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Gould, Erin E.

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Youth Transformations in Storytelling: Transmutability, Haunting, and *Fen al Hikaya* in
Marrakech, Morocco

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Erin E. Gould

December 2019

Dissertation Committee:
      Dr. Susan Ossman, Chairperson
      Dr. Christina Schwenkel
      Dr. Jonathan Ritter

The Dissertation of Erin E. Gould is approved:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

A special thanks to everyone I worked with in Morocco. I can't name everyone, but know that everyone I worked with, spoke with, or happened to meet on the street was influential and an aspect of this project. Morocco and the people I've met there have a huge place in my heart. Marrakech will always be one of my homes. Special thanks go out to Abdelhamd, Adil, Mohamed, Mehdi, Lori, Sara, and Abderrahim for being some of the first people I met in the city, and all of you have played such a supporting role in my work and my life. Dr. Amina Aouchar and Dr. Khalid Amine were influential and patient mentors during my time in Morocco, and their support and comments always helped to solidify and critique my own assumptions and conclusions. Thank you all for letting me become part of your lives.

I am fortunate that I started graduate school with the best cohort (and one honorary cohort member). Between core cards and just mutually commiserating, celebrating, and finding great spaces for taco Tuesdays, I could not have done it without all of you. A cohort that sticks together…Take it away, Jenn!

Also, I am grateful to have met so many people at UC Riverside who have given me great feedback or mentorship over the years. Taking courses or working in different departments, including Dance Studies, Music, Global Studies, and GradSuccess, have given me opportunities to expand my thoughts in many directions, all while solidifying my own ideas for forward movement. All of the fellow graduate school colleagues I have had the opportunity to take classes with, work with, serve on committees with, or simply share perspectives with have all helped me feel at home and supported in Riverside.

Thanks to my parents and family who supported but never fully understood why I wanted to be so far away—not only in graduate school in California, but also going away to Morocco for almost 2.5 years. Thank you to my parents, cousins Michael and Do Quyen, and my aunt Marlene for making the trek to Morocco and bringing some of my US family to meet my families in Morocco. My parents put up with me enough to help me drive from Indiana to California twice, and my sister, Jenny, drove from California to Indiana with me once—I could not have (and would not have wanted) to make the trip without you all! Thanks Terminator, Terminator Jr., and the woman in the front seat who always sleeps. Luckily, if I was ever feeling too far away from family, my cousins Michael and Do Quyen were in the Bay Area for laughs, adventures, and always sending me home with home-made meals. Thanks to Brian and Mary for keeping me updated with the girls and sending me their drawings when I was away for my fieldwork. Spencer Gould helped ground me after returning from fieldwork by asking, "What took you so long to get back?" Elliotte Gould helps me remember to take "uvenchrs," and I hope she continues to remember this throughout her life.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Youth Transformations in Storytelling: Transmutability, Haunting, and *Fen al Hikayat* in Marrakech, Morocco

by

Erin E. Gould

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, December 2019
Dr. Susan Ossman, Chairperson

Fen al hikaya, the famous form of oral Moroccan public allegorical storytelling, is being "revived" by youth in Marrakech, Morocco at the same time as the general public discourse states that *fen al hikaya* is "disappearing" and that youth are suffering from lack of opportunity during the "youth bulge." I argue that this youth revitalization of storytelling practice is haunted by the disappearing figures of older storytellers, but also that as youth move through the transmutable role of storyteller, they transform storytelling to fit their contemporary, internationalized, and economically precarious lives.

While youth precarity, particularly in artistic spheres, is not unique to Morocco, my research provides a case study from which to examine how young people, influenced by the haunting of time-honored forms of expression, transform contemporary practices

of cultural expression, "reviving" these forms but also innovating and changing

conceptions of these practices. Through two and a half years of ethnographic fieldwork in

Marrakech with over 40 storytellers and community members, this research examines

how youth transform and innovate creative expression, one of the myriad of strategies

youth employ to find belonging and meaning in their contemporary, precarious lives. I

use conceptions of haunting and specters to examine how the figure of the storyteller and

Marrakech's *Jemaa el Fna* Square, the most famous location for storytelling performance

in Morocco, haunt transformations Moroccan youth are making within their

contemporary storytelling practice in Marrakech through elements such as performance

configuration, language choice, and the use of costumes and props. I discuss how skills

like public speaking and fluency in English through storytelling can lead Moroccan youth

to different career paths both within and outside Morocco, contributing to their flexibility

but also to their role as internationally influenced individuals.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Transcriptions note

For the transliteration of Modern Standard Arabic, I follow the French and Moroccan transliteration as I encountered them with collaborators. I use words that have been previously translated or used in English and French literature. While I mention some plural words in their Arabic forms (storytellers as *hakawatine*), when referring to storytellers or *halqa*, I also use the simple form of adding the English 's' onto Arabic singular nouns (*hikawatis* or *halqas).*

Chapter 1: Introduction: Storytelling Youth in Marrakech Today

Only a mere few days after moving to Marrakech in early May of 2016, I was able to see my first storytelling event of the year. The Marrakech Biennale, which was a large, international arts festival that was held over a three month period in the city, was coming to an end, so the final weeks of performances and art shows were in full swing. For the Biennale, a group of my friends had created an art space in the old town of Marrakech, not far from Dar el Bacha, where they had a permanent collection of art installations from Swiss, Moroccan, and other international collaborators. In the space, they also held other performance events, such as storytelling and theatre performances. On this particular day, a research collaborator of mine was set to perform the last of his series of four storytelling performances—I had moved just in the nick of time. I recorded my experiences from that night in my fieldnotes:

I reached the entranceway of the *Laboratoire de mondialité* with two friends, and we walk all the way to the back of the place to find some seats on the benches covered in Moroccan pillows. By day, this location was a café, where, in support of the arts space, you could buy tea, coffee, or snacks. The walls are covered from the floor to the middle of the wall in intricate Moroccan tilework, and above the tile is plain, white wall. In some parts of the white wall, artists have taken advantage of the useable canvas space; they have spray painted designs and words, making the event space seem less like a family gathering area but more integrated with the art and design featured in the rest of the location. I am armed with my recorder and my digital camera, as well as my phone—

after my first field research trip, I was not going to forget these things at any event again, I hoped. After being away for so long, the last time I saw a storytelling performance in Morocco was almost an entire year ago. Everyone is walking around and greeting the others in the audience. My friends and I exchange greetings with others, and then we all sit down, ready for the event to begin.

After spending her time prior to the performance in the entranceway area of the space, Nina comes into the back terrace to do the introduction for our event. Nina is in her late 30s and is a figure in the art community here as a designer and for running a well-known *riad,* or bed and breakfast type accommodation, not far from this art space. She and Reda, her partner, are two of the major collaborators for this space. She notes that tonight's event is the last of the series since this is the end of the Biennale, and that as the last night, Mehdi, my storyteller collaborator who is performing, has chosen the theme of Life.

Mehdi comes out of another room clapping, which seems to fill the space and quiets everyone down into the performance. He has on his traditional white *djellaba* (a garment that is put on over other clothes to protect your clothing from dust and dirt outside) and yellow *bilgha* (everyday pointed slippers common for Moroccan men to wear outside). Everyone is quiet as he introduces himself in English to the international audience of about 15 people. The audience seems to be made up of a few younger people who I've seen at other storytelling performances, some locals to Marrakech who are invested in arts, and also some new faces that may have decided to come due to the connection between the Biennale and the arts space.

Mehdi moves around the performance space, where he has to avoid small trees sprouting from the planters in the open space and also a fountain in the center, which for today's performance has been turned into a popcorn serving place. Mehdi surveys the room and the audience members, who are seated in a half-circle in front of him, and then he decides to get started. He discusses briefly about how he will be conducting the whole event in English. He continues on to describe how he decided upon the theme of "Life" for the event, noting that, as the final performance segment in this space, he feels that "Life" allows him to return to some of the topics he discussed in the other nights of the series, which included women and travel.

Figure 1: Mehdi performing at KE'CH Collective. Note the planters interspersed in the performance area and the popcorn fountain on the right side. Photo taken by author.

For his first story, he tells an original story about how he learned about his father, who passed away before he was born. That story sets up his history with storytelling, which stemmed from his mother's narrative of the interconnections of life and death, and how this story moved him and helped him understand the loss in a productive way. While he performs, he moves in front of the half-circle of the audience, making eye-contact with

3

each of us as he passes us. His movements are calculated but also seem common place—

he reaches his hand out to us as he imitates his mother's supportive and welcoming

personality, but yet, his mannerisms between the character of his mother and his younger

self are clearly demarking changes in character. Once he finishes this story, he pauses for

only a minute, and then jumps back into the storytelling.

For his second story, he again tells an original story, focusing on his path to

becoming the storyteller before us today:

> "At the age of 9, he stepped out of the house and into a public venue, which was
> the square of *Jemaa el Fna,* which is right over there. So, he was sneaking his
> way out like a snake. He had seen snake charmers, he had seen the orange sellers,
> he had seen the drag queens…But when he was moving away from that Square,
> he found a guy—an old guy, with his stick, and his red *djellaba* and his yellow
> slippers. That guy, who was moving around a circle, was moving people with
> him. So, the boy snuck his way in, and he sat in that circle. He listened to what
> that guy said. The first sentence that he said was: "kan ya ma kan…" which
> simply meant "once upon a time…" That guy kept on telling this story. It was
> about a princess when she was forced to marry, and she said no. But at the same
> time, her family did not want her to say no. And at the moment when the story got
> complex, the storyteller said: "Tomorrow, it's another day for another new story.
> But I wouldn't finish this one [now]. You need to come tomorrow, in his exact
> place and this exact hour to listen to what I will be saying." The next day, the boy
> showed up to that guy. He sat in front, listening to him. Again, the second day, the
> third day... Whenever he had free time, he would go to the square and listen to a
> story."

Mehdi takes a deep breath, adjusts his *djellaba*, and re-centers himself in the performance

space before continuing:

> "Some time passed. Life happened. He wasn't just the 9 years old kid, he became
> 12, so he has to go to school and do whatever he wants. So he had somehow
> forgotten about the square. He had never passed by it except for the weekends
> when he would pass by it quickly. But he saw something that was really weird.
> He saw that storytellers, they were not there anymore. The guy who he had seen
> in the red *djellaba*, the one with the yellow slippers and the stick and his voice
> and all of that, he wasn't there anymore. He had vanished. So at the age of 19, or
> 17, he got back to the Square. And he devoted a one day to explore and figure out

what was going on. Yes, the snake charmers, orange sellers, the drag queens, he asked them what happened. And they all said, "It was a once upon a time, but the happily ever after never happened." Life happens to people. They change. They grow. And simply, if you don't care for them, no one will. He asked them, "What can I do just to see a storyteller?" And they had given him an address for one. So he went to his house, and he told him "I want to share with you my story. One day I was exposed to the idea that my father is dead. But it wasn't done that day—it was built on a story. My mother sat with me, and she told me this story. And I was completely inspired by the way she said it to me, and what it meant to me. He told him, "What can I do to bring this story back to life, based on your stories?" The Storyteller told him, "You simply need to learn. Put your story into it, learn it, share it with people. And you never know." So that kid who became a young guy, he started sharing stories with people. He started sharing a piece of his culture with people…And now, it's been a weird journey for him, because he is the one who is standing in front of you now…"[1]

And, after only around 5 min, Mehdi had given us a narrative of perseverance and following your desires. The first two stories, original narratives by Mehdi, placed us firmly in understanding elements of his life up to this point, but also provided framing for some life lessons: some things in life can be better digested through storytelling, and when you find something you're passionate about, do not shy away from the challenge. As someone who has only been performing storytelling for 3 years at this point, Mehdi demonstrates the skills needed to make an impression—he speaks clearly and confidently, while also making the audience feel engaged in the story, crafting elements of that relate to audience in terms of physical location (*Jemaa el Fna* Square) or common lessons from our youth. (Excerpt from fieldnotes and recordings ; May 6, 2016)

Getting Familiar with Contemporary fen al hikaya

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[1] Mehdi el Ghaly performance at KE'CH Collective's Laboratoire de mondialité; May 6, 2016 ; performance recorded and transcribed by author. Used with permission by el Ghaly.

I study how youth in Marrakech, Morocco, are transforming performance aspects of allegorical public storytelling, or *fen al hikaya*. Youth storytellers are not only changing the visual image of storytellers, or *hakawatine*, in Morocco, but they are also changing the locations in which performances occur and the language through which the stories, or *hikayat*, are told. I argue that the transformations they bring to their storytelling practice are continuously haunted not only by the figures who have told stories before them but also by locations, such as *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Marrakech, which symbolize a previous prosperous time of storytelling—a time of out of time before strict censorship laws were in effect. As time moves forward, fewer and fewer older storytellers are performing in large public gathering areas, but young storytellers are still apprenticing to learn the skills from older, more experienced storytellers. This project is based on anthropological ethnographic methods, putting primary emphases on my written participant observation fieldnotes and in-person, semi-structured or informal interviews with storytelling practitioners and audience members from events, as well as other community members in Marrakech. While I attended many storytelling events and recorded more than 100 stories, I do not conduct linguistic analysis of the stories as text, nor do I claim to be creating an archive of the practice or preserving the stories. Due to my emphasis on ethnographic methods and also my emphasis on sharing the perspectives of those who are performing stories, I leave these tasks to others more versed in those methodologies. However, I will include descriptions of storytelling events and excerpts from the stories people have shared with me in order to examine the reproduction and interpretation of these stories by young storytellers.

6

I seek to understand how these young storytellers, navigating economically precarious lives, are changing themselves and their stories through their practices. I examine the young people producing and reproducing these stories in performance events: how are they crafting a practice of storytelling that meets their own expectations of storytelling which are influenced both by past conceptions of storytellers and by their modern, and internationally connected lives? How does their participation in this practice impact their lives in terms of skills, experiences, stories, and belonging? I examine my collaborators' interactions with *fen al hikaya* performances to investigate the implications of how the inability to incorporate the current "youth bulge" in Morocco is influencing youth involvement in arts and in greater Moroccan communities. My work expands previous research on Moroccan youth and alienation (Bennani-Chraïbi 2000; 2010; Cohen 2004) and connects this research to *fen al hikaya* performance to expose a holistic image of how these practices demonstrate larger ideas of social change within the contemporary world. I argue that youth who take on the transmutable role of storyteller consider their practice to be reviving storytelling, but that this revival is framed by a haunting of the past—a haunting with implications of censorship and persecution (Derrida 1994; Gordon 1997) but also with nostalgia and futures shrouded by past practices (Fisher 2014). I also contend that participation in storytelling communities contributes to their contemporary experiences of belonging during their increasingly internationally connected yet precarious lives in Marrakech.

Historically, *fen al hikaya*—which refers to public moral storytelling—was performed in public gathering areas by older men. Stories were usually performed within

a *halqa*, a circular performance configuration with the main performer or performers in the center, surrounded by audience members. Moroccan storytellers (*hakawatine* or *hikawatis*) practicing oral storytelling (*fen al hikaya*) discuss contexts and morals set in times of an unknown past, always beginning their stories by saying "kan ya makan, fi qadim al zman…", a phrase in Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, or *darija*, which functions in a similar way to "once upon a time…" (personal communication, May 6, 2016). However, storytellers in Marrakech, specifically in *Jemaa el Fna* Square—popularly known as the last stronghold of storytelling—are "disappearing" due to various social, economic, and entertainment complications (Beardslee 2016; Boulghallat 2015; Hamilton 2011; Kapchan 2014; Schmitt 2005; Sehlaoui 2009; Simons 2006).

Many popular and touristic sources discuss how storytelling can still be seen in *Jemaa el Fna* Square, but that it is declining, specifically with the addition of TV and internet into contemporary everyday lives (e.g. Idrissi 2014: 1; Razavi 2015: 2). This decline prompted much documentation of *Jemaa el Fna* Square itself and the performance practices within it, including the documentation of storytelling and other genres of performance in official government-sponsored materials and declarations (e.g. UNESCO 2008), in written documentation form (e.g. Hamilton 2011), and in audio and visual materials (Ladenburger 2010; 2015).

Despite the way many sources frame *fen al hikaya* as on the decline but somehow still surviving, I found myself wondering where these storytellers were that people kept talking about. After many hours spent lingering in *Jemaa el Fna* Square, I never found one of these older public storytellers still practicing their craft. The practice was not

thriving in the stereotypical way that people were describing: older men were not standing in the Square, telling multi-part tales that led into one another over many days, like they have been described as doing in the past.

UNESCO's first intervention in Marrakech confirmed *Jemaa el Fna* Square as a World Cultural Heritage site, and initial efforts emphasized the physical preservation of the location. However, with the help of a significant foreign figure, Juan Goytisolo, and influential Moroccan scholars, like Ouidad Tebaa, UNESCO declared the practices seen in *Jemaa el Fna* Square as Intangible Cultural Heritage. But, even with this international publicity, performers, specifically storytellers, were still unable to continue their craft and were also made into products of intangible cultural heritage themselves (Beardslee 2014, 2016; Kapchan 2014; Schmitt 2005). Thomas Ladenbuger's efforts to preserve practices in the Square prompted his virtual archive of photos, audio recordings, and maps of the Square, denoting specific areas where different performances occur (2015). The audio recordings were primarily a way to preserve stories as they were told by public storytellers—of the storytellers in his recordings repertoire, only one still performs at private events. Ladenburger's emphasis on the figure of the storyteller also prompted the creation of his documentary *Al-Halqa—In the Storyteller's Circle* (2010), where he attempts to show the hardship of contemporary public performance as it functions on a tip-based system from audiences, but also highlights the difficulty in finding others to pass on storytelling practices to due to the precarity of the lifestyle. Due to the international media coverage from Ladenburger's documentary and preservation techniques, and a letter written by a prominent BBC journalist, Richard Hamilton, one

9

storyteller famous for performing in the Square was awarded a house by King

Mohammed VI (Hamilton 2014). All of these forms of documentation signal attempts to

preserve these storytelling practices, but for these attempts, it seems that after the media

hype has disappeared, so does the funding and efforts to support storytelling performance

in public spaces.

However, I also heard about initiatives where young people were doing

apprenticeships with older Master storytellers to learn this craft of storytelling; this re-

emergence of apprenticeships in the practice was framed as a revival mediated by youth

in the city (Hathaway 2015; HikayatMorocco 2013). The first time I met a young

storyteller, Mehdi, he seemed disinterested in speaking with me. I was building my

dissertation project, and I wanted to explore the possibility of focusing on emergent youth

storytelling practices in Marrakech. It was not until later during that initial trip that I

finally got to see Mehdi perform, and I came to better understand why his reaction toward

me made perfect sense. Storytelling in Marrakech is, and continues to be, trending news:

there had been many people from different journals and news outlets coming to interview

storytellers in Marrakech during recent years. These individuals were traveling to

Marrakech, interviewing storytellers to get the facts, and then leaving without a trace.

Storytellers were feeling used and had negative feelings toward these interactions. There

was a sense that outsiders were coming to steal stories, and that they were making money

off of the storytellers without giving anything back to the people who are actually telling

stories.

Much later in my fieldwork, Mehdi explained why he eventually trusted me enough to talk with me about storytelling. He said: "The fact that you asked a person about if you can use the information, that's been an eye-opener—that you're not just another invader who has come to penetrate the craft of storytelling and then just leave it wounded" (interview; Feb. 6, 2019). He discussed the commonplace act of people coming to get a story to contribute to this large discourse on the disappearing storyteller, but that all of these initiatives were short-lived. These initiatives to understand the role of storytelling and other reasons for writing articles would bring a small influx of tourists from abroad, but never really helped ignite a strong following or any national support of the practice in the country. These written accounts may not be "wounding" storytelling, as Mehdi phrased it, but the accounts were also not helping storytelling heal or igniting long-term, stable interest in the performances.

The urge to protect storytelling, demonstrated by Mehdi and others I spoke with, further garnered my interest in the practice. Many tellers speak about reviving the practice but also feel the need to protect it from people who mean to use it for their own purposes. When considering the idea of protection, my collaborators were, in many ways, attempting to preserve a particular idea of storytelling that was set in a past conception of the practice which they hoped to bring into the present and future of storytelling—giving storytelling a haunted quality. Travel books and news articles discuss storytelling as an art still being practiced in Marrakech currently, but the experiences of storytelling are, and have always been, ephemeral and gesturing to the past. Contemporary practice, in many ways, contributes to the idea of "time is out of joint" (Derrida 1994: 18) or

11

anachronous. In these attempts of framing storytelling as new yet based on previous practice, storytellers have created a haunting experience rather than the revival momentum that practitioners were discussing. This connection between revival and haunting will be examined further in this chapter and throughout this manuscript.

This revival of storytelling by young Moroccans is a case study from which to understand why young people would be interested in something so universal to human existence but which also seems so far removed from our contemporary experience of life—particularly when thinking about the impacts of technology on people's everyday lives and their ability to be entertained from the palm of their hand. Joseph Sobol discusses how when considering cultural theory, in societies entrenched in oral transmission of knowledge, "storytellers, seanchies, bards, or griots store and reproduce the culture's accumulated knowledge, storytellers are specialists"; however, when other technologies of knowledge dissemination are more prevalent (manuscripts, print, or electronic technologies), "the sacred aura attached to storytellers shifts to the mythtellers of the locally dominant media" (Sobol 1999: 1-2). The history of Moroccan storytelling is inherently linked to historical practices of storytelling, such as *A Thousand and One Nights* (Burton 1885; Irwin 1994), but it is also linked to a more popular and everyday form of storytelling, specifically thinking about the history of storytelling in public places.

Like Reynolds' work on Bani-Hilali performances in Egypt (1995), I also contend that storytelling practices are continually undergoing changes due to context and audience, but that this reshaping and reinterpretation does not make it any less authentic

in practice (Bendix 1997). Just as ideas of "authenticity" have influenced reception of other arts and seemingly "untouched" practices, many people I met in Marrakech, outside of youth storytelling circles, considered these youth practices as imitations and not real reproductions of past events (fieldnotes; 5/21/2017). However, youth seem to be utilizing the word revival to link their practices with historic storytelling practices in the area, much like Bendix (1997) describes the Grimm brothers doing to historically contextualize and authorize their stories. These youth seem to be re-interpreting storytelling, but they are doing so through drawing from the historic qualities of practice while also making storytelling fit with contemporary ideas of what storytelling accomplishes. I wanted to know if young people were becoming storytellers to forge careers in the craft, or if that was not the case, why they would take time to hone their storytelling performance skills. I contend that contemporary storytelling not only demonstrates shifts within artistic expression but also demonstrates changes to the social and cultural environment of Morocco. While this case study focuses on Morocco, these concepts and conversations around youth precarity, particularly in artistic realms, is not isolated only to Morocco but to international trends in arts and youth populations within world-wide precarity.

<center>*Youth in Morocco*</center>

Youth, as a life stage, is a time of transmutability and flexibility. Previously much scholarship considered youth as a gap between childhood and adulthood, and because of this, it was considered a passing moment rather than a life stage. Current youth literatures consider the life stage of youth to be much more than a passing moment—youth are still

<center>13</center>

seen in a liminal space, but instead youth, as a stage, is characterized by liminality that may be difficult to escape due to current social trends of unemployment and precarity around the world. Durham coins youth as "social shifters" as they represent an in-between that baffles the considerations of scholars and society; meanwhile, they continue to negotiate different conditions in society, such as power and authority, in ways that contribute to developing their own narratives of experience (Durham 2004: 590).

Because the storytellers whom I work with are all under the age of 30, but usually over the age of 18, the life stage and theoretical lens of youth is productive for this project because people in this age range are subject to many different issues relating to precarity, liminality, and issues of belonging (e.g. Baulch 2007; Bayat 2010; Bucholtz 2002; Cohen 2004; Durham 2004; McRobbie 2004; Mendoza-Denton and Boum 2015). However, in using the term youth, I do not claim to mask the complexities of how youth from different backgrounds develop (Bayat and Herrera 2010). The term youth is also rooted in patterns of youth for men—while the ages of youth have been extending in time for both men and women, the stereotypical age range of youth as consisting of the ages of 15 to 24 or 30 have been determined by average ages for life changes in men (Janson 2014). While most of my collaborators were young Moroccan men, I do not discount the fact that there are young Moroccan women who were or are currently vocal in the storytelling community. My efforts of meeting some of these women collaborators did not work out in establishing long-lasting, one-on-one correspondences or partnerships. However, I was still able to see many performances done by women storytellers throughout my fieldwork.

Young people in Morocco are living through times of a "youth bulge," meaning that there are more young people between the ages of 18 and 30 in the country than can find steady work and employment or find ways of feeling that they contribute to larger communities. Unfortunately, this "youth bulge" does not only include young people in Morocco, young people throughout North Africa and the Middle East are attempting to create lives amid this youth bulge, making it hard for them to reach socially designated statuses that denote their entrance into adulthood. However, policy analysts and scholars, such as Fuller (2004), note that within the next 30 years youth populations of countries in North Africa and the Middle East will mostly decrease in size. In 2020, an estimated 43.4% of the population will be under 30 years old in Morocco, still creating many issues for job opportunities for young people (Fuller 2004: 6).

While youth is already seen as a stage of transition, further contributing to their placement as neither children nor adults, these youth are living in times of constant temporary and menial job offerings. Particularly focusing on educated young people between the ages of 25 and 34 in Morocco, 46.3 percent were unemployed in 2000 (Cohen 2004: 25, originally cited in *Activité, Emploi et Chomage* 2000). According to a study by USAID, 80% of Morocco's unemployed persons fall between the ages of 18 and 34, and job creation in Morocco is functioning at 50% of what it should be to incorporate these youth into the workforce (USAID 2019). Young Moroccans were finding they had no place of belonging due to the lack of jobs and their resultant inability to reach a socially defined idea of adulthood (Baune 2005; Bayat and Herrera 2010; Bennani-Chraïbi 2000; 2010).

15

While working in the late 1990s, almost two decades before I conducted my own research, Shana Cohen found that youth alienation in Morocco had created a disjuncture between youth and the meaning of being connected to the nation-state due to these types of concerns (Cohen 2004). Many of the conditions Cohen was seeing decades ago are still present in Morocco: young educated people are still unemployed and find fewer and fewer opportunities for social mobility and belonging and feel less connection to the nation-state. Cohen's (2004) research, while influential for my own framing, emphasized economics and class junctures, while I focus on arts and transformations in terms of expressive culture. For Moroccan youth, this situation has not only created feelings of being displaced, but also feelings they may never have a place to "be" in society. Also, in current times, we see increased levels of alienation leading to extremist religious movements or increasing desires of young people to leave Morocco (Baune 2005; Ennaji 2005). All of these factors add to young Moroccans' disillusionment with their potential role within their community and country, and this disillusionment is only amplified with outsiders coming to their country to create profit from their practices, particularly thinking about comments from my storyteller collaborators about outsiders taking away their knowledge with nothing given in return.

However, this case study also shows the possibility of creative forms of expression leading to more ways of belonging, including with artistic groups. It also demonstrates the impact of the creative economy as leading to other opportunities, and while these may not be technical employment, youth can use this to fund themselves in creative ways until they decide to take another path.

Revival or Haunting?

When I was beginning fieldwork for this project, I found many of my

collaborators using the word *revival* to describe the process that these young storytellers

were taking with their craft. The term is mentioned on the website of *Hikayat Morocco,*

one storytelling apprenticeship program, storytellers mention their efforts for storytelling

revival before performances, and performers use this buzz word in news materials and

documentaries about storytelling revival initiatives (ArchaeoAdventures 2018; El Hadad

2015a; HikayatMorocco 2013). For instance, when Younes, a young man storyteller in a

storytelling apprenticeship program, would introduce the storytelling events he

participated in, he always made sure to say, "As a group, we are reviving storytelling that

is disappearing in the big Square so that these stories return to our minds" (fieldnotes;

6/15/16). However, as a researcher, I examined how the performers were using this

particular term, and how this term encompassed many different meanings. Were these

young storytellers saying that they were bringing storytelling back from death? Had

storytelling practice, in fact, been considered dead, and brought back to life, as is the

common conceptualization of the term? Or, was there something else happening within

their transformation of storytelling?

One of my collaborators, Mehdi, tried to enlighten my understanding of how he

understands the term "revival" in relation to storytelling and his place within the revival:

> Mehdi: Well, revival is...revival is looking at something that is already
> dead. It's like rebooting something. And storytelling is not dead. I don't
> think I revive anything [now]. I think I shine on something, but I revive
> myself through that…Revival and preserving, they are two different
> concepts. You preserve something that is dying. You revive something

that is already dead. Storytelling is neither of these. (interview; June 9, 2018)

For Mehdi, he thinks of his role in this process as preserving storytelling instead of reviving. I asked him to clarify: does he feel part of a revival group? Or is something more complicated happening?

> Mehdi: Well, a very long time ago…that was the idea. It was the idea of reviving the practice of storytelling—reviving the practice of storytelling, not reviving storytelling. The word practice is the key word…So we wanted to revive, first, the practice of storytelling, and then oral storytelling, though all of the stories that they are performing, most of them are already written. We revived the practice—for sure we did. Did we revive the experience? For sure. (interview; June 9, 2018)

From his descriptions, Mehdi feels that he and other young storytellers worked to revive parts of the practice of storytelling, but his initial comments seem to contradict his later comments.

Further complicating the goals of a storytelling apprenticeship group, *Hikayat Morocco,* in their website, mentions their mission of preservation, while at events, they frame their goals in terms of reviving storytelling and make no mention of preservation (e.g. fieldnotes, 3/17/2017). The contradictory definitions and conceptions of the word revival make the term convoluted and potentially vague.

According to Hill and Bithell (2014) revival refers not only to something coming back from a state of death, but that revival is a process that encompasses many other terms, such as revitalization, reshaping, re-interpretation, and re-articulation, to name a few. I realized that the common connotations of this word (coming back from death) does not relate to how storytellers were using this word, but the further definitions by Hill and Bithell (2014) seem to, in part, characterize what is happening to storytelling practices as

18

they are being transformed by the youth I work with in Marrakech. There have been other revival movements in storytelling around the world (such as the United States, e.g. Sobol 2010; Sobol 1999). Joseph Sobol (1999) describes how many storytelling revival movements throughout history globally have brought back emphasis and importance to storytelling as a practice and cultural form. I find that these literatures do not reflect what is occurring in Morocco from my experiences.

Storytellers in Morocco are still held in high regard but are not highlighted in ways that demonstrate their transition to higher status, but instead are continually placed within the category of historic practitioners—not contemporary innovators or cultural elites. While storytellers are held in high regard, they are not considered high in status, which is a consideration in "Contexts and Constructs," one of the domains Schippers and Grant note as being influential in the sustainability of a musical or cultural practice. This lack of high prestige keeps storytelling practitioners from being able to mobilize large communities behind them for support, and while they speak about musical communities, Schippers and Grant argue that these communities, in whatever way they are structures or formed, create the core of how practices can be sustained (2016). This is why, instead of framing these groups as reviving storytelling, I see their practices as playing on the haunting of storytelling on Marrakech and contemporary storytelling in two distinct ways, part in the specter suffering from political and creative injustice (1994), but also in terms of the haunting of futures not materialized which include elements that harken back or are not necessarily innovative in their reproduction (Fisher 2014).

I argue that the ways in which young storytellers are attempting to revive storytelling and the ways they are practicing storytelling aligns with ideas of *haunting*. Hauntings are "part of our social world" (Gordon 2008: 27), where the past comes to play in the present but also represents "future possibility…into what might come to be" (Schwenkel 2018: 415). In my experience of storytelling, the performances and events are ephemeral but repeated, drawing from Derrida's understanding of haunting as a "revenant" or a coming back of the "specter" (Derrida 1994: 6). Haunting, as I consider it in this project, is also conflated with notions of revival. In many conceptions of revival, there is momentum created behind a movement which is being revived from a previous state—however, I have not seen the sustained revival usually assumed by the use of this word, but instead see the traces of pushing forward in light of past censored and surveilled forms of cultural performance (Harris 2017; Sobol 1999).

This haunting and revival seem to speak to the past injustices that have been aimed at performers and activists in Morocco over the last many decades. Moroccans were speaking out on the injustice of colonization by the French for decades before the Sultan, turned King Mohammed V returned to the kingdom to regain his seat as leader in 1955 after being deposed from his throne in 1953 (Ossman 1994). When his son, King Hassan II, took office between the years of 1961 and 1999, his more austere nature and infamy for silencing voices that challenged his own prompted a new way of behaving in Morocco. These years can be referred to as "the years of lead," which Susan Slymovics states "evok[es] an era of grayness and lead bullets" due to the dystopia of a time when any single action of dissent could be a prison sentence, including passing out leaflets or

using other forms of creative expression could provide further evidence of your dissent

from the government (Slyomovics 2005: 2). People celebrated the end of the "years of

lead" when King Hassan II's son, King Mohammed VI, ascended to the throne in 1999,

and he spoke of liberalizing speech. Indeed, Morocco has taken steps forward in this

regard, but there are still stringent freedom of speech rules upheld in the kingdom.

In the early 2000s, amongst the "freedom of speech" discourse circulating the

kingdom, young people involved in metal bands started being persecuted for being

Satanists, in a country with most of the population following Islam with the Commander

of the Faithful as King. In the Moroccan metal trials, many viewed the governmental and

judicial systems as unstable because of their reactionary stance in dealing with the

metalheads. Instead of seeing stronger authoritative systems, displayed as forums for

debate and change, there were only reactionary punishment measures taken against the

metal participants (Cohen and Jaidi 2006; Otterbeck 2008). These trials show the

violence of publicly speaking about or showing imagery that goes against the dominant

narrative of the country. When looking at less openly critical artwork, Becker noted that

even in pictorial and abstract forms of visual art, artists were pushing the boundaries

slightly forward after the ascension of King Mohammed VI, but these pushes were not

taking them very far forward in critique—artists were still cognizant of if they would

cross any boundaries and be considered critical of what the authorities in the country

expect (Becker 2009). The impacts of censorship and persecution did not disappear with

the end of the "years of lead," even if the discourse has changed to note the liberalization

of discussion allowed in Morocco. This censorship of cultural actors and performers

informs the larger censorship and surveillance infrastructures functioning in Morocco. These strong forms of censorship have obviously had a large impact on the role and proliferation of cultural performers, including storytellers.

While storytelling may not speak as explicitly critically about the government or about religion as some would say that heavy metal or other artists do, this fear of censorship and punishment also impacted those in public performance positions. Just as secret police drive up to establishments in large black SUVs for weekly status reports, they also hire regular people who speak multiple languages to scour large gathering areas, prompting many to hold their tongues or speak further in riddles and myth. One of the benefits of being a storyteller is that you can mask critique and commentary in myth, however, these myths do not fall on deaf ears. Storytellers, as well as activists and openly critical figures, were targeted by the government, particularly during the "years of lead," to decrease the amount of resistance to the increasingly censored lives of Moroccans.

In addition to storytelling being considered lower status and not prestigious, storytellers were also under watch to make sure that their stories did not cross any boundaries or speak of any truths that should not be spoken. In contemporary times, censorship has reached new levels with the government of Morocco shutting down the use of social media apps like Whatsapp for periods of time, or the constant (secret) harassment of journalists and writers (e.g. Hajjaji 2019). I use the idea of haunting to comment on the revision to storytelling occurring in Marrakech through the efforts of young storytellers in light of the fluctuating nature of censorship in Morocco.

Much has been discussed by Mark Fisher (2014) concerning music and haunting, where he argues that contemporary arts are stuck in a pattern of re-using previous artistic movements, instead of producing new conceptions of art—this is how he claims that the past haunts the present and potential futures of cultural forms. Storytelling is a practice working through a balance of historic references, while also gesturing to the future where other layers of meanings will be created upon this practice (Huyssen 2003). The practice of storytelling also functions as a palimpsest of meanings because layers upon layers of different meanings have been attributed to the practice. For instance, the heritage of storytelling refers to a practice done by people who traveled around the world to share news, but it also refers to more contemporary ideas of storytellers who perform in the same gathering area over long periods of time. The figure of the storyteller refers to past figures, usually older and wise men, who moved from place to place sharing news and moral education, but also to contemporary figures who cannot make a living even by contributing to the tourist industry burgeoning in Marrakech. All of these ideas and images are layered on top of the figure of a storyteller, which itself is placed in a time out of time, much like ghosts and specters. How the figure and role is haunted by previous, contemporary, and possible future iterations shapes the way through which the youth perform the role of storyteller.

Transmutability of the Role of Storyteller, International Movement, and Belonging

The flexibility and precarity of the life stage of youth is paralleled with the practice of being a storyteller—this precarity of storytelling is demonstrated by the disappearance of many public storytellers over recent decades. Storytellers once

performed in public places and worked for tips from their audiences, which was a sustainable way to live at some point in history—but not today. Since 2013, when there were major efforts to begin storytelling apprenticeships for young people, I have witnessed many people participate in the role of apprentice storyteller but then transition from this role, showing the flexibility and transmutability that come from being a storyteller and from being precarious youth. Some became weekly storytellers for years, while others participated intermittently when they had more time for storytelling. Whether they got different jobs, began new studies in higher education, or found they had more responsibilities at home, many people stopped regularly participating in storytelling events, instead they participated once or twice a year. Already Karim, one of my collaborators who began a teaching job in 2016 and stopped participating in storytelling events since that time, has periodically dropped in to cafes to perform and recently participated in an international festival of storytelling in another country in Africa—his movement and climb of status being a representation of how storytelling practice can contribute to professional development of practitioners and how the role of the storyteller is functionally "transmutable."

For this project, I consider the role of storyteller as a transmutable state that these young storytellers pass through, come back to, or continue with for different periods of time. I contend that using the terms *transmutable* and *transmutability* encompass the constant changes that these young tellers enact on their storytelling practice, and also how these changes impact the storytellers themselves. Transmutability comes from the root *trans-* meaning across, over, or to the other; *-mut* refers to change; and *–ability* refers to

the ability to do or undergo[2]. From the breakdown of the components, transmutability

signals the ability to change from one state to another—perhaps from a storyteller to a

teacher, another role which requires charisma, public speaking, and knowledge

dissemination. Many scholars have noted that the social domain is transmutable, meaning

that human agency impacts the social domain (e.g. Brown 2013; Mikulak 2011). I argue

that transmutability instigated by people's agency extends to social practices, such as

storytelling. Due to storytelling holding this element of transmutability, these storytellers

will gain different skills from their practice, including proficiency in public speaking and

in at least one foreign language (in this study: English), event management, marketing,

and outreach. They may never stop being storytellers but instead use these transmutable

skills from their storytelling practice in their future endeavors, while navigating the shifts

in storytelling practice and in their roles within a global capitalist market.

The international networks that cross our world have significantly impacted

storytelling, both in terms of youth storytellers' performance skills, and also regarding the

incorporation of different languages into storytelling practices. For uncountable decades,

storytelling was known in Morocco as a practice performed in public places for

disseminating cultural and moral knowledges, but it was primarily practiced in darija, or

Moroccan Colloquial Dialect Arabic. This dialect encompasses words from many

historically linked languages (e.g. Standard Arabic, Amazigh dialects, French, Spanish,

German), but it is relatively unintelligible to anyone who only speaks one of those

languages, even Modern Standard Arabic speakers. Moroccans can understand news and

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[2] https://www.wordsmyth.net/school/SaltLake/?mode=wpar&page=1&offset=0&am=page

movies in Arabic (which are usually in Modern Standard Arabic or Egyptian dialect

Arabic), and they are also usually able to understand Levantine Arabic (*shami* which is

spoken around Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, etc). However, Arabic speakers from outside

the Maghreb (which includes Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria) cannot understand

Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian colloquial Arabic due to the influence of many other

languages on these dialects. Elias Canneti, a German-speaker who wrote a travelogue

about his time in Marrakech, described his experience with the storytellers in *Jemaa el*

Fna Square: "I understand nothing and yet whenever I came within hearing I was rooted

to the spot by the same fascination…[T]heir language was as important to them as mine

to me. Words were their nourishment, and they let no one seduce them into exchanging

it" (Canetti 1978: 77-78). Canetti emphasized that they storytellers actively did not

change their language of performance during his trip to Marrakech, but this is not true for

the storytellers I encountered during my time in Marrakech.

One of the first youth storytelling apprenticeship programs in Morocco was

started by a group of four college-aged students who were studying English in

Marrakech. These youth wanted to practice and improve their English skills, while also

engaging with practices of storytelling which they were finding less and less of in public

places. They found a Master Storyteller from whom they learn different Arabic folktales

by oral knowledge transmission, which is sometimes aided with the help of recordings of

the text of the story (Schechner 1985). Choosing to translate folktales and stories from

Arabic into English implies a strong working understanding of English and also requires

developing public speaking skills in a foreign language. However, media and movies are

readily available in English, and there has been a proliferation of English lessons and coursework in many levels of education in Morocco, demonstrating another significant impact of globalization. For at least the past decade, there have even been discussions within education systems in Morocco about whether to change the schooling system to an English or American system, instead of continuing with the French system currently in place at most institutions (e.g. Boutieri 2012; Lefevre 2015).

While I was constantly told that these storytellers are practicing storytelling in similar ways to those storytellers who have come before them, they are also enacting changes of performance language, performance place, and considerations in oral performance. Unlike the predecessors to current storytellers who would travel from place to place to spread news along trade lines or even just perform in different areas to make their living, these current storytellers are performing in specific places around a single city but also applying to perform for international festivals, international residency programs, and promoting their events through online platforms, such as Facebook. Speaking before international audiences and participating at international events provides ways of establishing cross-cultural interactions. Living in a constantly and increasingly interconnected world, these young storytellers are interacting with storytelling in a different way than their predecessors, who were also known for performing for a mixture of audiences.

Deborah Kapchan's (2007) work examines how Gnawa music, a spiritual and local yet global form, travels around the world. With the support of many famous musicians and being a form that has always attracted scholarly and artistic attention, both

27

in Morocco and outside it, the performers interact globally, contributing to the transnational sensation of trance music. In my discussions with my storytelling collaborators, they make it clear that contributing to these types of transnational networks would be exceptional, but the enthusiasm for Moroccan storytelling has not provided these international avenues to prosper, potentially due to the colloquial and historically particular types of narratives included in storytelling around the world.

In making an argument for the impact of world circulations on storytelling, I am not arguing that storytellers previously stayed in one place or did not encounter various audiences in the past, but instead I am commenting that audiences in contemporary times are increasingly expanded or limited by different modes of communication, not only by physical proximity as in the past. The globalization of media and communication technologies, including social media and digital messaging platforms, have influenced the cross-cultural interaction with practices from localized areas. For instance, young storytellers like Abdelkabir and Mehdi transform certain Moroccan cultural elements for cultural elements from elsewhere which seem to hold stronger hegemony in international entertainment and broadcasting, including British, French, and North American references.

Thomas Turino (2003) discusses the critiques of using ideas of the "global" in research due to its frequent vagueness in definition. He, instead, discusses how these sometimes described "global" elements would show more about the social formation of a person's experience. In his work in Zimbabwe, he saw that Shona intellectuals, while holding a higher status and having higher levels of education, were demonstrating more

similar practices and references to Shona rural peasants than to their middle-class

neighbors in Mabelreign, a nearby suburb. He argues that the Mabelreign individuals

shared similar cultural references to himself than individuals of the Shona group, which

he attributes to Mabelreign individuals having a "local variant of the same modernist

capitalist formation that [he] did" (Turino 2003: 63). I contend that similar formations are

demonstrated in my interaction with some of these young storytellers, including

Abdelkabir and Mehdi. These social formations allow individuals to access certain bodies

of knowledge, and these knowledges may cross borders, seas, and continents—these

references will be discussed in chapter 6.

However, I argue that storytelling has always been working across boundaries and

divisions, explaining how similar narratives can exist in different locales to function in

similar ways of bringing about morals or telling histories. For instance, Davis (2014)

recounts a story from her fieldwork on the Nepal-India border about a Prince who had

two large horns on his head, but he would hide them with long hair so members of his

kingdom did not know he had horns. However, when his father passed away, he had to

cut his hair, per the requirements for the coronation ceremony, but he made the man who

cut his hair swear to secrecy. Even though the man swore he did not spread the

knowledge of the Prince's horns, the information inevitably gets passed along, notably

through the gossip practices of a drum and a tree. After reading this version of the story

and Davis'(2014) discussion of how stories are irrepressible both in that they will

inevitably be circulated but also that stories have the ability to exhibit marginalized

viewpoints, I realized I had indeed heard this story in Morocco. However in the version I

heard in Morocco, instead of horns, the Prince had big ears that he covered with hair.

Indeed, this story is irrepressible and also witnessed in multiple geographic locations—

when and where the story was passed is not of importance, but the existence of this story

in a different context, merely with changed details, demonstrates cross-cultural links to

storytelling.

Through the process of storytelling, these youth are learning life skills such as

public speaking, language proficiency, event organization, and collaboration skills—

while also contributing to a history of storytelling as a practice. The current economic

precarity of young people in Morocco makes these skills increasingly valuable as they

can lead to new sets of opportunities, even including finding avenues of belonging.

Finding belonging during times of increasing precarity echoes Cohen's (2004) work,

where educated youth in Morocco were finding belonging with others of similar

precarious situations, which she calls the "global middle class." She found that young

people were not protesting and demonstrating publicly like Moroccans in the previous

decades. Instead, youth were finding other ways to express their critique through more

globalized outlets than gathering in public places (Cohen 2004: 6). This connects to other

conversations occurring about the impacts of the youth bulge in places like Morocco,

where young people are demonstrating less of a connection with society than with groups

corresponding to interests and communities built through practice. Instead of creating an

imagined community with others coming from similar geographic backgrounds, my

collaborators are creating imagined communities within arts as a counterpoint to their

lack of connection to communities in Morocco, partially impacted by the lack of

economic and social opportunity available (Anderson 1991).

Outline of Chapters

Throughout my dissertation, I examine the questions and topics proposed in this

chapter, focusing on how storytelling is both haunted by the famous figure of the

storyteller and *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Marrakech, but also how storytelling provides a

creative outlet in terms of transformation, connection, and transmutability for these

precarious youth. The first three chapters of the dissertation outline the foundation of this

project. In chapter 1 (Introduction), I begin the discussion of revival, haunting, and

transmutability as they pertain to contemporary youth experiences and practices of

storytelling in Morocco, posing my main research questions and pertinent framing

literatures for this case study. In chapter 2, I provide a literature review for themes

discussed in this work, as well as context for work in Morocco. The review considers the

bodies of scholarship that influence the argument of my research, including storytelling,

youth, revival, haunting, and foundational research focused on Morocco. In chapter 3, I

detail my methodology and through stories of experience, place myself in the research,

both in terms of physical space and through theoretical considerations of immaterial

elements of fieldwork and research. This chapter clearly lays out my data gathering

techniques, while, at the same time, weaves these technical elements of research with

personal experiences from fieldwork.

The following chapter (Chapter 4) of my dissertation focuses on the history and

decline of the figure of the storyteller within *Jemaa el Fna* Square, which is arguably the

most celebrated site for storytelling in Morocco. I construct a dual narrative in this chapter: one narrative discusses the historical narrative of the figure of the storyteller in Morocco, while the other outlines the decline of the public storytelling figure. The historical and continually Orientalist image of the storyteller places the storyteller firmly in moment set in the past, giving a certain nostalgia and stereotypical image harkening back to unknown past instead of a very real performer. The decline of the storyteller, instead, draws the line of how the censorship and decline of cultural actors, in combination with the low prestige and precarity of oral performers, contribute to the "disappearance" of storytellers in public. Even with initiatives from UNESCO and their Intangible Cultural Heritage programs, storytellers seem to be castigated to a role as intangible cultural heritage instead of individuals performing a state, internationally, or in any form of supported cultural form. Central to both narratives for the case of Moroccan storytellers is the location of *Jemaa el Fna* Square, information about which will contextualize the continued discussion of these dual narratives of the figure of the storyteller. For the purposes of this dissertation, the term "place" will refer to location or gathering area so that there is no confusion of terms when it is necessary to describe the Square in French as "place du *Jemaa el Fna*."

Following the history and decline narratives of the storyteller, I delve into my ethnographic chapters, starting in Chapter 5 focusing on new locations and considerations that young storytellers in Marrakech take when finding storytelling performance venues, now that public storytelling is not common. I analyze these changes of locations for storytelling as transformations in space, as these young storytellers find it necessary to

negotiate storytelling practices in locations that do not allow for *halqa* configurations like large gathering areas. I argue that these transformations in space bring about new considerations in storytelling practice for young storytellers. For this chapter, I adapt the concept of stance, as described by Berger (2009), which considers the relationships of the performer to the work and how they develop that work to be experiences, but it also articulates the relationship of the performer, performance, and audience. Not only are they forced to read their audiences like other performers, but they also need to adapt to their surroundings to provide a performance atmosphere that can allude to the history of storytelling in Morocco—contributing to the revenant nature cultural forms, as described by Fisher (2014) in relation to haunting, where the specters in this case are the figure of the storyteller and performance forms from *Jemaa el Fna* Square.

In the following two chapters, I examine case studies of the translation of stories by storytellers, but also the translation and transmutable character of the role of storyteller. In chapter 6, I consider the translation work these storytellers undertake, translating stories from darija and Modern Standard Arabic into English. I argue that these storytellers, like many other translators and performers around the world, have to walk a delicate balance between cultural and linguistic translation to make sure audiences can understand and better participate in the telling of the story, which also links to Turino's (2003) ideas on the diversity of social formations in people's lived experiences and how these social formations contribute to cultural referents. In Chapter 7, I contemplate the position of the young storyteller, and I argue that this position can be seen as transmutable for these young people. I consider ideas alluding to the position of

youth being within a youth bulge but also consider how this position of apprentice

storytelling leads them to other careers and opportunities. While some continue to

practice storytelling for many years, others use the skills they acquire from their practice

to move into different genres of performance or other paths to use their skills through

creative industries. In my final chapter (Conclusion), I tie together these different case

studies and analyses to reiterate key findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This dissertation is the product of framings provided by many different bodies of literature. While I focus on storytelling and performance, my dissertation is informed by those bodies of literature, as well as youth, revival and haunting, and pertinent literature focused on Morocco, the country where my research took place. The following chapter represents an in-depth discussion of these literatures and how this project was informed by these works.

Performance and Storytelling

For this section of the literature review, I discuss three bodies of work, including performance, storytelling, and Moroccan and Middle Eastern literature on oral traditions and storytelling, which have all influenced my framing of this research project.

Performance

Considerations of performance literatures play a significant role in a project focused on storytelling, one genre of expressive culture. Victor Turner's (1987) focus on performance is structured around the process and place of communicative acts and also the position of individuals and groups in society, especially in terms of ritual and performances as reflexive. He notes that performances are the "basic stuff of social life" seen "through the performance of roles, through performance that breaks roles, and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status" (Turner 1987:81). Performance can contain verbal and non-verbal communication while also contributing to *communitas* around which people feel belonging and combat

feelings of alienation. In my research, I am particularly interested in how, through performance, young Moroccans are able to undergo transformation of status through learning transferrable skills, but also how these practices create communities and feelings of belonging as the storytellers navigate systems of precarity. Turner's concepts in relation to expressive culture provided a key foundation for this project through its link with skills and communities built through Moroccan youth storytelling in Marrakech.

On an everyday level, Kapchan (1995) examines performance in the realm of aesthetic practices, noting that performances are:

> "patterns of behavior, ways of speaking, manners of bodily comportment…whose repetition situate actors …yet performances provide an intricate counterpoint to the unconscious practices of everyday life …lifting the level of habitual behavior and entering an alternate… "frame" wherein different rules apply." (Kapchan 1995:479)

She also notes that *habitus* and performance genres are inseparable, while she draws on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as "the gestural and emotional-aesthetic ethos structuring identities of difference" (Kapchan 1996:4). Kapchan shows the separation between everyday life practices and performances, but she also notes that everyday behaviors that are influenced by *habitus* also structure performance genres. This description and analysis of performance is used by other scholars, including Susan Slyomovics' (2005) work on the performance of human rights in Morocco, noting that different elements, such as torture and disappearance, are individual performances in her study of human rights. Royce (2004) argues that performance "implies some sort of competence"; examining the more technical and formal aspects of ritual and spectacle will lead to a further understanding of performances, and, in relation to the study at hand, provides a

36

framing from which to examine how young Moroccans are gaining competence in storytelling performance and how this competence is influenced by the historic practices of Moroccan storytellers. For this project, my understanding of performance is focused on the more formal, delineated ideas of performance, drawing form Turner (1987) and Royce's (2004) ideas, instead of looking at the everyday performance of *habitus* as discussed by Kapchan (1996).

A study that plays an important role in this work is Berger's (2009) research on stance, which he argues is a way to understand the different relationships that are articulated in performance. Of note for this study are his ideas on performative stance, which is the relationship of the performer to a previously created performance, and the audience stance, which articulates how the audience interprets meaning from the interaction between the performer, the performance, and themselves. This idea of stance, which will be discussed in further detail in chapter 5, is influential in understanding how performers conceive of their performances, and in this study, also how they think about and address ideas of audience reception and meaning-making. Through my work with young storytellers, I observed the ways through which young storytellers were constructing and curating their performances, paying attention to space, including incorporating props, language, and costume that both innovate prior ideas of storytelling practice while also harkening back to historical practices of storytelling.

While performances can be the object or process of analysis, Taylor argues that it can also be a methodological lens to understanding, as embodied knowledge can provide alternate ways of knowing (Taylor 2003); Sally Ness (1992; 1996; 2004) has done

extensive work on phenomenological approaches to performance and body movement

through space, and Berger (2009) contributes necessary discussion to how

phenomenology is a framework through which humanities and social science scholars

can further their understandings of expressive culture and the stance of those performers.

Training as a storyteller, from even the most basic level and still being firmly a beginner,

has contributed a wealth of information to this study of understanding the relationship

performers have with their practices. My embodied practice of storytelling brought a new

understanding of the considerations of space and movement that storytellers discussed in

their interviews and the movement I observed throughout the storytelling events I

attended during fieldwork. Bauman and Briggs (1990) argue that using performance as a

tool, we can focus and reflect on the process through which we communicate. This is

echoed in the work of other scholars, including Anya Royce (2004) who contends that in

the same way that artists and performers undergo a process of interpretation,

ethnographers do the same, contributing to an opening up of potential understandings.

She also argues that performance is intertwined with play, giving performers freedom to

play with form and imagination, which also links to Turner's contributions on the use of

play in drama and theater (Royce 2004; Turner 1982).

Working as an ethnographer with storytellers created different encounters framed

by play and creativity, where performance was at once referring to the performance of the

storyteller in front of the audience, but it also referred to the ways through which I, as the

ethnographer, conceived of the materials from the performance. Through the

incorporation of play, I used methodologies like drawing maps, embodied performance

practice, and workshopping translation sessions to consider how play and performance contribute to the framing of storytelling from the perspective of Moroccan youth.

Richard Bauman, one of the most notable scholars working on oral literature and performance describes oral narrative performance as distinct from other forms of speaking, all of which cannot be put into the category of performance; in order to meet criteria of verbal performance, the performance needs to be keyed in a particular frame that separates the event from the everyday (Bauman 1977). In my research, I found these special allocations of performance spaces to contribute a certain quality to the performances. One of my storytelling collaborators would dress in everyday clothes while meeting people at the performance location before the performance began— however, when it came close to the event time, he would disappear and re-emerge as The Storyteller, changing his status in the event but also initiating the sequence for the start of the real storytelling event.

Storytelling

In addition to providing a framing for verbal performance more generally, Bauman has been influential in his studies of storytelling and oral narrative performance. He argues that oral literature and social life are connected "because part of the special nature of narrative is to be doubly anchored in human events. That is, narratives are keyed both to the events in which they are told and to the events that they recount" (Bauman 1986:2). During my fieldwork, I encountered many young storytellers who only performed stories which had been passed to them by the older Master storytellers that they worked with. However, I also met with storytellers who created their own stories for

their performances, mostly built from first-person experience. Both of these types of storytelling sources are taken from human experience and when performed, these stories are influenced by their context—giving the stories stronger affective links to those listening to the story.

While oral narrative performance seems to intersect with everyone in their everyday lives, he also notes that the status of folktales and oral literatures were seen as unimportant objects of examination in many fields of study. He continues by arguing that oral narratives are "constitutive of social life in the act of storytelling, not just a reflection of culture or the external charter of social institutions, or the cognitive arena for sorting out the logic of cultural codes" (Bauman 1986: 113), which further confirms the extent to which storytelling reflects and impacts social lives of performers and audiences. Research into the importance and social life of storytelling, performance, and oral literatures began in the late 1960s when figures like Bauman (1977) and Finnegan (1967) studied oral literatures just as rigorously as literatures based in written forms. The stories from my research were set in unknown pasts and were used to transmit socially constructed morals, including elements like not underestimating the intelligence of women ("Hairdresser" story) to treating everyone with respect ("Cast out Queen" story).

Research on storytelling performance outside of Morocco note that their research focused on men's storytelling in public venues (Slyomovics 1987; Wickett 2012), and other works within Morocco and Tunisia have discussed men as the primary public storytellers (Amine and Carlson 2012; Rahmouni 2015; Webber 1991). However, in her study of women performers in the marketplace of Beni Mellal, Morocco, Kapchan (1996)

focuses on how women's entrance into different speech genres in performance works to create new and hybrid identities within which performers reproduce or rework social imaginaries. Other studies of women's performance which discuss questions of performance and placement within different societies have been explored in anthropology and ethnomusicology (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1986; Davis 2014; Rasmussen 2010). In Davis' (2014) work with Maithil women's tales on the border of Nepal and India, she notes that storytelling becomes a form of critique and voicing of otherwise silenced and overlooked women's narratives. She notes that in many ways, these narratives are irrepressible, stating that "not only *will* they be told, but they will *to be* told" (Davis 2014).

As Doreen Massey notes, gender and gender relations are just as significant in structuring space and place in society as other factors, such as class. She argues that these gender relations reflect and also effect the construction of gender in society (1994). In an interview with the Master Storyteller of a storytelling apprenticeship group in Marrakech, *Hikayat Morocco*, one of the groups some of my collaborators were trained in, Hajj Ezzarghani states: "both men and women have always told stories…but each one of them has their own stage. Today, that is changing…to be working with both genders is an enrichment to this art" (Razavi 2015). Historically, only illiterate men performed these genres, but the inclusion of women has led many Moroccans to wonder why these women would want to try to perform in 'men's space' (El Hadad 2015a). In the case of storytelling by youth in Marrakech, performances are done by both men and women, contradicting the past practice as being dominated by men. This change, most likely due to changes in space of performance and slightly shifting social norms, has allowed more

young women to feel comfortable and supported to perform in public cafes that are still more sheltered and less dangerous than large public gathering areas like *Jemaa el Fna* Square.

Works on gender division throughout North Africa and the Middle East are important to note, especially attempting to understand the variability and nuances of these divisions across the region (e.g. Doumato and Posusney 2003; Jay 2013; Mernissi 1996; Milani 1998; Newcomb 2008; Ossman 2002). Fatima Mernissi (1996) spent her career working on the complexity of gender relations in the Arab world, and through her work, she parses out the difficulties that arise when looking at how historical events and movements have impacted these gender relations, moving through major global events concerning the Gulf War and the politics of who controls women's *hijabs*. During my fieldwork, women were telling stories in apprenticeship programs, like *Hikayat Morocco,* in cafes, but I argue these changes show some transformations under the surface of Moroccan social life but these transformations have yet to influence everyday life. I was able to work briefly with two women storytellers, who confirmed that their goal was not to work in a public performance Square for their entire lives, but the act of performing and telling necessary stories to audiences gave these women opportunities to participate in activities their grandmothers would have never had.

Middle Eastern and North African Storytelling Practices

Many scholars and writers have put together compilations of stories from Morocco and surrounding areas to create written materials for the ephemeral tellings where these stories usually reside. Some of these works function as repositories of

stories. But, before recounting a number of stories, briefly reflect on the image of the

storyteller in particularly termed "Moroccan" storytelling (e.g. El Koudia 2003; El

Koudia 2014; Hamilton 2011; Herron 2016; Ladenburger 2015; Légey 2016 [1926];

Rhazali 2014); "Maghrébine" storytelling from Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria (e.g.

Reesink 1977); "Berber" or "Imazighen" storytelling (e.g. Halbaoui 2016); Kabyle

storytelling (e.g. Allioui 2001; Lacoste-Dujardin 2003); or "classic Arab folk"

storytelling (Jayyusi 2006). Some scholars found that many of the stories shared with

them were from the works of *Arabian Nights* and other written collections. Some note

that these stories highlighted what Moroccans felt outsiders would want to hear, so

instead of sharing stories originally from Morocco, they shared stories from the Middle

East and North Africa with Moroccan details included where possible, including

changing the historic currency of *dinar* to contemporary Moroccan *dirham* (El Koudia

2003). However, recently, there have been strong efforts to create a written record of

household and publicly told Moroccan stories that were not taken from these larger text

collections for the purposes of preservation (El Koudia 2003; Hamilton 2011; Rahmouni

2015). Due to the popularity of storytelling as a topic of discussion, most of my

collaborators had already spoken with or worked with other researchers, and my framing

of this project as an ethnographic engagement with transformation was influenced by the

significant number of works already preserving stories in large volumes.

Sabra J. Webber (1991), from the backgrounds of both folklore and anthropology,

uses folklore theory to inform her ethnography of Kelibia storytelling, but does not

specifically focus on transcription and preservation of texts. She incorporates folklore

theory, transcription of stories, and social theory to create a holistic study of the storytellers of Kelibia, Tunisia who practice *hikayah*, colloquial Arabic verbal art, similar to the genre of *fen al hikaya* in Morocco but seemingly her considerations of *hikayah* were during less formal types of performances. The compilation of her theoretical and methodological strategies provides strong support for her argument which contends that storytelling not only describes contemporary life, but also, in its creation, storytelling helps tellers to recreate and critique their cultures (Webber 1991). Webber's work was instrumental to my research as she used multiple forms of knowledge to construct a larger image of how storytelling impacted the everyday lives of those in Kelibia. For this research, I work to also tell the story of how storytelling transformation is significant in the lives of young storytellers in Marrakech, to understand how the lives of youth are being influenced by their participation in this type of performance.

The epic poetry of the Bani Hilal, usually attributed to Egyptian poets, has been one of the most extensively studied traditions of Arab storytelling (Connelly 1973; Connelly 1989; El-Lail 2012; Reynolds 1995; Slyomovics 1987). While the tales of *Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights* are the stories from this geographic region most known in the Western Hemisphere, Bani Hilal epic poetry is the most widespread verbal art form in the region and is known as a primarily oral tradition, unlike *Thousand and One Nights* (Reynolds 1995). In Reynolds' research, he found that the Bani Hilal, while considered by practitioners as a series of stories sung into a single oral epic, in recent years, had been sung in segments, not in its entirety (1995: 19). Similarly, storytelling tradition in Morocco may include stories previously included in a series, such

as *Thousand and One Nights*, but are now recounted in single, short excerpts in events. Departing from these long, oral performances that span over many days, my collaborators performed short, single stories to their audiences. Due to the precarity and flexibility that young people have to adopt to find avenues from which to earn money, independent storytellers hold events maximum once a month—more frequent performances were not regular occurrences except in places like Café Clock where the young apprentices would take turns performing during the Tuesday and Thursday set performances.

<div align="center">*Youth*</div>

Youth is used as a foundational framing for this project because the individuals I work with fit into a socially determined group considered youth in Morocco—specifically those who have not gotten married, found stable jobs, or set up their own households. While this social framing is determined by context, studying youth as a diverse category of individuals around the world has become increasingly more important within contemporary times of precarity. While this dissertation focuses on youth in Morocco, youth populations around the world are increasing, while job and economic opportunities in many countries are decreasing, particularly for youth. For this literature review, I discuss youth in terms of different categorizations: classic works, youth participation and arts, and Moroccan youth.

Classic Works

Prior to the 1990s, sociologists and anthropologists looked at youth as populations that were deviants and reactionary to older individuals in society. Recent focus on youth broadened the frameworks from which to study these groups, including looking

specifically at youth as producers of cultural knowledge, not just as these deviant and rebellious groups (Bayat and Herrera 2010; Bucholtz 2002; Buckingham and Kehily 2014; Herrera 2010; McRobbie 1991). McRobbie (1991) is an influential researcher in youth studies, not only as someone who opened up youth studies to investigate the lives of girls, but also because she was one of the first to really prioritize questions of class and gender, bringing a feminist reading to the populations with whom she worked. These studies help frame my research because they emphasize the movements and actions of youth, which was previously not seen as a significant categorization for major studies. In contemporary times, youth are experiencing less opportunity, promoting alienation from societies and communities of origin. These issues of belonging and opportunity become increasingly problematic when considering issues of radicalization present throughout the world.

Victor Turner discusses liminal space, as an ephemeral place between social roles. After transition into a liminal space, one leaves this stage to be reintegrated into society with a new status (Turner 1987; Turner 1995). This concept has not only been used to think about performance and ritual, but also can be attributed to "youth" as people within this life stage are moving from one stage (childhood) with certain rites of passage to another stage (adulthood) which is comprised of different qualifications which are culturally and historically particular (van Gennep 1960). As Bayat and Herrera (2010) argue in their contextualization of their research on "youth," I do not mean to use the word "youth" to somehow attempt to mask the different gender, class, and cultural norms

of people I refer to in this category, but instead think of this as a life stage between two other socially constituted stages of a life.

In Morocco, reaching "adulthood" has historically referred to when a young person gets married, has a stable job, and has their own home outside of their parents' home. Building off Bayat and Herrera (2010), Janson (2014) notes that conceptions of youth were derived from patterns of behavior exhibited by men in society—not specifically taking into account women and, of particular interest to his study and mine, Muslim women. When thinking of the social qualifications for leaving the youth category, most qualifications come from a man-centric perspective. Due to unemployment and issues within the "youth bulge" in North Africa and the Middle East, this category is always fluctuating. However, this fluctuation of timing of life stage is not only found in the Middle East and North Africa but is found throughout the world in different iterations (e.g. Durham 2004; Falola 2004; Janson 2014).

Youth Participation and Art

Youth, feeling marginalized and alienated, have responded with protests and disobedience around the world. Events, such as the Arab Spring, have shown the strength that groups can demonstrate, and many of the participants were young, using social media and other ways of organizing to protest (Hozien 2013). However, in relation to the Arab Spring, Morocco is an interesting case study of one place where the protests prompted slight changes to the Constitution of the kingdom, but most argue that this response from the kingdom did not go as far in shifting governing structures as was hoped for. During the same time as the Arab Spring, a bombing in *Jemaa el Fna* Square

47

brought together community and, in many ways, drew many protesters away from the international mission of regional democratization, instead bringing together the national community against the threat of terrorists.

Deborah Durham notes that in her work in Botswana, governmental and authoritative bodies were taken aback because protests by youth were tackling issues of "power and authority, responsibility and the grounds of legitimate governance, sources of autonomy and of interdependence, and the obligations and exploitations that make up membership in such social groups as family and the nation-state" (Durham 2004: 590). These protests show that while youth may not be participating in the systems contributing to their alienation, they are also not passive and are attempting to find ways to shed light on these issues in the public, potentially on a broader national or transnational level. Jessica Greenberg examines the ways in which youth participate in democracy in Serbia during times of disappointment, and engage in ways to ameliorate their disappointment (2014). Youth I worked with who had participated in the Arab Spring, or February 20th Movement, in Morocco noted their disappointment in the overall changes that occurred in the country; however, interestingly, while I was in country from 2016-2018, this topic was broached very briefly—this could have been linked to the disappointment in the changes or the fear of surveillance, censorship, and punishment that are linked to dissent in the country.

The role that youth play in society also interacts with their position in the transmission of cultural knowledge through national collective memory, heritage, and national community through their art practices (Anderson 1991; Connerton 1989;

Shannon 2006). In relation to storytelling, in many cases the storyteller starts as an apprentice until they are older and take over their predecessor's role, or until they break out on their own (Amine and Carlson 2012; Slyomovics 1987). Shannon (2006) argues that art produces alternative imaginative possibilities for emergent social connections in times when other links within society are not apparent or possible. Research on youth art and expression show genres of performance and art that are inclusive for youth, contributing to how youth find forms of expression to help them interact with society (Baulch 2007; Caldeira 2012; Lee 2013). Through different practices, such as graffiti, Caldiera demonstrates how youth are creating physical and meaningful spaces of engagement with society, even though this graffiti and other forms of expression could be taken away or banned at any time by those in power (2012).

However, Boum (2012b) discusses how rap can be an outlet for Moroccan youth in times of precarity, but these youth have to be sure not to go too far that they end up being persecuted for their involvement in movements of critique. Storytelling creates another cultural opportunity for voicing perspectives that may be otherwise silenced, and by setting stories in unspecified moments in history, my collaborators can discuss contemporary issues with the use of allusion and indirect referencing. However, much like Boum's (2012b) collaborators, my young storytelling collaborators have to work in ways that do not seem overly critical or frame their storytelling in terms of dissent as they contribute to the moral storytelling movement.

Many young people feel that an appropriate response to the economic, social, and political problems is to excuse themselves from participating in systems that reproduce

frameworks of their marginalization (Cohen 2004; Jeffrey 2012; Martin Muñoz 2000;

Mendoza-Denton and Boum 2015). Globally, people have been responding to these

systemic problems, and young people's lack of participation have urged scholars to create

even more defined terminology for youth of the world, including English "twixters,"

Spanish *mileuristas,* and Italian *bamboccioni*. Some studies refer to the period of youth

as "waithood": the period when youth are not needing others to take care of them but are

not full adults because they lack the access to adequate resources (Mahdi 2003;

Mendoza-Denton and Boum 2015: 301). Ossman (1994) notes that as the period of youth

and adolescence increases in duration, generational difference in expectations and norms

can form.

The growing population of youth around the world, as well as their lack of

opportunities and resources, highlights issues of economic decline that become apparent

as the unemployment rate increases significantly and as more people move from rural

areas to the cities in hopes of finding more opportunities and chances for employment

(Buckingham and Kehily 2014; Herrera 2010; Mahdi 2003). Martin Muñoz discusses

how current youth throughout the Arab world do not have the same motivations or

interests in life as previous generations did, particularly referencing generations of young

people during times of gaining independence when many youth became nationalist

fighters (2000). Today, there have been many who fear that the alienation youth feel

during the youth bulge would be motivation to join Islamist movements or religious

extremist groups throughout the region (e.g. Adraoui 2008)**.** Changing times create

generational differences from historical, social, and economic factors influencing differences in life perspectives between generations.

Moroccan Youth

Research on youth concentrated in Morocco provides a background for my project and offers points for further discussion within the intersection of youth and arts. Davis and Davis (1989) completed a study in which they observed the lives of young Moroccans in a small town, making a corpus of life practices for future work on young age sets in Morocco. While my research is not situated in a rural village context, this study represents work to discover the intricacies of Moroccan adolescence and steps to adulthood in this particular context for girls and boys. Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi's and Shana Cohen's work have focused on topics of employment and feelings of alienation for young people who are unable to find employment opportunities. Bennani-Chraïbi's work has been influential on the discussion of alienation of educated Arab youth, who have little opportunity and are not being integrated into the work force (2000; 2010). Shana Cohen's path-breaking study led the way to an understanding of how dim prospects for employment and changing global discourses about self-realization have contributed to a generational gap in Morocco (2004). While Cohen's work was focused primarily on issues of employment and work, my research focuses specifically on symbolic forms of culture, their connection to history, and the roles that the large youth bulge play in the contemporary creation of *Moroccanness* (Boum 2012a). My work articulates with Cohen's (2004) research but instead focuses on cultural forms of expression and the ways through which these practices promote movement and belonging in the generation after

that of her interlocutors. The individuals Cohen worked with in her study discussed their

feelings of alienation emerging from their status as educated individuals who were at one

point "global" but were not locally recognized or supported with economic opportunity.

For my collaborators, their precarity is a constant element in their lives, and the lack of

support they encounter creates a necessity for them to find ways of engaging with others

and building communities through expressive culture.

<p align="center">*Intersections of Revival, Heritage, and Haunting*</p>

Revival

Thinking about *hikayat* and *halqa* as contributing to a broader process of heritage

in Morocco also brings discourse of revival movements into focus. While this term,

revival, is loaded with many different implications, I draw from Hill and Bithell (2014),

who note that while the notion of revival normally assumes that something has to

disappear in order for it to be revived, their use of the term works from a much more

complex concept. With revival, Hill and Bithell (2014) articulate that this term, for them,

encompasses a range of more nuanced processes. Some of the other noted processes are

revitalization, reshaping, re-interpretation, all of which share this "re" prefix which

insinuates that they all share "a fundamental motivation to draw upon the past and/or to

intensify some aspect of the present" (Hill and Bithell 2014: 5). In their work, revival is

not seen as something coming to an end and beginning again, but they relate it to

continuations and shifts in previous iterations of practices. I will incorporate this term in

my work to highlight the nuance and the complex process of making anew a practice that

has been performed for at least a few hundred years, particularly thinking about re-

interpretation and reshaping, as discussed in relation to changes in space, performance and performers, and audience participation and organization.

Revival within the frame of storytelling has many different implications and results. Looking at North American revival movements in storytelling, Sobol (1999) examines storytelling revival in the United States as part of the work of revitalization that has been occurring throughout the world since the 18th century. However, as he discusses this revitalization or revival, he notes that in the United States, storytellers came together to create the future for new coalitions of professional, freelance storytellers—organized officially through an overarching society and including official festivals in order to bring the disparate storytellers together. However, I also critique the term revival for describing re-emergence of forms of cultural expression. In my understanding of how my collaborators use the term, I argue that they are actually referring more to ideas of cultural sustainability, where they, as a group, are interested in keeping *fen al hikaya* alive, but do not have some of the characteristics Schippers and Grant (2016) attribute to successful movements of cultural sustainability, including funding and sponsorship.

In line with cultural sustainability movements, Harris' (2017) work on storytelling re-emergence in Russia brings to light many issues with government attempts to "preserve" epic poetry, but in this case, shows that the re-emergence is actually met with government incentives to bring back performance and language practices associated with Olonkho epic traditions. However, she notes the politics within this revitalization effort: the government seems to be pushing the poetry, while citizens are pushing back, not wanting to learn the old style but renovating and creating new ways of performing these

older stories. Similar veins of research fueled Winegar's work focusing on arts practice and youth in Egypt. Government programs were put in place for youth to practice arts in particular ways that benefited the governmental views of religion and expression, which included arts and culture programs as the way through which to create "cultural cultivation"(Winegar 2014: 450). These cases highlight the community feedback stemming from attempts of government appropriation of cultural forms for revitalization efforts. Schippers and Grant (2013) discuss that truly sustainable cultural movements and revitalization efforts have to stem from communities who are interested in doing this work, by putting in funding and also by putting in effort and activity to promote the continued development of movements.

While Smith (2006) argues that heritage is contested and changing, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) contends that heritage actually only constitutes the dead and outmoded within society, such as materials placed in a museum, which are continually becoming more and more out of touch with the present. However, Shannon (2006) argues that while materials may become outmoded and obsolete, the discourses around heritage, in his fieldwork in Syria, play a complex role in contemporary Syrian society, working to negotiate notions of modern national culture, critical discourse, and aesthetics. Jessica Winegar's (2006) research on Egyptian art worlds shows how Egyptian artists are creating (both physically and theoretically) ways to demonstrate the modern condition of Egypt, which also signals connections to the nation-state, the global, and an "authentic" representation of the art of past and present Egypt. Winegar discusses that artists comment on the past while constructing art of the modern day, that they are in

fact haunted by one iteration and remembrance of a specific past while they work to move forward into the future. Within this research, my collaborators seem to be harkening back to the past, while also finding different avenues through which to make the practice more contemporary. The intersection of arts and heritage in Morocco creates these alternate avenues of youth expression, increasing connection and feelings of community through heritage practices (Belghazi 2006; Boum 2012a).

Haunting

When coining the concept of *hauntology*, Derrida (1994) described a specter as "always *revenant*. One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by *coming back*" (11). His descriptions of hauntology continually come back to the series of specters that are presented in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* while also tying references to justice, key figures, and key events. However, he points out that in haunting, the referents are no longer situated in time as humans perceive time, and through this coming and going process, the specters that haunt our contemporary times bring focus to the past in the present, but also harken toward the future. Colin Davis (2005) takes up the task of highlighting how Derrida's conception of ghost, again, does not lie only in the past, but gestures toward a yet unknown future—one that cannot be expressed in any legible form until the future happens, yet that is also situated in the past due to the presence of social injustice. Mark Fisher (2014) comments also on the time out of sync, attributed to hauntology in Derrida's (1994) contemplation of the term, but he uses this framing to understand how haunting occurs in more popular culture references and elements of culture that are, in some ways, taken for granted and both pushed into the future but also

firmly held in the past—however, he argues that these elements are also never fully active or realized in the futures, instead contribute to the idea that past elements are brought into the present due to lack of innovation in the present. Avery Gordon (2008) considers haunting and "ghostly matters" as elements of society that are lost with modernity, but this loss is a constituent element of modern life. However, these losses or haunting elements further shed light on our understanding of contemporary life. In many ways, my contemplating of haunting draws off of all of these conceptions: the repetition and revenant nature of the specter of the storyteller and the specter of *Jemaa el Fna* Square in relation to Derrida (1994), the present continually influenced and referring to a specific (and potentially nostalgic) past in relation to Fisher (2014), and storytelling as ghostly matter which potentially will be continually lost as times move forward toward continually evolving ideas of modernity in relation to Gordon's (2008) ideas. However, I also tie my understanding of hauntology to the aspects of social injustice referenced by all authors, particularly Derrida (1994). Storytellers, as well as other cultural and social actors in Morocco, are implicated in systems of censorship, surveillance, and punishment in the country, contributing to the decrease in number of storytellers during the historic "years of lead" during the reign of King Hassan II (1960-1999). This social injustice and series of punishments deterred cultural actors from speaking out in any way that would be considered dissenting, and today, while there are discussions of the liberalization of speech in Morocco, cases where metal band members (e.g. Levine 2009) and rappers (Rédaction 2019) have continued to occur since the ascension of King Mohammed VI, who is known for being more lenient with freedom of speech.

Moving into the hauntology of infrastructure, Christina Schwenkel (2018) describes how Vietnam is often described as a country haunted by its violent past. Particularly, she examines the haunting of a pagoda in Vinh City, Vietnam, which is both a place of meaning-making for visitors and also a place for contesting the power and mission of the state in its movement toward modernization and foreign influence. Pardue (2018), in introducing a larger body of works including Atencio (2018), Nagle (2018), and Kinossian (2018), further discuss how memory and haunts of past times at particular locations contribute to contemporary sentiments and protests. These framings are important to this project as I conceptualize the ways in which *Jemaa el Fna* Square is haunted by its histories and also in my conceptions of how this Square haunts the practice of storytelling in Marrakech. As a gathering space, the histories of *Jemaa el Fna* Square relate to punishment and injustice (which has even been attributed to one translation of the origin of the name). This Square is an influential force in contemporary youth storytelling, where elements of historic storytelling are seen, but the history of the Square and the stories noting the almost destruction of this performance space contribute to the framing of this place.

<div align="center">*Morocco and Middle East Literatures*</div>

Historical and Social Framing

Morocco has been the topic of research for many decades, starting particularly within the time of colonization of the country. Researchers interested in the everyday lives of Moroccans for various motivations have been coming in and out of the country since this time, including Edward Westermarck (1926) who wrote large, descriptive

volumes about the practices and behaviors of Moroccans during colonial times. Westermarck's works are important sources of information on Morocco, but he makes comparative and decontextualized conclusions about what he experiences. Gaston Deverdun, while working just after Morocco gained its independence from France, created a very detailed account of the history of Marrakech, an important city historically in Morocco (Deverdun 1959). This account attempts to cover the entirety of time from the foundation of Marrakech in the 1100s until the time of colonial rule in 1912, covering historical trends of rule and the establishment of important locations, partnerships, and trade routes. Making more contemporary and contextualized claims, Emily Gottreich's work (2007) examines the history of the city of Marrakech, focusing particularly on the articulation of the Jewish quarter, or *mellah*, in relation to the other regions of the city, particularly through conceptions of memory and space. More historical works by Edmund Burke III (1976), Abdallah Laroui (1979), and Jacques Berque (1955; 1983) provide critical commentary on the development of the Maghreb, resistance movements, and social complexity. These texts provide a historical basis for elements included in this research, including considering context and the impacts of colonization on the cultural practices and architectural environment of the country.

Classic Works in Anthropology which Inspired Further Research

Building off the foundations of many scholars in Morocco before them, many social scientists have studied in Morocco. Sociologist Paul Pascon (1986)and Anthropologist Ernest Gellner (1969) contributed studies from areas outside of Marrakech, specifically looking at how agricultural models and marabout/saint

governance relationships were articulated outside of the city during pre-Protectorate, Protectorate, and post-Protectorate times. Vincent Crapanzano explored aspects of Moroccan belief systems (1973; 1980), while also contributing a self-reflexive narrative with an interlocutor, Tuhami, whose cultural symbols Crapanzo describes as "frozen" (1980). Crapanzano's discussion spurs discussion of what it means to be frozen, particularly looking at cultural forms of expression, like storytelling, which are constantly changing. As I conduct research examining transformation of storytelling, his explorations on framing people who seem resistant to changing cultural symbols intersect with the conversations I held with many Moroccans about what a storyteller is or could be—which usually did not include considering young people as significant storytellers. These seemingly "frozen" and stereotypical images of the figure of the storyteller showed up throughout my research with these young storytellers.

One of the most well-known anthropologists to conduct research in Morocco is undoubtedly Clifford Geertz, who has a strong stance within symbolic anthropology, bringing up "thick description" as his way of understanding practices by describing every detail and then thinking to the deeper meaning of these practices (Geertz 1973). His contributions to the anthropology of Morocco are manifold, not only working to understand social structures in Moroccan society (Geertz, et al. 1979), but also in drawing cross-cultural threads from Morocco to Indonesia (Geertz 1968) to understand a wide variety of ways that social aspects of lives (e.g. religion, social structures, kinship) come into play in people's lives. His multi-modal and descriptive frames influenced the contextualization of this research, as I was constantly working to observe all possible

elements during performances and during encounters to lend a glance into my frame of reference for those interested.

Geertz was also responsible for influencing many anthropologists that came after him, particularly Paul Rabinow and Dale F. Eickelman (1976; 1985; 2002; 2003 [1999]), who have contributed significantly to scholarship on Morocco but also on social orders and power. For his first contribution to the anthropology of Morocco, Paul Rabinow (1975) focuses on symbolism and change over time, while using an actor-oriented methodology to elucidate his own experience in the process of ethnography. He argues that imperialism was one forces which caused violent symbolic alienation upon Moroccan populations because of the imperial motivation to 'save' or 'preserve' different traditions of Moroccan society (Rabinow 1975). This conversation on saving and preserving traditions contributes to the discussions of revival and cultural sustainability in my research, where government or externally-sponsored sustainability, by colonizers or international groups like UNESCO, can only contribute so much to these efforts. As noted in Harris' (2017) and in Schippers and Grant's (2016) work, these efforts can only truly but culturally sustained when interested communities band together to provide productive support for these efforts.

Language and Arts in Morocco

Branching from these key classic figures, generations of anthropologists have created important work on different elements within society. Ossman (1994) studied the politics of representation in a country where popular culture and tradition intersect and fluctuate within these larger systemic processes. She later studied the impacts of

aesthetics in a comparative study of Casablanca, Paris, and Cairo to understand how the globalization of images is embodied on an everyday level in these cities (Ossman 2002). Ossman's work contributes critical glances into how aesthetics and forms of expression can be shaped and influenced by politics but also by the circulation of ideas and elements from many places. In my work, I see how cultural elements from outside of Morocco contribute to the re-invention and innovation of young storytellers in their tellings for various audiences. Particularly, my collaborators witness the circulation of popular culture from neighboring countries (e.g. France, Spain, Britain, etc), and they find ways to incorporate these internationally known references when culturally translating elements of Moroccan cultures to those not as familiar with cultural, religious, or social details of Morocco.

Others scholars, like Newcomb (2009), have continued to study gender and the city within Morocco. Further building off of gender and arts in Morocco, Becker (2006) discusses the importance of symbols used in Amazigh arts in southeastern Morocco, and how these arts contribute to the authority women have while stereotypical images of women in Islamic areas proliferate the image of their weakness. Contributing to the language geographies of Morocco, which are complicated and political, Fatima Sadiqi (2003a; 2003b) discusses the different use of language between educated and informally educated women, and educated and informally educated men, noting that Moroccan dialect Arabic, Berber languages, and French are more often used by women, while men are heard using Moroccan dialect Arabic and Standard Arabic, not French and Berber as is often heard from women. This language choice contributes in creating identities for

those within and outside of Morocco (Badry 2007), and overarching decisions about language in different spheres of Morocco have real consequences on those entering the educational system (Boutieri 2012). Katherine Hoffman's (2007) research brings these considerations to an anthropological lens, specifically looking at how language ideologies south of Marrakech have been reshaped by political and economic shifts over time. Within my research, I collaborated with two women storytellers, and these framings of gender, language, and access contribute strongly to my understandings of their participation in storytelling. Considering gender in Morocco, much like in other areas of the world, requires an understanding of contextual everyday performance in different spaces. In my research, focus on language use and preferences can help show larger implications for use by different populations of young people. In my research, I found storytellers mainly speaking in Moroccan colloquial Arabic and English during storytelling in Marrakech, whereas in other areas of the country and in previous storytelling events (e.g. the COP 22 from personal communication) had storytellers who worked in French or translated French into Arabic for performance purposes.

Many scholars have worked on how arts and festivals can reinforce power structures of the Moroccan government, and also promote a certain type of identity through an image of Moroccanness in the media (Belghazi 2006; Boum 2007; 2012a). This display of Moroccanness extends from events into museum and cultural institutions in the country. In her study of different and new emergent genres of museums in Morocco, Pieprzak (2010) discusses how the modern museum in Morocco is based around participatory means in order to combat the lack of interest and marketing for other

museum institutions in Morocco. These works contribute to my understanding of how state "sponsorship" or promotion of certain cultural elements, like storytelling, is a political act and is uneven. These works are critical of the avenues through which these cultural elements are sponsored and promoted, leading to scholars like Cynthia Becker (2009) who discusses the beginning of the movement by visual artists in pushing the boundaries for freedom of speech after the "years of lead" during the reign of King Hassan II, where cultural actors were imprisoned for any mention of critique or need for reform of the government or monarchy. However, she notes that contemporary art could only push the boundary so far, as the power held by the governing bodies of Morocco still holds significant authority over freedoms in the country. These considerations for cultural actors still very much influence the narratives that can be told or shared in public storytelling, even by young people.

Chapter 3: Methodological Reflections

> Fieldwork stories…the kinds of narratives that are the currency of courses, conferences, and informal occasions of all kinds in anthropology departments…are the medium by which anthropologists relate to one another what really goes on in fieldwork. (Marcus 2009: 18-19)

This dissertation project emerged from a chance encounter with a young Moroccan storyteller in Marrakech, Morocco while I was in the early stages redefining my project. I became interested in how young storytellers were transforming oral storytelling in Marrakech, which is a city with a strong history in cultural performance, particularly in *Jemaa el Fna* Square. My first interaction with a young storyteller gave me the distinct impression that this storyteller was not impressed with my interest in storytelling. He saw me as a voyeur passing through, simply taking information and giving nothing in return. During this initial meeting, he answered my questions as if he had already spoken to many others about his work. I knew I needed to understand the transformation these young people were enacting on themselves and their storytelling practice on a much deeper level than I was being presented, so I spent 2016-2018 in the field, creating long-term and engaged connections with interlocutors and collaborators. I wanted to demonstrate my long-term research interest to my collaborators and other individuals in the arts and storytelling communities and also show that I was invested in understanding how these transformations in *hikayat* were having an impact on those practicing this art.

For the following chapter, I weave together methods, stories, and reflections from my time in Morocco because these methodologies cannot be separated from my own

personal experiences while in the field. For the project, I collected ethnographic materials, including participant observation, jottings, fieldnotes, informal and semi-structured interviews, photographs, personal audio recordings, and spatial mappings. I also collected historical and geographical information from secondary sources. For this fieldwork, I incorporated many different types of data collection methodologies, including drawings (Causey 2016; Hendrickson 2008; Taussig 2011) and mapping (Kim 2015; Nakashima Degarrod 2016) in order to create an archive for myself of multiple understandings and considerations of information from the field (Schneider and Wright 2010). Emerging from my time in Morocco, I frame this chapter around everyday living as concerned with colonization and language, ethics, and framings of research in the field.

Living and Language in Morocco: Between Marrakech and Meknes

The primary city where I conducted research was Marrakech, Morocco, which is known as a cultural center and tourist hub in Morocco. Specifically, *Jemaa el Fna* Square, a gathering area in the heart of Marrakech, is the most famous place in Morocco for performance and storytelling. Because of this history of culture in the city, and the presence of already existing storytelling groups, this city was the perfect location for my research. The research for this project took me to places like *Jemaa el Fna* Square, Café Clock, other locations in the old town, and also different locations in the new town of Marrakech. Conducting an ethnographic project within such an international setting made it necessary for my fieldsite, arguably fieldsites, to be a process of movement within this city. Considerations of fieldsites and their construction have been important in

anthropology due to the necessity of anthropologists to continually develop and innovate methods and understandings (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

I spent the summers of 2013 and 2015 in Morocco before moving there from April 2016 to September 2018. I primarily lived in Marrakech from April 2016 to September 2018, with a short stay in Meknes during September and October of 2017. After funding my own research my first year, I received a Fulbright Student Research grant to spend another year in Marrakech, which gave me time to immerse myself in daily life in Morocco and consider the interplay of everyday elements with cultural knowledges. Much like in the reflective turn on fieldwork starting with works by figures like Paul Rabinow, I want to highlight how these daily experiences contributed to the analysis and information I gathered while I was doing fieldwork (Rabinow 1977).

Marrakech was, in many areas of the city, swimming with both local Moroccans and foreigners. While there are many Americans living in Morocco, I was constantly mistaken as Italian or Spanish when I walked through the souks—sometimes people would even assume that I was Moroccan.

Figure 2: Walking in the souks. Picture taken by N. Hamdaoui and used with permission by the author.

My long-term fieldwork allowed me to become more involved with different arts and storytelling communities in Marrakech, and also allowed more time to develop ideas about this project as they emerged from everyday interactions. Pandian (2012) discusses the idea of time in anthropological research, particularly how we think about it on an everyday level as academic anthropologists. He tells the story of a time when he was working with a film crew in India, and the film crew ended up taking many days off. None of them seemed phased by this work schedule: they would get back to it when the time was right. However, he found himself feeling unproductive and anxious to get back to work with the crew. He says that the director eventually told him: "Just go with the current…Live like the Buddha" (Pandian 2012:557). Only after this statement from the director and a few other sentiments from other workers was he almost able to understand time in the same way as his collaborators. This story struck a chord with my own time in Morocco: there were plenty of times when I was ready to be working or asking more research questions, but instead my friends and collaborators wanted to relax and enjoy their time together.

Susan Ossman, reflecting on her experience and the experiences of her collaborators notes that, in Casablanca, Morocco, "knowing how to wait or when to leap into action is an integral part of city life" (1994:99). This aspect of research was at once hard to get used to, but on the other hand opened my perspective to chance encounters. Biehl notes that this part of ethnography opens up possibility for chance and important findings, and that as anthropologists do this work, they find themselves approaching collaborators with an "openness to life in all its refractions" (Biehl 2013:576). My

collaborators would tell me to slow down or that interactions take time. My experiences

of living in Marrakech, punctuated by my short stay in Meknes, a less popular tourism

destination than Marrakech, helped me understand many more things about Marrakech—

including how I took for granted the city's cosmopolitan and multi-lingual nature. While

living in Meknes, I spoke primarily darija with people there—and the nature of language

use in Morocco deserves a brief discussion to understand the politics and histories

involved in the prevalence of different frames of use.

Language Considerations

Concerning language in Morocco, there are volumes describing the use of

language throughout the country and the politics behind these uses. Before moving on, I

will summarize some of the language considerations while doing fieldwork because these

language politics frame life in the country. While no country has a simple language

geographies, language use in Morocco has been impacted by a large number of different

influences, which has shaped local languages in specific ways, but also continues to do so

in current times. The primary language that is spoken in the country is called *darija* or

Moroccan colloquial dialect Arabic, and the national language is Modern Standard

Arabic (MSA). Darija is the form of Arabic that is usually spoken at home and with

friends. This dialect of Arabic is constantly incorporating words from other languages,

including Modern Standard Arabic, French, Spanish, English, and German (to name a

few). Modern Standard Arabic has some commonalities with *darija*, but *darija* is also the

most unintelligible Arabic dialect when compared to other dialects: Moroccans can

understand news and movies in Arabic (which are usually in Modern Standard Arabic or

Egyptian dialect Arabic), and they are also usually able to understand Levantine Arabic (*shami* which is spoken around Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, etc). However, Arabic speakers from outside the Maghreb (which includes Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria) cannot understand Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian colloquial Arabic due to the influence of many other languages on these dialects.

Before Arabs came to areas of North Africa, populations of Amazigh people lived in the area today known as the Maghreb. Historically, this group consisted of nomads who had their own language system and own religious system. The Amazigh language family is still alive and well throughout Morocco, but for much of recent history, it has been stigmatized by the Moroccan government. However, due to its prevalence in Morocco and due to different initiatives taken by groups on behalf of those who consider themselves Amazigh, in 2009, the Moroccan government created a center for the development of written forms for Amazigh (*Institut royal de la culture amazighe* or IRCAM), while also officially recognizing Amazigh as the second official language of Morocco (after Modern Standard Arabic). In Morocco, this language family has 3 distinct dialects: Rifi (in the Northern Rif Mountains), Tamazigh (Central Morocco), and Tshlehit (areas around Marrakech and the South) (Bensoukas 2011). Due to the historic and contemporary prevalence of these Amazigh dialects in Morocco, Moroccan darija contains terms and mirrors structures of this language in some ways, adding to why other Arabic-speaking countries have trouble understanding darija.

While language interplay in Morocco is already complicated with the use of darija, MSA, and Amazigh languages, this is only part of the picture. In the early 20th

century, Morocco was inhabited by European powers, including being colonized by

Spain and France. Spain was a major ruler of the northern areas of Morocco, including

Tetouan, Chefchaouen, and other areas in the Rif. Today, travelers can still see remnants

of Spanish rule in the north, particularly by paying attention to architecture and language

use. Spain also still controls two territories just across Moroccan borders on the African

continent: Ceuta and Mellila. In the South, Spain controlled what is known as "the

Sahara" in Morocco[3] until the 1970s when Francisco Franco gave up the southern

province. Immediately after Franco's declaration, former King Hassan II encouraged

Moroccan citizens to walk south into this territory in order to show a peaceful

reclamation of the area; this event is known as the Green March which occurred on

November 6, 1975 (Spadola 2014). In both the South and the North of Morocco, Spanish

still plays a role in people's everyday lives.

Also in the early 20th century, Morocco was colonized by the French. French rule

began slowly by strategically influencing trade and administration, while also

empowering different groups who became local elites under French rule. They supported

those who were sympathetic to their rule in Morocco, and they created a series of Pashas

(high ranking individuals) who were responsible for governing different areas of

Morocco. One of the most well-known of these Pashas was Thami el Glaoui, who was

the Pasha of Marrakech from 1912 to 1956 (Maxwell 1966). During their rule as

colonizers, the French set about a campaign which included "developing" cities and

architecture, social life, and education (Eickelman 1985; Rabinow 1995; Wright 1991).

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[3] Morocco recognizes this southern area as part of their kingdom, while other governing entities recognize this area as its own sovereign country, which they call The Western Sahara (CITATIONS).

Students were taught French starting at an early age, and those who spoke French were of higher status than those who could not. Today, many highly influential scholars and politicians speak in French when addressing groups or when writing up their research due to French influence on the country but also due to the opportunity to speak to audiences capable of translating French text easier than Arabic text. The power associated with using French is still felt in the country, and even in many cities outside of the administrative centers of Rabat and Casablanca, French is still spoken widely and holds a certain prestige status (Sadiqi 2003a; 2003b). Both Spanish and French are incorporated into Moroccan darija, and depending on the location in Morocco where people are speaking, they fluctuate in prevalence of use; more people from the North and very south of Morocco use significantly more Spanish in their everyday lives than those from other cities, including Casablanca, Rabat, and Fez, who use more French on an everyday basis.

However, in Marrakech, one can see Moroccans interacting with many foreign languages due to its history of tourism including French, Spanish, German, and even Mandarin Chinese. Around 5 years ago, many young Moroccans were studying German in Marrakech due to the large influx of German tourists to the country. The Goethe Institute provided courses in German, as did many independent and smaller language schools. For many people I met in Morocco, Germany also represented a desirable country for migration because of the histories of colonization associated with other European areas from a Moroccan perspective. More recently, the governments of Morocco and China made new, open frameworks for trade agreements, and at the same time, lowered requirements for visas to enable citizens' easier travel between the

71

countries. These policy changes prompted many Moroccans to learn Mandarin, especially for those working in tourism because of the steep influx of Mandarin-speaking tourists to Morocco.

Language use is still a very pertinent topic of discussion in Morocco, as the development of the language geographies in the country have been continually expanding and changing for centuries. For this dissertation, it is important to understand the variability of language geographies, specifically how stereotypes and considerations of languages are constantly shifting to further impact the use and development of darija. In Chapter 6, I discuss translation practices in more depth, further expanding the considerations that storytellers take when performing stories to different audiences.

I came to Morocco with an intermediate speaking level of French, which is still a widely used language both in everyday speech and at restaurants and cultural centers.. However, during my time in Morocco, I learned and primarily spoke darija, or Moroccan Colloquial Arabic, and through different programs, I was able to build collaborators and mentors who helped in times of need. These hours spent improving my spoken darija gave me the skills through which to interact with participants and collaborators in Marrakech and in greater Morocco, and tutoring sessions provided space and time with which to work through other historical and media resources.

Population of Research

For my research, I worked with young Moroccan storytellers, both women and men, in Marrakech. My storytelling collaborators were between the ages of 18 and 30 years old, which is the age range commonly used to denote youth in research literatures

(e.g. Bucholtz 2002; Janson 2014). The primary individuals that I worked with were part of storytelling apprenticeship programs in Marrakech, who mostly worked to translate Moroccan and Arabic stories into English. Of the 20 storytellers that I worked with multiple times, 16 of them wanted to work in English during our meetings. Four of the young storytellers I met began their research relationships with me in darija—but two of these four began speaking with me in English by the time I left Marrakech in 2018. My research is thus framed around these interactions, and while I searched for pockets of young people practicing storytelling in French or primarily in Arabic, I was not able to locate groups of people working with these goals in mind, which have inherently impacted my research and groups that I am able to represent in this research.

While most of my collaborators were attending or had graduated from college with degrees in English, I still consider them precarious actors because most were still holding short term, unstable jobs to make ends meet. In Morocco, public universities are free at the college and graduate school levels for people who are so motivated to continue schooling after high school. However, unlike many students in the United States, my Moroccan collaborators were attending school while also holding part-time or full-time jobs in tourism sectors in Marrakech, including working night shifts at *riads,* which are bed and breakfast type accommodations, or while working as servers at cafes. These menial jobs, while jobs, were never jobs my collaborators held for long periods of time, and the more stable jobs sometimes required an internship-like trial period before the individuals would be hired—and these internships did not guarantee a job after the trial period, promoting a system where employers could allow individuals to engage in trial

73

internships but then not be offered a paying position after three months of working. I met

these storytellers and other collaborators through friends in arts communities in

Marrakech and also by going to different storytelling performances. I met other

collaborators through chance meetings.

Within this dissertation, I use the word collaborator to denote the atmosphere of

these relationships because I attempted to create a bi-directional collaborative

relationship with the people who contributed to this study, and I also plan on working

with these collaborators for future projects and publications (Fluehr-Lobban 2008). Most

of my collaborators became friends who volunteered their time to help me understand

their practice and included me in their lives. In return, I helped them with other projects,

especially organizational, academic, and administrative tasks I was more familiar with

from my background in academics. I helped craft CVs, recommendation letters, edit

cover letters, brainstorm ideas for the organization of events, and so on. In one instance, I

attended many events with my collaborator, and later, I became his assistant for helping

to set up different events and helped him with visa travel applications. The balance of

helping collaborators when they volunteered information to my study was constantly on

my mind—I'm sure that I never gave as much to them as they gave to me, but I was

always trying as hard as possible to find ways to create a balance. However, not everyone

I met was willing to work closely with me, which determined who is featured more

frequently in the following chapters (e.g. Hoffman 2013; Reese 2019).

The young storytellers I interviewed varied in levels of experience with

storytelling. Some had been practicing for close to 7 years, while others had just begun

the process of performing. One place where many young storytellers were practicing storytelling was at Café Clock, a famous, British owned café, which now has locations in three cities in Morocco: Fes, Marrakech, and Chefchaouen. I also interacted with older storytellers on a few separate occasions, but these storytellers were not my primary population of interest. For both populations, I collected historical data and learned about their experiences of performing, focusing on topics to be discussed in this work, such as transformation of practice and place, translation, and transmutability. Over the course of my research, I was also able to interview audience members about their experiences with *fen al hikaya*. These interactions enhance and corroborate information discussed with storytellers, and this information contributes to the discussion of different spaces of storytelling that I observed during fieldwork. I found that audiences for different events differed significantly within different spaces—anyone from international tourists, international artists, or local young Moroccans frequented different locations, depending on who was performing or sponsoring the events. These audiences spanned from young people to people between 50 and 60 years old, and primarily spoke English, French, Arabic, German, or Swiss German, due to my knowledge of specific Swiss owned venues as some of the venues I frequented during fieldwork.

Because of the prevalence of *hikayat* in life experiences and stories, meeting individuals in various areas of Marrakech or elsewhere became interesting research opportunities, and I was able to gather smaller pieces of information from these interactions about the history of oral storytelling and the importance of these practices to the image of Marrakech. For instance, some *Mrrakchis* (people from Marrakech) said that

they never went to *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Marrakech to see performances.

Alternatively, individuals from other cities in Morocco noted that if you didn't go to

Jemaa el Fna Square during your trip to Marrakech, you hadn't *actually* visited the city

(personal communication, 11/26/2016). These interactions with friends, acquaintances,

taxi drivers, fellow train passengers, and other encounters have provided needed insights

to enhance my conclusions and findings for this project.

<p align="center">*Participant Observation and Fieldnotes*</p>

My main methodological tools were participant observation and fieldnotes. I

conducted participant observation, a process of "being there," through long-term

immersion (Borneman and Hammoudi 2009) during *fen al hikaya* and *halqa*

performances in *Jemaa el Fna* square, Café Clock, and other performance venues, and

during everyday interactions, strolls, and communications with collaborators.

I attended any storytelling events possible with my notebooks. This took me to

different areas around Marrakech, including cafes and youth spaces, but also to different

cities where my Marrakech collaborators were doing performances, including

Casablanca. I also attended twice weekly storytelling events at Café Clock to see the

group *Hikayat Morocco* perform. I was primarily an audience member at many events,

but later in my fieldwork, I was able to accompany collaborators as an assistant to help

with set-up and organization of people in their performance locations. I recorded these

fieldnotes in a variety of notebooks, which, in themselves, became a joke for those who

collaborated with me over long periods of time.

One of my favorite moments was late in my fieldwork when I got out my notebook to write down something a collaborator had said. He responded by saying, "Oh, of course. Erin needs to get out her notebook and write this down" (personal communication; May 10th, 2018). My participant observation notes were written in a variety of different locations during fieldwork, and these notes included any elements of places, people or interactions that I found intriguing, exciting, or even puzzling. I took copious notes about stories, body language, performance language, clothing, and audience interactions of storytellers and stories, as well as other elements somehow demonstrated during performances, such as class, age-range, gender, and atmosphere of performances. These everyday type interactions provided necessary elements to round out my understandings and topics of interest. For example, the inclusion of discussions surrounding precarity and lack of career opportunities in storytelling was not originally part of my proposed dissertation. However, not long after beginning fieldwork, it became evident that these were important aspects to include in my research, based on my observations and the frequency with which others mentioned it to me. After recording these notes and jottings in notebooks, I would go back to the notebooks and create fully developed fieldnotes out of these notes, meaning that I expanded the description and quality of these notes by making them into fully formed sentences and writings (Emerson, et al. 2011). My fieldnotes included drawings and charts from what I experienced. These provided different ways of interacting with the information I was seeing and hearing. Other scholars (e.g. Causey 2016; Hendrickson 2008; Taussig 2011)

have reflected on how the process of drawing in the field provided unique ways of understanding unique and ephemeral moments while in the field.

It was important to go on walks with collaborators through the areas of the city where they wanted to take me. Walking is an element that has been implicated in ethnographic and anthropological research for many decades and is an important process for embodied research. The process of walking gives insight to the knowledge we know about place but also invites researchers to engage in different ways of knowing (Pink, et al. 2010). These strolls gave me significant background both on the individual collaborators but also on the areas of town through which we walked. In some ways, these walks also gave insights into how storytelling and historic performance practices intersected with different individuals' lives. For instance, one collaborator did not like going to the old town, where more of these storytelling events would take place, and he was also not interested in spending time going to storytelling events. One main collaborator lived in and spent significant time in the old town, noting how when he was growing up, he would pass through the Square many times a day and catch stories as much as he could. He told me that in order to understand storytelling in Marrakech, you must become familiar with your surroundings and the history of place. The last time I met him, he pulled out a map of Marrakech and wanted us to review the areas of the city we had walked in during our years of walking.

These moments of embodied understanding gave me the opportunity to delve further into fieldwork, promoting thick descriptions (Geertz 1973) of places and people, and delving further into the lives of my collaborators than Renato Rosaldo's term of

"deep hanging out" (Clifford 1997:56; Madden 2010; Wogan 2004). The times spent both during events and outside of event proceedings were integral to understanding perspectives of my collaborators from a holistic point of view.

While the storytellers I worked with performed mostly in different cafes, youth spaces, and private functions, I also attended performances of more established storytellers, and I spent many afternoons and evenings observing happenings in *Jemaa el Fna* Square. While my collaborators did not perform in this space, it would have been a large oversight not to spend time in this space as it was—and debatably is still— famous for the storytelling that people observe here.

<div align="center">

Interviews

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I conducted informal and semi-structured interviews during my fieldwork. Interviews give insight into my collaborators' experiences about their experiences, and practices, and I attempted to create spaces where collaborators felt comfortable to share information with me, without me shaping the interview (Briggs 1986). To build rapport and show my interest in storytelling with collaborators, I started with informal interviews, which were not recorded but during which I wrote notes, if permission was given. Significant amounts of my preliminary interviews were informal. For some informal interviews, I approached audience members after storytelling performances to ask them about their experiences with storytelling. All semi-structured interviews were recorded with a small Zoom hand-held recorder (Zoom H1 Handy Recorder), and I organized all of these interviews ahead of time with collaborators. For all semi-structured interviews, I offered to give my collaborators a list of my interview questions, and if requested these

were sent via email or given in hard-copy in person prior to our meeting. After the semi-structured interviews, I wrote notes on context, environment, and my own personal reflections from the interview. I would also transcribe these as close to the interview date as possible.
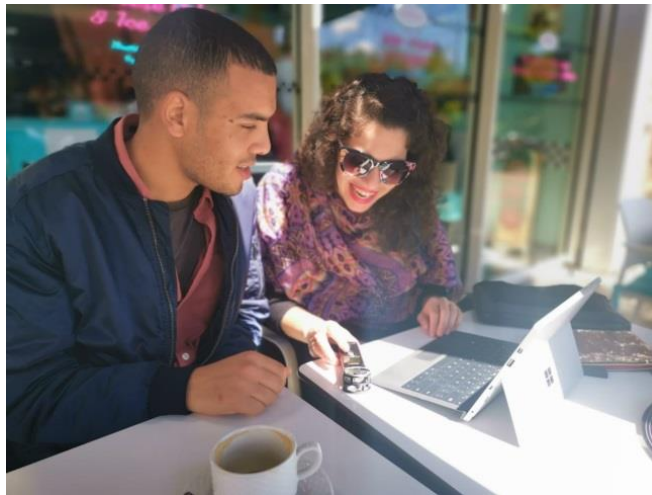
I conducted most semi-structured interviews in English due to my research population of storytellers performing in English. This also meant that most audience members also spoke English, and in the presence of a native English speaker, many wanted to show or improve their skills. Informal interviews and chance meetings (taxis, fellow train riders, other individuals in the city) were mainly conducted in darija due to the context of encounter.

Mapping

During fieldwork, I found it important to map the spaces of *Jemaa el Fna* Square and cafés, such as Café Clock, where performances were taking place. These mappings complemented my written descriptions and experiences from events, and these have been

invaluable in remembering particular performances and how people were situated in space. Most of these maps were included in my field notebooks, but some, particularly maps of *Jemaa el Fna* Square, were done on loose leaf paper or drawn in Evernote on my mobile phone. Drawing from Kim's work on sidewalks in Vietnam, my approach to mapping exposes the ways performance spaces are used for different storytellers, audiences, and vendors, and see the social interactions within shifting sites (Kim 2015). This also has allowed me to "spatialize culture," which refers to the process of understanding how culture is impacted by space or built environment and vice versa (Low 2000:36). The understanding of spaces through the mapping of these performance areas impacts the configurations and interactions within the space, which can communicate how the atmosphere is constructed in each venue. Some of these mappings will be used in the following chapters to demonstrate arguments or simply provide an idea of the spaces for storytelling in Marrakech.

Like others before me (e.g. Beardslee 2014; Citron 2004; Schmitt 2005), I spent many days observing the Square. I changed vantage points during different days of the week, and I wrote observations about fluctuations and changes occurring in the area. While storytelling may not be happening in *Jemaa el Fna* Square (during my observations there were those who people called storytellers, but they seemed to primarily be telling jokes), understanding the relationships of those performing in the Square to each other and to the people passing through helped me further understand the atmosphere of performance there. The Square, as it is today, differs significantly from other travel journals and writing (e.g. Canetti 1978; Warnock Fernea 1980), so it was

important that I discover the current iteration of the Square as it appeared during my fieldwork—only then could I further understand the changes occurring in the life of storytelling in Marrakech.

While the other performance venues were not as large or did not have as many moving elements as *Jemaa el Fna* Square, I also mapped these cafés and youth spaces where storytelling events took place. It was important to do this to see how the layout of the space changed the performance, and how storytellers in different environments used the space they were given. If there were repeated events in one space, it was interesting to note whether or not the make-up of the performance space would change with different iterations of performances. For instance, in one youth space, my collaborator's first performance was held in the middle of two areas of the space, making the area around the performer more of a *halqa* circle. However, during the second performance, my collaborator brought rugs and candles to change the atmosphere of the space, and he oriented the audience members to face the back wall of the location, creating a stage area rather than a *halqa* circular configuration. All of these elements can be compared when sketched and mapped in notebooks, and these materials provide great materials to draw upon during interviews of both performers and audience members.
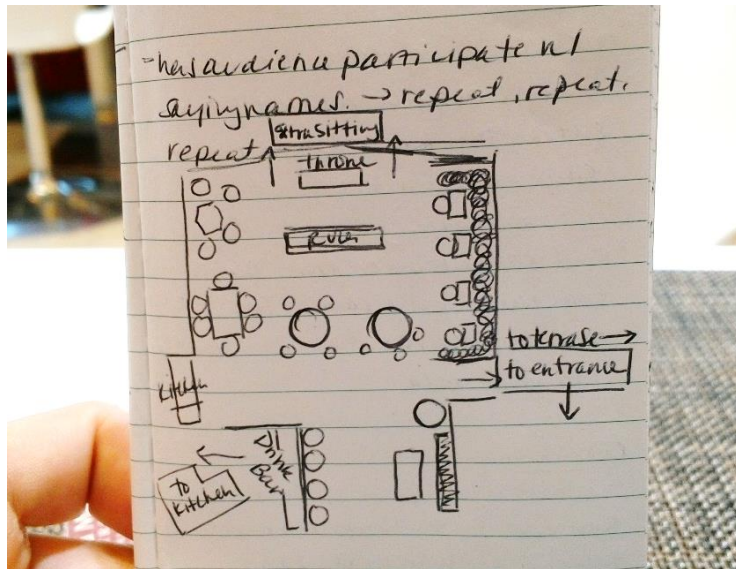
Figure 4: One example of a drawn map from a performance location, Café Clock. Photo taken by author.

Ethics: Recordings and Photographs

All semi-structured interviews were recorded with permission from my collaborators. I also took recordings of walking in the old town, displaying an aspect of the sounds one could encounter when walking in *Jemaa el Fna* Square and surrounding streets during different times of day. I audio recorded storytelling performances when given permission, and if possible, took short videos with my cell phone or Canon T5 Rebel camera.

Upon re-listening to my recordings from my fieldwork, I noticed that there was a negative correlation of recording quality and the time I spent in Morocco—the recordings seemed to be worse in quality the longer I spent in Morocco. Reflecting on this, I remembered that I started sitting further and further back in the café as I continued to return for storytelling events, allowing higher paying customers to sit closer to the area of storytelling. Almost every time I went to the café, I only bought a mint tea, equaling 15dh

(about $1.50), so later in fieldwork, I felt guilty taking up prime seating and hardly spending money since I was able to see the storytelling every week for almost two years. However, I also learned that there were some people who did not appreciate that I was always sitting in the café during storytelling evenings, so I felt obliged to sit further and further back. I had been able to reach the level of familiarity where people recognized how often I was at certain places. All of these recordings were done for personal use and reference, meaning they will not be distributed unless I get permission from those involved in the recordings.

With the exception of the Storyteller Mehdi el Ghaly, who has asked for his name to be used and due to our solid rapport, I have agreed to keep his name throughout this work. However, when I discuss other collaborators and interlocutors, I have employed pseudonyms in order to eliminate any concern of their names being used inappropriately. To further mitigate this, I have attempted to take away any details or markers that could lead to them being tracked down in Marrakech, which is already a small place. I have used the photographs in this dissertation with explicit permission by collaborators, and if possible, with permission from managers and owners of the places within which the photos were taken. The images and audio files were used in multiple follow-up interviews, and in using materials this way, the archive became a "conversation piece" that sparked reflection on the practices and events (Cantarella, et al. 2015). Otherwise, these archives have been placed on a hard drive, and a copy of that hard drive has been stored at another location to ensure no data is lost or compromised.

Process of Ethnography

My project bridges my ethnographic data together (fieldnotes, interviews, maps, etc) to make holistic conclusions. The process of writing is sometimes described as a journey of discovery, through which writers and researchers approach a certain view of the world. It is in the process of practice, whether it is writing or other forms of art, that one is able to make an interpretation of the world (Miller 1985). In my attempt to provide ethnographic insight to my research project, I emphasize stories, both those told in performance events that I attend and those shared with me or experienced by me. I include these stories throughout this analysis to provide context but also to let these stories live and breathe (Frank 2010).

Anya Royce (2004) describes artists as those who are able to read humanity as if it were a text; after reading and interpreting this text, artists give these experiences and interpretations back to their audience in the form of art. Along this same line of thought, she argues that ethnographers do similar steps for their work, interpreting and sharing stories, and "like performers, we proceed from a base of discipline and craft; like performers, our interpretations are neither passive nor mechanical" (Royce 2004: 16). Thinking of ethnography as an active process, much like thinking about art as a process, is significant for the work of anthropologists. This embodied process creates a much stronger bond between anthropology and art, even if the ethnographer does not specifically work on artistic spheres (Ness 1996). Writing up this ethnography is very much a process of analysis and self-reflection, and I consider this artful approach to ethnography even more significant through my research with storytellers who are continuously further developing their skills of storytelling.

Chapter 4: Narratives of the Storyteller: The Historical Figure and His Decline in *Jemaa el Fna* Square

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Today is not a particularly special day as I walk toward Jemaa el Fna Square in the center of Marrakech's old town—of course this is the famous place linked to historical storytelling in the city. I decided to go sit in my favorite café—one of the many which provide an overhead view of the bustling Square.

As I walk toward Jemaa el Fna on Avenue Mohammed V, named after the historic Sultan turned King after French colonial occupation, I can see the crowds of people wandering down the sidewalk in the same direction. Passing the wall denoting our entrance into the old city, I and my fellow walkers pass many different stalls selling souvenirs, restaurants offering terrace views, and street vendors selling nuts and candies. The uneven sidewalk on the street varies from cement to tile to brick depending on where you are walking, causing me to carefully consider where I choose to plant my next step.

Finally, I reach the entrance to the place, and it is just now reaching dusk when people come out to see the happenings in the Square, sheltered from the heat of the day. Along with the rest of the crowd who have come from all directions by walking, by taxi, or by bus, I wander left into the calleche walkway, where horse drawn carriages line the right side of the walkway and various vendors of nuts, art, lamps, flowers, and calligraphy wait to draw in their next customer. The cobbled walkway is beginning to fill with people as people move, with their backs to the famous Koutoubia Mosque, into the mass of performers, vendors, and wanderers in the Square, meanwhile avoiding the heavy, clomping steps of the horses.

Reaching the end of the calleche walkway, the Square opens and people begin to spread into the area. The first person I notice as I walk is a gurrab, or a water seller, who is always carrying a goat hide water sack and wearing a hat covered in brightly colored tassels. This figure is always seen wandering the entrance to the Square, luring people for pictures after which they give him a tip. I pass this figure to wander further into the mass of people, and I find a few women sitting, fully covered in niqab-style coverings while giving a couple of other women henna tattoos. They're covered, I'm told, to avoid the shame of being a woman exchanging money in public. Because it is getting closer to dusk, the snake charmers in the center of the Square, in front of the food stalls still being set up

for the evening, are packing up their materials. They've been out here all day, underneath their umbrella, luring passersby with the sound of their instruments, which sound to me like a mix of a recorder and an oboe. The sound is unmistakable, much like the sound I hear next coming from the nearby Gnawa musicians. The Gnawa qraqeb castanets are playing rhythms that make me look in their direction, but I don't move much closer. By this time in my stay in Marrakech, I have learned to not get too close or they will put a hat on your head and offer to take pictures with you for a hefty tip. There are several Gnawa groups already in full musical form, starting to add to the evening noises throughout the Square. I keep moving toward the East side of the Square toward Café de France, as I'm being called to by juice vendors who shout, "Salam! Miss! Stop please! Juice! 3sir ("juice" in Moroccan dialect Arabic)!" And as I slide past the juice vendors, I come across the usual monkey handler with the monkey with a Lionel Messi jersey to lure soccer fans for photos with their diapered monkeys. As the night continues to fall, other performances will be happening in this already bustling Square, including Berber musicians and comedians taking the floor. The acrobats and soda pop fishing game haven't yet made an appearance yet, and the food stalls are not quite as bustling as they will be in the next few hours.

*Even now, the Square is noisy, causing me to reflect on the lack of storytellers among the people. One of the reasons many give that the storytellers are no longer here is the noise. They also claim that the attraction to the storyteller is fading as attending a storytelling session is more time consuming and requires attention, while musical performances and acrobatics can be momentary glimpses before moving to the next halqa. But also at this time, it is hard to think of the Square being any different decades ago—where are the storytellers and what led to their disappearance from this place? (*fieldnotes, 9/16/2017)

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This chapter outlines the dual historical and declining figure of the storyteller in

Marrakech, Morocco, particularly in its relation to the famous place of storytelling,

Jemaa el Fna Square in the heart of Marrakech. The figure of the storyteller looms in the

hearts and minds of those coming to this city, as Marrakech has been known for a few

decades as the only place in Morocco where storytelling still regularly happens in public.

However, if you take a walk through the Square now, you will find no storytellers, but rather comedians and potentially fortune tellers who seem to be weaving different types of narratives. This chapter contextualizes how the history of the city and performances found in *Jemaa el Fna* Square continue to shape considerations of the figure of the storyteller. My research in Marrakech is intimately tied to the history of performance in Morocco in general but my research always returns to *Jemaa el Fna* Square, a historical location of cultural performances. This Square functions as a gathering place, performance space, entrance to part of the *souks* (vendor areas in the alleys of the old medina), and much more to both locals and visitors. Because *Jemaa el Fna* Square is one of the most celebrated places in Morocco for storytelling, understanding storytelling performance in this city requires a look into this place particularly in relation to its connection with the figure of the storyteller in the past, present, and future.

Jemaa el Fna Square was not always what it is today. It started as an international market and meeting place, but today functions more as a commercial, touristic area. Because of its prominent place in tour guides and because of its connection to the souks that stem from it, *Jemaa el Fn*a Square itself has been reimagined in terms of tourism for outside consumption, displaying a wide variety of performances and experiences all within one location where people attempt to get a "taste" of a certain historic past filled with storytellers. As a result of the politics of the Square and the direction performances and performers have taken with their crafts, Jemaa el Fna Square, a place known for storytelling and exchange, has seen all of this storytelling heritage disappear from this public space—even after influential groups like UNESCO have attempted to aid in the

88

preservation of cultural practices. In current times, this "historic past" they experience is physically without the *hlayqi* (or performance circles) of storytellers—and these complications in this location spur unique "sense of place," which Keith H. Basso describes as "place-based thoughts about the self lead commonly to…other places, other people, other times, whole networks of associations that ramify unaccountably within the expanding spheres of awareness that they themselves engender" (1996: 55). These senses of place encode different meanings and experiences to locations through the associations with other stories and histories.

Figure 5: View of *Jemaa el Fna* Square taken from Café de France to the east of the performance area. In the distance, the minaret of the Koutoubia Mosque rises into the sky. Photo taken by A. Bousaadi and used with permission.

As discussed in previous chapters, I investigate how elements of haunting play into contemporary storytelling, and *Jemaa el Fna* Square is one place that figures strongly into the haunting of storytelling practice. However, the lack of storytellers in this

space speaks volumes to how integrated storytelling is in the imagined environment of the space. While the figure of the storyteller inhabits the space like a "specter", drawing from discussions from Derrida (1994) on hauntology and how figures and ideas can contribute to the past, present, and potential futures, the Square itself also haunts contemporary storytelling practice. To illuminate the intricacies of the figure of the storyteller, this chapter provokes a dual narrative of history and decline. The historic, Orientalized, and primarily older storyteller is placed within an unknown past as he travels from one location to another, spreading news and morals. He is used to promote Marrakech as a tourist destination and as a place that promotes heritage and exoticism (Mitchell 1991; Said 1979). While on the other hand, the figure of the storyteller is also declining, as is promoted by texts like *The Last Storyteller* (Hamilton 2013). The loss of oral storytelling in public areas is felt throughout the opening vignette of this chapter and the lingering unexamined "crisis" of the loss. Even with the efforts of UNESCO and local and international figures, storytellers have abandoned and been abandoned by the Square.

Contextualizing the Square

In order to understand the context of the storyteller, I draw from a description of the Square given to me by Mehdi: "I think of a smoothie…It's a mix of a lot of ingredients…But when you taste it, every sip has a specific experience or different taste…that come together to create one big taste…" (personal communication; 2/26/2017). He visualizes the myriad of performances, vendors, people, experiences, and items in and around *Jemaa el Fna* Square as all contributing to the greater whole, but that each individual "taste" also comes through as you experience the smoothie. At any given

time as you enter the Square, you are confronted with a collection of different individuals, including snake charmers, henna artists, acrobats, comedians, musical performers of all kinds, magicians, gurrabs (water sellers in colorful costumes), men with monkeys, juice vendors, snail soup vendors, restaurant vendors, horse carriages, souvenir vendors, tourists, and locals, just to name a few types of people that can inhabit this space. These "tastes" come together to create an overall sensory experience of place, which can be overwhelming for some.

Further adding to the mystery of *Jemaa el Fna* Square, the origin of the name is not clear. Some argue that the name refers to a place of death or annihilation (*place du Néant*). This connotation of the name corresponds to two myths: the first one recounts a time when a mosque was going to be built on the current location of the Square but was demolished; the second myth corresponds to the rumor that people were hung in the center of the Square when they broke laws or otherwise needed to be punish (Boulghallat 2015; Deverdun 1959; Matthieussent 1985). Other explanations attribute the naming to the meaning of *fina'* being a public or private place within a central courtyard (Boulghallat 2015).

Jemaa el Fna Square has always been a place of interaction. Currently, it serves as a space for cultural performance, but originally this area was used as a marketplace connecting different areas of the world. The Square was known for its market because it was on the path of a large intercontinental path connecting Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The initial use of this area was built upon exchanges of all kinds, which is also where the storytellers entered the picture. Vendors of material goods and immaterial

91

goods passed through here on their ways, spreading knowledge. These vendors would pass through the Square to sell their wares as they moved from one place to another, and performances and snacks or tea would be served to those listening and watching.

Interactions of space and place have been investigated heavily in the social sciences and other disciplines that deal with the intersections of how humans interact with their surroundings, the environment, and one another (e.g. Crang and Thrift 2000; Lefebvre 1991; Low 2000). The social production of space is an important topic in understanding how places are constructed socially, economically, and politically. One of the most famous contributors to the theoretical understanding of the social production of space, Henri Lefebvre, contended that social space is constructed of thoughts and actions, but also holds infrastructures of domination and power (1991). He argues, using the case of Venice, that "a social space cannot be adequately accounted for either by nature (climate or site) or by its previous history. Nor does the growth of the forces of production give rise in any direct causal fashion to a particular space or a particular time. Mediations, and mediators, have to be taken into consideration…" (Lefebvre 1991: 77). There are multitudinous factors to consider in how a space is produced and re-produced over time, and each of these factors can disclose a myriad of social interconnections that help further understand humans' interactions within space. Setha Low describes this process in her work on spatialization as follows: "[we] must think about how space is continually shaped and re-shaped, not just by architecture, but also by bodies, dreams, desires, social interactions, and the environment interrelations" (2016: 5). The complexity of influences on the making of space, and the process of human and material mutual

inscription on space, describes the everyday construction of space seen in *Jemaa el Fna* Square.

While the people wandering *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Marrakech may change, the everyday interaction of people passing among sellers of wares and entertainment follow similar patterns of behavior: the Gnaoua musician will constantly be looking for a tourist to place his hat upon, or the monkey trainers will constantly be trying to sneak their monkeys onto the next passerby. Minca and Borghi argue that this continuity of performance over time in tourism, specifically in *Jemaa el Fna* Square, makes these behaviors banal and repetitive to those performing them, while the audience changes constantly (2009: 21). This mutual construction of space by humans, material, and culture leads those within the space to consider the different forms of knowledge and the multiple social practices occurring within interactions of space.

Considering work that has been done specifically on *Jemaa el Fna* Square and its surrounding markets, Lauren B. Wagner (2015) discusses the configuration of markets and shops around the Square as characteristic of 'bazaars' because of the historical and heritage-aspects. She argues that the Square and surrounding markets are for both foreign and domestic tourist consumption, noting the role this area plays in the tourism economy of Morocco but also in the contemporary meaning of the past location (Epton 2003 [1958]; Minca 2006; Wagner 2015).

A Moroccan man I met during a trip to Rabat, the capital of Morocco, stated that if you are from a different city and go to visit Marrakech but don't visit the Square, "you have not really visited Marrakech" (personal communication, 11/24/16). The seemingly

chaotic mass of performers, juice stands, and vendors in the Square are thrilling for some. Others try to escape the meticulously organized but seemingly disorganized mass for the maze of the *souks*, or marketplaces, behind. This particular place is also attributed by many to show an "authentic" view of Morocco and Marrakech (Minca 2006; Minca and Borghi 2009).

Folklore scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995) connects heritage to the creation of many tourist destinations, and through the creation of these places, we find people flocking to consume local services and goods. Nostalgia is one powerful concept when people construct an image or expectation of a particular setting, particularly in a place like *Jemaa el Fna* Square, where social space meaning stems from memory, heritage, and space attachments (Cattell and Climo 2002; Low 2016; Pieprzak 2009). Related to ideas of haunting in relation to infrastructure and impacts of the built environment on human experience, Schwenkel (2018), Pardue (2018), and others consider how places are haunted by past events and ideas and also how these memories are imbued in the built environment. The Square represents the heart of the city, giving it an aura of power—it contains the heartbeat of cultural life. While Jemaa el Fna Square has not historically been known as a place of debate and protest, it does have history as a place where governing bodies demonstrate power.

As described earlier, one of the origin myths of *Jemaa el Fna* Square comes from the narratives of death and punishment in the space. However, more recently, it has been linked to conspiracy theories of state power. One theory contends that during the Arab Spring in 2011 (April 28th, 2011), in order to get Moroccans to stop thinking about the

94

concessions they wanted from the government, someone in the administration sent a

suicide bomber to Café Argana on the Northwest corner of the Square. From this event,

Moroccans became more worried about local threats and conditions of terrorism instead

of placing all their focus on changing state policy. These attributes from the past create an

image that many consider to be characteristic of a certain type of place, which houses

certain historic figures and relationships including the figure of the storyteller.

The Historical Storyteller

"Our storyteller went all over telling his stories. Storytellers spread news
all around the region and talked about their travels. They collected stories,
traveled, and brought news from other parts of the world back to their
homes."
–Soumaia[4]

Due to my research with storytellers, I have heard many different stories of the

historical storyteller and his role in the proliferation of performance within *Jemaa el Fna*

Square. One origin myth of the Square focused on the different performances found

there, and the *halqa* they appear in; *halqa,* or circle, is a performance configuration where

performers are in the center with audiences circled around them. One of my

collaborators, Jalal, elaborated on the past image of the Square, noting the centrality of

the market and vendors. He described the Square as follows: "You would see the *halqa*

circles, and next to these *halqa* circles, there would be tents set up to sell tea or snacks.

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[4] Speaking about the Master Storyteller, Hajj Ezzarghani; from fieldnotes; 2/9/2017

There used to be cushions around for people to sit on when they came to watch

performances when they needed a break from walking around the market stalls" (personal

communication, 8/25/17). In this image of the Square, the tea sellers and the performance

halqas were cast to the sides of the Square so that the market was in the center (Amine

and Carlson 2012; Beardslee 2014). Today, the organization of the Square has changed

slightly to incorporate permanent cafes on the periphery of the space and markets mainly

spreading behind the Square in the *souks*, while the performances and other activities,

such as music performances, comedy performances, dancing, henna art, and snake

charming, take place in the central area.

Mehdi explained the proliferation of *halqa* performance circles to me in a

compelling way:

> Then in the big Square of Marrakech is where the *halqa* came alive. What circle
> came alive first? It wasn't the musicians. It wasn't the snake charmers. It wasn't
> the orange sellers. But, it was the people who had something to talk about—
> something of news, something of information. It was the storytellers. So, when
> the storytellers gathered people, some people read books to them, but other people
> performed. Then, the circle started to get bigger and bigger and bigger. And from
> there, the circle gave birth to other baby circles, including the characters from the
> stories that the storytellers told: the snake charmer, the musician, the dancer, the
> wizard or the witch, or the henna lady, or the food stall, the tea maker, or the
> coffee maker. And then all around the big Square, you would see that the
> storyteller circle is dominant—being highlighted, but at the same time, it has its
> own supporting circles. (personal communication; 6/2/2018)

This quotation brings a visual image to my mind. I imagine the storyteller sharing their

favorite story, meanwhile the characters from this story are spoken into existence by the

storyteller—they materialize as real beings and begin their own circle around the main

circle of the storyteller. This narrative of the beginning of performance in *Jemaa el Fna* Square also demonstrates the centrality of the storyteller to this space.

Many people have described Marrakech's famous Jemaa el Fna Square in their scholarship and travel writings giving insight to how this space has changed drastically over time, yet continues in an almost timeless circuit (Beardslee 2016; Deverdun 1959; Grame 1970; Warnock-Fernea 1980). Guy DeBord (2005) concludes that everyday lived elements of society are exactly what inspire creation of the spectacle, making *Jemaa el Fna* Square a perfect example of how everyday life and everyday behaviors can become a constant spectacle. One famous travel novel written by Elias Canetti described the formation of the *halqa* circle around a storyteller:

> It is around them that people throng most densely and stay longest. Their performances are lengthy; an inner ring of listeners squat on the ground and it is some time before they get up again. Others, standing, form an outer ring; they, too, hardly move, spellbound by the storyteller's words and gestures. (Canetti 1978: 77)

Canetti describes the storyteller for an entire chapter of his observations in Marrakech and *Jemaa el Fna* Square, demonstrating the strength these characters, usually men, carried as performers. These men, usually older and seen as "wise" due to their craft, propagated news from other places while imparting moral stories t listeners—usually men and sometimes children because the Square was not a performance place or an appropriate place for loitering by women.

The stories told of near and far away places, set in unknown times, sharing socially acceptable behaviors, critique, and allegories to audiences, bridging the gap between high and low status, orality and literacy in *halqa* configurations

97

(Amine 2001). For many centuries, storytelling in *Jemaa el Fna* Square occurred when a group of people would surround the storyteller, creating what is referred to as a *halqa* or *halqa* circle. The storytellers and their audiences interact while creating an important relationship, within which each individual, in their role, acts as part of the chain of significance, not only for storytelling but also for public performances of many kinds (Amine 2001; Hamilton 2011). Khalid Amine examines the importance of *halqa* as a physical configuration that can be occupied by people of all walks of life, and also as a space which hovers between the so-called high and low cultures of society, between literacy and orality (2001: 55). Storytelling was an event accessed by a large group of people without fees for entrance, and it could be an activity around which people of many different backgrounds congregate.

Much time was spent by apprentices who learned the repertoire of the Master storyteller they studied with in hopes to take over the Master's *halqa* position when the storyteller passed from this world or decided to retire from oral performance. The storytellers and apprentices practiced the strategies and role of *bakshish*, or tips for their livelihood by understanding how to keep audiences engaged enough to provoke more money to leave their pockets.

These narratives situate the storyteller as the Orientalized stereotype—an old man imparting tales while asking for tips willingly given by audience members. These imaginings promote the freezing of cultural referents, and they prevent new images and iterations of storytelling to become part of the repertoire

of the figure of the storyteller. People discuss the Square as if it were stunted in time, speaking directly to Derrida's (1994) notion of haunting as representing time out of place. Even without the physicality of storytellers, the legacy of the Square as a place of storytelling hangs in the air, drawing people's attention to the past, present, and potential futures of storytelling performances. Many reasons, including this static image of the storyteller, have contributed to the contemporary decline of storytelling in public places.

The Storyteller's Decline in the Square

"10 years ago there were storytellers—Morocco was no exception. They told religious stories and fairy tales about Kings, heroes, and princesses. However, now there is a lot of noise in the Square, so storytellers are unable to be there.."
—Fatima Ezzahra[5]

Jemaa el Fna Square has been extensively documented and written about by scholars and writers, especially since the times of the French Protectorate period from 1912 to 1956 (Canetti 1978; Deverdun 1959; Peets 1988; Warnock Fernea 1980). During colonization, General Lyautey wanted to promote Moroccan design and keep traditional places intact (Rabinow 1995; Wright 1991). However in the 1950s, the government had made plans to make Jemaa el Fna Square into a car park outside of the maze of souks because it was no longer seen as popular or useful. One of the most famous stories

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[5] From fieldnotes; 3/23/2017

associated with the need for a revival of the Square and surrounding souks starts with

Eleanor Roosevelt, the former first-lady of the United States. There is rumor that Eleanor

Roosevelt visited Marrakech in the 1950s, and she was disappointed to see that Jemaa el

Fna Square was changed so much from the times she had visited in her youth. She noted

that the public square was not as lively as she remembered, but she would love to see the

Square have its sprawling and lively atmosphere when she visited next.

Because of this conversation, King Mohammed V saved the Square from

destruction and vowed to bring it back to its previous fairy-tale glory by the time

Roosevelt returned (Minca 2006; Wagner 2015; Warnock Fernea 1980). This is one of

the most famous myths outlining the potential destruction but eventual saving of the

Square and performances there. However, while many Moroccans abandoned their living

spaces in the *medina*, or old town, immediately after gaining independence in 1956, more

recently foreigners have played a large role in changing the *medina*, just as tourism has

transformed the city and its economy.

Because of the continued importance of Jemaa el Fna Square in relation to

cultural practices and performances, this Square has been of interest to international

organizations, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural

Organization (UNESCO), which registered the Square as a World Heritage site in 1985

(Beardslee 2016; Schmitt 2005). Many scholars examine the roles of institutions,

specifically UNESCO, in the construction of heritage around the world. UNESCO has

constructed programs for World Heritage, which focus on the preservation of a specific

physical area in the world; this particular framework preserves a physical site, without

taking notice of the other aspects of heritage that are not encompassed within a physical or material object.

However, another program from UNESCO called the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) program attempts to account for the meaning beyond material heritage forms—and this institution has also been interested in the performances and practices at *Jemaa el Fna* Square (Beardslee 2016; Meeker 2013). In 2001, *Jemaa el Fna* Square, with the help of a Spanish supporter named Juan Goytisolo, was entered onto the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) sites, promoting the preservation and continuation of practices there (Beardslee 2016; Hamilton 2011; Kapchan 2014). In Lauren Meeker's work in Vietnam, she acknowledges that UNESCO's ICH program promotes international visibility for different cultures to be entered onto the world stage, but also notes that these processes show preference to practices that represent an authorized version of authentic musical and cultural practices (2013). This type of authenticity is sought after, and according to Regina Bendix's work, certain authentic practices are "envisioned as pure and free from civilization's evils" (1997: 7). In many ways, this promotes an 'othering' of these practices, and places them outside of Western 'civilization'. Deborah Kapchan argues that UNESCO, instead of 'preserving' cultural practices, has actually created intangible cultural heritage categories that are inflexible and static (Kapchan 2014). Working from comments made by Richard Kurin (2007), Huib Schippers and Catherine Grant describe how this work of preservation may not be the best way forward, but until recently, no one had been able to discuss other ways through which to give these practices a sustainable future; Schippers and Grant are two

scholars attempting to create a way to study music as an ecosystem based out of five different domains to understand best strategies for sustaining musical forms around the world, which arguably could be translated into strategies for other intangible cultural heritage (2016).

In *Jemaa el Fna* in Marrakech, Morocco, practitioners of *hikayat* and *halqa* performances have been in the Square for at least a few hundred years (Amine and Carlson 2012; Beardslee 2016; Hamilton 2012). However, when UNESCO entered the Square into their heritage programs, the practitioners of the Square were not given a strong voice in these preservation techniques, adding frustration to those who are attempting to make a living from these practices in the Square (Beardslee 2016; Kapchan 2014). Some factors such as high noise levels, competition between performers, and a lower amount of lingering spectators have contributed to the decline of *hikayat* and *halqa* performance in general. However, some also note that with the introduction of *Jemaa el Fna* into the World Heritage and ICH lists, UNESCO moved the site of some transportation infrastructure which were seen as bringing patrons closer to *halqa* circles for their bus and taxi waiting times and bringing more business to performers. Many scholars and performers contribute this as merely one of the many reasons why performing has become unsustainable in practice—people are not meandering through the Square to wait for their transport and giving their spare change to performers (Beardslee 2016; Schmitt 2005).

The politics of performers and the noise of the place make it very difficult for storytellers to find a good location from which to tell stories in the Square. One of my collaborators, Karim, describes the Square as follows:

> Because the Square itself is not as calm as it was...it's not as relaxed as it was because you have people that want to get money, and they are just…across the street from you and they are shouting... As a performer, you can still perform but the audience is not comfortable, not relaxed, not focused. They are going to feel that there is so much hard work for them to keep up with what you say... (personal communication, 6/2/2018)

Karim's description calls into question how the Square is currently experienced by audiences. With so much distraction, how are the cultural meanings and performances adding to the overall experience of this place? While he still considers the Square an important and intriguing setting for performance, Mehdi also feels that there is a certain part of the character of the place that has been changing in the recent past:

> Though the whole quality of the Square has been draining a little bit because of the mix of tourist, not the cultural tourism, but the money that is tourism of taking money…I can see the differences between now and 19 years ago, from 15 years ago, I can see that passion that people are trying to spread in order to share their culture regardless of what they share. (personal communication; February 2017)

Mehdi notes that he still sees the passion of people trying to continue to impart Moroccan culture onto those who pass through, but also that there is a significant change with the polluting nature of money tourism.

The Square is also a place of surveillance. It is not coincidence that the Square is home to one of the largest offices of Tourism police in Marrakech. This office stands, very foreboding to the northwest area of the Square. Morocco remains a place of constant vigilance, particularly when considering harming its image of tourism promoted from the

country for international potential clients and when speaking about King, country, and Islam. Cultural actors are not exempt from these surveillance considerations. As discussed earlier in this research, the period of time between the 1960s and 1990s were characterized as times of significant censorship. However, even under the reign of the current monarch, King Mohammed VI, freedom of speech has no liberalized as significantly as citizens have wanted.

In particular, in the early 2000s, metal bands and rappers began, again, to be persecuted for their work. In the case of metal bands, groups of young people were persecuted and jailed for their participation. As Mary Buscholtz discusses in her work on youth, "musical cultures are better understood as founded on a politics of distinction, in which musical taste is tied not only to pleasure or social identity but also to forms of power," and this power young people were exhibiting was against the powers of censorship in the country (2002: 541). In 2003, the Moroccan authorities tried to show their control over the metal music scene which resulted in arrests and charges against fourteen men who participated as musicians and fans. The men, between the ages of 22 and 35, were charged with crimes for participating and organizing events for the metal scene, wearing clothes displaying satanic imagery, undermining the Islamic faith, and recruiting and attempting to covert others into satanic devil worship (Cohen and Jaidi 2006; Levine 2009). These men were made to defend the reasons why they would organize a metal music festival, why they chose to meet at the café, why they wore black T-shirts, why they used some English words in their songs, and why they had evidence of skull and snake imagery scattered in their homes (Cohen and Jaidi 2006).

In the Moroccan metal trials, many viewed the governmental and judicial systems as unstable because of their reactionary stance in dealing with the metalheads. Instead of seeing stronger authoritative systems, displayed as forums for debate and change, there were only reactionary punishment measures taken against the metal participants (Cohen and Jaidi 2006; Otterbeck 2008). These trials show the violence of publicly speaking about or showing imagery that goes against the dominant narrative of the country, particularly thinking about how, at that time, using English in their music was of concern to authorities. When looking at less openly critical artwork, Becker noted that even in pictorial and abstract forms of visual art, artists were pushing the boundaries slightly forward after the ascension of King Mohammed VI, but these pushes were not taking them very far forward in critique—artists were still cognizant of if they would cross any boundaries and be considered critical of what the authorities in the country expect (Becker 2009).

While metal bands, rappers, and visual artists are very public figures in media and television, storytellers do not function outside of this system of surveillance. Even performances on small scale in public gathering spaces are heavily censored and monitored, not only by police, but secret police and informants. On every level, censorship impacts people's everyday lived experiences, even in the local *hanout*, which are neighborhood grocery stores, and around neighborhoods with lingering security or bouncers outside of restaurant bar establishments. One afternoon, I was with a friend, Hicham, eating lunch outside of my apartment complex, on a road that is less traveled than the larger avenue on the opposite side of the building. We were discussing the

previous evening's events, when all of a sudden, a large black SUV with shiny chrome wheel rims pulled around the corner and stopped across the street from a restaurant next door, which was a common spot for people to grab dinner and drinks in the evening. Without anyone getting out of the looming black SUV, the bouncer from the establishment next door walked out to talk with the man in the driver's seat of the hulking black vehicle.

As I was observing this situation, I couldn't help but blurt out to Hicham that this seemed strange. He put down his burger and responded simply, "Oh this happens all the time. Usually, people in this position have a weekly meeting to make sure no one has been saying anything in the neighborhood, and so that the secret police know if anyone has been causing trouble at the bars recently" (fieldnotes; 4/16/2018). I was not shocked by this statement, but more taken aback in terms of the commonplace aspect of the secret police keeping tabs on everyone's movements. It was not uncommon for people to note that I should be careful speaking to my *hanout* men because they report on my movements for the government's protection, where foreigners are kept track of to help make sure Morocco continues to be a great destination for travelers. However, even bouncers and owners of bars participate in this type of community surveillance.

Through this example, I wanted to demonstrate how normalized this type of community and police surveillance is in the lives of Moroccans. Not only are people watching large-scale and critical performances, including rappers and metal bands, but this surveillance seeps down into the level of everyday—these weekly stops by the black SUV in the new town only further demonstrate how a tourist site, like *Jemaa el Fna*

106

Square where storytellers would often perform, would be crawling with secret police and hired informants.

From these internal politics and noise issues within the Square, one famous Master Storyteller has been vocal about the disappearance of true *hakwatis*, or storytellers, in the Square and the changes that makes to the atmosphere and environment of the Square. Azalia says, "We *hakawatis* are like fish in the middle of the sea. But there are no more of us in *Jemaa el Fna*. *Jemaa el Fna* is dead" (KechTV 2015). In the same interview, he notes that *halqa* circles are now focused on business and less on arts, so the competition between *halqa* performers have pushed out the storyteller spaces. Ouidad Tebaa, the Secretary General for the Association *Place Jemaa el fna, patrimoine orale de l'humanité*, has said:

> The storytellers will unfortunately disappear. The place is historically related to the hakawati trade, but since storytellers, like Bariz, have left this place, orality continues to decline. It is difficult to find a solution or an alternative to remedy this alarming situation…Today, storytellers suffer from several problems. They are very old, and death touches more than one. Traditional transmission (master-apprentice) is unfortunately not done anymore. (Boulghallat 2015: 212)[6]

Others note that the lack of attention and lack of expendable time or lack of interest from spectators in the square also contribute to the decline of storytelling circles (El Hadad 2015a; Hamilton 2011). On some levels, it feels that the orientalist narratives of the Square have actually contributed to the decline and pushing out of storytelling from the Square due to emphasis on tourism and international visitors.

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[6]Original quotation from Boulghallat (2015: 212) : "Les conteurs vont malheureusement disparaître. La place est historiquement liée au métier du *hakawati* [conteurs], mais depuis que des conteurs, come Bariz, ont quitté ce lieu, l'oralité ne cesse de reculer. Il est difficile de trouver une solution ou une alternative pour rémedier à cette situation alarmante...La transmission traditionelle (maître-apprenti) ne se fait malheuresuement plus." Translation by author with help from Nabil Hamdaoui.

However, this is not what is described to tourists in their guidebooks (Hathaway 2015; Idrissi 2014; Razavi 2015). Statements such as these were scattered throughout articles, newspapers, journals, and books:

> Today this form of entertainment is in danger of becoming extinct. Previously, hikayat was found in cities throughout Morocco, but today Marrakech's Jema el-Fna'a square is one of the last places to find the old stories and there are fewer and fewer storytellers. (Idrissi 2014:1)

> But the number of Moroccan storytellers has dwindled as the art faces competition from TV and, now, the Internet. (Razavi 2015: 2)

> Once common throughout Morocco, today hikayat is practiced primarily at Marrakech's Djemaa el-Fna square, where there is a revival of sorts underway with the city's youth. Aware of the tradition disappearing from city squares and cultural events around Morocco, including Marrakech's most famous square, younger Moroccans are joining apprenticeship groups to learn the stories and ways of storytelling from Master Storytellers. (Hathaway 2015)

Despite the way these sources framed *hikayat* as on the decline but somehow still surviving, looking closer at the lives of those performing storytelling, any observer could see the picture was much more complicated and that these practices were not contributing to a long-term career option. Scholars (e.g. Beardslee 2014; Kapchan 2014) found that even with the UNESCO interventions to the Square and the aim of preserving practices there, the performers were unable to make a living just simply working in the Square.

Storytellers feature frequently into the image of *Jemaa el Fna* Square, but alarming statements such as the previous comments from Azalia and Tebaa, give us another picture of what is happening to public storytelling in the Square. There is disconnect between narrative and reality when tourists and locals see no storytellers. The actuality of the place is not playing into the virtuality of people's imagined *Jemaa el Fna*

(Boulghallat 2015). In preserving the space, it has forced out the storytellers to find other spaces to practice their craft. This exodus of storytellers has caused many young storytellers to also find new spaces of performance to continue their practice—these chosen spaces stand at odds with the history and legacy of the Square. These choices of changing location will be discussed in the following chapter.

Spurring the Change: Media

New media, along with lack of interest and time is often blamed for the decline of storytelling. Many of my collaborators noted how people have many forms of entertainment in the palm of their hand, so many people did not need to go to a public performance. Mehdi said, "[People] are concerned with catching the eye, not about catching the soul. These old, I would call them old circles or old style of performance, they catch the soul before they catch the eye." He continued to mention how the snake charmers, acrobats, and live musicians seem to be much more Instagram-able performances, stating:

> And even taking a picture with them [storytellers]...if I took it to somebody in Michigan, and you asked them what this guy probably did, he would say that this guy is from a different culture. They are not going to say that this is a storyteller because they haven't been modernized or highlighted throughout history as something that could be updated. That is also a problem. (personal communication; 6/2/2018)

He argues that one reason why storytelling cannot compete with other forms of entertainment is its lack of conspicuous imagery due to it being an oral performance. While Lila Abu-Lughod has examined how new media is used by Egyptian governments to enforce ideas of nation building and the "modern" (Abu-Lughod 2002; Abu-Lughod

2005), I contend that in Morocco, Abu-Lughod's research on the modern and Mehdi's comments on catching the eye with "Instagram-able" sights come together to make a convincing argument for why people are less concerned with storytelling in *Jemaa el Fna* Square: storytelling and storytellers do not fit into the modern, yet still historic, image of Morocco.

This intersects with Gordon's assertion that haunting is linked to elements that "are lost within modernity" (Gordon 2008: 7). As noted previously, Joseph Sobol describes how societies based in oral communication and transmission are reliant on storytellers to reproduce cultural knowledge. However, the introduction of other technologies can interrupt this symbiotic relationship of a community and its storyteller, shifting the role of knowledge transmission to "mythtellers of the locally dominant media" (Sobol 1999: 1-2). Contributing to this loss as a main form of news and entertainment could be the way that stories are passed down as memorized and non-changing stories. While morals can be applied in many settings, including loving your mother, following the King, treating women with respect, these morals are also told in ways that are not always changed to apply to contemporary lives. In Morocco, storytellers represent time out of time, harkening back to a past wherein a storyteller would pass along information and knowledge to those listening—but now have lost this main mission to other media forms.

Figure 6: Soda fishing--one of the more "Instagram-able" activities in the Square.

While the storytellers are disappearing from the Square, other performances that fit into capturable images of Marrakech and Morocco take over the re-imaginings of the space. This includes more of a popular focus on snake charmers, acrobats, musicians, and henna work, particularly due to the presence of material items to draw people's attention and create snapshots of experiences (i.e. snakes, acrobatic movements, musical instruments, or henna designs). Partially due to the storyteller's mission of turning a person's ears into their eyes, besides the *halqa* around the storyteller, these figures do not differ in looks significantly from others in the bustling *Jemaa el Fna* Square. Mehdi notes in the above quotation that if someone sees a picture of a storyteller, they probably just would think that "this guy is from another culture," completely disregarding any of the wordsmithing qualities underlying the picture.

Due to the competition within the Square and the lack of interest in storytelling, potentially due to the lack of the Instagram-ability of the performance, we see these

111

hikayat storytelling performances leaving the Square, not being the most prominent

performances that portray orientalist and Instagram-able images of Marrakech (Said

1979). Unlike conceptions of techno orientalism where images, specifically linked to

Asia, are linked to future technological innovation (Roh, et al. 2015), Instagram photos of

storytelling keep the practice firmly rooted in the past conception of the practice, while

public discourse hopes to bridge the past, present, and future discussing the hope of

storytelling revival. However, through my research, I have found that people are, indeed,

interested in watching storytelling performances, but that these performances are being

shifted to fit into other spaces by young storytellers.

Figure 7: View of *Jemaa el Fna* Square from Café Glacier to the southeast of the performance area. Taken around 11:00 a.m. before many people were in the Square. Notice the reddish color of the walls and buildings in the background.

Chapter 5: If not in the Square, Where?: Transitions in Place of Youthful Storytelling

> As I wait for the weekly *Hikayat Morocco* storytelling event, I notice how the mingled scents of mint tea and cumin color the atmosphere of the Clock Café in Marrakech. I hear the purr of a blender and greetings exchanged by groups of young women and men at the café entrance, creating a diffuse sense of sociability, until, suddenly, the ambience is interrupted by loud clapping. Rachid, a young storyteller begins to tell us about the illustrious role of Marrakech and its famous *Jemaa el Fna* Square in shaping ancestral forms of *hikayat* and *halqa*, before introducing Amina, tonight's first storyteller. "She's one of our very, very few female storytellers," he remarks. "You know, back in the old days, that wasn't ever allowed, so…that's another thing we do, too." (personal fieldnotes, 10/17/16)

The figure of the storyteller, his decline and the role of *Jemaa el Fna* Square in creating histories of storytelling have become elements which haunts contemporary storytelling practice. In my discussion for this chapter, the term 'place' simply refers to a specific physical location, while the term 'space' denotes the interaction of the built and social environments on the physical place. For this chapter, I argue that *Jemaa el Fna* Square and past storytellers continue to haunt the practices and interactions of young storytellers with stories and audiences even when they change locations. This means that in many ways, the spaces of new locations for performances draw from histories and experiences of *Jemaa el Fna* Square even though these locations are outside this famous performance area. While *Jemaa el Fna* Square is the most well-known area for storytelling in Morocco, older storytellers no longer perform in the Square due to many contributing elements, such as the politics of organization in the Square and issues of noise, and instead, the places once used for storytelling performance are being taken over

by other performers. This means that emerging young storytellers are forced to find new locations for their performances outside of this famous Square, and as a result, they must also find ways to configure new locations in specific ways to be able to construct their desired spatial atmospheres for performance.

How they construct the space of their performance locations also articulates with their stance on their performances, drawing on Berger's (2009) ideas of stance, which he argues is a relationship of the performer to all possible elements of whatever they are performing. He argues that there are three major lines of inquiry within a stance, and that all of these lines are influenced by culture: first, there is performative stance, which refers to a person's relationship to something seen as already composed; second, compositional stance, which focuses on the relationship of a person to an element of expressive culture they compose but which also holds agency in its composition; and third, audience stance, which seeks to examine how audience members create meaning in the experience of the performance (Berger 2009). I acknowledge the interplay of all of these forms of stance in a performance, but for the purposes of this chapter, I will draw primarily from ideas of performative stance which at some points blend into audience stance but from the perspective of the performer. Studying audience and reception (e.g. Rosenthal and Flacks 2011; Turino 2008) are important when examining performance, however, I did not conduct reception studies methodology—instead, I will be incorporating information about audiences and the information I received from audience members to contribute a fuller image of these spaces and the interactions within them.

Throughout my ethnographic fieldwork, I attended performances in a range of venues in Marrakech, including cafes, youth centers, universities, and large auditoriums. Here, I examine how a change in place influences the atmosphere of the telling, and how these young storytellers are actively crafting new locations for storytelling performance in Marrakech. I discuss different performance locations where I observed youth storytelling events, examining how young storytellers change these locations for their performances, how this impacts their performance behavior and interactions with the audience, and how seeking new locations demonstrates a hope for revival.

Some major questions framed my understanding of this shift in the construction of performance space: How can something as simple as a change in physical location transform storytelling performance and with it strategies of interacting with an audience? How is storytelling translated to different locations where elements like the *halqa* circle are impossible to spatially reproduce? How do the legacies of "The Storyteller" as a figure and *Jemaa el Fna* Square as a location influence or haunt contemporary youth storytelling?

Within this chapter, I continue the conversation from the previous chapter which focused on the dual narrative of the figure of the storyteller throughout history up until contemporary time when they are no longer seen performing in public gathering spaces. However, in this chapter, I focus on the locations young storytellers are moving their performances to and the ways these storytellers navigate constructing performances spaces from which to share their craft and performative stance with audiences.

Re-placing of Storytelling

Where are these "re-placed" storytelling performances happening? What are the considerations of space necessary for a new storytelling location? I found that storytellers were using a variety of spaces they could find to conduct different events—there were hardly any spaces that people were unwilling to consider when conducting events. However, there seemed to be a trend of certain types of spaces: cafes, youth spaces, and places with stages were the most common. However, these locations were not just chosen randomly—many of these places have local, international, and some sort of status tie that pulled the storytellers to engage in storytelling in that particular place.

Re-placement Considerations

To begin this conversation, I will begin with an extended excerpt from fieldnotes leading up to an instance where I helped a collaborator set up for their performance:

> *As soon as Mehdi walked to meet me, I knew we would have a bit of work to get today's location prepared for the performance. In his hands, he held bags filled with candles, pillows, his performance clothes (a djellaba and a pair of bilgha), and even a large Moroccan rug. He could tell I was surprised when he showed up with all these things, and he promptly responded: "Yes, I think I'll get us a taxi today."*
>
> *We drove in the taxi from the Majorelle neighborhood to downtown Gueliz, about 2.2 km—a distance I had walked many times before, but not with so many items in my hands. Once we stopped in front of the Youth Spot, Mehdi and I paid the taxi driver, we said "Chukran, bslamma" (or "Thank you. Goodbye" in Moroccan colloquial Arabic), and we made our way to the Youth Spot first by lugging all our materials up a flight of stairs. It was around 5:00 pm, and the performance was set to start at 7:00 pm.*
>
> *When we reached the top of the stairs, we turned right to enter the Youth Spot. This space looked like any other office space in Marrakech I had been in: the walls were tan, made from cement or mud clay blocks overlaid with plaster— which means that usually not many things adorn the touch to breach walls. The entry to the space served multiple purposes: by day it was an English and Arabic learning center and by night, it served as a space for showing movies with a projector and as a space for young people to play video games. Hidden behind a*

116

small wall in this space was also a kitchen where Moroccan mint tea and coffee were made, particularly during storytelling and other cultural events held here to bring both people and money into the space.

Mehdi and I passed through this area of the Youth Spot to go directly to the back terrace where the performance would be taking place later that evening. The outdoor space attempted to make you forget that you were in the center of Marrakech downtown. The owner and managers of the Spot had placed that thatched roof type material around the outside fence, making the space feel slightly like a luau. On the outside of the building, they had commissioned an artist to put up some graffiti and pop art. The ground was brown tile, and around the back edge of the room, there were wooden milk crates turned upside down with pillows on top to create a make-shift bench seat for people ordering food and drinks. This terrace area was going to hold the performance for the night, and Mehdi had ideas of how he wanted to make it feel more appropriate for his stories.

First, we put the large rug into the center of the space. Filling the area with reds, yellows, and blues, the Moroccan rug was the start to making a space where people felt more comfortable and relaxed for a story. After putting down the rug, Mehdi and I placed pillows on the rug. These pillows demonstrated the variety of Moroccan weaving, but would also be used as seats for those sitting on the floor. But unlike the halqa configuration of Jemaa el Fna Square or other public performances, these pillows and milk crates were all facing one direction— toward the projection screen. After helping with the pillows, Mehdi set off to start setting up his multimedia presentation for the performance. He was experimenting with different insertions of media and projection with his storytelling practice to continue to build the diversity of his performances. He set me to the task of placing candles around the space that we could light right before the show started. I remember him saying to me, "Make the space inviting. We want people to be relaxed when they come in and, if needed, you're going to be in charge of getting more pillows out for people coming in. Also, you should start lighting the candles in about 15 minutes so that when the audience starts coming in, they get the full effect." By now, it was 6:30 pm, and the excitement was about to begin. (fieldnotes, 6/22/2017)

Figure 8: View of part of the path from Majorelle to the Youth Spot in Marrakech, Morocco. Photo by author.
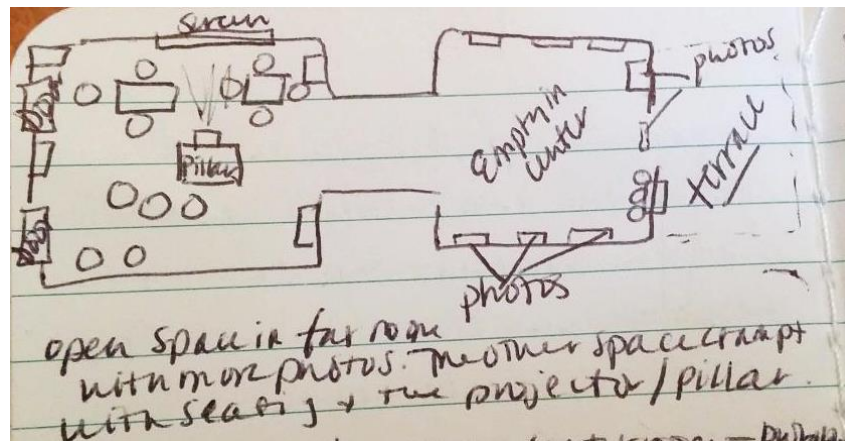
Figure 9: Drawing of the Youth Spot (right side) and the educational area (left side) of this location. Performances were usually held on the terrace (far right).

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When thinking about the dynamics of these spaces, storytellers have to consider different elements of their performances within the space. Mehdi has performed in a variety of different places due to the burgeoning interest in the ways young storytellers

118

have been innovating in storytelling. He describes how he has to determine different

elements of the space in order to understand how he needs to approach the performance:

> For me, I always needed to [know] somethings: How are people being seated? How are they facing me? How am I facing them? Or, what is the environment: is it quiet or not? That way, I could choose what is the right story to tell, what the right arrangement of the performance will be, and how one can play with the surroundings. Because the surrounding, or the environment itself, is the most important feature for me during performances. (personal communication; 6/9/2018)

In this quotation, Mehdi describes all of the elements he needs to consider when doing a

performance, including how the organization of space will create the storytelling

atmosphere. Unlike in the *halqa* circles of the storytellers in *Jemaa el Fna* Square

described in the previous chapter, Mehdi can curate the space to make things comfortable

for his audience and for his performance. If the environment and dynamics are the most

important element to his performances, he demonstrates the amount of thought he puts

into his work to make the space inviting for audiences. From his discussion, I understand

his concern with the performance and audience as interacting with two of Berger's (2009)

stances: performative and audience. While he cannot influence how the audience creates

their meaning from the performance, he is concerned with how his relationship to the

stories performed will influence their process of meaning-making. Of course, primarily,

he is interested in his relationship to telling the stories, hence the concern with creating

the atmosphere of the location fit the spatial considerations he hopes to imbue in the

space. After being an assistant for Mehdi as he contemplated these issues for multiple

performances, I understand that Mehdi channels his version of storytelling to emulate and

build upon previous storytelling practices he witnessed as a child and has heard about in

other tales. However, because he is performing in different spaces than storytellers of the past and is someone working to expand the amount of storytelling practice in the city, partially in response to the continuous decrease in number of Master storytellers in the city, a specific conception and aura of storytelling haunts his performances (Derrida 1994; Fisher 2014).

For some of his performances, he is able to bring in different 'props' to produce the environment he hopes to achieve—including rugs he buys or rents from the *medina* which feature commonly depicted patterns and colors. He sometimes places these on the ground in front of where he is going to perform, complete with pillows for his audience to sit on, mimicking the experience of sitting around a *halqa* on the ground. Other 'props' he includes in his performance include a *djellaba* (common garment worn in public by men and women alike in Morocco) and a pair of *bilgha* (common slipper-style shoes worn in Morocco). So, while Mehdi does not often perform in the Square, the elements he brings to create the environment draw on cultural elements of Moroccanness that can be reproduced, including rugs from the *medina* (Boum 2012a). These props were used mainly to influence the space or atmosphere of the performance.

However, Mehdi was not the only young storyteller to use props in his performances. When I attended many performances by the apprentices at Café Clock, many performers used props, including a large chair for a throne, a cane, and cups, when necessary. Potentially stemming from their training with Master Storyteller, Hajj Ezzarghani, his apprentices used props to help the audience visualize the stories and also to gain their attention (Figure 10). I remember many storytelling performances where

120

Hajj would hit the ground with the cane to emphasize a point or to accentuate an element from the story, such as an explosion or conflict.

Figure 10: One instance of Hajj using props, including a cane and sitting in the throne chair. Notice how the throne splits the front and back areas of the café. Due to this, most people sat in the main area or stood on the second floor, looking down into the courtyard instead of sitting behind the storyteller. Photo taken by author.

While these props were not always used in the same way by each performer, I remember vividly one experience from a story told by Fatima Ezzahra, where she used both a cane and a large chair in her performance. She was telling a story where a water seller (or *gurrab*) was meeting a king, who sat in a throne. The story is supposed to tell the story of someone who pulled himself from poverty by using the materials he found at hand, but also condemns ideas of jealousy and envy seen through the character of the Vizir. As she stood in the front of the audience at Café Clock, she was wearing her hair down, not covered, while she wore jeans, a sweater, and a leather jacket over the ensemble. This made a lot of sense since the inside of the café, open to the sky because it

is a *riad*-style building, was cold. She began the story as she grabbed for the cane

positioned behind the main chair placed in the back of the storytelling area :

> So there was a poor man who needed to make a living, but he had no money to
> invest in any materials or machines in order to become a man of a special trade.
> All the man had was a water container. He asked God for help, and the next day,
> the man found grapes growing around his house. He decided to put these grapes
> into water, and he wanted to start being a *gurrab*, or a water seller. His name was
> not *gurrab,* but that was his job title. He thought "ma2 min tbeeb" or "water from
> raisons." And all the people who drank his water thought this was the best water.

As Fatima Ezzahra described this situation, she used the cane to walk to the nearby table,

and then she grabbed a water bottle from the table and a water drinking glass made of

metal to demonstrate how the *gurrab* walked around giving water to different clients as

he wandered through the local *souks*.

> So, people would drink the water and tell their friends about it. People would
> come by to drink the water and continue to spread the word of this story. Day by
> day, people came by for the water and as the word spread about the delicious
> water he had, the King heard about this drink. The King came by and said, "is it
> your water that I've been hearing about? I've heard about you from many people
> in the kingdom and I've come to try it for myself." The King tried the water, and
> he told the *gurrab* that from now on, people who try the water will give him a
> small amount of money to keep this going. The *Vizir* heard about what the King
> had decreed for the water seller, and he went to meet the King in the palace in his
> throne room.

At this point in the story, Fatima Ezzahra placed the cane on the wall next to the throne,

and she sat down with much power and authority in the throne behind her. When sitting

on the throne, she spread herself across the seat (which was very large) to create the

image of her confidence as she transitioned into the role of the King. She continued:

> The Vizir began speaking to the King who was sitting on his throne, and he said,
> "That water seller makes more money than I do. What is that all about? How

come he sells the water and I get less money than him?" The Vizir was talking to the King to convince the King that the *gurrab* was taking advantage of the King's kindness and that he was trying to trick the King. So the King trusted the Vizir to talk to the *gurrab* about this. Instead, the Vizir, being jealous of the water seller, created a plot where he wrote a letter, and told any guard that if they saw the letter that they should kill the person holding it.

At this point in the story, Fatima Ezzahra has begun walking around the performance area with the cane again, denoting her position as the *gurrab*, and she continued on the dialogue between the *gurrab* and the Vizir:

> Next, the Vizir sought out the *gurrab* and told the *gurrab* that the King was unhappy with him because he thought he was tricking him. The *gurrab,* of course, denied this and wanted to know how to make the King understand he was not tricking him. The Vizir gave the *gurrab* the letter and told him to deliver it to someone just outside the gate which would mean he would pass by some guards.

> On the way to deliver the letter, however, the *gurrab* was given a gift. This gift was valuable and something to be desired. The *gurrab* and the Vizir, once again, crossed paths. Upon seeing the gift, and already being envious of the *gurrab*, the Vizir asked for the gift, which also held the letter, and the *gurrab,* out of gratitude for the help from the Vizir, gave him the gift. The Vizir then attempted to go out of the castle to take the gift, was seen with the letter by the guards, and was promptly killed.

> The King learned about the Vizir's plot and demise, and he then contacted the *gurrab.* From that point on, the *gurrab* held a permanent position serving his King, and the jealous Vizir was forgotten.

Upon reaching the end of the story, Fatima Ezzahra became herself again, as the narrator of the story. She told us that there were a few things to learn from this story:

> For one thing, this story tells us that you should not be jealous or envious of what someone else has. The *gurrab* was just doing his job, and the Vizir was greedy and wanted things that weren't his. We also have a saying that, "He who digs the hole will fall into it," and this is demonstrated by the plot that the Vizir constructs

123

for the *gurrrab*. In his jealously, the Vizir tells the guards that if they see that particular letter, that they should kill the one holding that letter by cutting off his head. However, when it came time to go outside with the letter, it was the Vizir, in his greediness, that ended up carrying the letter, and then getting his head cut off by the guards. (from recordings and fieldnotes; 11/20/2016)

Figure 11: Fatima Ezzahra performing a story with the cane prop at Café Clock, with the throne chair to the right. Photo taken by author.

When performing this story, as noted previously, Fatima Ezzahra used both a cane and a large chair (Figure 11). Whenever she spoke from the perspective of the *gurrab*, a poor water seller, she would use the cane to help her walk around the performance area in the café, giving the audience more insight to how this water seller needed a job but also was not able to perform the jobs of many other men. And, sometimes if the audience seemed particularly noisy at the café, Fatima Ezzahra would hit the cane a bit harder on the floor to make sure she was keeping everyone's attention centered upon her. However,

when she spoke from the perspective of the King, she would sit in the large, wooden

chair positioned in the back of the performance area, usually in a booming and

commanding voice, imitating the usual characteristics of Kings in folktales and stories.

From another instance of prop use, one of my early fieldnotes illustrates the way

that Abelhai, another storyteller who performed primarily in *darija,* would use props and

his background in theater to tell stories:

> Abdelhai puts together storytelling and theatre performance in his tellings, which
> is apparent through the way he moves his body—knowing in what ways his voice
> will project and making sure his audience can follow his movements. He held a
> presence and even though I understood words here and there, he had different
> actions that enforced the idea he wanted to convey—he was doing a mini theatre
> performance during his telling. He used props, like a water bottle and cup, used
> the staffs behind him, and was impressive in his use of inflection for telling the
> stories. (fieldnotes, 5/5/2016)

These props helped the audience understand the story, but also gave non-verbal cues to

when both Fatima Ezzahra and Abdelahi were switching characters because, unlike many

theater plays, each performer was the only actor present to tell their stories. While the

prop of the chair may not have been present in *Jemaa el Fna* Square when storytellers

would perform there, other props like Mehdi's *djellaba* and *bilgha* and Fatima

Ezzahra's/Abdelhai's staff would have been easily accessible and common elements in

performances. They simulate certain elements of storytelling that connect the performers

and the audience to historical conceptions of storytelling practice, while also serving to

situate the performer, the audience, and the story.

While including props to re-create an aura of culture and performance in a space

not usually used for these types of events is consistent with a harkening back to the past

125

of storytelling, throughout my fieldwork, I noticed that one element of storytelling in *Jemaa el Fna* Square seemed to be lost: the *halqa* configuration. Throughout the many performances I attended during my time in Morocco, I only experienced a true *halqa* circle a handful of times at youth storytelling events. There were instances where events created a semblance of circle configurations, but they were not consistently used as such—the back of the circle could be behind a partial wall or no one actually sat in that area to make it a full *halqa* experience. Other times, there was no semblance of a *halqa*— there was a stage separating the performer from the audience or, in a lot of performances, the performer was backed up against a wall. When I asked Mehdi about why the *halqa* configuration was not usually included in his performances, he answered by saying:

> Well, circles are still practical to do, but they are not comfortable...Definitely the circle makes it hard for the performer because you need to focus on a lot of people. To me, why I don't do it anymore is because of the spaces that I perform in. There might be like a format of the circle, but not the full circle. Sometimes, I will be the top of the circle and people will surround me. But to have a full circle, it is a little bit hard because you need to find places for people to sit. Are they going to sit around you like in circle 1, circle 2, circle 3...That can be awkward. So, you need this theater sequence way of sitting to make the space more relaxed for people. If people get together in a circle, one is going to be pushing another one, and then pushing another one—and for me, I still need to make them comfortable and at the same time, make myself be heard. Back in the day, people were comfortable that way because that was the best way to organize in public places for performances. (personal communication; 6/9/2018)

While the aura and environment are the most important element for Mehdi to consider when he is putting together his performances, the *halqa* configuration is not part of how he likes organizing the audience in relation to himself as the performer. He uses props which draw the audience's attention to the lineage of storytellers that he represents, but he does not follow in re-constructing the *halqa* configuration in his re-placement of

126

performances. Mostly, he attributes this to comfort, both for himself and the audience, but his relationship to *halqa* is most definitely informed by his experiences in *Jemaa el Fna* Square. His mentioning of "one is going to be pushing another one, and then pushing another one" draws my own reflections back to my experiences being in *halqa* circles in the Square—while someone may not be consciously pushing you, the wall of spectators around different performers seems to ebb and flow, creating an experience of constantly re-negotiating yourself to the other audience members, so that you are able to still see the performance.

Once the storyteller has created the space for their audience, the next step is to perform the stories. Before even beginning to perform, storytellers must read how the audience interacts with the aura they have created. Many storytellers I spoke with discussed how they had a variety of stories in their toolkit, but that before performances, they usually tried to organize a theme or order of the performance to fit the future setting and topic of conversation. However, many of my collaborators also note that even if they create a particular organization for an event, when they get to the setting, they can decide that the story does not fit the audience or the environment and change things around— because the performance does not only "belong to the performer" (Schechner 1985: 118). For instance, Fatima Ezzahra described this to me:

> I used to always change [the stories I told]. Let's say I have a story about guys, and it's funny… Like Hajj has said, "Okay, each one of you is going to perform this particular set of stories," and I see the audience is full of young guys and girls, I may think that this story is more for families and relaxing time. But, if there's an energetic audience, I'll tell Hajj that I want to perform another story. But sometimes we don't' change [the stories]. Most of the stories are nice and can be told to anyone. Storytelling art is something that has to be learned. People's tastes are different. But sometimes if you want to make it a little different or a

little creative, you just want to make it a little funny or not too boring, if you have a 30 minute story or 40. If you think these people are not willing to give you all their time, or like some people just want to listen to the story while eating their dinner, so they have an hour. So, you're limited by time and other motivations of the audience. That's the time when you decide to change or not to change. (personal communication; 11/30/2016)

Even from my brief foray into storytelling, reading the room is a skill that storytellers constantly need to consult with their performances. However, reading the room within the constantly bustling café where Fatima Ezzahra works would be different than reading the *halqa* in *Jemaa el Fna* Square due to types of people who would be found in these places. People passing through the Square may be of all ages and from Morocco or elsewhere, but those who will mostly flock to the *halqa* of a storyteller are probably those who can follow along with the story and who have time to stay for a few minutes. In the café where Fatima Ezzahra works, she has to consider elements of tourism and consumerism in relation to the stories she performs and the ways she performs them. People come once and never again due to the tourist nature of the café, and sometimes people only go to the café to eat, not knowing there would be storytelling that evening.

All of these elements must be considered when creating any performance, but particularly for these emerging, young storytellers, they need to consider the lingering legacy of practicing storytelling in a city known for storytelling in public venues. The new venues from which these storytellers perform stories each add different elements of exclusion and inclusion for groups of people, even if they are designed to be as inclusive as possible. The next sections will consider the different choices of new performance venues: cafés, larger auditorium stages, and smaller youth and art venues.

Re-placement Locations: Case of the Cafés

By far the most prevalent alternative choices for these performance locations were cafes and coffee shops. Throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and many other parts of the world, café culture has been proliferating where craft cafes and trendy cafes come into existence, being immediately filled with patrons (e.g. de Koning 2006; Jolliffe 2010; McCosker and Wilken 2012; Örs 2002). When Habermas (1992) discussed cafés in his works, these were seen as locations of public discourse and inclusivity. However, looking specifically at cafés in Morocco, Graiouid (2011) argues against Habermas (1992), citing that cafes have not ever been a space of ideal interaction where every individual is included[7]. Much like the practices I see in Morocco, cafes are a place of inclusion for select groups, whether that is men, wealthy individuals, or foreigners. He notes that others have tried to understand how cafes can, in some locations, be meeting places for women, there is a tendency for women to meet in other spaces which are devoid of historical connotations, such as McDonald's or fast food places (Davis-Taïeb 1998). However, Graiouid also notes that café spaces are actually usually separated strongly by gender—if the terrace is men's space, then the upper floor of the café may be more commonly for women (Graiouid 2011). So what could these places bring to the proliferation of storytelling practice in Marrakech by young storytellers?

At the start of the movement to revive storytelling through youth performances, the apprenticeship group *Hikayat Morocco* began performing in one café in the *medina* of

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[7] The topic of public space and the public sphere is part of an important larger conversation than can be provided here. I use Habermas (1992) and Graiouid (2011), a Moroccan scholar who has written extensively on café culture in Morocco, in relation to comments on cafes in particular in order to situate, briefly, issues of access, class, and gender for the performances held at cafes in Marrakech by young storytellers. For a brief introduction of the public sphere as described by Habermas, see: Habermas, Jürgen. 1974[1964]. The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article. *New German Critique* 3: 49-55.

Marrakech, called *Café Clock*. This café was a perfect location, still nestled in the old

town of Marrakech, a mere 10-15 minute walk from the famous *Jemaa el Fna* Square—

close enough to draw off the aura of performance and cultural exchange of the Square

(Figure 12). The café started as a place dedicated to cultural exchange, making

storytelling, particularly *Hikayat Morocco's* English storytelling, a natural highlight of

the schedule.
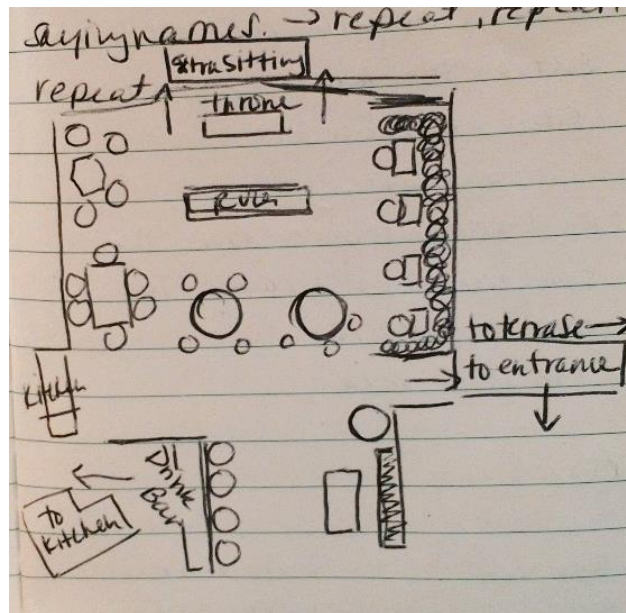
Figure 12: Drawn map of Café Clock, showing the different areas and elements on the first floor of the café where storytelling would take place. Usually storytellers would perform in a semi-circular arc around the throne/chair in the top center of the map.

The nature of the exchange in this location is that of sponsorship and

community—when it began, the space was for Moroccans, tourists, and international

visitors of all kinds. The cultural exchange was based off the communication of everyday

people being in the same space and sharing different cultural forms of expression. Many

of my collaborators note that this was the spirit in the beginning of the place—people

from all over the city and tourists would meet together here to share a glass of tea, while being sheltered from the haggling of the cafes surrounding *Jemaa el Fna* Square. This meant that early audience composition within this location was that of other Moroccans, mostly younger Moroccans, while there was also a large influx of foreign visitors. The group has always attempted to structure their storytelling nights so that members of the audience from one telling could return another night during their stay and hear other stories.

As Marrakech has continued its plan for bringing in more tourists, and as the competition between cafes has increased, Café Clock has been aiming more toward international visitors and tourists to cater their services to, which can be seen through the prices and products available at the café (including a camel burger). The owner of the café, an Englishman, has been motivated to create a chain of these cafes in the country—currently, there is one in Fez (the original), Marrakech, and a recently opened café in Chefchaouen. This also has impacted the aim of the storytellers in this location—while before they would attempt to perform different stories every performance, the constant flux of visitors means they do not need to perform different stories each evening, but just hope that the audience members did not return. During my fieldwork in 2017, I tried to go to these storytelling events twice a week, and I found that during my time in the café, there were many nights when storytellers would perform the same stories. This was intriguing for me as an ethnographer because I was able to see the intricacies of difference between the performances, but I found this mostly interesting in relation to how the storytellers would always frame their performances as continually changing and

sharing new stories. As I continued to attend storytelling events, I began to be a figure in the stories—sometimes Fatima Ezzahra would include "Erin" as a character, but alternatively, this also created some strange interactions with managers and workers at the café after I, for the fiftieth time, ordered a simple mint tea.

The partnership of *Hikayat Morocco* and Café Clock still continues to today, and it has been influential in bringing about multiple types of publicity about storytelling and the new directions these young storytellers are taking with the guidance from their older, Master Storyteller mentor (e.g. ArchaeoAdventures 2018; El Hadad 2015b; HikayatMorocco 2013; Simons 2006). And, of course, this partnership has offered storytellers a regular space for storytelling. When *Hikayat Morocco* first began performing in the café, they performed one time a week, but met together with the Master Storyteller two times a week to practice and continue to develop their skills as storytellers. They would listen to and memorize stories from their Master Storyteller mentor through oral transmission, much like many other forms of cultural knowledge (Reynolds 1995) and formal education (Eickelman 1985). After a few years of performing, they switched the amounts of times for practice and performance—they began performing twice a week with only a Sunday meeting to talk about their performances for the week and practice with the Master Storyteller.

From the time when I began going to these events regularly in 2016, the evenings usually consisted of two or three stories told in English (translated by the performers) and one story in Arabic (either by the Master Storyteller or another apprentice). While this bilingual setting of storytelling was already unique and gripping, the storytellers were

also made up of both men and women members, bringing a new light to the mainly man dominated idea of public storytelling. Fatima Ezzahra, one of two women storytellers who spoke with me during the time of my fieldwork, described how she first was interested in joining the group of performers:

> When I first started doing storytelling, I thought I would be able to do it, so I should do it. I had done theater before, so I had performed some. [Street performers] were never women, only basically men. When performances are in public, you get all kinds of people because public is for everyone. So it has never been a woman. However, that doesn't mean that women weren't storytellers before. They were. Just inside the house, telling stories to their own kids only or maybe kids of neighbors, but you know, they never thought of performing in public. And so when I heard that I could do it, I thought that I had to try…So when we started it, we got a lot of fans. Like first day we performed, a lot of people wanted to come back, a lot of took our numbers, a lot of people wanted us to do performances for them, for their families, for their friends. So, day by day, it became famous, and especially because now we are making it for everyone. When they see, they want to come back again, they send their friends. It's something so nice to hear stories. It's not, it's something unique. It's a unique place, it's a unique art in Arabic stories and English in old traditional Moroccan stories in English with females. It's a lot more nice here than before. (personal communication; 11/30/2016)

Fatima Ezzahra walks us through the histories of different storytelling—men performed in public because it was more exposed and considered more dangerous, while women told stories in homes. However, when she heard about a group trying to make sure storytelling was actually able to include everyone, she wanted to join and become someone who could share stories with a more diverse set of audiences. In partnership with this café, the storytellers were able to entertain people coming for meals to learn about storytelling, and to this day, storytelling nights at this café are advertised in most English-language guidebooks.
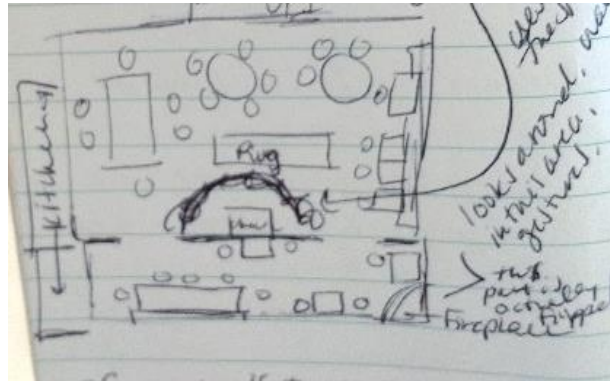
Figure 13: Map of Café Clock with other performance notes from my notebook. Notice the circular arc around the throne, representing the usual path performers would use as they told stories in this location.

The politics of a place like Café Clock cannot be left out of the discussion of storytelling here. While the start of the relationship and the continuing relationship seem to be productive for all involved, there is a story from the middle of the relationship between storytelling and the café where individuals at the café, not the storytellers, felt slighted because the storytellers in the group at that time attempted to participate in an international storytelling festival. From the stories I heard circulating around the mythic (which was never seriously detailed or described to me where I could feel comfortable stating both sides of the disagreement), the sponsors at the café seemed to think they had been undermined with the storytellers' participation in an international storytelling event without them knowing. This brings up interesting politics of censorship and surveillance in comparison to those detailed earlier in this text. While I previously discussed the censorship efforts of the kingdom to keep cultural actors and activists from speaking their minds about issues or participating in certain forms of expression, this case seems to point to an almost neo-colonial relationship of sponsorship. Much like Scott (1990) discussed when considering how resistance is enacted in society, these young storytellers

134

seemed to work in avoidance of major power structures, only to then be hindered when the more powerful (sponsors, managers) learned of their efforts. While the storytellers were accepted to the festival, many other barriers to their participation kept them from actually participating, including being denied visas for travel even though they had raised money to cover costs of visas, lodging, and everyday costs.

So while the sponsorship created opportunities for the group to get publicly acknowledged, and the group was also able to find a space to perform in every week, the other complexities of the relationship ended up having negative impacts on the group by not being able to participate in the storytelling festival, but it also managed to create divisions in the group. After this time, the original members of *Hikayat* Morocco began to go their separate ways, showing how, in some ways, this particular case of censoring but also politics of sponsorship could impede storytellers at different locations and events.

Figure 14: Fatima Ezzahra tracing the path from the previous figure, where performers usually paced during performances (between the rug with pillows and the throne chair). Photo taken by author.

While the previous example discussed the very prominent place of Café Clock in the reimagining of storytelling by youth in Marrakech, other cafés have hosted storytelling evenings that are not as promoted to foreigners and non-Moroccans. Most of these other café spaces were locally owned, and they were usually chosen because the storytellers or the organizers of the events had a personal connection with the café or those who ran them.

I was able to attend one event in a café close to the major train station of Marrakech. When you walked in, you had to avoid the bottom of the circular opening, much like an entry way out of a fantastical story where there are no rectangular doors. The inside of the café was generic, much like other cafes—there were white walls, with white tile, upon which 20 to 30 small white, square tables were set up for visitors. Upon moving past these tables, I found myself at another circular door that led to the outdoor space. This space was filled with plants, and, for that evening, long tables that were covered with fancy-looking white tablecloths. Three tables were set up in a U-shape, while one table was situated at the front with only four chairs—this was the seating for the performers and speakers (Figure 15). Storytelling was not the major draw for the evening for most people—it was included in a showcase of different Moroccans talking about their work in Marrakech. Because I was invited by the organizer, Brahim, but I knew Mehdi was performing, Mehdi and I went together. We got to the space early to see what Mehdi would have to work with for the evening.
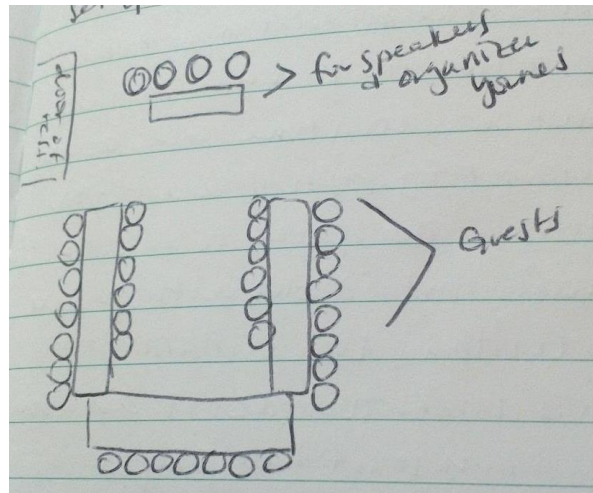
Figure 15: Very basic mapping of the organization of the NetworkEAT event near the train station. It was held in the back garden of a café, and the door to the café is noted on the top left of the image.

People slowly began trickling in—and most of the participants were from Marrakech, many were university students and early career individuals. At the beginning of the event, I was the only non-Moroccan, as the community members speaking represented different companies and paths of how to get into different careers in the city. In total, there were about 30 people at this event, but that number was constantly fluctuating as people left to attend to their other commitments. As the evening went on, people were served dinner and were spoken to by people working in economic, political, and arts realms of Marrakech. Two of the presentations of the night were in French, and the third presentation was done in Moroccan dialect Arabic. By the time the last act came around (the storytelling from Mehdi), most people had already left. Mehdi was a little disappointed, but this did not let his enthusiasm for the performance waver.

After spending time in Marrakech, I came to know how small the city actually is, and everyone who was still around for Mehdi's performance were people who I had

137

interacted with many times—probably at different storytelling events, as well as seeing them around the city. When it was finally his time to perform, he came forward and asked us all to get up out of our seats to re-create a *halqa* circle like in *Jemaa el Fna* Square—noting that after sitting all night, we needed a story that would revive our energy and motivation for the event (Figure 16).

This event was the only event while I was in Marrakech observing the storytelling practices of young people in Marrakech when there was an actual *halqa* around the performer. As I noted in the previous chapter, *halqas* are known for being spaces of participation and action, and coupled with telling the story in Arabic, Mehdi re-created this style of performance, which promoted audience interaction from the audience. While this event may not have been the most advertised or most inclusive event (I think there was an entry fee), the community created around the storytelling performance at the end of the night was spectacularly energetic—we all did as Mehdi asked, and being one of the only non-Moroccans in the *halqa*, Mehdi shared a story in Arabic which got all of us laughing and enjoying our time. Maybe this instance of reading the audience was easier for Mehdi than other performances because most of the people surrounding him and showing support were already familiar with his work and already were excited to hear another story from the man who claims to know more than 100 stories by heart.

Figure 16: Mehdi performing at NetworkEAT near the train station. This is one of the few performances where a *halqa* configuration was featured in his performances. Photo taken by Y. Jaouad, and used with permission.

Re-placement Locations: Case of the Youth and Art Spaces

Another type of space that hosted storytelling events during my time in the field were small arts spaces and youth spaces. I consider spaces like these ones where the emphasis is not focused around consuming beverages or foods, but instead in contributing to a community based around a specific mission.

After moving to Marrakech in 2016, one of the first performances I watched was at a small *riad* that had been converted into an art exhibition space for an arts collective called KE'CH Collective (Figure 17). This space was used for the Marrakech Biennale of 2016, and the group was able to keep the space for a few more months after the conclusion of the Biennale to keep art on display and for a space to continue to hold events. The managers and contributors within the location were of many backgrounds: Moroccan, Swiss, German, and American, and the art and performances within the location brought in a variety of audiences due to the contributors' and managers' positive

139

reputations in Marrakech—these included people of all ages and from many different international backgrounds.

Figure 17: Entrance to KE'CH Collective, 2016. Photo by author.

During the Biennale, the collective worked with Mehdi to put together a series of storytelling evenings. He created overall themes for each performance night, which were spread out throughout the two months of the Biennale. The space of his performance was organizationally very interesting, as the center of the space was taken up by a fountain, which was filled with popcorn on performance nights. Otherwise, the gathering space area of the *riad* was scattered with trees, causing the performers to negotiate each step. This space (Figure 18) and one of Mehdi's performances (Figure 19) here was described in my opening vignette for this dissertation, where he described how he began his journey

to being a storyteller. For this performance, there were about 15 people of varying ages

and backgrounds present.
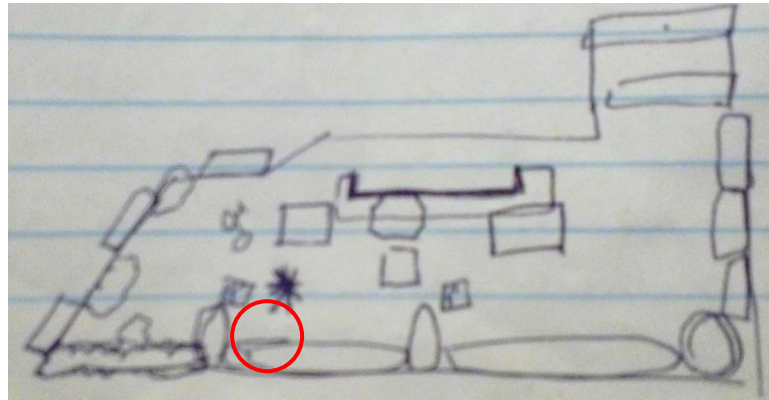
Figure 18: Quick drawing of KE'CH Collective outdoor performance area. The star (circled in red) represents the position of the storyteller, while the other squares in the area represent trees or other obstacles.

Figure 19: Mehdi performing at KE'CH Collective. Note the planters interspersed in the performance area. Photo taken by author.

Another space I became quite familiar with after moving to Marrakech was The

Youth Spot (Figure 20) in the Gueliz (new town) neighborhood of Marrakech. The space

was housed within a larger apartment which included the Youth Spot for half of the

apartment, and the other half of the apartment was used for courses which covered anything from teaching pedagogy to English language to Arabic language courses for foreigners. This was one of the first locations where I took Moroccan Colloquial Arabic lessons during my time in Marrakech—mostly only open for daytime hours with the exception for weekly movie nights. This place was owned by a local man who had been involved in education for his entire life, and who also ran the Arabic programming during the daytime. However, he and others interested in promoting the location as a place for young people to spend time together when their busy schedules allowed, created the gaming and performance areas to get young people to hang out in locations other than bars, billiards clubs, and dance clubs, which were filled with smoking and drinking.

The Youth Spot side of the space was always open in the evenings, containing a small kitchen where teas and coffees could be bought for a small price, but the big draw with the Xbox that people could rent for various amounts of time. The biggest draw for me was the storytelling and other event nights, and these storytelling events were also some of the first where I was able to accompany Mehdi to help him put together the aura of the space for the performance. Most of the performances in this space were made up of young Moroccans, both women and men, who were interested in supporting the location or in supporting Mehdi as a performer. The attendance at these events usually ranged from about 10 people to over 50 individuals—this latter event was one of the only other times there was an accidental *halqa* configuration created due merely to the necessity of cramming as many people as possible into the location.
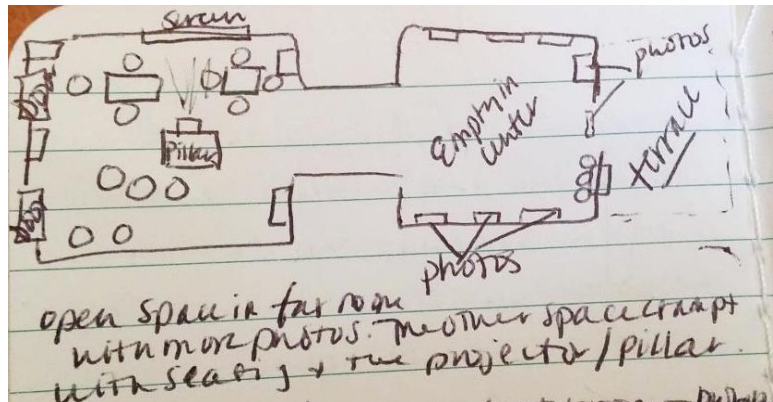
Figure 20: Drawing of the Youth Spot (right side) and the educational area (left side) of this location. Performances were usually held on the terrace (far right).

While these two spaces were smaller in scale, Mehdi explained to me the differences in how he thought about the people and environment of these two locations when he performed:

> The Spot, the only advantage that I was more aware of, is the people that are going to come. I knew that they are going to be youngsters, not older people. At the KECH Collective, it was a whole different range of people that I didn't have any control over, so it needed to be…definitely the first night was rough. The second night was fine, and then as it kept on going, the number of people shrunk, which is fine, but it made me realize that people are not always up for specific formats. I always kept on changing it, I wasn't doing the same stuff. (personal communication; 6/9/2018)

From Mehdi's reflections, we see the differences in the spatial make-up which was almost simply influenced by the people who contributed to the dynamics of space. His reflections consider the differences in each performance, about how performances in the same space (which could maybe consist of similar groups of people) can change the overall success of the performance. He notes that there were different age ranges in both locations, but that he was constantly trying to change up the organization and style of his performances.

143

While I was only able to see one performance in the KE'CH Collective location, I attended multiple performances at the Youth Spot (e.g. Figure 21 and Figure 22). Each of these performances differed from the other in many ways. The first performance was one performance where the Youth Spot seemed too small for the crowd that decided to come to the event. This physically created the necessity for Mehdi to have a partial *halqa* around him because people were cramming into the space wherever they could.

Figure 21: Mehdi's performance at the Youth Spot. Notice the opening behind him where people ended up sitting and standing, creating a *halqa* eventually during the performance. Photo by author.

For his next performance, he took this into consideration and decided to put himself, the performer, as far from the door as possible so that many people could come in late if they had other responsibilities before the performance. This was also the first performance where he brought rugs and pillows into this space to create an aura of comfort and relaxation, while he still was sporting his *djellaba* and *bilgha*. But the environment of the space was different from before—Mehdi was facing the audience

144

with a wall behind him, creating a backdrop but also allowing him to be facing the entire

audience for the duration of the performance.

Figure 22: Image from Mehdi's performance with multimedia use. Photo by author.

For the third performance I attended at the Youth Spot (Figure 22), Mehdi tried

something different. Instead of standing up in front of the audience like he had done

before, he wanted to enter multimedia into the performance. He created stories that were

linked to images and collages he displayed behind him as he told stories, all while hiding

his face with the hood of the djellaba—he was entering new ground as a storyteller with

significant use of digital projection and media. Due to knowing the organizers of the

space, he was able to put together a performance which exploited all of the different types

of technology equipped in the space, while still continuing to develop his performance

145

styles as a storyteller. However, these types of performances, while productive and developmental, were never taken up during larger events.

Re-placement Locations: Case of the Large, Staged Performance Venues

Since the beginning of my intellectual interest in storytelling in Marrakech, there have been two events where storytelling has been done by young storytellers on a large stage: 1) an event educating on ways to develop public speaking and independent business projects, and 2) TedXMarrakech.

Because Mehdi has been one of the most prominent young storytelling performers in the city, making some money from performances but mostly doing them out of passion and motivation to pass along his own stories, he was invited to speak at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech for an event for student business development, for which he performed for a group of about 50 young college-aged students, who primarily study in French due to their courses being in business (a topic taught throughout Morocco primarily in French). Due to his aversion to speaking French, Mehdi decided to speak in English and *darija* when he addressed the group. He was put on a stage to tell a story to the attendees and discuss how he goes about developing his storytelling performances and reaching new audiences. During this event, he was on a stage that was much higher off the ground than those seated in the audience, and the sound system was not ideal. He got through the performance, but was slightly doubtful that it was a successful performance from his own estimation.

Another event where young storytellers were put on stage was at two different iterations of TedXMarrakech (2015[8] and 2017[9]). Both of these events were held at larger venues, the second iteration with storytellers was held at the Es Saadi Palace in Marrakech, where the performances took place in a large hall that could accommodate up to about 200 people. The audience, because it was a ticketed event, consisted of mostly foreign and international attendees ranging in age between 30-60 years old. However, because the TedX event was put together by a small group of individuals, they offered volunteer positions for young Moroccans who wanted to attend the events and who did not have enough expendable income to pay for a ticket—instead they helped with the logistics of ticketing, technology, and organizing people in exchange for attending speakers and gaining access to the always extravagant lunch.

During the first, Sara Mouhi, one of the previous women members of *Hikayat Morocco*, and Ahmed Ezzarghani, the Master Storyteller mentor for *Hikayat Morocco*, shared a brief story in Arabic from Ezzarghani which was then translated into English by Mouhi. The second performance was done by Mehdi in 2017, where he performed one of the stories he has independently created from a moral he lives his life by. The performances take the storytellers out of the *halqa* where Ezzarghani may be most comfortable and shifts them to locations in front of a group of over 100 people and a video camera, contributing yet another set of considerations into their performances within the space:

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[8] To see Sara Mouhi and Ahmed Ezzarghani's TedXMarrakech performance from 2015, follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVbE3wyWXxk
[9] To see Mehdi el Ghaly's TedXMarrakech performance from 2017, follow this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pjFuLo4U3I&t=75s

This is always interesting to me because when it is intimate with people, it is extra focused, but then, when it's in a bigger stage, it needs to be more than extra focused. It needs to be delivered the right way. And then the places that are in-between, you can play with the performance angle. So for me, I've always had few components that I've needed to highlight the delivery, not to highlight myself. I'm very flexible when it comes to performance, because I can just perform wherever. The thing that I need to do, it needs its own prestige, it needs its own respect. The stage is always the thing that gets you respect….Like the amount of thoughts that go to every plot detail, like for example, in TEDX, the jokes. I was like, the jokes, this is this, that is that. My stress is how are they going to be perceived? Because there is a point where they would be perceived as me making jokes about women, as a man. And that was the biggest stress for me that night. Am I going to be misunderstood? And that is the only thing that I always feel a bit...a bit stressed about is: Am I going to be misunderstood? If you are going to be misunderstood, then that is definitely the worst thing. (personal communication; 6/9/2018)

Mehdi explains that there is a certain prestige with performing at these staged and international types of events. While he is not the first storyteller to perform on the TedXMarrakech stage, he takes it as an opportunity to continue to develop his repertoire and learn how to deal with different types of audiences. However, he notes that because this audience is so much bigger than those in a café or in the Youth Spot, he has to think more about how the different elements of his story will be highlighted when he performs for an audience that he does not know well. His biggest stress comes from wanting to be understood and hoping that he is, in fact, not misunderstood. This topic of conversation leads this discussion to its next chapter on the considerations young storytellers take when telling stories translated from Arabic into English within these different spaces of performance.

Contributing more of a descriptive look into the different alternative spaces that young performers have begun sharing stories in, this chapter sought to understand how the changing of space for storytelling performance has a strong influence on performance dynamics but also level of prestige gained from different locations. These different spaces and locales force the storytellers to consider different elements of inclusion, exclusion, language choice, story choice, and environment aura in order for the performance to go as planned or to be respected by the audience. This element of language choice will be considered further in cases of cultural translation discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Language and Cultural Translation in Storytelling

"Translation is charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of
the original language and the birth pangs of its own."
–Walter Benjamin (*Illuminations*, 1969: 69)

From my research, I not only found that place was a large factor in performance (see Chapter 5), but I also found that the language of these performances plays a significant role for young storytellers. While the previous chapter focused on the places of performance, this chapter examines how storytellers discuss the process through which they shape their storytelling performances through translation. The work done by storytellers engages global cultural contact and frictions that arise through the process of transmitting cultural meaning from one language to another (Tsing 2005). Most of my collaborators perform stories they have translated into English that were originally written or performed in Arabic. Most storytellers I interviewed also prided themselves as being cultural ambassadors for Moroccan storytelling. Therefore, they not only translate their stories into English for performance in front of English-speaking Moroccan audiences, but also for English-speaking foreign audiences. While translation presents cultural and linguistic complexities for storytellers and audiences, it provides the opportunity for stories to be heard around the world that would otherwise be unknown.

In a place, like Morocco, with such a variable linguistic environment, language can demonstrate many things about how someone chooses to represent themselves, the context someone is in, or the education someone has received. Katherine Hoffman, a scholar working on linguistic usage in the area south of Marrakech in the Anti-Atlas mountains, uses "language ideologies" instead of "language attitudes" to describe the

inherent power and social dynamics included in language use (2007). Kathryn Woolard and Bambi Schieffelin note that "ideologies" when it comes to language "are not only about language. Rather, such ideologies envision and enact links of language to group and personal identity, to aesthetics, to morality, to epistemology" (1994: 55-56). The politics and dynamics of language use are prominent in Morocco. Mehdi has explained that he refuses to speak French during storytelling events. He told me he does not feel very comfortable speaking it, which could be the primary reason why he refuses, but he has also previously expressed that English is a better language through which to perform and make a strong point. Other performers have mirrored this type of language surrounding performance languages, noting that telling stories in English gives them greater freedom to tell their stories (see Ch. 3, section "Language Considerations" for a larger discussion of complexities of language usage in Morocco).

Even outside of these linguistic considerations within Morocco, how does one go about translating a story? Reflecting on translation led me to consider Walter Benjamin's conceptions of translation and storytelling. Benjamin writes, "fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original," explaining that paying close attention to individual words can actually change the overall meaning of a story during translation. Translators must "incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language" (1968: 73). Adding more complexity, Said Yaqtine, writing about jocular stories, notes that there is a reliance on specific words to create the desired effect of the joke. There is an element of inversion that occurs in jocular stories,

151

making the stories come to life only when people think about the multiplicity of the meanings attributed to words and situations (Jayyusi 2006). This seems to establish the foundation for much of storytelling—the word play of stories, and their translations, provides entertainment and moments of subtlety for audiences framed by a knowledgeable performer. Both Benjamin and Yaqtine note the importance of individual words and the intent the translator holds for the audience and the significance of the overall work can impact how storytelling is received. Each instance of translation and each storytelling event invites the potential for miscommunication, while it also invites the potential for expanding the listener's knowledge.

The intricacies of translation challenge storytellers to construct stories that they feel hold true to the original, while also communicating pertinent information to the listener. I discuss, specifically, how international influences, informed by the politics of language in Marrakech can shift how some storytellers choose to formulate their translations. I argue that the process of translation from darija to English is a global process because the translations by young storytellers are bursting with global references, or what I term "global insertions." Particularly in Marrakech, many translated stories are influenced by media from the United States and Europe. Because of media influences from the United States in Morocco, my collaborators are continually inserting references from shows, movies (which they watch on MBC Channels available in Morocco), and other media—no matter if they are performing for Moroccan, foreign, or mixed audiences. I focus on different concepts important to thinking about translation, especially in light of the many linguistic considerations people make every day in

Morocco. Additionally, I consider how translation can include elements of violence, while also considering how translation and language use should be considered part of a global process of storytelling.

The first part of this chapter focuses on a case study from my experience with the story I call "The Wizard and the Vizir[10]." During the first time I listened to this story, Fatima Ezzahra gave a good performance, but the meaning of the story was lost—her cultural translation did not provide enough background to let the meaning shine through for me or other members in the audience. I will recount her version of the story here to outline another storytelling performance. After hearing this story the first time, and finding myself unable to figure out the overall meaning of the piece, I asked another collaborator, Mehdi, to help me gain a deeper understanding of the story. Through this process of asking for help, I was motivated to examine some of the ways through which stories are made intelligible to multiple audiences by explaining different elements. After recounting the case study of my own misunderstanding, I analyze how my collaborators, specifically Mehdi and Abdelkabir, discuss translation as it plays a role in their work. They both describe how they balance linguistic and cultural translation of words or phrases that come from Arab or Moroccan sources but need to be understood by broader sets of audiences. My collaborators recognize that including certain terms, phrases, and even jokes will require more work on their part to be understandable to different audiences, and that sometimes these terms are not understood without a strong

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[10] I have made up names for some stories when my collaborators did not have a regularly used title for the story. The names I create are usually descriptive but also are amalgamations of titles from my collaborators.

background knowledge of place. Building off of these discussions, I argue that the process of inserting global references and incorporating cultural descriptions into stories demonstrates how youth storytellers are negotiating their positions as cultural ambassadors but also international individuals through a historically particular practice.

A Moment of Misunderstanding: The Wizard and the Vizir

From my own experiences researching storytelling in Morocco, I have come across many moments of misunderstanding or feeling like I was missing the significance of a story. The following is one example of a time when I felt I needed further cultural explanation on a story I had been told, which led to a new understanding and appreciation for the story.

After being in Morocco for a few months, I became a regular at one of my storytelling venues. I went for performances as often as possible, and I was always trying to absorb the different stories. Many were similar to those I had heard before, but others were completely new to me, even after reading a significant amount of folktales and stories in preparation for this research. During one of these performances, I realized that sometimes I was not quite sure what the point of some of the stories were that I was hearing. I would write reflections about misunderstanding or missing the moral I was supposed to take away from these stories, and I would file those notes away into a section of my mind labeled "I'll understand one day" or something commenting on my graduate school mentality of continually finding new things to know that I didn't know before. After hearing one story, which I call "The Wizard and the Vizir," for the second time and

still not understanding the meaning or moral of the story, I knew I needed to contemplate the issues I was finding in these translations or reiterations of the story.

For this storytelling evening, I was sitting again at Café Clock. The whirring of the smoothie machine was in my ear, and the smell of freshly prepared food was sifting out of the kitchen to my left side. The kitchen and café area noises were still surrounding those of us in the audience, but we could see the storytellers setting up for the next performance. There were four storytellers today: Hajj (the Master storyteller), Abdelkabir, Fatima Ezzahra, and Younes.

Younes gets up and begins to quiet everyone down for the impending performance. He usually starts the session by clapping very loudly to get everyone's attention in the café, but this also functions to get the kitchen and café areas to quiet down for the performance. He does a short introduction about the storytellers for tonight, noting that Fatima Ezzahra, one of the earliest members of *Hikayat* Morocco, is joining us for a story for the evening. In his booming voice, he points out that she will share the first of four stories for the evening.

Younes turns on his feet to the right side of the café to go sit near Hajj. As he does so, a young Moroccan woman stands up with her hair down. She flashes her signature smile for the audience and says a brief hello from the center of the performance space, she states that she will be telling a story about a man who people think is a wizard before seeming to get into character by looking down at her feet before beginning to tell the story:

> This is the story of a man who many begin to believe is a wizard. This man was a carpenter, and he was married to a woman who was a servant for the royal

155

family. Together they were not rich, but they enjoyed life together. However, life was getting hard because they had very little money. One day, the man's wife was working at the palace for a party where there were many people and also farm animals inside, she saw the Princess's necklace fall off her neck. After falling off, the necklace was eaten by one specific cow. The man's wife did not say anything to anyone, but the next day, she heard that the Princess was very upset that the necklace had gone missing—so much so that the King put out a reward for anyone who brought the necklace back to the Princess. Because the man's wife was so smart, she told him to go to the palace and pretend to be a wizard and tell them exactly what cow to slaughter to find the necklace.

As the character of the wife, Fatima Ezzahra, with her hair down and regular jeans displayed during her story, raises her voice slightly as she glances around the room looking for her husband to share the news of the necklace about. She continues as the omniscient narrator:

The husband goes to the palace and tells the King where the necklace is, and to see if the man is right, the King slaughters the cow, only to find the necklace in the cow's stomach. The King is very happy because the Princess was so sad that the necklace was gone.

After this event, and after getting the reward for finding the necklace, people start a rumor that the man is a carpenter by day but he is actually a wizard—how else could he know that the necklace would be found in the stomach of a cow? The Vizir of the King is suspicious that the man is not a wizard after all, and this Vizir hires 40 assassins to try to kill the "wizard" man. Because the man's wife is in the palace all day and because she is a smart woman, she discovers the Vizir's plot to sabotage her husband. For the first plot, she hears that *that* night, an assassin will be coming to their house, and that the Vizir will do this for at least 40 nights with increasing numbers of assassins. After she leaves her job at the palace that day, she goes to her husband and tells him to go out and buy 40 sheep, and then he should keep the sheep in the central courtyard of their house. For the first night of the plot, the Vizir tells one assassin to go to the man's house, enter the house from the roof, and kill the man. That night, the man's wife hears the assassin on the roof, and she says to her husband, "Go and get your knife, you need to kill one tonight…" The man does not follow his wife's orders, but upon hearing this, the first assassin leaves the house and decides that the next night he will bring along

156

one more assassin to kill the man. Each night, the assassins hear the wife say, "Oh, go get your knife, there are [number] that need to be killed tonight…"—the number always reflects the number of assassins present on the roof, but the wife, trying not to alarm her husband, makes her husband believe that he just needs to kill some of the sheep he brought to the house.

While performing the story, Fatima Ezzahra decides to mimic sneaking footsteps as she describes how the assassins go on the roof of the man and woman's house. She walks to the left side of the room during the first night, only to do the same motion toward the right side of the room when she mentions the second night the assassins come. After all the sneaking footsteps, she continues:

> After this same scenario happens for 40 consecutive nights, the assassins and the King further believe this man to be a wizard. However, the Vizir is not interested in being outdone. The Vizir convinces the King to ask the man to come back to the palace one more time. For the next challenge to prove that the man was not a wizard, he decides to bury three jars filled with three different materials in the ground. The Vizir says that if the man can guess what is in all three jars, the Vizir will give up his job to the "wizard" man. (fieldnotes; 1/15/2017)

The audience, enrapt in the tale and wondering if the man gets away with the envious Vizir wandering around the setting, are all turned toward Fatima Ezzahra for her to continue.

However, because I was unable to really understand the ending of the tale, I will switch now to an explanation that Mehdi provided me after hearing this story. Because I asked about the meaning of the story, Mehdi decided to go through the end of the story with me to make sure I understood the point of what happens:

> The Vizir tells a servant, "Ok, let's bring three pots. Put honey in one, put butter in another, and put tar in the last one." After this is done and the pots are buried in

157

the ground, the Vizir asks the ["wizard"] man to guess what each of the buried jars holds. For your reference, Erin, in our culture, we have the significance of honey, butter, and tar. Sometimes the situation might be honey: easy, sweet. It might turn out to be butter, which is a little bit hard. Then, the situation could turn out to be tar: dead and tricky. So, that's what the man said: "Well, the first one has got to be honey. The second one is butter, while the last one is definitely tar." And the Vizir said, "You guessed it!" (interview, 3/10/2017)

So, one evening when I was meeting up with Mehdi El Ghaly for an interview, I couldn't help but ask him about this story that I had heard recently. While I had never heard him tell this specific story, I knew that he had been practicing storytelling for over 5 years—meaning he had probably heard the story a few times when working with others if it wasn't one of his usual stories. I needed to satiate this feeling of misunderstanding, particularly because I felt as someone studying storytellers, I should understand the stories and morals being expressed. My question to him about the story was, of course, not a simple one. I asked him, "What was the meaning of this story? How did the man know that honey would be in the first jar?" Fortunately, Mehdi obliged by explaining the more intricate elements of the story to me:

> The substances in the jar were actually mirroring the situations that the man had found himself in during the story. The first jar is honey. This first jar corresponded with the time when his wife told him about the cow eating the Princess' necklace—it was a lucky, sweet situation because the man and his wife got a reward for knowing where to find the necklace. The second jar, butter, corresponded with the second event with the assassins: he was sort of lucky because his wife knew what was happening with the assassins, meaning it would be like butter. It was not sweet and easy, but his wife was strategic and they were able to keep the man from getting killed. The last jar, tar, corresponded to this event of guessing the buried jars. He got into trouble by being challenged by the Vizir—this is like tar. This is an example of why certain cultural references cannot be translated directly, but they can be highlighted in more of a theatrical

158

way. I might stop and say, "Honey: that means it was sweet and easy. Butter, thick a little bit. Tar, it was all dark, thick, and sounded bad." But then the man got all of this because he was referencing all his encounters and all the situations from the story. (interview, 3/10/2017)

Mehdi emphasizes that this part of the story is reflective of the rest of the story in general; hence, why it is important to know that in Moroccan culture there is special significance to things being called honey, butter, and tar. Without getting a good explanation of the significance during the first time I heard this story, I was confused about how it was so easy for the man to guess what were in the jars. I questioned whether the protagonist of the story was, in fact, a wizard, and if I had missed the point of the story this whole time?

Cultural Translation: Miscommunication and Violence

This instance of misunderstanding also brought me to think deeper about the process storytellers go through when they are tasked with translating ideas that could be incomprehensible or not fully understood outside of their own context. Said Faiq makes the argument that "misunderstandings are said to derive from incompatibilities in processing of media which carries them: languages" (2004: 1). He discusses how some theorists of translation argued that translation should be a primarily cultural act due to the universal nature of culture around the world. He rejects this claim. However, the meeting place between these particulars and universals is where Anna Tsing notes that there is "friction", that "rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; one stick alone is just a stick" (2005: 5). She uses this analogy to note that frictions, in many iterations, remind us that the meeting between two things may not be equal and they could represent

159

heterogeneous ideologies, perspectives, materials, and so on, but also that these frictions or meetings can lead to new compilations and complications of culture and power. I find Faiq's aforementioned quotation about "misunderstanding" to be one of the many iterations of "friction" in linguistic and cultural knowledge realms. But like Tsing, I argue this can be a productive friction, not stemming only from two contained items but from the meeting of different realms of knowledges, from which emerges a fire of new understandings.

There have been many times in talking with Mehdi and other Moroccan collaborators where they say to me, "Oh, I'm sorry, but if I tried to translate this to English, it wouldn't make sense" (personal communication, 4/15/2017). The problem arises from different cultures having different cultural repertoires that arise from teaching and learning that occurs with deep interaction in a language and place (Basso 1996; Dingwaney 1995). Dingwaney and Venuti both warn and argue that there is an inevitable "violence" that occurs in translation from non-Western to Western languages, particularly by Western individuals. For example, Venuti (1996) writes: "the aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same…and this aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text…" (196). However, in the discussion they focus on the violence done by the foreign translator to the culture he or she is translating (Venuti 1995; Venuti 1996). While the translation I discuss here examines non-native English speakers translating stories from their native language (here: Moroccan Colloquial Arabic) into English, something can be said about the homogenization of different practices through process of globalization and the violence that occurs with this type of

circulation. Something is nearly always lost in translation. Is it possible to ever translate

from one language to another and not have some loss of any kind? Or in a positive light,

can we think of these moments, individuals, and groups as starting their own zones of

friction to create even more complicated and intriguing cultural interactions, both for

themselves and also their listeners?

Combatting Miscommunication: Global Insertions

When I asked Mehdi about his process for translating stories for his

performances, he said that in the beginning, he had to think clearly about how he wanted

to tell stories. He said there is always a tension between translating the story word-for-

word and telling the story by making sure there is more cultural translation. As our

conversation continued, I was fascinated with one of his answers to my questions about

cultural translation.

Mehdi explained that he translates concepts and ideas with a particular culture in

mind, or he draws elements from popular culture from around the world if something

seems impossible to translate literally:

> Well, it's really interesting because at first I found it really hard to tell certain
> jokes or certain elements or certain cultural features or symbols. So, either…I
> explain a little bit about what [a concept or word] is without going too much from
> the stories, or I do a little different explanation because I love pop culture. So I go
> and look for that element that may have the same link or the same feature [in
> another place or culture], and I bring it from that culture [to my story]. It might be
> an emoji, it might be a character in a famous series, or famous music…(interview,
> 3/10/2017)

Mehdi explains that he uses foreign references in order to make his storytelling more

applicable outside of one specific cultural context. When he encounters a situation where

there is no way he can see to incorporate a joke or a cultural reference into a story that comes from Moroccan culture specifically, he chooses to incorporate an element of either global popular culture or United States popular culture. By doing this, he attempts to make more connections between the stories he is telling to his audience.

During my two and a half years of fieldwork in Morocco, Mehdi was one of the storytellers I had the opportunity to meet with several times. Through his performances and our interactions with one another, I became aware of his passion for storytelling and interest in U.S. pop culture. As a side note, Mehdi was constantly informing me about pop culture coming from the States. Since I wasn't keeping up with what was happening, he decided to continuously inform me about new music and popular culture emerging in the United States. I started feeling completely disconnected with popular culture, particularly when he would ask me things like, "Did you hear the new Lil' Pump and Kanye West song?" To which I always had to admit that I didn't even know what a Lil' Pump was, or something along those lines.

These elements of our interactions are intriguing, particularly thinking through the earlier discussion of language politics in Morocco. Why, out of all of the languages spoken and used in Morocco, does Mehdi choose to be immersed into pop culture coming primarily out of the United States? Politics and of language use are prominent within Mehdi's use of English over French in his translations (e.g. Badry 2007). Upon hearing Mehdi's response to bringing in cultural references, I am immediately reminded of other comments he made over the years about differences between the use of French and English, most notably when he told me: "French is for love and fu-fu, but English is

strong and makes a point" (interview, 2/26/2017). This quotation demonstrates the strong

connections different individuals have tied to language use, and how their proficiency in

these languages or comfort in using the language shapes their attitudes towards their

inclusion.

When Mehdi goes about translating different elements by using "global

insertions" which give a sort of alternative cultural translation, he understands his usage

as contributing to cultural exchange:

> Then, I tend to borrow from the culture, but in the end, I'm sort of enriching both
> cultures because we have similarities more than differences, but we just need to
> clear the dust in order to see them. I definitely explain a little bit, when it's a
> ceremony, it is to be explained, but when it's like something relatable in the other
> culture, I use that... (Mehdi el Ghaly, interview, 3/10/2017)

This idea of "enriching both cultures" through "borrowing" is provocative within our

intensely globalized context. While he may be glossing over the politics of his own

inclusion of foreign references in his work, Mehdi is also someone who has, for the last

few years, been creating his own stories in English for his performances. He has become

fluent enough in the English language to include many different pop culture references

coming from the United States in his daily life—so why would he not include them in his

stories? He also notes that by incorporating elements from all cultures that he is

interacting with in the story, he is, in fact, enriching both cultures by exposing the

cultural similarities rather than emphasizing the differences. When he encounters a

situation where there is no way he can see to incorporate a joke or a cultural reference

into a story that comes from Moroccan culture specifically, he chooses to incorporate an

element of either global popular culture or English/American popular culture to try to

connect with his listeners. By doing this, he attempts to make more connections between the stories he is telling and his audience. Without making some of the cultural references more upfront for the audience, Mehdi worries that he will not be able to connect with the audience, thus losing the point of his event and the point of his effort.

Combatting Miscommunication: Cultural Explanations

Abdelkabir, another storyteller collaborator, spoke to me about how he approaches translating or explaining cultural elements in his translations:

> So, I personally like explaining but I get different reactions from the audience. So most of the time, they feel happy that they know more about the culture, because it is those little things that are specific that you share. They learn from it. When you tell them about prayer 5 times a day, they might know about it, but they might not know about ablution. They would just think that we go and pray, but ablution is a process…I feel that they are a good addition. If I was in their shoes, I would like to know about them, but sometimes you get bad feedback. Some people are there either to laugh or to be entertained and that's it. (interview, 3/21/2017)

In this way, Abdelkabir's descriptions of terms function as a re-footing of the story and the cultural learning process for those unfamiliar. Said is thinking about the different ways he interacts with audiences. He particularly pays attention to giving a solid foundation of information, attempting to lose none of the cultural intricacies in his translations. From his example above, he feels that just saying "prayer" instead of "ablution" gives the audience an unclear view of what is actually occurring in the story. While ablution is a process of purifying an individual and is done before prayer in mosques, ablution has other complexities in other contexts, so he provides the necessary information for his listeners to understand precisely what is happening.

164

In the same interview, Abdelkabir mentioned a story where he brings up The Pilgrimage, which is the pilgrimage that all Muslims are required to take at least once in their lives to the holy city of Mecca, located in Saudi Arabia. Both ablution and the Pilgrimage have religious connotations that could be common knowledge if listeners understand aspects and practices of Islam. However, these elements are not common knowledge for people living outside of a religious, namely Islamic, context. Said uses these moments of discussion for enlightening those who "learn from it," while also making sure the connotations of different words are kept and understandable for the listeners.

Similar to Abdelkabir, Mehdi mentions the importance of audience understanding these cultural concepts—if you do not have the attention and understanding from the audience, the performance of the story may not be enjoyable or enrich someone's perspective:

> And especially when these cultural references or these cultural situations are not explained well, the story falls flat…The more the person is experienced, the more they have a cultural background. Because there are a lot of Moroccans who can know stories and who can perform them, but if they don't have a cultural background, they don't know, ok, so let's tell the story from a cultural point of view. The things that may not actually make sense to the foreigner, let's try to have them make sense in English. If they do that, they will be successful. (interview, 3/10/2017)

He wants to use the cultural translation of pertinent terms in order to enhance the listening of the audience. He also expanded this discussion by noting that he perceives his translation as visual translation. By using this approach, he describes his stories as texts that include appropriate literal word translations, but he will also include more explicit

cultural translations of practices that are important to the meaning and narrative of the story. The "visual" aspect of the translation comes from how he considers his body within the storytelling event. Mehdi notes that body language and performance practices impact the amount of information that people receive from the story. From this interview, I understand Mehdi to define a successful story as one performed well, but also one that is understood and appreciated by the audience.

At the same time, Abdelkabir notes that explanations can interrupt the flow of the overall story. He said that as a storyteller, he has to gauge the time when a longer explanation of storytelling elements is necessary for the audience because, as we discussed previously, you also want the audience to understand the story. However, you also have to gauge when these elements are an unnecessary complication to the story. Abdelkabir says that explanations can interrupt the telling of a story, but we also must think more broadly about how telling a story can have real impacts on how the audience receives it. If you get a bad reaction from some, but a better reception from others, how can it seem like a bad thing to include these cultural comments? He understands "bad reactions" in two ways: 1) bad reaction to the story due to lack of information and cultural translation, or 2) bad reaction to being bored by the inclusion of the cultural knowledge or interruptions in the story. No matter what the bad reaction comes from, a storyteller needs to convey a story that keeps people entertained and which also brings the listener to a point or ending place where they can reflect on the story and its relevance to their own experiences.

Practicing storytelling in a place like Marrakech, which is known for its focus on the tourism industry, it has become commonplace to encounter foreigners looking for storytelling or other cultural experiences. These youth are working in a field where they really do need to balance audience understanding and entertainment value, particularly in one of my fieldsites where part of the emphasis is to encourage people to come back (or tell their friends to come) a few times a week to a tourist café.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have seen the different issues and complexities that young Moroccan storytellers go through in attempting to translate and create meaning with Moroccan stories to both Moroccan and non-Moroccan audiences. Stemming from a case study looking at misunderstanding caused from the story "The Wizard and the Vizir," I discussed the intricacies in cultural translation of stories by youth storytellers in Marrakech. While the case study showed how my misunderstanding brought about a "fire of new understandings," it also brought the positives and negatives of "global insertions" and cultural explanations found in youthful storytellers' stories. The storytellers are tasked with needing to balance the entertainment factor with the cultural explanation factor. Benjamin notes that the most important element translators must consider is the intention behind the language that is to be translated, and by considering this intention, only then are you able to create an "echo of the original" which does not "cover the original, does not block its light…but allows the pure language to shine upon the original all the more fully" (1968: 74). By engaging and interacting with storytelling, and in the case of this paper the act of translating storytelling for a variety of audiences, we find the

167

value of connection and knowledge with storytelling as not only showing people about culture, but in many ways expanding perspectives of knowledge and bridging seemingly different culture practices and behaviors.

Both storytellers from this section, Mehdi and Abdelkabir, are concerned with passing along culture while telling these stories but also being entertaining. Translation from Moroccan Colloquial Arabic to English does not simply correspond to the translation of individual words and actions, but the content of the stories may need much more time and concern when being introduced to audiences who are not familiar with different aspects of Moroccan society and cultures. Abdelkabir highlights it is necessary to explain certain cultural elements because, for example, people "might know the word pilgrimage, but they are not necessarily familiar with us going to Saudi Arabia…" (interview, 3/21/2017). Mehdi is also concerned with incorporating explanation of cultural elements, but he also uses what I term "global insertions," referring to cultural elements he substitutes within stories when he determines that certain local cultural elements will be hard to explain for his international audiences. Either way, both storytellers spoke about the necessity of making story elements understandable for those in the broader audience, for local, international, or mixed audiences.

Because storytellers hope to transport you to another time and place with their stories, the performance needs to speak to the audiences they serve. In one interview with Mehdi, he said: "and as I told you there is a proverb that says, 'he's a good storyteller who can turn man's ears into his eyes,' so if I'm having trouble with translating it, how about creating an image for you and you can translate that [part of the story with your

own images in mind]?... And if that fell flat, then your whole story fell flat" (interview; 3/10/2017). At the end of the day, we all want to interact with the stories that stand tall, not the stories that "fall flat."

Chapter 7: The Storyteller: Economic Precarity and Transmutability

"Yes, I'll be happy to help and share the little knowledge I have about storytelling. I haven't been doing much lately, so *it will be good to remember storytelling again…*"
—Karim[11]

Introduction

When I first started coming to Morocco**,** I was interested in how, or if, people who identified as artists could make a living in Morocco doing what they loved. A now close friend of mine, after I told him that I was researching these questions, promptly and memorably answered, "The answer is no. Your research is done. There is no way people make a living off of arts here" (Reda, personal communication, 8/7/2015). I found this response intriguing—not that it was unheard of for artists to be in precarious situations due to market fluctuations, but how was it so easy for Reda to tell me that it was impossible to make a living in the arts in Morocco? As he is someone who works with art collectives, I knew he understood how the system worked, but I was also finding that certain arts communities were growing in Marrakech, particularly when looking at the Marrakech Biennale and the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair. While I am writing this, the Marrakech Biennale has been discontinued since 2018, but the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair has been thriving in Marrakech.

As my project changed from investigating various types of arts – particularly festivals, oral arts, and contemporary arts – and became fixated on *fen al hikaya*, I became even more preoccupied by the intersection of economic opportunity and arts. *Hikayat,* and its seemingly diminishing iteration in *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Marrakech,

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[11] Personal communication; 2/18/2018; emphasis added by author

was already a craft of note because of the amount of press discussing the disappearance of storytelling from the public sphere in Morocco (Hathaway 2015; Idrissi 2014; Razavi 2015).

Youth are particularly confronted with economic precarity. Economic, political, and social policies in Morocco since its independence in 1956 have not created the necessary infrastructure to deal with the large population of youth currently attempting to create their livelihoods in Morocco, also known as a "youth bulge" (Cohen and Jaidi 2006; Fuller 2004). When I would speak with youth storytellers, they all seemed very interested in the practice of storytelling, but something seemed strange when they discussed their commitments to the practice: not many saw storytelling, or wanted to see storytelling, as a long-term career option but instead saw it as a way to participate in a practice they held close to their hearts. While this may not be a career option like the older storytellers who used to perform in the Square, this practice by youth may be a way that youth are participating in creative industries in times highlighting flexibility in work and living situations.

Throughout my fieldwork, many youth who were previously or who currently are taking part in these practices have changed their concentration from creative practices to alternate career paths, showing that their participation can contribute to their participation in other endeavors. Many of my collaborators noted that storytelling was providing them with public speaking skills that were helping them in their lives, but this was always mentioned in passing that they were now more easily able to speak in front of larger groups of people. Besides public speaking skills from performing, these young

storytellers are developing fluency in other languages and fluency in marketing themselves as individuals worth listening to.

Building off of the last chapter which discussed the considerations youth storytellers have when choosing how to perform a story—both by deciding on a language of performance but also the vocabulary choices they will make within that performance—in this chapter, I discuss how storytelling provides youth with a way to participate in greater society, find a way to belong, and learn translatable skills for other careers and job opportunities. I outline the economic hardships for Moroccan youth by providing detailed background on the systems that have resulted in the young bulge. I use information from interviews to argue that these practices do not necessarily produce sustainable solutions for careers but that participating in storytelling becomes more of a role through which storytellers gain transmutable skills, leading to long-term benefits for these young storytellers.

Abdelkabir and Systems of Precarity

Before moving into the macro-level understanding of precarity in Morocco, I will share one story of a collaborator I worked with in Marrakech. Abdelkabir was one of the earliest interlocutors I met in Marrakech, and we met after I attended one of his storytelling events at a local café. I was impressed by his engagement in the location, which was not organized in a way to really be able to engage with the audience—there were many wall segments and supports framing the views of the audience. That being said, he made significant efforts to look each audience member in the eye when

performing, portraying his passion and determination for an acceptable storytelling experience for the audience (Berger 2009; Schechner 1985).

Abdelkabir is passionate about storytelling, but he did not grow up in a place where he experienced storytelling all the time in public squares. Abdelkabir is from the Middle Atlas, coming from a family where no one else has ever gone to school past high school. How did he end up in Marrakech training with a Master storyteller? Abdelkabir finished high school in the Middle Atlas, and because public college tuition is free for Moroccan students, he moved to Marrakech to live with his aunt while he earned his degree—she represented the closest relative who lived nearest to a public university. As he became more and more interested in learning English, he began to see advertisements and hear about storytelling apprenticeship programs, but he was already finding it hard to balance schoolwork with responsibilities he held as a man in the house in Marrakech. Eventually, he was able to join the apprenticeship program, and through showing his passion and talent for memorizing stories, he was able to perform and earn about 150 dirhams per evening he performed (Moroccan currency; 10 dirhams equals about $1.04 USD). This performance salary was an improvement from what he was making before by doing odd jobs in the neighborhood, like helping to clean houses or fix bikes or take photographs for people for events. Most of his salary went right back into his aunt's household, so his budget for other things, like updated camera technology was put on the backburner.

As he continued to perform in English and continue to improve his English and photography skills, Abdelkabir was interviewed for a job with students who study abroad

to Morocco from the United States. His role as a performer helped him be the ideal candidate for a job teaching youth from the U.S. about Morocco, and Abdelkabir is currently working towards his Ph.D in Linguistics in Morocco.

While this story of Abdelkabir is not exceptional, it demonstrates the intricacies of the responsibilities of Moroccan youth in their homes. Abdelkabir may be learning English and going to college, but due to different infrastructural and administrative policies, he is able to do that for no charge. Even when speaking with Fatima Ezzarhra, another close collaborator, she noted how her salary for storytelling goes back into her family budget to make sure the entire family has enough for necessary items. Through proficiency in English, these young people have found other avenues through which to find alternative opportunities.

Brief Information on the Economic and Social Situation for Youth in Morocco

The overall economic system in Morocco, as seen from the view of the World Bank and IMF, has not developed sufficiently in the years post-Independence (Cohen and Jaidi 2006). Through the efforts of many 5-year plans in the post-Independence period between the 1950s and 1970s, Morocco implemented new domestic, economic, and social policies in order to control "economic diversification, modernization, and social investment"; within these policies, they favored economic growth policies in hopes that this would lead to sustainable economic growth, as well as increase in human capital and industrialization (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007; Cohen and Jaidi 2006: 35). Scholars note that while some implementations by the IMF, specifically in China, seemed to boost the economy and create less poverty than previously experienced in the country, other

implementations of IMF policies with lacking oversight in places like Russia in the 1990s
left more poverty and disparities than were previously seen (Cohen 2004; Stigliz 2002).

Unfortunately, these plans did not ensure development of any of the targeted
sectors in Morocco, leaving the country highly in debt, without developed education
systems, and not competitive in the global market (Boudarmbat and Ajbilou 2007). This
perhaps should not come as a shock when reflecting on systems within global capitalism,
particularly entities such as the IMF which thrive on keeping their lenders in debt.

Cohen and Jaidi discuss the history of economic development in Morocco, and
note that the dependence on the "often languishing textile and tourist industries shows
that the state has not encouraged sufficient diversification into industries that require
higher skill levels and also yield greater income" (Cohen and Jaidi 2006: 33). One
research collaborator, Said, tried to describe, very simply, the reasons why Morocco was
not more competitive on the global market. He tied his economic growth of Morocco
analogy to tagines, which are the most common meal I ate when I lived in Morocco.
Depending on what vegetables and potentially meat you have in the house, you cook
these ingredients over the stove in a particular tagine dish. This results in a delicious
meal, but not one that requires much money to produce. He said, "What do Moroccans
make the most of? Tagines. They make millions of tagines a day. That's why Morocco
cannot be competitive. We make the most quantity of something that we make a profit of
10dhs on" (personal communication, 5/15/16). Though he paints a simplified picture of
what actually happens in a country's economy, Said's sentiments seem to demonstrate

the disappointment with the current state of society and his lack of opportunity within the greater system.

The current youth population living in North Africa and the Middle East face grim economic prospects upon attempting to enter into the job market because the youth bulge facilitates steep competition for jobs and housing, keeping youth from successfully attaining certain steps that socially recognize them as adults. Many scholars from policy and development backgrounds discuss the impacts of the youth bulge on population and society throughout North Africa and the Middle East, and attempt to create models and equations to estimate the future impacts of this group on different societies across the region. Fuller (2004) uses a chart from the UN World Population Statistics to show the estimated change in percentage over the next decades for youth aged 24 and under in a variety of countries across North Africa and the Middle East. This information depicts a potential future outlined through numbers, noting that in the UN's estimation, all of these nations will see a drop in youth cohort size, with the exception of Yemen. This chart displays the percentage of population under 30 years old in Morocco in 2001 as 55.1%, lowering in 2020 to 43.4%, and lowering again in 2030 to 38.4% (Fuller 2004: 6).

As a result of these previously unsuccessful economic policies, Morocco does not currently have the resources or infrastructure to successfully integrate its youth population into society in terms of jobs, economic opportunity, and social policies that reflect contemporary life. The youth bulge in Morocco is ushering in a time where youth are not employed and have no choice but to extend their liminal status between adolescence and adulthood, making youth a stage of longer duration than in previous

176

generations (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007; Baune 2005; Bayat and Herrera 2010; Boudarmbat and Ajbilou 2007).

Because a certain quality of life is not being met in Morocco, there are feelings of alienation and an outflow of citizens, resulting in the loss of human capital for the kingdom (Bennani-Chraïbi 2000; Chaaban 2009; Neyzi 2005). Problems associated with the youth bulge extend to education, including the fact that many societies cannot train enough teachers to create a successful education system. Individuals can gain degrees, but they are not able to get enough attention from mentors, nor enough sought-after specialized knowledge to contribute in productive ways in society (Assaad and Roudi-Fahimi 2007; Cohen 2004; Fuller 2004). This creates an imbalance between the skills needed for new enterprises and those available from currently educated individuals.

Creative Practices and Storytelling in Morocco

Building on the previous discussion of the current general societal conditions impacting youth in Morocco, I will move more specifically to thinking about economics and the youth bulge in relation to creative arts, specifically *hikayat*. From the previous description of lack of opportunities and grim unemployment prospects for youth in the labor market, we can assume that opportunities in the creative industries are also suffering from a lack of investment and sponsorship.

Practices, such as storytelling, are part of a very individualized workforce that "creative economy" scholars and policy-makers tout as the best way to escape constraints of state administrations, whether that is true or not (McRobbie 2004). Many scholars discussing the impacts of creative economies discuss how work within a larger corporate

framework is increasingly individualized in this manner, where individuals are hired for

temporary contracts from a larger entity. If storytellers are self-employed and lack a

stable corporate sponsorship, what kind of labor force do they represent in this new

economy? How are these individuals, not only in Marrakech but around the world,

framed according to their endeavors? I hypothesize that involvement in the arts uniquely

contributes to youth participation in the national imaginary, allowing them to create

spaces of social integration through arts practices. However, while they may contribute to

a national imaginary, is their group labor recognized in a way that benefits their practices

and the continuation of their performances or is their labor exploited by other parties

without recognition or support?

Throughout my fieldwork, I was able to work with about 20 storytellers. From

that number, almost all the storytellers I worked with during my fieldwork have moved

on from storytelling. Many of the storytellers have stopped performing and received jobs

in teaching or tourism industries, while others have continued jobs in restaurants or cafes

which they held concurrently while previously storytelling. This is not a new trend by

any means. Two of the major reasons for the disappearance of storytelling from

Marrakech's famous *Jemaa el Fna* Square is attributed to the decline in tips made by the

storytellers and the disappointment of a broken promise from the government to give

performers in the Square a living stipend. Two of the last storytellers from the Square,

Baris and Azalia, have been vocal, speaking in videos and doing work with documentary

makers and artists to try to make storytelling, and performing in the Square in general,

move back toward arts, instead of on their current trajectory to tourist spectacle (KechTV

2015). The spectacle of the Square walks to line between an actuality and a desired imaginary, because, as Debord (2005) describes, spectacle is indeed a construction but is also informed by reality. These two storytellers, Baris and Azalia, spent their lives working in the Square, and see that currently, that type of lifestyle is unsustainable. They are also aware that cultural *hakawatis* are slowly leaving the Square behind, while it gets passed on to snake charmers, contemporary musicians, acrobats, and other Instagram-able sites, even though the Square has been designated a UNESCO Intangible Heritage Site since 2001 (Beardslee 2016; Kapchan 2014).

Writing from the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer offered the concept of a "culture industry" as a way to show the linkages between cultural practices and the economy, all while critiquing the mass production and commodification of cultural texts for national and political motives (Banks 2007). Like his predecessor Walter Benjamin (1936[1969]), Adorno argued that the mass circulation of cultural texts thanks to new means of production produced a cycle with two outcomes: not only were the producers of cultural texts alienated from this labor, but their productions were themselves inauthentic. However, their arguments, or cynicisms, do not take into account the individual who could potentially evade the culture industry, thereby avoiding commodification and alienation. Moreover, Adorno assumed the presence of a singular totalizing culture industry, which simplifies what is actually a dynamic and overlapping set of culture industries (Banks 2007).

Richard Florida has offered a different means for interpreting the nexus of creativity and labor, the concept of the "creative economy" (Florida 2003). Florida's

179

ideas assess how the US and UK have created systems that reward creativity in all realms of work. Contract laborers are glorified, while at the same time creative labor of individuals deepens creative labor's links to the market (Brouillette 2009). In a 2001 Green Paper by the UK, the administration stated: "Everyone is creative" (DCMS 2001; McRobbie 2007), promoting creativity in work. Angela McRobbie notes that this is a clear sign of the UK wanting to become connected to new technologies, and to take advantage of groups, specifically young people, who are finding stable jobs of the past to be "tedious," or are simply not finding them. These young people are seen as having less educational and cultural capital, so they are forced to consider other options which can include unpaid internships that are not always rewarded with a stable job at its completion (McRobbie 2007).

A commonality between these two models is the strong prevalence of precarity. Andrew Ross describes the origin of the term precarity coming from the Latin verb *precor*, meaning "to be forced to beg and pray to keep one's job" (2009: 34). Within the post-Fordist age of production, particularly in the US, UK, and other industrialized countries, precarity has become more and more prevalent (Nielson & Rossiter 2005; Ross 2009).

Many of the storytellers I have collaborated with at some point have needed to get full-time jobs, and they have much less time for storytelling. When I approached Karim about meeting for another interview after we hadn't met for about 6 months, he said: "Yes, I'll be happy to help and share the little knowledge I have about storytelling. I haven't been doing much lately, so *it will be good to remember storytelling again…*"

(personal communication; 2/18/2018; emphasis added). Since our initial meetings, Karim started first working at a coffee shop in Marrakech, and subsequently left that job to move back to the town he grew up in outside of Marrakech to teach English at a high school. He moved back to be close to family, but he is not finding creative outlets for his stories. Instead he is finding himself craving storytelling but having no time to pursue performances in Marrakech, which is between an hour and an hour and 20 minutes from his town.

Another collaborator of mine, Mehdi, has, for two years, been working at a riad, which functions like a bed and breakfast. At first, he took this job because he had graduated from college, and upon doing a year of focusing solely on storytelling, he was finding he needed another sort of income to help out at home and to be able to fund his own travels. Almost immediately, he was promoted to manager at the riad and since then has had less and less time for storytelling. He explained his situation to me as follows:

> I mean…now, I have a job. I have more of a fixed schedule. Does it prevent me from doing what I wish to do? Definitely not. Does it slow down what I wish to do? Of course, yes…I might be getting money, if I wanted to get money…from my work and from performing, but then I will be exhausted so my creative self, or my creative zone, is going to be demolished (The Storyteller Mehdi El Ghaly, personal communication, 6/9/18)

Mehdi is one storyteller whose mission was to make storytelling more popular again in Marrakech through innovation. His journey as a storyteller began after his mother told him the story of a boy who did not have a father like the other kids did—he was this boy. Since hearing this story, and while growing up, constantly moving through *Jemaa el Fna* Square, he knew he needed to pursue this craft in order share his stories, as well as give a

181

voice to those who had none. Whenever he speaks about storytelling, he notes that it is impossible to make a living out of this craft because unlike in the past, today everyone has access to entertainment through their phones, the internet, television, and so on. However, he notes, in past times, before cell phones and other media were commonplace, people listened to stories to be entertained and to see the production as it was unfolding— they didn't have to wait months to see the production like a movie and didn't get any teasers about what was coming next like advertisements for TV shows.

Mehdi and Karim represent two storytellers who, while passionate and motivated to continue storytelling, have had to make other choices to have more stable lives. Creative industries, as defined by the British Arts Council in 2011, are described as industries "based on individual creativity, skill, and talent with the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property" (dePeuter 2011:418). These types of industries have seen a surge in production in recent decades and invite flexibility to scheduling and work. However, this flexibility creates a precarious situation for youth who want to pursue a craft out of passion because they also have no stability in income, no separation between work and non-work time, and little time to find collective communities. This type of labor, independent and self-scheduled, requires nothing from an employer, but in return does not find profit during lulls in work scheduling. However, while these performances may not bring stable performance careers, throughout my research, I've also seen how these young storytellers utilize their skills learned while storytelling to benefit themselves in other careers.

Transmutability of Storytelling

From what I've seen during fieldwork, I consider storytelling as a transmutable

role for these young storytellers. The ways in which these storytellers gain skills useful to

their globalized worldview demonstrates their commitment to being globalized

individuals seeking opportunities that may take them far from Morocco.

One element brought up when I asked Mehdi about the benefits and skills he has

developed during his time as a storyteller focused on his authority over himself and his

performances:

> Storytelling has given me this, I would say, authority on me. And in fact, if you
> have a story, share it. Even if it's boring, it's cool. 'Cuz whenever any story is
> boring, it depends on the audience and how they feel it [to make it successful].
> Your story may inspire some but [some] may say it's stupid. So your story may
> inspire, because stories are inspiring. (personal communication, 8/30/15)

Mehdi attributes storytelling to a better sense of self, giving him "an authority on me."

This authority over himself and his own stories was something that was brought up many

times over the course of my fieldwork with many of the storytellers, but particularly with

Mehdi. Not only does this relate to understanding oneself, but his authority also extends

to the performance context, as part of storytelling is the process of being able to reiterate

the points but also connect with the audience. Many scholars note that the term

'performance' has undertones which give the implication that someone performing has

competence in their role (Royce 2004). Mehdi notes that everyone may have a story, and

he feels that everyone should share these stories, even if everyone does not necessarily

enjoy it. The feelings audiences have toward stories can relate to the performance style

of the storyteller and the way they use their craft to connect with audiences. One of the

most significant elements of a successful performance are the connections created through relationships between the storyteller and the audience members.

The first time I spoke to Mehdi about his storytelling practice, he spoke to me at length about the confidence in public speaking he has developed. He said:

> Because storytelling, you can use it as a tool to do public speaking. It gets me to stand here and speak in front of you. I did not always have these skills. I used to have butterflies, they were flying all over the place and I was like no, come on guys. This was my voice back then, but now I am say yes, this and that, and go over there and be this and that. (personal communication, 8/30/15)

As he has continued storytelling through the years, it seems that Mehdi has been very aware of different skills he has developed through storytelling, including public speaking. This echoes sentiments from Bauman (1977) where he notes that an intriguing part of verbal art forms and verbal art performers is how performance roles can actually overtake the roles usually attributed to different social positions, in effect making a storyteller's entire life a storytelling event. An example he uses in the text focuses on Sammy Davis, Jr., who reportedly said that as soon has he leaves his own front door, he's "on" (Bauman 1977: 31). Victor Turner echoes this blurring between performance and other contexts, noting that performances are the "basic stuff of social life" seen "through the performance of roles, through performance that breaks roles, and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status" (1987: 81). The perpetual performance of being a storyteller implies the passion with which Mehdi practices his craft and reflects an increase in self-awareness from the times before he became a storyteller, when he had butterflies flying all over the place.

184

One young woman storyteller I worked with, Fatima Ezzahra, noted that storytelling provided her with the English language skills and the confidence to speak in front of large groups of people (personal communication, 11/30/2016). She also voiced her enthusiasm for being able to tell stories to people in English, opening up many different audiences for her performances, noting that "because it's in English, it's not limited in Morocco, or it doesn't have a limited audience. Now it's like more, it's becoming bigger and bigger" (personal communication; 11/30/2016). Here, she discusses how telling stories in English makes the potential audience larger, and she brings the conversation back to the topic of global exchange and living in a globalized world. Not only is she interacting in a different language within a global network of storytellers and audiences, she is contributing to the circulation of stories through her practice. Unfortunately, shortly after conducting our only interview, I lost contact with her. She had explained to me that one of her goals was to travel to Asia and teach English, which she had already been able to do one other time. Her comments and goals demonstrate the transmutability and the opportunity storytelling practice can provide for young Moroccans. By gaining language proficiency and public speaking skills, she has the ability to travel out of the country in order to teach English in another country, expanding her personal experiences but also expanding her potential audience for storytelling. I hope she met those goals and that is the reason why we never were able to connect again.

Many of the storytellers I work with have spoken to me about the goals they have to travel outside of Morocco to develop skills and perform stories. As noted earlier, both Mehdi and Karim have begun different career paths where their skills of public speaking

and also English language proficiency benefit their everyday performance. Both Karim and Mehdi have been able to leave Morocco for various amounts of time to participate in storytelling festivals or workshops. They have been able to prove their qualifications as ambassadors, particularly in programs conducted in English, providing them with opportunities for international travel, personal development, as well as storytelling development.

However, it was not an easy path for either of them. Both were, at one point, part of the same organization aimed at reviving storytelling practice in Morocco. From their activities, they were gathering momentum and applied to perform at an international storytelling festival in the United Kingdom. Their group earned a spot, only to have all four storytellers be denied visas to go abroad. Unfortunately, these transmutable skills are not always enough to guarantee the possibility of opportunities.

While these skills may not translate into international opportunities, I have seen how participation in arts and cultural practice have led my collaborators to other support communities. As discussed in relation to Shana Cohen's work (2004), I found that my collaborators were not as invested in being connected to society as they were wanting to be connected to the historical narrative of storytelling and also the arts networks in Marrakech. Mehdi discussed how he was able to find a sense of belonging with other artists in the city:

> I came in touch with what a lot of artists…they always treated me in a really cool way. I felt like I belonged to a tribe. And this tribe was always thinking about something bigger than you. And that is the point when everything shifted for me, and I started doing storytelling because...my story, which you know, it shifted me

and changed my whole life… I didn't want to belong to society or anything but I wanted to belong to what I do. (interview; 6/9/2018)

Mehdi ties a connection, not to society in ways that we would automatically think of when considering Anderson's (1991) conception of imagined communities, but instead links his belonging to his practice of storytelling which also links him to the greater community of artists in Marrakech and Morocco more broadly. His use of tribe here is interesting as someone who spent a long time interacting with my collaborators.

In many ways, he uses tribe to signal that there was a sort of coalition made amongst those he considered fellow tribe members, but this also references the 2017 TedXMarrakech theme, "Tribes and Trolls," during which Mehdi was asked to perform as a cultural performer[12]. His performance, which he called "The Tribe of Ten," focused on a family of 10 women, spanning different ages and personalities, but all still getting along like family, or perhaps like a tribe. The moral of the story leads you to discover that being true to yourself is the only true way to live, not by playing into the pettiness of others around you who envy you. While this story's moral does not speak directly to how Mehdi found his avenue of belonging, it does speak to the attitudes we should live by: do not be fake or envious because these behaviors change how others perceive you. In the same way, Mehdi, through storytelling and arts networks, found those who he knows will be true in their intentions toward him. For a variety of reasons, maybe one of which includes the precarity he feels on an everyday level, he does not feel the need to "belong

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[12] To see the video recording of Mehdi's performance, follow this link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pjFuLo4U3I

to society" but instead finds solace and community with those who appreciate what he does.

By taking up the transmutable role of storyteller to develop transmutable skills, these storytellers are finding ways to develop themselves in terms of skills but also in relation to community building. Youth employment precarity due to the youth bulge in Morocco is having lasting impacts on the types of lives youth choose to pursue in the country (Boudarmbat and Ajbilou 2007; Chaaban 2008). The economic development plans within Morocco and in other countries within the Middle East and North Africa have resulted in a situation where much of the youth populations in these countries have been unable to find the kind of stable work that previous generations would have been provided in order to put themselves fully into the adult category of citizens in the country.

I found in my fieldwork that many of my collaborators were not considering storytelling as a full-time career, but instead were pursuing storytelling to find an alternative route through which to continue to develop their own skills during this time of little opportunity. While both Karim and Mehdi were fortunate to find alternate careers when storytelling practice was not providing a stable income, other storytellers are still trying to find their way. However, the skills, such as public speaking skills, English language proficiency, and creating community connections through arts communities, have all resulted in these storytellers being able to develop themselves, both personally and professionally. In the same way that storytellers in the past needed to be global citizens, these young storytellers are using their developed skills to their advantage, whether it is to become teachers in Morocco or abroad or even just to travel to other

countries to seek opportunities with arts programs. My research demonstrated that youth involved in this storytelling practice felt motivated to do so because of connections with their elders and connection with the history, myths, and peoples of Morocco—however, these links were felt between people who were experiencing similar lives. Anderson (1991) speaks directly to the influence of imagined communities on our identities and how these imagined communities structure our lives even without the promise of ever meeting everyone within that community. These storytellers transition the skills necessary for storytelling into their future goals and endeavors, further contributing to their status internationally savvy individuals.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

During my fieldwork from 2016-2018, my research on young storytellers in Marrakech, Morocco, sought to understand some far reaching questions of why and how young people were participating in storytelling performance. This study was spurred by the popular discourse stating that storytellers were disappearing from Morocco, while I was also hearing that a new generation of storytellers was emerging. From the discussions in this dissertation, I argue that youthful storytellers are transforming storytelling practice yet are continually haunted by past imaginings of the storyteller as a figure and associations of working in the city which claims *Jemaa el Fna* Square as its heart; these young storytellers are transforming the practice in terms of re-placing these performances outside of *Jemaa el Fna* Square but are also re-voicing these stories in different languages, which leads them to build skills to use to their advantage in times of significant economic precarity in Morocco. These conclusions not only inform life in Morocco but also speak to the intricately interconnected world that we all inhabit, and, in particular, how forms of expressive culture can be enriched or lost within these processes of globalization.

Due to the disappearance of storytellers in common gathering areas in Morocco, particularly Marrakech, this study situates its discussion around the emerging generation of youth storytellers who have taken up the reins of storytelling to transport it into the lives of future generations. Many of my collaborators framed this as a revival movement, and revival movements have emerged throughout history in relation to storytelling because storytelling is a cultural repository of knowledge and holds a place in people's

hearts from a young age (Harris 2017; Sobol 1999). However, when considering implications of revival, and drawing from Hill and Bithell's (2014) considerations of revival movements as re-interpretive, I also found that this movement was also being haunted by past conceptions and performances of storytelling. This haunting, informed by Derrida's (1994) ideas on how ideologies can be like specters which are continually returning and resurfacing but also work outside of human conceptions of time, fit into the presence of the figure of the storyteller and the place *Jemaa el Fna* Square were having on in relation to the performances I was seeing from my young storytelling collaborators.

The image of the storyteller looms largely in this image of the original depiction of *Jemaa el Fna* Square because storytellers were always there, passing through exactly like the vendors, but instead of selling wares and goods, the storytellers spun tales and spread news from the far reaches of the globe. Their historical impact on the dissemination of knowledge cannot be underwritten, particularly in reference to how official forms of knowledge dissemination in the past depended on oral transmission (Eickelman 1985; Sobol 1999). Through the centuries, storytelling continued to be an important trade and way of spreading allegorical information, and it became the main performance of *Jemaa el Fna* Square. In the text, Mehdi describes how storytelling actually gave life to the other performances seen today in the Square, furthering the legacy of importance storytelling has in this location. It is not hard to imagine how these stories and myths still figure largely in people's conceptions of Marrakech and Moroccan storytelling more generally. However, along with the historic figure of the storyteller, today we are seeing the decline of the figure of the storyteller, and this decline is

demonstrated by the lack of storytellers in the famous *Jemaa el Fna* Square in current

times. Even through the efforts of international non-profits like UNESCO, and through

the efforts of other individuals passionate about preserving and supporting the

performances seen in *Jemaa el Fna* Square, storytellers have been leaving. Larger than

life storytelling figures like Baris and Azalia are two such storytellers who publicly

address the business-like state of *Jemaa el Fna* Square today (KechTV 2015). Through

this decline, I argue that storytelling is haunted by past and present systems of censorship

and lack of support for expressive culture.

I also note that elements from historic storytelling are still included in today's

youth performances. For instance, storytellers like Mehdi wear a costume fulfilling the

image of previous storytellers in the Square, mimicking their use of *djellabas* (common

outer robe with sleeves) and *bilgha* (common slipper-type shoes worn both indoors and

outdoors) in order to give them visual authenticity as a storyteller. I was also finding that

during storytelling events, the performers would constantly reference the previous history

of storytelling in Marrakech, specifically returning to *Jemaa el Fna* Square as the

birthplace and most-famous performance area for storytelling. This place and the figure

of storyteller seemed to be stuck in a version of the past, not involving change through

the years of performances but instead held to a stereotypical image.

Due to the disappearance of storytellers from large gathering spaces due to

various economic, political, and logistical reasons (one being noise), youth storytellers

are also forced to find new places from which to perform. Leaving behind the famous

Jemaa el Fna Square, however, does not unlink the legacy of storytelling from this

famous Square from the practices of these young storytellers—they are haunted by the legacies and histories of *Jemaa el Fna* Square while at the same time are haunted by the practices of former storytellers as figures. When these youth take their storytelling performances outside of the space most well-known for the practice, they usually find ways to harken back to this idealized practice of previous storytellers as holders of knowledge in the country, as described above. However, spaces that youth are finding for performances stray from the publicly accessible locations like public squares, and instead are finding solace in performing in locations like cafés, youth event locations, and larger event houses (including universities and TedX style locations). These locations symbolize a change in performance area, as many of the events cost audiences money.

Because storytelling events are still sought after, people would show up to the events, but the other hurdle to cross for performers is making the storytelling area and the stories themselves applicable and meaningful to audiences. Using Berger's (2009) stance, I considered how performers were thinking about their relationships to the stories and the performances, but also about how these performers took into account the process of audiences creating meaning from their performances.

In these storytellers' attempts to expand the possible reaches of audiences, they translate and perform these Moroccan stories they learn orally from a Master Storyteller in English for different mixes of audiences. In cafés like Café Clock, international audiences come to take part in Moroccan storytelling evenings to hear stories that would have been circulated throughout *Jemaa el Fna* Square in the past. However, these experiences are changed by both experience of space (within a café instead of in a public

193

gathering area within a *halqa* configuration) and also experience of language (stories told in English instead of Arabic). Venuti (1996) and Dingwaney (1995), both coming from translation studies backgrounds, discuss the violence that occurs when a cultural form is translated from one language to another, particularly when a cultural from a locally rooted language is translated into a globally invasive language, such as English. In many ways, the image of storytelling that these young people are displaying through their tales is a *different* storyteller than historic Moroccan storytellers, and potentially these two scholars would note that these storytellers are increasing the amount of violence wrought on these stories.

However, my collaborators framed their cultural and linguistic translations as opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, where people from other places could come to understand the histories and myths of Morocco, or, in the case of stories told from *Arabian Nights,* a general sense of stories disseminated throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Abdelkabir noted that he uses storytelling in order to educate audiences on terms that they may not be familiar with from the Moroccan context, such as ablution. Mehdi also noted the necessity of doing these educational lessons for people who grew up outside of the local context, but he also takes another approach: he engages with dominant globally circulated ideas to try to level with international audiences. Instead of beleaguering a particular cultural element from Morocco, he finds an equivalent in another culture that may be more well-known, so that the audience does not miss the overall meaning of the story. These translations beg the question of which is more

important: verbatim in translating word for word or the cultural and stylistic translation that keeps the overall meaning at the expense of certain elements of vocabulary?

Through the thoughts of many storytellers, including Abdelkabir, Mehdi, and Fatima Ezzahra, I have demonstrated their comfort with their craft and with performing these stories in English. Not only has their practice contributed to their overall development of comfort in front of larger audiences, it has also giving them the opportunity to continually practice being a global ambassador and a global individual. Their cross-cultural interactions through storytelling have not only kept them in Morocco but have given them international opportunities, including performances in foreign storytelling festivals and artistic residencies. While the international opportunities for my collaborators have, so far, all been short-term, this does not decrease the possibility of long-term engagement abroad—potentially opportunities that will help them escape their current status as precarious youth currently in Morocco.

They also may not have to seek opportunities abroad to find more stable careers because their participation in storytelling has also provided time to develop skills in addition to public speaking, including marketing, outreach, and performance skills, which could help them find employment which seeks charismatic and culturally competent individuals. Many of the storytellers I have worked with in my research are currently no longer career storytellers, nor did they ever express the want to rely completely on storytelling as a career. Instead, they use the role of storyteller as a role through which they learn these transmutable skills to reach toward other opportunities of careers. Some of the careers my collaborators have sought include being local teachers, hospitality

195

managers, English teachers in foreign countries, and some have returned to school to pursue higher degrees in disciplines where they study storytelling or other elements of global culture.

My collaborators also noted that their participation in these endeavors helped them find communities who embraced their precarity but also supported each other in ways they were not experiencing through other social and economic means. Mehdi describes that he found a way to belong to a "tribe" of people like himself, and he mentions that he did not want to belong to a "society" but that in belonging to this tribe, he was constantly interacting with new and inspiring people.

While these storytelling initiatives are not finding stable global interaction as is seen in Kapchan's (2007) work with international networks of Gnawa performances, these storytelling ventures are still informing the ways through which my collaborators view Morocco and the world around them. These initiatives in expressive culture can have a larger impact on everyday behaviors, including the further inclusion of women in realms that have historically been held only by men. Fatima Ezzahra, Oumaima, and Soumaia represent individuals pushing against the bounds of history, particularly in Morocco where women were only ever seen telling stories in their homes and only usually to their close family and friends. While my interpersonal relationships with women storytellers was short lived during my fieldwork, their performances figure highly in my considerations for this work and any future work on storytelling in Morocco.

Overall, this research sought to expand the boundaries of how people think about a topic like storytelling, which has been examined by certain disciplines while being

undervalued in many others. The universal and global nature of storytelling is further

demonstrated as these local Moroccan stories are circulated around the globe, and I hope

that one day, like my experience with Davis (2014), someone will encounter narratives

from Morocco and think back to a time when they heard the same story, maybe with

cultural elements changed, when they were somewhere else in the world.

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