



## Chapter 3

# Techniques of Transformation

## *Subtle-Material Bodies in Dhikr and Other (Breathing) Practices*

The body is (like) a letter: look into it . . .  
go into a corner, open the letter, read (it).

—Mevlana Rumi<sup>1</sup>

“The medicine of the heart is *dhikrullah* [breathing, reciting, and reminding oneself of Allah]!” Hafiz said to me, pointing his finger toward his chest. I asked him, “What is this heart? Is this an organ?” My biomedical bias and naiveté in the matter of the metaphysical heart could not be more evident. Hafiz continued to instruct me, “This is also an organ. First, it is a physical organ; then, when one has done a lot of dhikr [breathing and chanting of Allah’s names], it is formed as an organ of consciousness. That is the spiritual heart [*qalb*]!” Pointing his finger to the left and the right side of his chest, he located these two hearts and said, “Here is the physical heart, and on the other side is the spiritual heart.”

It was a summer evening in 2013. Hafiz, Claire, and I were sitting on an ornamental carpet in the living room of Hafiz’s apartment in Kreuzberg. He brought three glasses and filled them with black, aromatic tea (*çay*). I switched on the recorder and leaned against the wall. The three of us discussed our respective interests in Sufism. At some point, Hafiz began to talk about the heart. He described it as material and subtle. The heart is a physical organ, but it can become an organ of consciousness. The heart is connected to the material world, and it remains subtle. More than the location of the heart in the human body, what the heart is or could be, seems more relevant in Sufi practice (Rustom 2008).



For Sufis, the experiential anatomy (Cohen 1993) of a subtle/material body affords the possibility of imagining a metaphysical heart.<sup>2</sup> The invocation of the material/subtle (breathing) heart features in classical discourse and contemporary Sufi narratives. What is the role of breathing, and what is the meta/physical heart in contemporary Sufi practice? What are the conditions of possibility for imagining and inhabiting a subtle body and its parts? What kinds of bodies emerge from practice across the different Sufi spaces in Berlin and connected sites? How are these bodies transformed, and how can such transformation be articulated as healing? I seek to address these questions by framing Sufi (healing) practices as body prayers, as the techniques of transformation.<sup>3</sup>

## Healing Breath, Body Prayers, and Techniques of the Body

[W]e will experience the inner way of Sufi body prayer. . . [W]e will experience a body awareness practice of cleansing and healing the senses, falling backward and downward into the arms of the Beloved, so that we can feel each new breath as a healing breath.

—Murshid Saadi, European Sufi Summer School 2013

Sufi practices enact specific kinds of bodies with techniques that are, in fact, body prayers, for example, *sema* [whirling ceremony], *dhikr*, the Dances of Universal Peace, and the walks. The breathing, wayfaring bodies emerge from these sounding, moving, and feeling/sensing practices. The Sufi techniques transform the capacity of the human body, transitioning toward the postsecular imagination of what a body can become. My attention to the term *body prayer* is drawn from its usage by the Inayati Murshid Saadi Shakur Chishti/Dr. Neil Douglas-Klotz. He conceived Sufi practices as body prayers that involved the sacralization of the corporeal, bringing together “body awareness,” “healing the senses,” and the feeling of “healing breath” with a sense of the sacred, as “falling into the arms” of the Beloved/Allah. Body prayer is also a translation of the German theological term *Körpergebet* (Koll 2007, 139). What the body is capable of becoming cannot be taken for granted. How can one think of the human body in terms of transformative techniques?



A technique of the body is an action that is “effective and traditional. . . . There is no technique and no transmission in the absence of a tradition” (Mauss [1934] 1973, 75). Long after Mauss and especially since the 1980s, the anthropology of the body emerged with a focus on knowledge and epistemologies of body practices, their physical-symbolic-socio-material dimensions, their significance in medicine and religion, and the co-constitution of the concepts of the body in connection with the environment as part of the historical process.<sup>4</sup> Talal Asad criticized the dichotomous view that the human body is either the passive recipient of “cultural imprints” or “the active source of *natural* expressions” embedded in the local history and culture (1997, 47). The body is the human “means *for* achieving a range of human objects—from styles of physical movement (for example, walking), through modes of emotional being (for example, composure), to kinds of spiritual experience (for example, mystical states)” (1997, 47–48).

Sufi body techniques and healing practices have been in circulation for centuries, with past and recent innovations.<sup>5</sup> In its contemporary enactment, the breathing, wayfaring *postsecular body* refers to the transition of the body from an antagonistic relationship with (religious) traditions and bodily techniques toward a life-affirming positioning and practice, transcending a secularist negation and a literalist, religious confirmation.<sup>6</sup> The breathing, wayfaring body resonates with sounds connecting the everyday *real* world with the spiritual world of *the Real*. It mobilizes movements from the practical repertoires of Sufism. Sufi practices transform the body to be capable of specialized techniques, such as whirling, repetitive breathing, dancing, and walking. These techniques combine movements and visualization. An everyday, material body becomes a spiritual, prayerful, breathing, sounding, moving body through these techniques.

## Techniques of Breathing, Wayfaring Bodies

“The human body is like a [musical] instrument. It can take in frequencies and can itself become like an instrument” (Güvenç and Güvenç 2009, 81). The Tümatas leaders invited the imagination of not only a material body that can learn to play a musical instrument, but also a subtle/spiritual, non-material body centered on the heart that can become a musical instrument: “We can use the body as an



instrument, . . . not only in terms of listening to the sounds and the songs, but use the body itself as a sounding body (*Klangkörper*)” (2009, 81–82). It is in this form that the late Oruç Güvenç and his companion Azize Andrea Güvenç framed the discourse that informed the Tümeta-Berlin events in Berlin and connected sites (Yalova, Turkey). With whirling movements, a sounding body expands into a breathing-sounding-moving *sema* body.

### ***The Breathing-Sounding-Moving Sema Body***

*Sema* (in Turkish) is derived from *samā'* (in Arabic), meaning audition, hearing, or listening, and denoting that which is heard. *Samā'* in Sufi discourse refers to a spiritual concert with a ritual form of devotional practice in terms of movements, physical agitations generating intense emotions, existential states, and even revelations (During and Sellheim 2012). Practicing *sema* is a core practice of Tümeta-Berlin. The body that emerges from *sema* is a breathing-sounding-moving body in whirling motion, accompanied by a vast repertoire of songs and collective chants in a community gathering of *semazens* (practitioners of *sema*). *Sema* here is a body prayer: a sacred movement with sound.<sup>7</sup>

In Tümeta-Berlin’s rendition, *sema* begins with the dervish greeting (crossing hands on the chest and a deep bowing) and a conventional invocation of Allah in Arabic: *Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim* (In the name of Allah, the most gracious the most merciful). Tümeta-Berlin members whirled regularly in private gatherings. They also organized semi-public *sema* events two or three times a year. In the next section, I describe a *sema* event that took place in the Kreuzberg district of Berlin and follow its transnational ties to another *sema* in Yalova, Turkey.

### ***Breathing Sema Bodies in Kreuzberg and Yalova***

At the entrance gate, I ran into my friend and former flatmate Roxanne. We had met in Istanbul, sitting beside each other in the ambience of the Blue Mosque. She had just returned from Yalova, a small town about three hours from Istanbul, where the annual Tümeta *sema* took place. Roxanne was about to leave Istanbul for Berlin, and I was on my way to Yalova. Four months later, we met again in Kreuzberg, Berlin. Many of the interlocutors I came to know at various phases of my fieldwork gathered to whirl that night.



The *sema* event combined whirling motions of the bodies with the playing of many sound instruments, traditional Central Asian and Turkish songs, as well as the songs of praising Allah (*ilahi*), remembering Allah with *dhikr* (collective breathing of the ninety-nine names) and *sohbet* (spiritual conversation). The sixteen-hour-long *sema* continued inside the hall with the *semazens* (the whirlers) while musicians and participants sat/meditated in a circle around the central whirling space. Every few hours, an expert illustrated basic techniques of whirling to facilitate the movement of newcomers:

We bow with a dervish greeting to the invisible presence of Mevlana Rumi seated on an empty white sheepskin. Using the left foot as a fixed index on the floor, one begins to move the right foot as if taking one step at a time. Keeping the right palm in front of one's face as a mirror to fix one's gaze is recommended to prevent falling. Later the right hand should go up in the mode of receiving grace (*baraka*) while keeping the left hand down as if giving away what was received. One continues to breathe and move, listening to the sounds coming from the musicians. (fieldnote, 17–18 December 2014)

Movement and sound energize the body. They also make the body hungry. Outside the hall, we munched, swallowed, and gulped dried fruits, oranges, warm lentil soup, biscuits, and several sorts of tea. After eating and drinking, I chatted with the whirlers in front of the half-open door that led to the *sema* hall. Participants went in and out at will. Hafiz and Claire were already there. We nodded at each other and conversed briefly. The *ney* and its notes of longing began leaking through the gaps. It was time I paid more attention to its sounds.

I went into the *sema* hall. Inside there was little light. We were instructed not to talk or take pictures inside. I saw Raphael and Minar seated on the small stage tuning their instruments. Halima was sitting on the right side on a sheepskin mat. On the other side, Roxanne took turns playing the frame drum. I took my place at one side of the circle that formed around the space in the middle, where the *semazens* were moving, slow and fast, each at his/her speed. Hafiz and Claire were whirling effortlessly. One of Hafiz's students, a woman in her fifties, caught my attention with her distinctive style of whirling. Wearing a long black dress with long, loose pants, she entered the whirling space turning fast and keeping her eyes closed. She entered the floor with arms folded across her chest and gradually stretched them outwards, spinning her body at the same time.



I watched her with awe as an absorbing smile lit up her face. It was evident from the emotion expressed on her face and the ease of her moves that she had been whirling for a long time, like many Tümata-Berlin members (and committed Sufi whirlers) who keep returning to the *sema*. Newcomers tried out novice steps with palms in front of their eyes. They looked puzzled. It reminded me of my longing to whirl, my initial inability to do so, and the sweet torture of such desire.

Compared to the public Sufi performance I described in the Introduction, Tümata-Berlin's *sema* was a semi-private event in which the public/newcomers could join. Usually, events were attended by the members of Tümata-Berlin, other Sufi networks, and friends of the participants. In the course of fieldwork, I experienced *sema* in multiple configurations. The whirling body was not only a feature of the *sema* organized by Tümata-Berlin but also at the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi-Center Berlin. The latter offered *Drehtanz* (whirling dance) workshops on Sunday afternoons. In addition, one or two male members would rise up and whirl at the height of the collective dhikr in the Sufi evenings open to the public. Similar whirling moves were also incorporated into the easy steps of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat Dances of Universal Peace, derived from the Mevlevi *sema* postures. Hafiz, in particular, devoted time to whirling as part of the Sufi evenings he organized with Claire and his friend circle. Apart from these organized *sema* events, spontaneous *sema* took place during Sufi concerts without planning or pre-announcement (chapter 6).

The historical Sufi tradition frames the contexts of *sema*. The practice of *sema* renders Sufism tangible. Not all Sufi networks across the world practice or even permit *sema* (Green 2012). The practice of *samā'* appeared around the ninth century CE among the early Baghdad Sufi circles (During and Sellham 2012). One of the first texts about this practice appeared in the tenth century, and around the same time, a parallel discourse condemning the *samā'* was in circulation (Al-Hujwiri [1911] 1998). Since that period, the question of permissible sounds of music and ecstatic movements has divided the Islamic tradition. However, the widespread perception of the Islamic tradition being hostile to music or body movements resembling dance forms has been refuted by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists worldwide (Stokes 2002).



Islam as a “discursive tradition” is not only governed by prescriptive authorities (Asad [1986] 2009). “Explorative authority” defines the Islamic tradition as much as “prescribed forms of correctness” (Ahmed 2016, 286). The *samāʿ* was the sum of “personal and collective exercises of Sufi existential experience” (2016, 286), performed in Sufi spaces, the whirling of the dervishes (of the order of Rumi) being the most well-known example. Given the popular presence of the Sufi *samāʿ* in the tradition (despite the long-standing reality of debates around its acceptance and rejection), it is not surprising that in Berlin and connected sites, the whirling movements and their more elaborate ceremonial formations are considered quintessentially Sufi.<sup>8</sup>

Mevlana Rumi figured prominently in the contemporary *sema* events that Tümeta-Berlin organized. Whirling bodies deployed an intersection of the tradition of the Mevlevi ceremony of *sema* with the technique of whirling to transform the body itself. In Tümeta discourse and practice, the *sema* body resonated with sounds of Shamanism-inspired music from Central Asia and Sufism-inspired music from Turkey, generating whirling bodies in moments the two streams come together.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Ninety-Nine Days and Nights: Transnational Lines of Sema Bodies***

For Tümeta-Berlin and other Sufi networks, the Turkish town of Yalova offered an opportunity to join the elaborate global (Sufi) *sema* every year. In the summer of 2014, I followed Tümeta-Berlin to Turkey and participated in the twenty-four-hour *sema* for a week. This event continued for ninety-nine days and nights. I attended the days and nights between ninety-three and ninety-nine. There, the sound of the *sema* was an intermingling of songs in Turkish, Farsi, Arabic, and English with a sonorous, collective dhikr. Groups of musicians took turns to ensure that there was no interruption. The organizers ensured that at least two people were whirling in the central octagonal *sema* floor. *Sema* took place without pause.

Like Berlin, the *sema* in Yalova was attended by a large number of women but very few men. Most bodies whirled from the right to the left. This was supposedly the (original) movement as instructed by Mevlana Rumi. Almost everyone who entered the floor came and bowed deeply with hands on hearts, kissed the floor, and began to



turn. At the end of their whirling, all bowed to the ground and left. Although whirling was a challenge for newcomers, I did not see anyone fall. Workshops took place outside the main hall in the nearby shade, where advanced practitioners prepared the newcomers with extensive instructions.

The following winter, the *sema* in Yalova was reproduced in a decorated hall in Kreuzberg, staged to become little Yalova. “Klein Yalova!” said Roxanne, and I agreed. Although in comparison to Yalova, the *sema* in Kreuzberg was scheduled for less than twenty-four hours. The *sema* events in Yalova (near Istanbul) and the Kreuzberg district of Berlin had varying lengths, numbers of participants, and ambiance. Both events were connected not only to each other but to other places (such as Istanbul and Konya) where *sema* was taking place on the same date in 2014 (17/18 December, the death anniversary of Mevlana Rumi).

Unlike Yalova where the word *sema* explained itself, in Berlin, it had many names with “dance” attached to it: *Derwisch Tanz* (dervish dance), *Drehtanz/Wirbeltanz* (whirling dance).<sup>10</sup> In Yalova, hundreds of people gathered to whirl. Whirling in Berlin was attended by fewer people. At the public *sema* events I attended, I saw perhaps fifty to eighty people. There were differences in organization, number, and diversity of participants, but the techniques engaged the subtle/spiritual and material bodies in both places. Whether in Berlin or Yalova, during the *sema*, the heads of *semazens* were often lightly tilted toward the heart on the left side. They crossed hands on their chests to greet each other and the sheikh. In *sema*, one imagines the breathing heart to be the connector of the transcendent and the immanent realms, of the materiality and the subtlety/spirituality of existence.

*Sema* was about turning around one’s heart and how the heart was polished in remembering Allah (dhikr):

The goal of the *sema* is to center and channel energy. The dervish turns himself to the left around the center of his heart. Like the atoms around the atom-center, like the planets around the sun, a dervish turns around his heart . . . [Referring to the Light verse (Qur’an 24:35), Hafiz concluded] Through the remembrance of Allah, the divine light comes into being, and the heart is polished so that it gleams like a polished mirror. (Hafiz’s text in a local magazine, published in September 2008)

Sufi studies scholars have discussed the heart in relation to other (subtle) body parts (Pagani 2017; Milani 2013; Rustom 2008; Kugle





2007).<sup>11</sup> In Sufi Berlin, the heart is mobilized with popular metaphors. For example, Sufism is known as the way of the heart (*Weg des Herzens*), and Sufi teachers are also known as the *physicians of the heart*, those who practice medicine of the heart (Meyer et al. 2011). In addition to the whirling in *sema*, the heart is engaged in the bodily prayers of sonorous and silent dhikr. Dhikr is centered around the chest area as the movements of the head and body activate the subtle body centers (*latifa*). In the dances/walks, attention is also directed toward the center of the chest, perceived as the seat of love and knowledge. Heart chakra (a subtle center in the middle of the chest in Yoga discourse) is evoked in the Sufi Yoga innovations practiced in Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufism (Selim 2015a).<sup>12</sup>

In Yalova and Berlin, the sounding, moving, feeling bodies are inhabited and co-constituted by their breathing hearts. Breathing allows the body to move effectively with sounds: “In intensive Sufi rituals with Zikir [dhikr] and Sema, the bodily movements, the breath, and the [human] voice become one” (Güvenç and Güvenç 2009, 82). Breathing becomes the heightened focus of practice when the body is immersed in dhikr. Sounds and movements are part of the dhikr body. But, breathing enacts Sufi bodies differently than whirling. In *sema*, whirling movement is the focus, and breathing is an accessory. In dhikr, the sensual experiences of breathing and reciting take over, and breathing is calibrated to reciting the names and phrases of varying length and frequency, while movements are accompaniments.

### *The Breathing-Reciting Dhikr Body*

The main goal of the ways of the *ṭarīqa*  
[path/order] is to train, to practice *dhikr*.

—Sheikh Nāzim<sup>13</sup>

The word *dhikr* (in Arabic) refers to reminding oneself or “remembering.”<sup>14</sup> Dhikr leads to remembrance, in the context of Islamic tradition, with the tireless repetition of a litany (Gardet 2012a; Chittick 2004, 48). The bodily technique of dhikr mobilizes a breathing body, either accompanied by a sounding “practice of the tongue” (Lawrence 2015, 21), or in silence, as a practice of concentration. In contrast with *fikr* or discursive reflection, dhikr in Sufi discourse is about remembering and repeating sacred words,

most often the ninety-nine names of Allah. Reformist and literalist enactments of Islam often contest the dhikr as a permissible prayer form, arguing that Sufi practices are un-Islamic (Ahmed 2016). Sufi Muslims and non-Muslim Sufis, however, continue to practice dhikr, aloud or silently, slowly or fast, collectively or as a solitary practice. Dhikr is probably the most frequent form of Sufi body prayer and renders Sufism recognizable (Ahmed 2016; Gardet 2012a; Green 2012).

Throughout fieldwork, I participated in different kinds of dhikr, alone and in the company of others, in silence and with loud vocalization. I regularly attended dhikr evenings on weekends at the Haqqani-Naqshbandi Sufi center. On one evening in spring 2013, quite early in fieldwork, I entered the threshold of the center for the first time. I was struck by the contrast of a quiet bland outdoors with an inside where splashes of color, a thickened smell, and a rich tapestry of sound circulated.

I could hear the low hum of voices and faint drumming as I entered the bigger hall, which accommodated about a hundred people on that crowded evening. People of all ages gathered. Children were running around making noise, and a few adolescents were playing with their gadgets. In an adjacent smaller hall, Timur Efendi, a long-time member of the network, instructed the audience about the connection between the breath, the body, the word “Hu,” and their relation to the most compassionate Being:

What He created, what He has given you is your body. Do not think that your body is the absence of Him. Your body thinks of Him all the time. All your organs think of Him and praise Him. In every breath you take . . . Listen to each breath. What do you say when you breathe? Whom do you call when you breathe? Don't you breathe with Hu? What is Hu? Hu is Him. He is the most compassionate. It is His name. Who is He? He describes it through His qualities. He is the totality. His qualities are collected together in the word “Hu.” (Timur Efendi, 17 May 2013)

In 2013, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I went through my first embodied encounter with Hu during the Sufi meditation Timur Efendi was teaching at the center. Roxanne and I were sitting on the carpet and speaking to each other in low, hushed voices when Timur Efendi came in. Unlike the collective dhikr in the main hall with a larger crowd, in this smaller room at the center, there were



mostly women and a few young men. We sat on the carpet and the red sofa lining the wall and waited. Timur greeted us heartily, “Herzlich Willkommen!” He began the session by asking newcomers their names and the meanings of these names. He asked if there was any question from the audience and spoke for about half an hour, covering various topics. Later, he came down from the sofa and sat with us on the carpeted floor. Turning on the CD player that emitted the sounds of the *ney* (played and recorded by Tümeta), he invited us to join a dhikr with Hu.

After fifteen minutes of silence and immersion in the sounds of the *ney*, Timur began to recite Hu. At first, slowly and on a long breath, followed by the unison of multiple Hu in male and female voices with a resulting, deep, booming Hu of resonance. Gradually his Hu gained speed, and his breath was shorter. Instead of a long drawn HUUUUUU, it was a series of rapid repetitions of *Hu!Hu!Hu!Hu!Hu!* louder and faster. Until Timur took the lead to utter the Hu softly, and gradually, the Hu was almost inaudible. Timur stopped for a second to begin chanting the first part of the *shahadah* repeatedly: *La ilaha illallah. Hu!* [There is no God but Allah. Hu.]. Timur recited several Qur’anic verses and Arabic phrases praising Prophet Muhammad, followed by the invocation of his *silsila* and the opening verse of the Qur’an (*Al-Fatiha*). He concluded by thanking us and said, *Danke schön!* (fieldnote, 17 May 2013)

On Fridays and Saturdays, after communal eating on the floor of the bigger hall, Sheikh Eşref Efendi, leader of the center, regularly guided a collective dhikr with the invocation: *Destur Ya Sheikh Nazim Kubresi* (With permission from Sheikh Nazim Kubresi). He uttered sacred phrases, and his audience followed. On most occasions, he repeated *Estağfirullah* (I seek forgiveness from Allah)—*ala hümmе salli Allah* (O Allah, send blessings!)—*Ya Allah, Ya Rahim* (O Merciful One)—*Ya Karim* (O Generous One)—*Ya Selam* (O Peace)—*Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim* (In the name of Allah the beneficent the merciful)—*Allah Allah* (in paired rhythms) and *Allah hu/Allah hu/Allah hu Haqq!* (*al-Haqq* in Arabic refers to the ultimate reality or the Real or the Truth).<sup>15</sup>

These shared, collective utterances created a charged atmosphere, with dimmed light, recitation, and the repetitive breathing sounds. The collective dhikr generated an ecstatic peak experience filling the otherwise secular urban space, and imbuing it with sacred



**Figure 3.1.** Dhikr and *sema* at the Sufi-Center Berlin, 3 August 2013. © Nasima Selim.

sounds.<sup>16</sup> Men and women stayed close to each other but in separate rows. The dhikr became a more melodious form of breathing with more vigorous movements in the late evening when a collective sound *Amentu billahi . . . hu hu hu hu!* (I believe in the existence of Allah . . . hu hu hu) filled the room. In the twilight shadow of darkness, we breathed a collective breath, sweating, shouting, and moving together (figure 3.1).

The body in dhikr required sounding and moving began to match the movements of the neighboring bodies. Led by the sheikh and without speaking to each other, we began our mimetic movements, breathing fast and slow. Later in the evening, when the drums were loud, and the voices were rapidly breathing and chanting, we were still holding the hands of strangers next to us. We began to move our upper bodies to the left and front, to the back, to the right and the front, to the back, and to the left again. These moves happened without direct verbal instructions on how to move, in many variations. Every few minutes, the voices and the drums slowed down only to accelerate the speed again. Our bodies responded to



the gradual increase and decrease of the rhythms played by the musicians and the breathing of the sheikh. (fieldnote, 17 May 2013)

Doing dhikr with Hu and the names of Allah (along with other sounds) took place not only in this Sufi center but in the other Sufi networks as well. Hafiz, a Haqqani-Naqshbandi himself,<sup>17</sup> led a circle of friends in what he called *Sufi Trance Tanz* (Trance Dance) to practice a sound meditation uttering *ā* (aaa), *ī* (eee), *ū* (uuu) (also mentioned by Chishti 1991), and added “o” with movements of the hand and fingers, and closed eyes. *Hu* and *Hayy* were the two most frequently evoked sounds breathed by Hafiz’s circle of friends. These sound bites of breath circulated among Sufi Muslims, Inayati networks, Tūmata-Berlin, and nomadic Sufis, constituting a Sufi soundscape of shared, embodied utterances.

The dhikr bodies that emerge from these sounds are made by breathing together with movements that correspond to the sounds of the sacred utterances. Both *sema* and dhikr mobilized material and subtle/spiritual bodies. There are differences internal to both practices across the Sufi networks, but the family resemblances between them render the *sema* and dhikr bodies recognizable in Sufi-Berlin. Sufi practices, such as *sema* and dhikr, make the ephemeral tangible. They generate palpable energy. This happens not only through the whirling-sounding and breathing-reciting but also through other kinds of movements and practices of innovation.

While dhikr and *sema* are Sufi practices that traveled from Islamic societies to Muslim-minority Western Europe, the incorporation of dhikr and *sema* in the Dances of Universal Peace and (*Tasawwuri*) Walks of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat network is a North American innovation added to repertoires of Inayati practice that found their way to Germany.

### ***The Dancing-Walking Energy Body***

The incorporation of whirling-sounding (in *sema*) and breathing-reciting (in dhikr), and in the circular dances and special walks (embodying the masters), generate energizing bodies. Whirling, breathing, and reciting in dhikr are common practices connecting the Sufi networks, whether they self-identified as Muslims or not. The mobilization of syncretistic energy bodies, however, was most prominent among the Inayati networks. An experiential entry into the collective body of Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat will make this point clear:



Rabeya, Ganga, and Khadija greet me with smiles and long hugs. I meet Arham, a physician-Sufi from California. After a few minutes, we stand in circles, holding hands. [I am a bit embarrassed that my palms get moist quickly] . . . Rabeya recites the first lines in a slightly hoarse voice. We follow her voice with several recitations in Arabic: *Subhan Allah! Alhamdulillah! Allahu Akbar!* [Glory to God (4×), All praise to God (4×), God is great (3×)]. We begin to dance in circles and repeat the three phrases. Simple steps. From left to right. A few turns. Men and women stand together and take turns adding a different pitch to our collective voice. There are only three men. The rest of us are women. In the end, we all say *Amin!* to end the dance (*Amin* is the Islamic rendition that sounds and functions similarly to the Christian *Amen*) . . . The second dance is based on an Aramaic prayer.<sup>18</sup> Khadija leads the dance. We go through another round of new steps to learn and repeat unfamiliar phrases. (fieldnote, 12 May 2013)

The Dances of Universal Peace are an innovation central to the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat practice. These dances are blooming repertoires of techniques: movements, sound-making, and breathing. Not all Inayati networks are equally invested in these dances. But all Inayatists in Berlin begin ritual action by invoking the words of Hazrat Inayat Khan in German and English:

Toward the one	<i>Dem einen entgegen</i>
The perfection of love, harmony, and beauty	<i>Der Vollkommenheit von der Liebe, der Harmonie und der Schönheit</i>
The only being united with all the illuminated souls	<i>Den Einzigseienden, vereint mit all den erleuchteten Seelen,</i>
Who form the embodiment of the master, the spirit of guidance.	<i>die den Meister, den Geist der Führung, verkörpern.</i>

In the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat dances, the invocation led to movements, sounding, breathing, and reciting. The dances always ended with everyone exchanging hugs. Compared to the dhikr of the Haqqani-Naqshbandi and their late-night soundscapes of gradually increasing rapid/loud music and the vigorous movements of dhikr bodies, the Inayati practice mobilized a distinctively toned-down soundscape and a more syncretistic movement-space. Murshida Ganga explained how the bodily act of breathing was connected



to the cosmic breath in dhikr: “Breath is the cosmic breath, and it connects us all. It is your breath and my breath . . . In Aramaic, *ru* means breath, air, spirit, and soul. It is all one word in Aramaic . . . In Hebrew, it is *ruah*. In Arabic *ruh*. *Alaha ruhao* in Aramaic means: *God is breath*. So you have it. God is breath” (interview with the author, 2 May 2014).

“Eat, dance, and pray together!” is a phrase I often heard among my Sufi-Ruhaniat interlocutors. It is attributed to Murshid Sam (Samuel Lewis), a white US-American murid of Hazrat Inayat Khan. Murshid Sam came up with the circular dance form in the 1960s (R. Jackson 2014).<sup>19</sup> Holding hands, singing, and moving in circles for hours constitute the main ritual. The words used in these movements include the ninety-nine names attributed to Allah, but are also drawn from other religious traditions (Judeo-Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist). Breathing techniques and practices from body-oriented psychotherapy and American sacred dance forms by Ruth St. Dennis are also used (Douglas-Klotz 2003, 166).

A few months after my first encounter with the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat dances, I joined the annual European Sufi Summer School, where the subtle breathing heart was invoked often, and the Inayati winged-heart symbol was everywhere:

Today’s talk is titled “Polish Your Heart,” the dance leader says. “Do not overdo it! Attend to your needs. Otherwise, after three days, you will collapse!” He also says, “At the end of this week, the heart won’t be perfect, but we may get a hint.” A woman asks, “How do we work with the heart?” The dance leader asks us to stand up and move in circles. After the dance, there is silence, and we are told to feel what just happened. The dance leader speaks again: “The body stores it. All the information we need is saved in the body. We need a key to open the body. Increase the heart’s capacity. It is the heart with the wings [referring to the Inayati winged heart symbol]. The heart opens and goes home. It closes. It awakens in you the longing for the heart to stay open. Make the heart larger. Increase its capacity with prayer, *ishq* (love), dhikr, and spiritual work. All dances, meditation, chant . . . Then the smaller mysteries will be open. Then the bigger mysteries will be open. The key is *Ya Fattah* [Arabic. The opener]! (fieldnote, 1 July 2013)

The energy body is a collection of many breathing, moving bodies. An advanced practitioner and therapist in the Inayati network formulated the notion of a “collective body” that comes out of a



coming together with circular movements (Hermann, interview with the author, 17 September 2014). Murshida Ganga articulated her understanding of (Inayati) Sufism as getting connected to the body and to others:

We say, our invocation is *Toward the One!* What is the One? The One is in my own body . . . I am connected with my feet, with my bones. That is the whole process. Many people are not connected. I wasn't! *Naja!* Thinkers. Big thinkers! [At this point, I interjected, laughing and saying: "in the head!"] But not in the heart, not in the belly, and not in the feet. Not connected to the earth . . . So the first thing is my own body. This is number one. Number two is my connection, now to you, to my surroundings, to nature . . . And then the other is to my friends, and everywhere I have connections, too. [With] the ones in the body and the ones not in the body. (interview with the author, 2 May 2014)

The steps of the Dances of Universal Peace are easy to learn. Holding hands, however, can be awkward. Looking into the eyes of strangers is perhaps the most difficult thing to do. During the dances, there is a silent exchange of body gestures. The hugs can be cold or warm, depending on the familiarity one establishes with the stranger moving next to oneself. At some point during the dance, however, I sensed no individual body anymore but a collective body in motion. The moving bodies, the wet and dry palms, and the swaying breaths heated the garden hall, in the midst of cold Berlin. These dances engender a collective sensuous body, with known and unknown words, collating breaths, fostering intimacy, and attempting to move beyond the confines of time, place, and differences internal to practice. The *sema* and the dhikr practices generate a collective body too, but a person can practice them alone at home. In contrast, the Sufi-Ruhaniat dances require collectivity. However, just as the collective practice of *sema* and dhikr (described in the sections above) are oriented to create a sense of belonging to an intentional community, these Inayati dances also generate the formation of a collective body, where one is required to hold the hand of another, to move and make sounds with others.

In addition to the Dances of Universal Peace, the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat practices another set of movements embodying the moods and body postures of past teachers in the lineage, known as the *Tasawwuri* walks or "the embodiment of the Master." Following Hazrat





Inayat Khan and Murshid Sam, Murshida Ganga summarized these walks as “embodied spirituality”:

It is not in the clouds. It is no way out. It is here. What we do . . . embodied! Here and now . . . The divine light and everything are in the body. If you work with the elements, we are these elements. The air is my breath. The earth is my bones. Water is in my flesh, and the fire is my blood . . . It has to do with embodied spirituality! (interview, 2 May 2014)

In an annual healing order meeting in May 2014 at Haus Schnede in Salzhausen, we gathered in a big hall on one spring afternoon. We were instructed to embody a particular Sufi teacher, breathe, and walk the way they might have done:

Murshid S. (Murshida Rabeya’s teacher) was walking the walk of Pir-O-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan holding a *Rudra Veena* (a stringed instrument used in Hindustani classical music) as if he was carrying a child. He was walking with his eyes filled with misty tenderness, and with short, light steps, he slowly came toward us, looking into our eyes, transmitting/performing a cultivated kindness. We were standing in a circle. He asked us to follow him and embody Hazrat Inayat Khan. We made serious efforts to concentrate on performing what we were not but could become. (fieldnote, May 2014)

*Taşawwur/i* practice emerged in the late medieval period of Sufism (Malamud 1996). It was meant to train Sufi students into a state of absorption/annihilation (*fanā*) in the inspirational, monumental figures of the Sufi teachers with visualization, contemplation, and the body prayer of mimetic walking. In its contemporary enactment, *taşawwur* is a term/practice mobilized by Murshid Sam and his students to refer to an attunement to the teacher’s corporeal presence.<sup>20</sup> The *Tasawwuri* walks train the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat *murids* to embody the teachers of the *silsila* (lineage). This does not happen only in the act of imagining but in making a corporeal presence sensible. Each *murid* must learn to walk the walks and enact the subtle/material bodies of the past teachers. The attempt to embody the energetic presence of a particular teacher generates laughter, amusement, difficulty, and frustration. Success is ensured by repeated practice and can be recognized by peers and authorized teachers over time.

Techniques of transformation, however, involve much more than the participation of the body. Bodies slowly acquire the ability to par-



ticipate differently. Over time and with repeated practice, the novice gradually learns to inhabit a different kind of body. The question is: what kinds of bodies and body parts are being transformed by the techniques of whirling, breathing, and energizing? What kinds of substances are subtle (and material) bodies made of?

## Substances of Transformation

In Sufi-Berlin, the metaphysical heart (*qalb*) and the self-centered self (*nafs*) were two prominent subtle/material body substances of transformation.<sup>21</sup> The concept of the *nafs* was reworked as ego, and the word *qalb* was invoked as *das Herz*/the heart.<sup>22</sup> “*Nafs!* Our small self [and the higher self]. How do they come together and make peace? The higher self is the boss. Not these other selves. My resistant self, my doubting self. They are all small selves” (Murshida Ganga, interview with the author, 2 May 2014).

There are many models of the *nafs* and the *maqams/maqamat* (stations/stages of the *nafs*) (Hermansen 1988). According to the Qur’anic hermeneutics, *nafs* can be interpreted as the human self or soul (Mittermaier 2011, 261). The transformation of the *nafs* involves multiple stages.<sup>23</sup> Hafiz echoed Shaykh Hakim Moinuddin Chishti (1991) in emphasizing the necessity of evolution/transformation of the *nafs* (the lower/self-centered self).

While *nafs* was a frequent trope, it was often interchangeable with the word “ego,” the same word in English and German. Haqqani-Naqshbandis considered “ego-training” central (Abu Bakr, interview with the author, 13 July 2014): a Sufi student must train his/her *nafs* in everyday life. In the Inayati discourse, the word *nufs/nafs* was frequently cited by Hazrat Inayat Khan and Murshid Sam Lewis. In Tūmata-Berlin, the *makam* (modal system) was evoked more in relation to the kind of sound that could affect a particular body part. Even if they sound the same, the Turkish word for the musical *makam* (*Tonart*, modal system) is not to be conflated with *maqam* (in Arabic), which means a station or subtle realm through which the *nafs* is progressively transformed and refined. My primary teacher, Khidr, repeatedly reminded his students that the principal tasks on the Sufi path were about: (a) paying attention to the breath; (b) opening the (breathing) heart; (c) transforming the self-centered ego (*nafs*) to be of service to others.



A sounding *makam* body looks like the mapping of several musical *makams* corresponding to various body parts (Güvenç and Güvenç 2009, 63).<sup>24</sup> For example, *makam Uşşak* is supposed to be working on the heart area on the left breast (2009, 63). Contemporary music-and-movement therapists (Tümata-Berlin) play particular tones to generate specific *makam* and heal sufferings linked to parts of the body.

Another component of the Sufi subtle body is the subtle center (*latifa*). Activating the subtle centers in the body is one way the lower soul (*nafs*) can be transformed. In the music therapy discourses, there is talk about “energy flow” but no mention of the *lataif* (plural of *latifa*) that the classical Sufi discourses mention.<sup>25</sup> There were diverse opinions regarding these subtle centers. Raphael, for example, informed me that “*Lataif* is a marker of the specific steps in personality development for some Sufi. In the tradition of humoral medicine, there are different body-souls (*Körperseelen*) or faculties (*Fakultäten*), but these are, first of all, psycho-physiological attributions” (email, 3 September 2014). The *makams* are closely linked to the *lataif* and correspond to these subtle centers clustered around the chest, emphasizing the centrality of the subtle heart (*latifa qalbiyya*).

In Tümata discourse, sounds are played to remove blockages of energy in the body that can be removed by playing music that resonates with the *makam* corresponding to the area where the energy is blocked. The sounds played in *sema* (and AOM [Ancient Oriental Music-and-Movement Therapy; *Altorientalische Musik- und Bewegungstherapie*]) evoke myriad sensations and a plethora of associations, if not by personal history, then by an acquaintance through travel experiences in regions belonging to the geographically vague idea of an Orient.

In terms of the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniyat walks and the dances, how does the classical discussion of the subtle centers (*lataif*) figure in practice? Moving the head from left to right, up and down, moving the body forward and backward in the numerous variations of the dances requires mimicking the more vigorous *dhikr* movements informed by the classical *lataif* discourses. The immediate verbal discourses do not always evoke these classical perceptions of the body or its subtle centers but evoke a modified version of the yogic chakra system.

The imagination of the subtle and material bodies circulates with an excess of movements and sounds in breathing, whirling, ener-

gizing them. The breathing heart makes a frequent appearance as the central metaphor and metonym. The symbol of the Dances of Universal Peace, for example, is a string of hearts in a circle. A circle of breathing, sounding, moving bodies may engage in conversations and exchange money before and after the practice. During the movements of bodies, breath, and energies, the individual bodies cultivate the capacity to transform the metaphysical breathing heart.

### **Qalb: The Metaphysical (Breathing) Heart**

“The heart is the seat of the higher intelligence and the intuition,” Khidr, my primary Sufi teacher, explained the Arabic word and concept of *qalb*, almost a year after I had the initial conversation with Hafiz mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Since the beginning of my fieldwork in the spring of 2013, I have had numerous discussions with my Sufi interlocutors about the “heart.” I felt somewhat at a loss in my navigation of the classical discourses of the Heart, which proved to be many as well.<sup>26</sup> Khidr invoked the (breathing) heart to instruct me about worrying less about being lost, and instead focusing on *doing* the heart-centered practice. As an illustrative example, he elaborated on one of the eleven (*Naqshbandi*)<sup>27</sup> rules for everyday life, *wuquf-i qalbi* (the heart pause):

In order to understand the full implications of the heart pause, it is necessary to look at the Arabic word and concept *qalb*. In this light, the heart is the seat of higher intelligence and intuition. It is a most vital *latifa*, subtle energy center . . . The heart occupies a special place because it is also the seat of love and the Divine. The *heart pause* has nothing to do with stopping the physical heart. It exclusively relates to detaching and putting a halt to sentimental conditioning and automatic emotional responses. It is indicated to concentrate on the inner being and the Divine. In other words, it stands for detachment. . . . It boils down to detaching the physical self and the spiritual inner being, allowing oneself to stay focused on love and knowledge as a duty. Visualize your personal *dhikr* inscribed as white light on a symbolic image of your subtle heart center, which has the color golden yellow. The *lataif* centers—especially the *latifa qalbiyya*, the subtle heart center—are organs of perception, nonmaterial in nature, and form an important aspect of each person. The *lataif* centers have to be awakened and activated via spiritual exercises in combination with color visualizations and *dhikr*. You can practice a silent *dhikr* breathing in



*wuqf-i* and breathing out *qalbi* to harmonize and energize yourself with this rule (recorded on 10 May 2014).

“The operation of the heart is done through the word of the sheikh,” Ayşe was convinced of the authoritative power of the sheikh and the location of the exertion of that power, in the metaphysical heart (interview with the author, 21 July 2014). This heart is usually termed *qalb* in Sufi/Islamic discourse, although many terms relating to the heart on various levels exist. The *qalb* is more than the muscular pump that circulates blood in the body. The *qalb*, the metaphysical heart in Qur’anic hermeneutics, is a bearer of tradition and a site of transformation. It stores divine qualities (inscribed in the ninety-nine names of Allah) and contains the spirit-soul (*nafas*)—the “life-activating force,” which, according to Chishti (1991), “enters with each breath, the breath that activates all physiological functions” (1991, 14). Michaela Özelsel, a German psychologist and Sufi Muslim, mobilized Carl Jung’s analytical psychology to articulate *qalb* as a more comprehensive concept of the unconscious (1995, 136).

In Sufi-Berlin, the subtle metaphysical breathing heart accompanied the beating material heart, pulsating in the images, objects, stories, and conversations. Claire and Hafiz invoked the phrase “polishing the heart” as an effect of Sufi practice. In a longer conversation, Claire shared her narrative of experiencing the subtle heart:

I went to his [Hafiz’s] classes. Not only for the dancing. It had something to do with the heart, the opening of your heart. My heart felt so big! Like the whole underground station. Something was opened. It was physical [but] more energetically. Something small became enormous, the radius of my heart . . . They [Sufi practices] polish the heart, and they open the heart! (interview with the author, 24 April 2013)

In addition to the circulation of the heart discourse, the imagination practices and experiential anatomies invoked subtle/spiritual bodies and transposed them onto their material formations. Hafiz’s discussion at the beginning of this chapter on the metaphysical heart was shaped by the circulation of various discourses of Sufi healing centered on the heart. When I probed further into his perceptions of the body, Hafiz directed my attention to Chishti (1991) for a deeper understanding of the *nafs*, the *qalb*, as the substances and loci of transformation of the material/subtle body.



The human body in ritual action can be conceived not only in terms of a theory of embodiment, linking the “intimate spaces of the body” (mobilized in Sufi practice) to the use of body-as-metaphor (Kugle 2007) but also to a theory of “enactment” (Mol 2002, 32), illustrating the kinds of bodies that emerge from immediate practice.<sup>28</sup> Sufi discourses and body practices inform the experience generated by these practices. The gradual training of techniques for the newcomers unused to whirling in *sema*, breathing in *dhikr*, or mobilizing energetic presence in the *Tasawwuri* walks, enhance the possibility of doing and experiencing the subtle body and body parts, in terms of the *nafs* (ego) and the breathing *qalb* (heart). The ease of the advanced, longtime members and practitioners in associating these subtle bodies with material bodies, illustrates the successful transitioning of secular bodies into postsecular Sufi bodies. Sufi techniques turn novice bodies, with innumerable repetitions of techniques, into expert, wayfaring bodies. The bodies of strangers who arrive at Sufi events, and subsequent practices, eventually colate into transforming the collective, sensuous, breathing body.

The invocation of the material-subtle heart is a remarkably persistent feature of Sufism in its otherwise enormously diverse historical and ethnographic representations. Sufi literature refers to the heart with an intense focus on the “matters pertaining to the heart” (*al-umûr al-qalbiyyah*) (Nasr 2004, 34). “Particular body practices imply (no less particular) metaphysical and cultural commitments, and may indeed finally induce them” (Coakley 1997, 8). The enactment of bodies and bodily experiences in practice shows how techniques, could be effective in transforming the egotistic self, even if they are not directed to a specific mode of suffering and involve older or more recent innovations. Sufi body prayers become techniques of transformation by shifting the imaginaries of subtle/material bodies in practice, by providing the corporeal conditions of possibility to inhabit such a hybrid, emergent body.

## Lessons from the Breathing (Sufi) Bodies

Breathing, sounding, whirling, reciting, energizing Sufi bodies enact the ontologies of Sufism in postsecular practice. Sufi practices mobilize sounds and movements (and stillness) of the body. Words are recited with attention to the breath in *dhikr*. A circle of energy bodies



emerges from the walks and dances. Historical techniques and available discourses are configured with innovations in Sufi practice.<sup>29</sup> The focus of the breather-wayfarers on the subtle-material heart and their cultivation of a “sensitivity of the heart” is rooted in the Islamic cosmology (even when they discursively separate Sufism from Islam) as they navigate the “modern topographies of the self” (Vicini 2017, 120) in becoming Sufis in Berlin (chapter 2 and 4).

Thinking with the body in Sufi practices offers multiple insights. Sufi bodies, together and separately, differ from the image of the human body in anatomical atlases. The subtle body of Sufism may not fit together even with the subtle bodies derived from other traditions (Milani 2013). Sufi discourse talks about the human body in ways that cannot be fully translated into academic discourse. I recognize and stay with this tension.<sup>30</sup> The use of the word “body” does not suggest that the image of the body is a singular formation. Juxtaposing the different bodies, bringing different discourses and practices together, may not resolve the dilemma of untranslatability and equivocation of Sufi concepts. These moves only point to the problems of naming and describing Sufi bodies in the language of an academic tradition.

“The [mystical] body is involved in an act of becoming a receptacle for the Sacred Other” (Saniotis 2012, 79). Sufi bodies are “projects where they creatively engage in achieving mastery of the self” (2012, 79). The Sufi imaginaries of the somatic topography employing Sufi concepts (*nafs*, *maqam*, *lataif*, *qalb*) generate the potential to move the body beyond the Cartesian mind-body duality.<sup>31</sup> Such possibilities of inhabiting the body destabilize habituated notions of thinking about the body.

The contemporary enactments of the metaphysical breathing heart are often practice-specific to a Sufi network. These practices also change forms and significance in the course of crossing national borders and moving somewhere else, as the practices of transnational Sufi networks in other European contexts illustrate (Diaz 2011). Juxtaposing Sufi healing technologies with heart discourses contributes to the repertoire of more-than-biomedical healing knowledge and corporeal epistemologies. Epistemological assumptions govern our ethnographic experience of “time, space, space-time, time-space” among other elements in fieldwork (Crapanzano 1999, 76). Ethnographers must take into account radical



alterity to imagine a range of bodily experiences, for instance, body-space, space-body, body-as-metaphor, and metaphor-as-body. In the Sufi-Islamic context, taking the Qur'anic hermeneutics of the body seriously can assist us further in making sense of the classical/contemporary metaphor of the subtle-material Heart.

There is a difference between a body that can whirl or not, a body that can breathe in a certain way and one that cannot, a body that can try to embody the attributes of Allah versus one that avoids even trying, a body that can energize itself to the extent that it can transmit its own energy to other bodies as against a body that does not imagine (and incorporate) such an energy resource. If we are to take such possibilities seriously, then the horizons of thinking and becoming a body expand. This also depends on whether one allows oneself to think and mobilize that kind of body. The human bodies I describe here did not take part in all the Sufi techniques available in the city. Partly because they were not interested in all kinds of practice, and partly because of their entry points and belonging to the respective *silsila*/lineage and the bodily repertoires that came with the kind of Sufism they practiced. If an anthropologist has the curiosity and the opportunity to come across diverse body practices and decides to participate, there is a possibility not only of witnessing transformations but of becoming a different body compared to the one she had inhabited before. Such opportunities are limited because access depends on respective Sufi networks and the predispositions of the fieldworker.

Sufi body practices do not operate without political implications (see chapter 6). For example, the popular Sufi practice of *sema* attributed to Mevlana Rumi has partially to do with Rumi's contemporary fame as a global icon. Such fame is not only an illustration of cultural appropriation but also the purification of Sufi practice from Islam. Rumi's utterances in medieval Farsi took place in the context of a Muslim-majority society. He drew from Qur'anic hermeneutics with innumerable references to the prophetic tradition. The aesthetic/affective appreciation of his verses today is not restricted to these hermeneutics and traditions. The aesthetic/affective power of Sufi practices lies rather in the ways and extents to which they are made to speak to current existential concerns. Whitewashing Rumi and other eminent historical Sufi figures as only Sufis, denying their Muslimness, their non-white, non-Western Islamic contexts,





are inherently political moves in the context of anti-Muslim racism in Germany.<sup>32</sup>

This chapter focused on how the wayfaring bodies shift from their everyday techniques of sitting, standing, walking, and moving, to the Sufi techniques of a sounding body: whirling, breathing, reciting, energized walking, and dancing, together and alone. These techniques transform the subtle/material bodies depending on both corporeal capabilities and social circumstances, and the technical, symbolic repertoires made available by the different traditions of Sufism. The orientational and ontological metaphor of the Sufi heart in Berlin enacts a human body capable of containing the Divine. The sacred anatomy of the subtle-material body and the metaphysical heart affords the possibility of de-territorialized (Sufi) healing knowledge. The next chapter will show how such knowledge is not reduced to the logic of curing diseases through the transformation of subtle and material anatomies but aimed toward a quest for healing secular and religious suffering.

## Notes

1. The translated quote is taken from the contemporary website Masnavi.net (Rumi 2017).
2. The body is never solely a material entity in Sufi discourse (Bashir 2011, 20). The heart and its significance are well-documented in Islamic literature, with over one hundred thirty references to the heart (*qalb*) are found in the Qur'an (2:7; 28:10; 57:16) and numerous prophetic traditions (*ahādīth*) (Nasr 2004, 2015).
3. Paul Heelas and Rachael Kohn (1986) coined the term "techniques of transformation" to discuss how Buddhist practice informs psychotherapy. Elisabeth Hsu engaged the term to discuss the sensorial experience of therapeutic practices in a postgraduate course she taught at the Freie Universität Berlin in the summer of 2016, titled *Techniques of Transformation: Medical Effectiveness in the Light of Sensorial Experiences in Therapeutics*, based on an earlier lecture series held at the University of Oxford in 2002 (email, 14 February 2017).
4. For example, the concept *body ecologic* in the context of the transmission of Chinese medicine refers to "a framework for an analysis that includes the concerns of people in their interaction with the natural environment . . . [building] on the awareness that these concepts have a history and have evolved by complex historical processes" (Hsu 1999, 80). See seminal works on the anthropology of the body and embodiment by M. Jackson (1983), Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987), McGuire (1990), Csordas (1990), Lock



(1993), Coakley (1997), and a recent anthology by Mascia-Lees (2011). For bodily encounters in religious practice, see Fedele and Blanes (2011). For learning through the body, see Stoller (1997, 2008) and Stoller and Olkes (1987).

5. Innovation (*bid'a*) is often regarded as un-Islamic by many proponents of reformist Islam. The historical and human phenomenon of Islam could not take place without innovations, intersections, and intermingling with other traditions (Ahmed 2016). Thierry Zarcone and Angela Hobart (2013) discussed how Shamanism and Islam came together in Sufism, healing rituals, and spirits in Central Asia. Michaela Özelsel (1995) combined Western psychotherapeutic models of healing with the Shamanic and Sufi traditions of healing. See Robert Jütte (1996, 1999) for a history of nonconventional medicine and religious/spiritual healing in the German context.
6. In contrast, the *secular body* is inhabited by a “secular person . . . whose affective-gestural repertoires express a negative relation to forms of embodiment historically associated with (but not limited to) theistic religion” (Hirschkind 2011, 638).
7. The Qur'an makes no mention of the term *samā'*. The term existed in old Arabic, referring to songs or music performances (During and Sellheim 2012). Sufi *samā'* practices belong to the repertoire of techniques practiced in the Islamicate societies of the Middle East, Central, Middle, and South Asia, especially in Iranian, Turkish, and South Asian Sufi Islam (Kermani [1999] 2000; During and Sellheim 2012; Ahmed 2016). The Mevlevi *sema* of dervish gatherings transformed into a cultural performance for the public and tourists after the Mevlevi lodges were officially banned in 1925 by the Turkish government (Şenay 2017; Şahin 2016). The Mevlevi *sema* was documented as a dervish practice by Christian travelers from Western Europe as early as the fifteenth century, with increasing frequency by seventeenth-century travelers to the Ottoman Empire, and later, by Orientalist scholars (Sedgwick 2017). In the 1920s, European dancers began to perform versions of the *whirling dervish dance*, *whirl dance*, and *Mevlevi dervish dance*. In Berlin, the expressionist dance pioneer Mary Wigman performed Mevlevi-inspired whirling in 1923 (Barber 1985).
8. Ahmed emphasized the importance of labeling the Sufi practice of *samā'* as Islamic (2016, 288).
9. See Zarcone (2013a, 169) for a detailed discussion of “Islamized Shamanism,” the intersection of Shamanism and Sufi Islam in Turkey and Central Asia. Sufi dhikr and whirling movements were influenced by local Shamanic practices, as much as the “mutual assimilation” of Sufi Islamic ideas began to infuse the local practices.
10. The term dance seems to be employed more frequently in the German context. In the Turkish context, the term *sema* is well-established, and a term such as *derviş dansı* only rarely appears. I thank Robert Logan Sparks for drawing my attention to this point (email, 7 February 2018).
11. One of the earliest depictions by Amr al-Makki (d. 909) showed how there are many hearts within one: the *qalb* is in *ruh*, and *ruh* in *sirr*, and are



- successively dissolved as one gets closer to the Real (Massignon 1982, 3, 17). A nineteenth-century Sufi lithograph illustrated the seven concentric “subtle layers of the heart”: the material heart (knot of flesh, *madgha*); the liminal/imaginal *barzakhi* heart (beating heart, *qalb*); the moral heart (*fuad*), and the most subtle layers (spirit or *ruh*, secret or *sirr*, light or *nur*, and “I am”- *ana*). The lithograph was found in a North Indian Sufi manual, *diyā’ al-Qulūb* (The brilliance of hearts) by ṭājjī Imdādullah (1817–1899) (Kugle 2007, 250). This is a continuation of one of the earliest Sufi imaginings of *latifas* being encapsulated in one another (Milani 2013, 170). See Samuela Pagani (2017) for details on the heart discourse in Sufism.
12. The subtle body centers in Sufi discourse do not entirely correspond to the subtle body centers (chakras) in yoga discourse (Dale 2009). The Sufi schema of the subtle heart center may have been influenced by Taoist, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions, but exact historical linkages are not confirmed (Milani 2013; Ernst 2005). The *latifa qalbiyya* (subtle center of the heart) was prominent in the teachings of Naqshbandi Sheikh ‘Ala Uddawla Simnani (d. 1336) (Lizzio 2007; Schießmann 2003, 46).
  13. Nāzīm (2004, 33).
  14. “Remember (*udhkur*) your Lord when you do forget” (Qur’an 18: 24). The word “dhikr” exists in many languages of the Islamicate societies. In Turkish and Bengali, it is often pronounced as *zikir*. In English and German, the popular transliteration and pronouncement of the word is *zikr* or *zikar*.
  15. The Real is William Chittick’s (2004) translation of the term *al-Haqq* as used by Ibn Arabi. Chittick’s description of the Real focuses on the frequent use of the Qur’anic verse (41:53): “We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves, till it becomes clear to them that He is the Real” (Chittick 1989, xv). In Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s translation, *al-Haqq* refers to “the truth” (2015, 1170).
  16. The vigorous performances of Haqqani-Naqshbandi dhikr sacralize secular space in the United Kingdom (Werbner 1996). My fieldwork confirms the presence of a similar phenomenon among the Haqqani-Naqshbandis in Berlin.
  17. Hafiz, like Sheikh Eşref Efendi and Timur Efendi, considered the late Sheikh Nazim his teacher. He occasionally attended the events at the Sufi-Center Berlin but led his small network with Claire. Hafiz repeatedly emphasized the role of the prayerful body in linking the dhikr to the metaphysical breathing heart.
  18. Aramaic is an old Semitic language, arguably the language that Jesus Christ spoke (Douglas-Klotz [1990] 2007). Aramaic prayers are popular in the Inayati Sufi-Ruhaniat network.
  19. See Roy Jackson (2014) for a discussion about Inayati practice in the United Kingdom.
  20. *Tasawwuri* practice, the embodiment of the masters, was prominent among the Haqqani-Naqshbandi and the Inayati networks. In the medieval Sufi discourse, *tasawwuri* played a vital role in the Sufi novice’s aspiration of being attuned with and absorbed in the teacher, as a necessary intermediary step on



the quest for absorption and subsistence in Allah (Malamud 1996, 93; Chodkiewicz 1990). According to the unpublished German Murid manual that I consulted during my fieldwork, Murshid Wali Ali Meyer's definition of *tasavvuri* was translated into German as *Einstimmung* (in the right mood of . . .): "It allows oneself to get into the right mood of the great beings, something we can learn through the process of fana (annihilation of the self)."

21. "The subtle body has a strange ontological status" (Syman 2010, 7). The subtle body is not entirely real and not "wholly imagined" (2010, 7).
22. Neither the English word "heart" nor the German word "Herz" does justice to the polyvalent meanings and resonances of *qalb* invoked in Sufi parlance. In Arabic, the different hearts are known as *lubb*, *fu'ad*, and *sirr*, and in Farsi, *dil*.
23. The impulse-driven *al-nafs al-ammāra* (self-centered self/the soul commands to evil, Qur'an 12:53), the differentiating *nafs al-lawāma* (self-reproaching self/blaming soul, Qur'an 75:2), and the serene *nafs al-muṭma'inna* (peaceful self/soul at peace, Qur'an 89:27). The Arabic word *nafs* could also refer to the body, its demands, and desires (Chishti 1991).
24. *Makam* (or *maqam*) is considered a concept, scale, and phenomenon in pentatonic music traditions (Yöre 2012). According to an anonymous treatise (fourteenth–sixteenth century), the *makam* body was conceived in terms of body regions, with each part and organ reacting differently to different musical tones (*makam*) (Neubauer 1990, 246). Tūmata ideas of the *makam* body are informed by the 1864 illustration of Ottoman musician Haşim Bey Mecmuası (Güvenç and Güvenç 2009, 63).
25. The subtle body centers in Sufi discourse are entangled with personhood and self-transformation, although significant variations exist (Milani 2013, 169, 181). The tenth-century Iraqi Sufi Ahmad Ibn al-Junaid (d. 910) and his contemporaries mentioned these subtle centers. Later the *lataif* discourse was developed by the Central Asian Naqshbandis in terms of the first five *latifas*, followed by 'Ala Uddawla Simnani (d. 1336), who added the last two. See Arthur Buehler (1998) and Marcia Hermansen (1988) for a discussion of the historical development of the *lata'if*.
26. See Carl Ernst (1985) for a detailed account of affective aphorisms and their significance in the classical Sufi tradition, alongside their multidirectional impacts on Muslim communities.
27. These eleven rules or principles were attributed to Bah ad-din Naqshband Bukhari (1318–1389), the namesake founder of the Naqshbandi order (Sultanova 2011, 33).
28. Annemarie Mol (2002, 32) distinguished *performance* and *enactment*. While performance carries interfering associations of a backstage somewhere, enactment indicates that "activities take place—but leaves the actors vague" (2002, 33).
29. Richard Wolf (2006, 260) described the Mevlevi-inspired *malangs* in Pakistan spinning rapidly. He considered such spinning as an innovation in the local dance forms. In Sufi-Berlin, variations of the whirling set in motion the distinctive local imaginaries of Sufi movement.



30. I thank Annemarie Mol for pointing my attention to the problems of equivocation and translation of Sufi bodies (email, 7 September 2017).
31. Arthur Saniotis articulated the demands on the Sufi students in terms of the aspiration and cultivation of a certain “existential mastery in the form of disciplining the body . . . , the need for controlling the *nafs*, the seat of carnality” (2012, 79).
32. *Whitewashing* can be understood as the racialized “expropriation of cultural identity [that] cripples and deforms” (Hall 1989, 71). It constructs whiteness as universal and normative, expressing itself through racial erasures in a white supremacist society (Gabriel 1998). Whitewashing manifests in how popular Euroamerican media erase crucial contextual details when representing non-white and non-Western figures, exemplified by the casting of white actors to play a BIPOC character (Zhang 2017). I have discussed the political dangers of a related phenomenon (cultural appropriation) elsewhere in this book (Introduction, chapters 2, 4, and 6). However, restricting Rumi to a nationalist heritage, such as exclusively Iranian, Afghan, or Turkish, can be problematic. Considering Rumi as both Sufi and Muslim, who belongs to the transnational heritage of several nation-states beyond contemporary borders, complicates a singular identity. The contemporary appreciation of Rumi and other historical Sufi figures is emblematic of a global heritage accessible to Muslims and non-Muslims, whether they identify as Sufis or not, but not at the cost of whitewashing non-Western non-white Sufis like Rumi (Arjana 2020) and the cultural appropriation of an inherently Islamic tradition like Sufism.