

their being converted by the beauty of the sound of the Qur'an. It is a chapter often read during the ruqya, along with Surat al-Fatiha and the verse of the Throne. The imam's recitation stops at verse 9, not because he decides to stop but because the jinn has departed and Z. is now speaking.

Silence, a long pause, and then "she" turns to us, with a different gaze. Z. looks at the imam, then me. "Were you gone?"

The fourth movement is the "interior community."²⁴ The session resumes in the afternoon at the home of Z. and her daughters, where, in a small sitting room filled with relatives and neighbors who have been helping and caring for Z.'s sick daughter, the imam tends to the mother and her daughters, who keep "falling" as they respond or echo each other; and he listens to the invisible presences that speak, scream, and bear witness through their bodies.

At the end of the afternoon, when mother and daughters are slowly returning to their waking selves, when everyone is exhausted, and the imam's voice is hoarse from fatigue, he addresses the attendance with words of moral exhortation, in the form of a lesson drawn from the example of life we just witnessed. The experience of illness becomes a summoning and a witnessing of the ways of God, and the ritual gives way to a pedagogical session of spiritual exhortation. He speaks in colloquial Arabic and in simple words and figures, different than the words he uses in his sermons, or in his formal conversations with me. He says:

"Please listen and understand what I am saying: God, high be his praise created the human and the jinn, two worlds. Imagine the example of Europe and the Maghreb,²⁵ two separate worlds and continents, neighboring each other, but different. Such are the jinn and the human. They are distinct, but one always overpowers the other. If we don't conquer the jinn, the jinn conquer us. How can we conquer the jinn? With religion, with pious fear of God, with prayer and remembrance. The more we fear God, the more the jinn are afraid of us. But if we are fearful of our fellow humans, if because of our fear we seek the help of magic and false healers, and through them of the jinn, we empower and strengthen the

HALLUCINATION

Hallucinations are perceptions of something that is not actually present. In the early twentieth century, psychiatrists posited the still prominent theory that hallucinations result from the malfunction of a neural filter. This so-called gating mechanism typically reduces the flow of information from the sense organs to the cerebral cortex, protecting it against sensory overload. Such information-processing errors have been described as symptoms of mental disorders including schizophrenia or as effects of hallucinogenic drugs like LSD. In psychedelic discourse, however, authors with mystical leanings such as Aldous Huxley or Timothy Leary conjecture that these disturbances of the "cerebral reducing valve" enable subjects to perceive "everything that is happening everywhere in the universe." These overwhelming experiences might be biologically useless, if not detrimental, but spiritually edifying as finite human beings come to experience themselves as part of an infinitely larger cosmos.

Whether or not to attribute truth-value to mystical experiences induced by drugs or psychopathology appears to be

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jinn, and the jinn end up conquering us. So to come back of the story of this household, this is what happened. . . ."

He goes on to offer an interpretation, by stringing in a single narrative the fragments of the story that in the course of the day had been told in multiple voices and perspectives, human and jinn. His account situates the experience of the house-

a matter of speculative metaphysics. Yet such speculation has produced countless experiments of living and whole research programs. Epistemologically, the question is whether metaphysical speculation is only generative of experience and experiment, or whether it can also be modified by the empirical knowledge it thus gives rise to. Postpositivist philosophers such as W. V. Quine have argued for continuity between empirical findings and metaphysical frameworks. Following this line of thought, recent neuroscientific studies indicate that hallucinogen-intoxicated subjects—just like dreamers—perceive less, not more, of the external world, while producing more stimuli internally. Such findings challenge one sort of metaphysical speculation, while lending empirical support to an alternative framework: experiences of oneness with the universe may be interpreted not as revelations of a cosmic truth, but as evidence of the fact that each brain is a whole possible world to itself.

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hold—within which he counts the jinn as non-physical beings—within a trajectory that reflects the vulnerability of life and the entanglement of passions. He speaks of the losses and the pain, not in simple condemnation, but as an invitation to reflect back on the very human failures that had been at the origin of this suffering, the failure to trust in God, and to be attentive and just with other fellow humans—a spouse, a child, a neighbor; the fact of falling into the trap of suspicion, a kind of sickness of relations that resulted in a catastrophic loss of confidence. It is such a loss of trust—in God and consequently in fellow humans—that cause people to resort to witchcraft, furthering the tangle and the imprisonment. After listening to the testimony of the jinn, a speech of pain and delusion, those involved must take responsibility for the history of suspicion and ponder the other potential lives and failed encounters, truthfully submitting to God. In that submission there would be the ground for re-encountering the violence of that past in a new form, the capacity to encounter others in their error, which was also one's own.

1 Shahrnush Parsipur, *Women Without Men: A Novel of Modern Iran* (Zanan Bedun mardan, 1989), trans. K. Talattof and J. Sharlet. New York: The Feminist Press, 2010.

2 Ali Shariati, "Shahadat," in *Jihad and Shahadat*, edited and trans. M. Abedi and G. Legenhausen. North Haledon: Islamic Publication International, 1986, p. 213.3
S. Pandolfo, "Soul Choking. Islam and the Ethics of Psychoanalysis," *Umbr(a)*, n. 72, Summer 2009.

3 The filmmaker herself has described in interviews her own

"severed" relation to the history of Iran, her own "missed revolution" (the Iranian revolution of 1979) and the way her images and installations have become "intercessors" of an encounter in the space of a "second life."

4 William Chittick, *The Sufi Path to Knowledge. Ibn Al-'Arabi Metaphysics of the Imagination*. Ch. 7, "Cosmic Imagination." Stefania Pandolfo, *Impasse of the Angels: Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 188.

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