches s.o.”

kiyyas (sing.; *kiyyasa*, pl.)/*kiyyasa* (sing.; *kiyyasat*, pl.):

Male or female hammam attendants (used interchangeably with *kassal* or *ṭayyaba* above). The word *kiyyas* derives from the Colloquial Moroccan Arabic verb *kyyes* meaning to scrub the skin, so the *kiyyas(a)* is literally “he or she who scrubs the skin of s.o.” The related word *kis* refers to the scrubbing mit used for exfoliation.

laïcité:

The French word meaning secularism; the requirement that church and state be separated

lalla:

The feminine equivalent of *sidi* or *sayyad*.

l’ud:

L’ud is Agarwood, the resinous wood from the *Aquilaria* tree, an evergreen tree native to Southeast Asia. Interestingly, it is only wood that has been infected by a particular mold that gives off this unique fragrance.

marabout/mrabet:

The word *marabout* is a French distortion of the Arabic *mrabet*, meaning religious leader. The word in French refers not only to the structure but also to the *sayyad* or saint/religious person that the structure commemorates.

moulay:

Moulay is usually applied to descendants of the Prophet, but can be used as a polite form of address for any respected or elderly person.

nafas:

breathe, freedom, liberty

nafs:

soul; psyche; spirit, mind; person, individual; essence, nature; personal identity, self, ego

nisrani:

The Colloquial Moroccan Arabic term for Christian foreigner, white person, European, tourist, or outsider. See also *rumi*

Ramadan:

The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and the month of fasting during which all Muslims are instructed (as one of the Pillars of Islam) to refrain from dawn to sunset from food, drink, smoking (nothing may pass the lips), sexual relations, and sinful behavior such as cursing, lying, insulting, gossiping and fighting from dawn to sunset. Ramadan is said to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad.

***riḥ* (sing.; *ruwah*, pl in Moroccan Arabic):**

wind, air

***ruḥ* (sing.; *arwah*, pl.)**

“breath of life, soul; spirit (in all senses)” (Wehr, 1979, p. 365).

rumi:

The Colloquial Moroccan Arabic term for a Christian European or foreigner. This word is also used as an adject to describe a Western version of something, ex: *khbz rumi*, Western style bread. The connotation is that anything *rumi* is less robust and in some way inferior to the Moroccan version.

***sayyad* (sing.; *syad*, pl.):**

a holy man, saint, or highly respected man. See entry for “*sidi*,” below.

shabakiya:

Cookies shaped like roses and flavored with anise and cinnamon. Traditionally, they are deep-fried, then soaked in honey and sprinkled with sesame seeds, and popular during Ramadan.

sidi:

Sidi is the colloquial Moroccan Arabic title for a holy man, saint, or highly respected man, and an abbreviated version of the more formal Modern Standard Arabic word *sayyad*. Sometimes the two words *sidi* and *sayyad* are used interchangeably in spoken Moroccan Arabic. *Sidi* is sometimes used to address someone in a friendly, casually way, as in “hey brother,” *ya sidi*. The feminine equivalent is *lalla*.

***ṭayyaba* (sing.; *ṭayyabat*, pl.):**

Female hammam attendants. They are in charge of watching over the inside of the hammam and the water, and for a fee, attending to and scrubbing clients. The word is derived from the root T-Aziza-b meaning good. As a verb in the second form, it means, “to make good, to cure, to heal and to massage,” so the *ṭayyaba* is literally she who heals

or massages. The male equivalent is *kassal* (sing; *kassala*, pl.) and *kiyyas* (sing.; *kiyyasa*, pl).

ummah

The collective community of Muslims.

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