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Abstract

This paper examines the strategies that Sufis adopted during covid-19 crisis which are journey and seclusion: two strategies that characterize Sufi's behaviour. Using qualitative research, this paper argues that though the policies enacted in the time of covid-19 has led humanity into herd immunity in which bodies have been subjected to a set of improvised political decisions, Sufi bodies are immune bodies by nature, as they are characterized by an inner immunity that makes of them either in a state of journey or in a state of seclusion. Drawing from Rosi Braidotti (2011)'s poststructuralist notion of nomadic subjectivity, this paper also states that the Sufi can be seen as a 'nomadic subject' able to experience not only physical journey shaping the move from one territory to another but also a kind of non-physical journey pertaining to spiritual ascension shaping the path to God. As a result, Sufi discourse is a site for fostering communal immunity where individuals are provided with strategies to transcend not only the pandemic as a temporary disaster but also the problems of life as well as the challenges menacing humankind.

Keywords: *Sufi discourse, nomadic subject, Sufi's journey, seclusion and immunity, pandemic.*

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Introduction

Stringent strategies adopted by the states to control and mitigate the spread of the pandemic have pinioned bodies within the immunization process, where immunized bodies have become a domain of struggle and a terrain of power relations. In fact, the outbreak of corona-virus has debunked the inability of the individual to cope with the new crisis, resisting the lockdown imposed by the state; this is due to the fact that individuals are unaware of or unfamiliar with seclusion procedures. Historically, people used to combat pandemics by means of seclusion —a mystical tool by excellence— while in the time of economic disaster or political strife people tend to travel in task of fetching a prosperous and safe place. These two strategies —seclusion and journey— are the hallmark of Sufi's behaviour in time of crisis.

From a theoretical point of view, crisis has become a defining feature and part of what constitutes our daily life. In fact, Braidotti (2011) reveals the predicament of our con-

temporary age which leans towards "a sort of cognitive and moral panic" that "has seized the humanistic community under the pressure of the clash of civilizations and the current political economy of fear and terror" (Braidotti, p.174). Braidotti further argues that "from a post-human digital perspective comes the debate about the proliferation of viruses, from computers to humans, animals, and back" (p.338). Accordingly, the distinctive trait of our age is that the spirit of biogenetic globalization invades the world and causes dying. There-fore, if Braidotti suggests in theory the importance of adopting a nomadic thought —which is to say "a strong ethics of the ecosophical sense of community" (p.210) — we arguably take *Sufi* discourse as a terrain not only for negotiating and resisting these abusive power configurations, but also for providing practical and expedient strategies that may lead com-munity into peace and equilibrium.

Therefore, the crises that humanity is experiencing today are due to a major crisis presented in the collapse of values, behaviour and meaning. In fact, this paper tries to shed light on what Sufism can offer as a value-based and spiritual reference in managing our con-temporary crises and creating effective value governance. Accordingly, Braidotti (2006) sug-gests adopting "a nonunitary vision of nomadic subjectivity, which… produces a more trans-formative approach to the ethics of thinking" (p.230). This new ethos provides frames for "creating collective bonds, a new effective community or policy" (p.231). These new moral recommendations that Braidotti speaks of are approximated on the basis of the "nonprofit, emphasis on the collective, acceptance of relationality and of viral contaminations" (p.230). Leaning on Spinoza's ethics, Braidotti defends the importance of human bonds as one of the most fundamental human conatus or desire, yet because *Sufi* discourse encourages human bonds, coexistence and love, it is a discourse where this human conatus holds by increasing what Spinoza calls 'the power of acting'. This power to act born of our passions – argues Spinoza – arouses in us an eternal desire to act and move, which, to adapt to the context of our research, comes under travel and seclusion as two forms of action and movement.

The significance of this study lies in focusing on the strategies of resistance in time of crisis outside the domain of politics —which usually and forcibly coerces its subjects into a conformist behaviour. However, the strategies adopted by the *Sufis* are autopoietic, in that seclusion is an effect of love, and love is an "intense yearning for unification" (Ibn Sina, 1894, p.225); and in this divine union, seclusion takes on an ascensional dimension —a mystical journey to God. Yet, journey, on the other hand, as the word *hijra* in Arabic entails, is to abandon evil, hatred and bad deeds. Since all abandonment takes place in the heart, the traveler does not associate his heart with a place, but with the universe as a whole, hence the importance of journey which accords immunity to *Sufis* who travel constantly.

Sufi discourse refers to a substantial body of literary oeuvres produced in the field of Sufism and enjoys a set of properties that discerns it from other discourses usually enmeshed in ideologies and isms. S.H. Nasr (1972)'s *Sufi Essays* introduces *Sufi* discourse as a remedy of the turmoil of modern life related to the loss of identity, the lack of spirituality and the spread of atheism. Similarly, Annemarie Schimmel (1975) views *Sufi* discourse as gnos-tic, universal and transnational. Furthermore, Keller (1978) maintains that *Sufi* discourse is looked upon as a set of:

> texts which deal with ultimate knowledge: with its nature, its modalities, its con-ditions, its methods, and also with secondary insights which might be granted to a seeker in the course of his task…[they] are thus texts which discuss the path towards realization of the ultimate knowledge which particular religion has to offer (Keller, p.77).

Leaning on Keller's statements on mystical discourse, Ming-Yu Tseng (1997) views mystical writings as anti-language generated by the so called anti-societal force, which in turn suggests that "coexisten[ce] with an alternative society is an 'alternative world view' " (p.181). In the same vein, Geoffroy (2010)— a French scholar in *Sufi* studies and an affiliate of Alawiya order— proposes Sufism or Islamic mysticism as a necessary substitute for bringing Islam back to practice, because when a religion is robbed of its spiritual dimension, it falls apart or collapses.
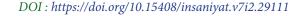
Sufi discourse played a major role not only in fighting colonialism but also in the spiritual stability of the state. Historically, Geertz (1979) asserts that because the state had recognized the intrinsic role which Sufism had been playing in bringing Muslim society into a state of stability, the state therefore allied with it (p.160). First, Sufism in Morocco created a strongly communal immune which partook in the political activism against colonialism. Second, after Morocco had gained independency, Sufism took on an educational dimension aiming towards building knit communities by bringing back Islam to its moderate form against the rapid propagation of Wahabism which caused *Sufi* orders to recede (Zeghal, 2008, p.18).

Our main argument relates to the ways in which Sufi discourse can be a source of spirituality that provide individuals with strategies to transcend crisis, of which are journey and seclusion. To attain this objective, the main questions this paper underlines are: (1) to what extent *Sufi* discourse can be a communal immunization instrument whereby individuals adopt a nomadic style of thinking not only in its spatial dimension, which describes the motion from one place to another, but also in its ascensional dimension, which depicts the spiritual journey to God? And (2) to what extent journey and seclusion are expedient strategies that individuals can use in times of crisis and political turmoil?

Method

This study makes use of a descriptive and historical method, which consists of discussing the topic by referring to original sources, explaining the meaning of unclear words and deducing conclusions from *Sufis'* hagiographies. Since theory is essential in practising qualitative research (Liamputtong & Ezzy, p.2), we take poststructuralist theory as a method to analyze and interpret data. The use of this theory helps accentuate the nomadic aspect of *Sufi*'s behaviour, find out the nature of *Sufi* discourse and its importance in fostering communal immunity and provide individuals with strategies of resistance in time of crisis. With that said, nomadic theory will be used in the entire paper, as it accounts for the liminal state the *Sufi* is adopting in his journey to God: this liminality is expressive of the *Sufi*'s behaviour, which oscillates between journey and seclusion. As for data collection, the quotes cited in this paper are taken from Islamic *Sufi* tradition (books, treatise, *Sufis'* hagiographies and divans). In order to abide by *Sufi* terminology, Arabic terms are written in italic and given their full equivalent terms in English.

Regarding the theoretical conception of this study, the paper employs Braidotti's poststructuralist notion of nomadic subjectivity in task of showing that saints have an autopoietic immunity constantly derived from the duality of journey and seclusion. First, journey always shapes the relationship between the disciple and his master. In other words, the relationship between the disciple and his teacher is brought into view by means of a cluster of *Sufi* narratives where motion (journey or migration) is a distinctive feature shaping this relationship. Second, seclusion is deployed by the *Sufi*s in favour of reaching that which is divine in them and seeking unification with God. Therefore, if people view lockdown as unbearable procedure, *Sufi*s, who have familiarized themselves with the experience of seclusion, displace this tragedy into joy and pleasure.

Result and Discussion

Journey (*safar*) and seclusion (*'uzla*) are strongly pertinent to Islamic mysticism and considered to be two major paradigms in *Sufi* discourse. By consensus, these two recurring themes relate to the strategies that saints adhere to on their way to God, as they provide *Sufi*s with inner immunity that makes them capable of coping with crises and tough situations. Given that journey and seclusion are embedded in the everyday practices of *Sufi*s, they can be inscribed in the *Sufi* management of public life. In the light of Braidotti's poststructuralist notion of nomadic subjectivity, *Sufi* discourse regards the *Sufi* as a nomadic subject "ab[le] to actualize selfhood as a process of transformation and transversality"(Braidotti, 2012, p.33); this transformation of the self is attained, in the case of Sufism, through journey and seclusion —both of which connotes a sense of nomadism.

Since *Sufis* and saints are in a constant state of seclusion and journey, they produce a discourse intended to locate the individual in this *inbetweenness* which extends the scope of spiritual experience beyond the individual level to include the entire community: "For the likes of us living in a community is more beneficial, because some of us imitate others [in good works]."(Qushayri, 2007, p.148). In fact, the "processes of becoming are not predicated upon a stable, centralized Self" but rather "on a nonunitary, multilayered, dynamic subject attached to multiple communities"(Braidotti, 2012, p.35). That is, this transition from the individual to the communal is governed by a strict boundedness to the teachings of Sufism, whereby a disciple obeys his master or *sheikh*. This obedience is occasioned by love and guidance than by that which enters on the part of power relations, so the *Sufi* takes guidance and gains immunity from within the community around him.

The importance of familiarizing individuals with journey and seclusion in *Sufi* discourse is twofold: disengaging from space and gaining unity. In fact, *Sufi* discourse is full of narratives that regard the *Sufi* as a flowing river (Chaplin, 2011, p.209) which rots if stagnant (Ibn 'Ajiba 45). Journey in a time-space line results in spatial disengagement, which Tabriz constantly calls upon: Oh traveller! Do not attach your heart to a place so that you are not sad when you leave it (as cited in Rumi, 2009, p.8). Accordingly, the adoption of this nomadic style of thinking makes the *Sufi*'s subjectivity amenable to take on various forms:

> My heart has become capable of every form,
> It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,
> And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba
> And the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran. (Ibn Arabi, 1911, pp.26-29)

This nomadic subjectivity emanating from travel grants the *Sufi* positive qualities related to love, the accommodation of alterity and the advocacy of polyphony. These outcomes by which a communal immunity is achieved become a hallmark of the *Sufi* tradition. One can then say that Ibn Arabi's doctrine on love is occasioned by nomadism, which enlarges the horizon of the *Sufi* to include all forms of worshiping God. Therefore, without travel, there is no place for love, peace and alterity —all of which are constitutive of the communal immunity.

The Moroccan geographer Ibn Battuta (1304) spoke of the emergence of *Sufi* folks who had performed journeying together with their guru in hope of purifying their souls and correcting their behaviours (p.3:24). He traces this emergence back to the positive impact of *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism* and Al-Ghazali's *The revival of the Religious Sciences* on the entire Muslim community. However, Abu L-Qasim Al-Qushayri mentions that there are groups of *Sufis* who stick to a sedentary mode of behaviour, of which are "al-Junayd, Sahl

b. 'Abdallah [al-Tustari], Abu Yazid al-Bistami, Abu Hafs [al Haddad], and some others" (p.297). Generally, the impact of *Sufi* discourse on Ibn Battuta and other scholars in forming journey literature (*adab rihla*) and in spreading the culture of journeying amongst people is significantly manifest. The notion of togetherness resonates with this type of journeying performed by a group of *Sufis* whose destination never comes to an end; since God is omni-present, this nomadic attitude towards space is being constantly deterritorialized by the *Sufis* in search of God. The more the *Sufis* perform journeying in flock, the more their relationship to space decreases, for the attachment to or the desire of laying sway over a place is the source of all wars and strife. Accordingly, individuals are immunized by adopting an ascetic proclivity toward space which they derive from Sufism.

This non-attachment to space alludes to a post-identitarian nature of the *Sufi* that moves beyond self-representational practices. The *Sufi*'s identity is "not ego-indexed, but rather impersonal" (Braidotti, 2012, p.33), as it perishes of that which constitutes it. What *Sufi* discourse finds objectionable in the everyday life of individuals is that it reifies the values pertaining to hypermodernity, materialism and individualism. If individuals adopt a nomadic mode of thinking which they take from Sufism, I argue, they will construct a non-fragmented self —which is an outcome of practising annihilation (*fana*) — where subjectivity becomes unified or fixed; this unification is experienced at the moment of annihilation, where the *Sufi* is in a unitary relationship with the divine: my heart used to have dispersed desires, which then mustered since the eye saw you (Al-Hallaj, 2010, pp.13-14). In the case of Al-Hallaj, immunity is achieved when the *Sufi* experiences unity and abandon fragmentation in the di-vine presence (*hadra*). As such, the *Sufi* lives in this inbetweenness, which is to say between fragmentation and unity, a unity that he temporarily achieves at the moment of annihilation. Therefore, the latter is an instrument whereby this spatial disengagement occurs, which is hence a mystical outcome of journeying.

Abu baker Shibli (A.H 227-861) is one of the most salient mystics in the history of Sufism; he had witnessed the beheading and burning of his companion Al-Hallaj (858-913) —the most controversial figure in the history of Islamic mysticism (Attar, 2000, p.357)— who refused to avert punishment by fleeing or travelling. Contrary to Shibli, Al-Hallaj's eagerness to die is a strong desire towards eternal union with his Beloved and a result of his constant journeys, in which he repeatedly went through a series of intermittent unions; in the case of Al-Hallaj, the transition from the intermittent states of union to an eternal union is done through death. This "intense yearning towards unification" (Ibn Sina, p.273) culminates in death, which, according to Schimmel, "leads the lover to his Beloved" (135). Because Al-Hallaj strives for "gain[ing] eternal life", he "tread[s] everlastingly the way of death" (Rumi, 2004, p.17). Shibli underscores sameness and difference between him and his comrade: "I and Hallaj are of one mind, but my madness saved me, and his intellect de-stroyed him." (as cited in Hujwiri, 2000, p.151). In contrast to Al-Hallaj, Shibli adopts two strategies to shun the caliphate's execution— pretending madness and fleeing to the desert. That is, Shibli preferred subsistence (*baqa*) over annihilation (*fana*), which is to say that *baqa*, in the case of Shibli, signifies 'not to die' and that *fana,* in the case of Al-Hallaj, signals 'death'. Nevertheless, one can apparently view the position of the two mystics at odds, yet they coincide coherently: *baqa* and *fana* are both viewed as a mystical journey to God and two opposing states (*ahwal*) of the *Sufi* in the path towards God. Therefore, the two mystics are seen as 'nomadic subject' with the same telos, yet contrasting methods: Al-Hallaj dies to liberate his community from the chains of political power, while Shibli escapes death to contribute to the advancement of his community.

The story of Ibrahim Ibn Adham (AH c.100 – c. 165) —the most prominent *Sufi* scholar in the mid-second century A.H— is paramount in *Sufi* discourse, as it expresses an extreme form of love, whereby immunity and self-sufficiency hold. When seclusion and journeying become a prerequisite for unification with God, divine love bypasses all earthly forms of love. After Ibn Adham had abandoned the throne and his family, he journeyed to Mecca, where he composed the these verse couplets upon seeing his son whom he abandoned years ago:

> I abandoned everyone for the sake of Your love
> And I orphaned my children so that I could see You
> Therefore, if You tore me asunder in love,
> My heart wouldn't long for none but You (as cited in Ameli, p. 2:28)

The idea of abandonment in the *Sufi* sense is engendered by the desire to unite with God, which Ibn Sina calls love (5). Therefore, the *Sufi* attains union by adopting a non-sedentary mode of thinking which aims at "instil[ing] movement into thought" (Braidotti, 2012, p.11); this movement —in its two forms: journey and seclusion — is an indispensible mystical practice aiming at emptying the self from all attachments. In other words, "nomadic thought rests on the practice of estrangement as way to free the process of subject formation from the normative vision of the self" (Braidotti, p.83). Accordingly, Sufism is viewed as a terrain for exercising estrangement by adhering to movement as a freeing agent from all forms of attachment (*ta'aloq*), an estrangement expressed in a more straightforward vein: "O lovers, O lovers, it is time to abandon the world" (Rumi, 2009, p.xxxvi). his exhortation towards travelling and seclusion alleviates people's attachment to space and strengthens instead their nexus to God; the practice of estrangement is then achieved through the voyage of the body and heart as well as through—to use Al-Hallaj's terminology— the eclipse of intermediaries (*isqat al-wasa 'it).*

In fact, journey and seclusion are linguistically approximated, as they both belong to the same semantic field which connotes the idea of estrangement, by which union holds; Ameli underscores that estrangement is an outcome of divine love and a way towards unification (2:28). As such, *Sufi* discourse provides *Sufis* with strategies that free them from all sorts of constraints and help them undo their bond not only with people but also with space, which —in *Sufi* tradition— is superseded by the path to God. In *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam,* it is reported that Ibn Adham recorded in his writings his dialogue with his Christian master Simeon, who was under seclusion for seventy years (Glasse, 2001, p.178). By adopting the Christian monk as his guru, Adham has managed to bridge the gap between Islam and Christianity through *Sufi* discourse which trespasses the boundaries of religious agitations by deeming love a religion of humanity.

The spiritual voyage that Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) performs has inspired a myriad of *Sufis* in their path to God— including Ibrahim Adham, who reproduced what did Al-Ghazali. Griffel (2009) states that Al-Ghazali's book *Almunqid Min Dallal* has provided researchers with a comprehensive description of the reasons for abandoning his family and his position as head of *Nizamiyya* (p.44). By recognizing the state of his fragmented self, Al-Ghazali decided to "expel the demon of frivolity, put on the clothing of the pious" (Al-Dahabi, 1998, p.19:324) and adopt instead a nomadic mode of thinking, which —according to Sufism— consists of the abandonment of luxurious life in pursuit of that which is divine; Al-Ghazali says:

> I attentively considered my circumstances, and I saw that I was immersed in attachments, which had encompassed me from all sides. I also considered my

achievements—the best of them being my instructions and my teaching—and I understood that here I was applying myself to sciences that are unimportant and useless on the way to the hereafter. Then I reflected on my intentions in my instruction, and I saw that it was not directed purely to God. Rather, it was instigated and motivated by the quest for fame and widespread prestige. (as cited in Griffel, p.44)

Being constantly 'immersed in attachments' blurs the veil between Al-Ghazali and his Lord, as he eventually realized that "what is most distinctive of [*Sufi* sects] can be attained only by personal experience, ecstasy, and a change of character" (Watt, 1963, p.153). During his eleven-year journey, he travelled back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem. Upon his return to homeland (*Tus*), he says, "I chose seclusion ('*uzla*), desiring solitude and the purification of the heart through *dikhr"* (as cited in Griffel, p.50). Therefore, Al-Ghazali's spiritual experience is expressive of different metamorphisms that he underwent during his journey and seclusion, which cause him awe, humility and contentment— qualities that let him view critique and praise on an equal footing. This inner immunity that he inherited from practising abandonment has great impact on the change of his character and has therefore inspired mystical community around the world.

Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) —a well known *Sufi* scholar and philosopher who has in-fluenced the entire humanity through his doctrine of love— has examined the concept of journey in its ascensional dimension through his mystical narratives, where journey upward becomes linked to the myriad shifts experienced by the *Sufi.* The term heavenly ascension (*mi'raj*) relates to the inner and noetic journey of the Sufi, a journey that takes place at the time of seclusion, which in this sense is considered a non-physical journey. However, Though Braidotti limits nomadic subjectivity to bodily movement, mystical seclusion takes on as well a nomadic nature, as it does not only occur in the physical place (*khulwa*) but rather in the place beyond it, i.e. space— which is an abstract term alluding to an empty space in which absent others communicate (Giddens, 1984, p.33). During Ibn Arabi's *mi'raj*, he travels to an empty space filled with a cluster of images that caused him to communicate with the souls of the prophets. In *The Alchemy of Happiness*, chapter 167 of *Futuhat Al-Mak-kiyya* —during Ibn Arabi's ascension— he met *Aaron* in the Fifth Heaven and reported his dialogue with *Yahya* as follows:

> Next I alighted to stay with Aaron, and (there) I found Yahya, who had already reached him before me. So I said to (Yahya): "I didn't see you on my path: is there some other path there?" And he replied: "each person has a path no one else but he travels." I said: "Then where are they, these (different) paths" Then he answered: "they come to be through traveling itself." (Ibn Arabi, 2017, pp.78-79)

In this dialogue, Ibn Arabi underscores the significance of travelling in reaching di-vine truths, for each *Sufi* path is unique and original —yet the method is rhizomatic and repetitive. This style of rhizomatic thinking aims to relive "the event or place from different angles" (Braidotti, 2012, p.230). Accordingly, Ibn Arabi has likewise duplicated the experi-ence of the Muhammadan *mi'raj* (heavenly journey) by visiting Heavens —each of which represents a symbolic encounter with a prophet. In fact, the dialogue Ibn Arabi stroke up with *Yahya* conforms to his theory of 'unity of existence' (*wahdat al-wujud*). That is, diver-sity is of human origin; whereas unity is of divine one. In other words, although the ways to God are diverse, the ultimate end is the same. Adopting this mystical divine truth may expel the seditious elements responsible for causing antagonism and hatred in the world.

All the metamorphisms the *Sufis* undergo in their journey and seclusion grant them positive traits that stand as an alternative to that which is negative in their actions. The power

to bring positivity into people's lives renders *Sufi* discourse a terrain in which theory and practice, the real and the imaginary and the material and the ethereal coexist. The journey a mystic takes through his heart is far more significant than the journey of the body, because "travel can be divided into two parts: travel with your body, which implies moving from one place to another; travel with your heart, which implies rising from one attribute to another (Al-Qushayri, p.143). Similarity, the Tunisian *Sufi* Al-Mawahib (1309) makes the same discernment in his treatise: A journey is of two types: the journey of the soul, which entails shifting from density to gentleness; and the journey of the body, which entails moving from one place to another (Al-Mawahib, p.48). Thus, the *Sufi*'s identity is prone to numerous transformations and understood in terms of nomadic though. This new metaphor in which the body and soul interact within a moving space is the characteristic of our contemporary world.

When individuals are bound to a place that lacks prosperity, peace and love, seclusion and journeying become imperative mechanisms for searching for perfection —one of the most important attributes of God. In contrast to those who lack immunity, *Sufis* adopt the mechanism of travelling during crises, a mechanism proposed by the Qur'an:

> When the angels seize the souls of those who have wronged themselves—scolding them, "What do you think you were doing?" they will reply, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will respond, "Was Allah's earth not spacious enough for you to emigrate?" It is they who will have Hell as their home (The Qur'an, 4:97)

Being oppressed in the land has never been an excuse to adhere to a sedentary mode of thinking, which Ibn Khaldun criticizes and deems a sign of backwardness (p.138). On the contrary, the *Sufi* is a "nomadic subject" ready to travel and seclude for God's sake, for journey —in the *Sufi* perspective— is the general rule, while seclusion is the exception. Because Qur'an encourages people to travel or emigrate during the time of crisis, the *Sufi* is then in a constant mobility; otherwise, attachment to space may hinder him or her not only from escaping evil or transcend crisis, as in verse 97 from *Surat An-Nissa*, but also from uniting with God. In other words, this continuous movement of the *Sufi* is due to his unstable being, which feels the crisis every moment his heart is aloof from God.

The advantages that *Sufis* received from journeying are paramount because in it they get acquainted to foreigners, which is to say to different cultural and religious beings. Therefore, though "strangely the foreigner lives within us" (Kristeva, 1991, p.1), the heart of the *Sufi* is considered an abode of otherness; the foreigner, who is different from 'Us', is an extension of the single self (*nafs*); this extension is expressed by the Koranic phrase *annafs al-wahida* "the single person" (The Qur'an, 4:1) from which sprung all selves (*nufus*). The belief in this mystical reality results in warding off strife and racism, as Rumi puts it in his poem "XXXVI": "I deal harshly with none, because I am sweet as a garden of roses" (2004, p.146). Sufism underscores the idea of otherness, as the contemporary world is laden with strife and hatred:

> Our social horizon is war ridden and death bound. The promises of globalization turned out to be deceitful, and their financial rewards disappointing. We live in a culture where religious-minded people kill in the name of "the right to life" and where mighty nations wage war for "humanitarian" reasons (Braidotti, 2012, p.279)

Braidotti's statement alludes to a multilayered complex, paradoxical problem shaping the contemporary era of the world —yet solvable in the *Sufi* discourse. The solution to this dilemma neither comes on the part of orthodox adherence to creedal statements nor comes

on the part of a political power. Instead, Sufism heralds itself as a sanctuary to the foreigner who "comes in when the consciousness of [our] difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities" (Kristeva, 1991, p.1). Consequently, Kristeva's solution to this difference or racism pertains to the adoption of a "nomadic attitude" (Braidotti, p.301) towards space, which —in a more mystical vein— echoes Rumi's call for the importance of "abandon[ing] the world" (p.xxxvi). Thus, adopting this mystical call may lead our community into peace, stability and equilibrium, three qualities under which a community thrives.

Historically, the prominent role played by *Sufi* orders in building highly immune societies cannot be denied. Taking the example of Morocco, Ibn 'Askar mentioned that the state used to consult *Sufi sheikhs* in time of crisis and negotiate with them; since *Sufis* showed no interest in the throne and were interested instead in improving the lives of people, they acquired a good reputation. In fact, during the political strife, *zawaya* (*Sufi* lodges) offered a number of services for the entire community: protecting peasants' corps from marauding, offering sanctuary to strong antagonists of the ruling class and providing *it'am* (food) for adjacent communities (Ibn 'Askar, 1976, p.78). That is, the interaction of *Sufi* lodges with the community and its institutions is characterized by ascetic retreat from the throne and active participation in its affairs. This active involvement of *Sufi* orders is an outcome of *zawaya*'s adoption of "less linearity and more rhizomatic and dynamic thinking" (Braidotti, p.225), which usually culminates in mitigating the hotbeds of political conflict during the crises.
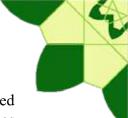
The concept of the nomadic subject resonates with the *Sufi* tradition in many ways. Braidotti' nomadic thinking is concomitant with the *Sufi* annihilation (*fana*) of the self in pursuit of an ultimate telos. This annihilation is not a voyage into death, but rather constant processes of becoming that feed infinite possibilities for existence. The mystical journey to God echoes a mode of nomadic thought which is purposeful and meaningful. This mystical end that the *Sufi* is trying to achieve across multiple times and spaces causes him to feel pain, which he displaces into pleasure and ecstasy. Adopting such a nomadic vision culminates in a multidimensional and fluid subjectivity —which transcends that which is earthly for the sake of achieving the divine— as the fluidity of *Sufi*'s behaviour resembles that of a river (Chaplin, p.209). Thus, this fluidity of *Sufi*'s subjectivity may be regarded as a source of power and strength if used properly in the context of mysticism.

Conclusion

Shibli, A-Hallaj, Ibn Adham, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi all travelled and secluded on their ways to God and hence went through different metamorphisms that granted them immunity and helped them influence their neighbouring communities by advocating otherness, love, dialogue and co-existence. This study stresses the importance of adopting what Braidotti calls 'a nomadic style of thinking', either through journey or through seclusion —both of which are two forms of travel: physical and ethereal. This nomadic attitude towards space, in its both dimensions, makes of *Sufi* discourse an abode that makes the world a better place, or —as Rumi puts it— a "rose-garden of union." As previously indicated by the hagiographies of the *Sufis,* seclusion and journey prove to be two expedient strategies in times of crisis that provide individuals with inner immunity and power against the disturbances —wars or viruses— that may befall the world. During this research, these two strategies take on different labels and forms —of which are abandonment, estrangement, *mi'raj* (heavenly journey) and fleeing; nevertheless, and in the course of discussion, madness and death appear to be another two strategies used respectively by Shibli and Al-Hallaj in the time of crisis.

Scant studies related to this topic —*Sufi* discourse and immunity in times of crisis— were found. First, the data used in this study is not sufficiently enough to draw any overar-

ching generalizations about the fact that all *Sufis* during their path of *wusul* have adopted seclusion and journey as two strategies to gain immunity and hence help their communities thrive. In fact, more work needs to be done in the task of raising the results of this study to the degree of generalization, as the results achieved in this study remain limited to some prominent *Sufi* figures —Abu Baker Shibli, Al-Hallaj and Ibn Adham, Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. Second, another limitation of this study relates to its near-total focus on journey as a major problem-solving strategy compared to seclusion, which is given little room for discussion and discussed solely in the light of heavenly ascension. Therefore, seclusion should be extensively studied in its multilayered aspects.

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