The Friendship Fest: Perfecting Friendship through Transnational Musical Performance

Nancy LeAnne Thompson

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the American Studies Commons, and the Music Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-9k7z-ff83

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
The Friendship Feast: Perfecting Friendship through Transnational Musical Performance

Nancy LeAnne Thompson
Williamsburg, Virginia

Bachelor of Science, The College of William and Mary, 1978

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary
May, 2008
This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Nancy LeAnne Thompson

Approved by the Committee, February, 2008

Committee Chair
Associate Professor Arthur Knight
College of William and Mary

Associate Professor Charles McGovern
College of William and Mary

Associate Professor Anne Rasmussen
College of William and Mary

Visiting Assistant Professor Timothy Barnard
College of William and Mary
In the wake of 9/11, the relationships between Americans and Arabs, Christians and Muslims could hardly be characterized as friendly. Yet a mere two years later, the government of the primarily Arab and Muslim country of Morocco sought out the support of American evangelical Christians to join in the co-production of a three day musical celebration of transnational, trans-cultural friendships and cooperation. As with all such collaborations, issues of cultural imperialization must be considered, but I argue that ultimately the Friendship Fest revealed itself as a constructive, if complex and unevenly balanced, musical performance of transnational cooperation that stands as an exemplary, sophisticated, cosmopolitan response to stresses that threaten peaceful coexistence in an increasingly globalized world. As an homage to the musical nature of the event, I present my discourse as a series of three "Movements" with a concluding "Coda." In the First Movement, I explore how the intersecting discourses of cultural diplomacy, tourism and religion enabled both the Moroccan Government and the Western promoters to utilize the Friendship Fest as a transnational performance site for the pursuit of friendships that facilitate and promote transnational political engagement, identity formation and bilateral cultural exchange. In the Second Movement, I examine how various performances were modified to create a veneer of consensus, thus revealing how various actors performed friendship as they sought to exert influence and affect desired change. In the Third Movement, I describe how music, especially in a festival setting, is uniquely suited to promote friendships and to function as a bridge spanning deep cultural, political and religious divides. In the Coda, I assess the relative success of the Friendship Fest to pursue, perform and/or promote friendship and address the qualitative nature of that friendship. I conclude that while the friendships begun during the festivals may not be perfect in an Aristotelian/Platonic sense, they did constitute the beginning of an ongoing work of "perfecting friendship" as described by Ivy Schwietzer.
# Table of Contents

- Dedication ii
- Acknowledgments iii

**Overture: “Can Jesus come out and play?”** 1

*An Unusual Invitation*
- Origins of the Friendship Fest 2
- My Involvement 6
- My Argument 7

**First Movement: “We’re just friends—really!”** 9

*Friendship: what lies beneath—the multiple layers of relationship.*
- Theorizing Friendship 9
- Historical Background of Morocco 15
- Moroccan/American Political and Cultural History 18
- Cultural Diplomacy or Cultural Imperialism? 25
- Tourism: Economic Development or Economic Imperialism? 33
- Religious Tolerance or Religious Imperialism? 40
- Conclusion 44

**Second Movement: “Play nice!”** 46

*How friends act—the performance of friendship*
- Theorizing Performance 46
- Idealized Performances 51
- Conclusion 55

**Third Movement: “Let’s all sing!”** 57

*Music is the universal language—isn’t it?*
- Theorizing Music 59
- Musical Meaning and the Individual 61
- Trans-Cultural Musical Understanding 64
- Cultural Imperialism or Transnational Collaboration? 67
- Two Successful Collaborations 70
- The Value of Music in Cross-Cultural Communication 72
- Music as a Political Tool 73
- Music Festivals as Educational Tools 76
- Music as a Tool of Persuasion 78
- Music as a Tool of Worship 81
- Conclusion 83

**Coda: So was it the “beginning of a beautiful friendship?”** 85

- Bibliography 92
- Vita 98
Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to the glory of God, who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all I could ask or even imagine, and apart from whom, I can do nothing.
Acknowledgements

Without the support and encouragement of many people, this work would never have been accomplished. I want to thank Arthur Knight, my advisor, who allowed me to test the waters and begin taking classes before I had even applied to the American Studies program, who consistently supported my non-conventional path, and who helped me view the Friendship Fest through the lens of performance theory. I also want to thank Charlie McGovern, who assured me early on, that I “had the chops” to do this work, who pushed me to think deeply and skeptically about my assumptions, and who forced me to write clearly and analytically. The subject of this thesis grew out of conversations with Tim Barnard whose excitement and interest in my work provided both energy and direction when self-doubt and frustration threatened to overwhelm me. Thank you for believing in this project. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Anne Rasmussen and my Music 345 classmates, who were so patient to teach me about music and who inspired me with their generosity, intellectual curiosity, and sheer sense of fun. I especially want to thank Rev. Dr. Harry Thomas for introducing me to the wonderful people of Morocco through the Friendship Fest. Finally, I wish to thank my husband, Bob, and my daughter Susie for loving me, supporting me, encouraging me, and believing in me. Without your faith in me I would never have begun, without your wise advice I would never have continued, and without your tireless support I would never have finished. Thank you both so much.
"our fate as a global community depends on our ability to act on the similitude—however illusory or fantastic—of our shared humanity...our national as well as global future lies in reclaiming and...perfecting friendship as an engine of equality and self-knowledge, especially friendships across differences."

Ivy Schweitzer¹

"Most of the people in America think that we here in Morocco are still living with camels and living in the desert. We know a lot about America. So these musicians [Americans] when they go back to America...will talk and tell their friends and family all about what it is like in Morocco, and that it is not like in the movie Casablanca."

Moroccan musical artist Edil Hanine²

"our political co-existence, as subjects or citizens, depends on being able to agree about practices while disagreeing about their justification. We can live together without agreeing what the values are that make it good to live together; we can agree about what to do in most cases without agreeing about why it’s right."

Kwame Anthony Appiah³

"I think music is definitely more important than words because music is so much more universal. Everybody can understand it. Everybody loves a good beat!"

American musical artist Danielle Kimmey⁴

Overture: “Can Jesus come out and play?”

An Unusual Invitation

On May 6, 2005, as the sun was setting, I, along with 20,000 other people made my way to the desert plains outside the walls of Marrakech, Morocco to watch as (what seemed to me) an unlikely group of performers took to the stage. The evening marked the beginning of the first-ever Friendship Fest—a three day music festival pairing Moroccan musicians with contemporary Christian musicians from the

---

United States, England, and Australia. The festival, which ultimately drew an estimated crowd of 80,000 attendees in 2005 (and subsequently a crowd of approximately 220,000 in 2006) was a public performance: one that appeared to me to be unprecedented and unusual in light of the political, social, cultural, and religious tensions that existed at the time between Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Americans, and eastern and western cultures as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York, and Washington D.C., and the ongoing war in Iraq. In the context of those tensions, the Friendship Fest raised all manner of questions that I felt bore careful and thoughtful examination. I was curious to know how this event came to be. Why the government of Morocco, a moderate Arab state, which is 99.99% Muslim, would invite Christians to come and sing about Jesus? Whose agendas were being served? Who was performing for whom and what exactly was being performed?

Origins of the Friendship Fest

In March 2003, the Moroccan Ambassador to the United States, Aziz Mekouar, had a conversation in New York with freelance photojournalist Michael Kirtley about the perceived anti-Muslim, anti-Arab rhetoric coming out of the evangelical Christian community following the 9/11 terrorist bombings of the World Trade Towers. Responding to the ambassador's concerns, Kirtley organized a
 delegation which included Rev. Dr. Harry Thomas, the co-founder of America’s largest Christian musical festival, Creation Festival; Rev. Richard Cizik, the Vice President for Government Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals; and Rev. Robert Schenck, the President of the National Clergy Council. The delegation traveled to Morocco in March 2004 to meet with top government and religious leaders including Prime Minister Driss Jettou, and the Wali (governor) of Marrakech, Mohammed Hassad, to discuss religious freedom and democratic reform in Morocco. While there, the Wali invited Thomas to present a “Human Rights” award at “Khmissa 2004,” an event celebrating the rights of women. The ceremony was held in a large theater and was televised throughout Morocco, as well as to much of the Arab world and to France. Thomas, who was introduced as an American evangelical Christian clergyman, presented an award to Moroccan citizen Assia El Qouadie for her work on prison reform. During his address, Thomas quoted Christian scripture and reminded the audience that those who work with the poor “touch the face of God.” The audience responded with a three-minute ovation, and afterwards, many people on the streets came up to him and thanked him because he was the only one on the program who had talked about God. Upon returning home, Thomas received a letter from Ambassador Aziz Mekouar confirming the verbal invitation of the Wali Mohammed Hassad for Thomas to bring a Christian musical festival to Morocco in 2005.

---

In mid-July, King Mohammed VI sent his personal envoy, H.E. Taib Fassi-Fihri, Minister Delegate for Foreign Affairs, to meet with Cizik, Kirtley, and Schenck, at the Moroccan Embassy in Washington, DC. He confirmed the King’s commitment to an ongoing conversation with the American Christian community, and made it very clear that evangelicals were welcome in Morocco: “His Majesty hopes that this will become a long-term friendship between our two peoples, mirroring the historically strong ties between our two nations.”

The ties to which Mohammed VI referred are not only strong, they are longstanding: Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States as an independent nation, and currently maintains the longest unbroken Treaty of Friendship with the United States—dating back to 1786.

On its surface, the Friendship Fest was a three day musical celebration of transnational, trans-cultural friendships and cooperation. Both the 2005 and 2006 festivals were co-produced by American promoters of contemporary Christian music festivals, Harry Thomas and Tim Landis, and by Saad Zniber, the former Moroccan director of the Fez Sacred Music Festival. The three men shared responsibility for booking the talent and coordinating all the production aspects of the festivals including the stage, lights, and sound system, which were erected on the desert plain just outside the walls of Marrakech. Saad, in conjunction with an American stage manager, managed the stage crew, as well as the light and sound technicians who were primarily Moroccan. The costs of the production were shared by the Moroccan government, Moroccan corporate sponsors, and private contributions collected from, among others, individuals at Christian music festivals in the United States. All of the artists and production personnel donated their time in support of

---

what they perceived to be an historic endeavor.¹⁴ Each evening as the sun set, the festivals, emceed by local Moroccan celebrities, were opened by a Moroccan musical group which was then followed by alternating performances of Christian and Moroccan musicians such that both groups were equally represented.¹⁵ A great musical diversity was presented at each festival including rock and roll, pop, gospel and rap/hip-hop, as well as both traditional and contemporary Moroccan music.

Underlying the music, however, it soon became clear that there were also ongoing performances of culture, religion and politics. Beyond the actual formal performances taking place on-stage by the musicians, a plethora of other performances were concurrently taking place off-stage. Questions about the significance and impact of these auxiliary and ancillary performances and their relationship to the purported main event, the Friendship Fest, prompted my desire to better understand how performances operate in mediating and communicating across transnational and/or trans-cultural boundaries—especially when the messages involved may not be mutually valued or are even potentially antithetical to each other. I was especially curious to uncover just what was being masked by the banner of friendship, and to analyze how friendship got performed. I sought to understand why this seemingly unlikely friendship was being pursued. Who benefited and how? Was this merely an example of American cultural imperialism, and if so, was I in some way complicit in that imperialism by virtue of my attendance?

Why was music engaged as the cultural tool of choice? Was the festival effective?

For whom? Those questions haunted me, both as I attended the festival, and after I returned home to the United States; eventually they came to lie at the heart of this thesis project.

**My Involvement**

Because this work began as such a personal endeavor, it is important at the outset that I make my involvement in the Friendship Fest transparent. While I had no voice in bringing the festival into existence, or even in the actual production of the event, I was, as previously noted, in attendance, and my husband functioned during the event as the press liaison for the American promoters. Unlike the other promoters and western musicians whose expenses were covered by a variety of sources both Moroccan and American, we provided for our own transportation and lodging. We did, however, have full back stage access as well as the opportunity to engage with all of the principals—producers, musicians, government and business leaders—in both official and informal settings. As such, I occupied a unique and privileged insider/outsider position that presented multiple vantage points from which to view the event. During our time in Marrakech, however, both before and during the official festival, I was primarily engaged in tourism: observing, engaging, and learning informally about a culture that was foreign to me. Any formal investigation or academic research aimed at preparing this thesis in response to the questions raised, occurred only after the festivals concluded.

Though not intimately involved in this specific festival, my perspective can not be considered strictly neutral or unbiased since, in my primary occupation in the United States, I am involved in the production of the annual contemporary Christian music festival, Atlanta Fest. Thus, my interests were most assuredly aligned with the
American Christians. We (my husband and I) became involved with their (the Moroccan and American producers) project because we were fascinated by this unique opportunity to present a Christian gospel message in a Muslim nation—a nation in which it is illegal to proselytize—and to do so openly, at the invitation and with the support and approval of the Moroccan government.  

My Argument

It could be argued that the Friendship Fest exemplified American cultural imperialism: the hegemonic imposition of Christian beliefs and of a more advanced western culture upon a weaker, needier, third world, postcolonial nation—a position which bears careful consideration. I contend, however, that transnational relationships are rarely that unilateral and uncomplicated. The Friendship Fest resulted from the complex—though opaque—negotiation of conflicting and competing agendas by parties with independent agency who found a common ground for the articulation of those agendas under the banner of friendship.

In this thesis I will explore how the intersecting discourses of cultural diplomacy, tourism and religion enabled both the Moroccan government and the Western promoters to utilize the Friendship Fest as a transnational performance site for the pursuit of friendship to facilitate and promote transnational political engagement, identity formation and bilateral cultural exchange. Further, I will suggest that multiple performances, occurring both on and off stage, were modified to meet and address the perceived cultural expectations of targeted audiences in an effort to establish and create a common and neutral relational stage upon which various actors performed friendship as they sought to exert influence, affect desired

---

change and advance masked, non-mutual, and potentially divisive agendas. Finally, I will show how perceived musical meanings and understandings operate within and facilitate a transnational political discourse; how music, especially in a festival setting, is uniquely suited to promote friendship and function as a bridge spanning deep cultural, political, and religious divides.

Since the nature of friendship itself, both as it relates to interpersonal relations and to civic engagement, has undergone significant definitional changes throughout history, understanding the ways in which the trope of friendship shaped the Friendship Fest as a transnational performance site and was employed by the festival producers to advance cultural work across transnational boundaries is critical to my investigation. However, I believe that when viewed through an historically contextualized friendship discourse and when set against the backdrop of Moroccan-American political and cultural history, the alliance between the Moroccan government (whose officials initiated the event) and the American evangelicals (who co-sponsored it) becomes more transparent. Ultimately, far from an example of either American or Moroccan cultural imperialism, the Friendship Fest reveals itself as a constructive—if very complexly and perhaps unevenly balanced—musical performance of transnational cooperation: an exemplary, sophisticated, cosmopolitan response to stresses that threaten peaceful coexistence in an increasingly globalized world.
Theorizing Friendship

From the onset, one of the most intriguing things about the Friendship Fest is its name. What does it mean in 2005/2006 to be friends, to pursue transnational and trans-cultural friendships? How does friendship function, and what does it signify in a modern era rife with escalating world political tensions and increasing postcolonial concerns about the potential cultural imperialism associated with globalization? To answer those questions, it is first necessary to position this particular pursuit of friendship within the long transnational philosophical discourse of friendship; to see "friendship as a historically situated, politically inflected cultural practice."

The classic view of friendship as articulated by Aristotle and Plato, allows that a perfect friendship can only occur between equals who are unrestrained by natural, biological or social coercion, or institutional regulation. In his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asserts that, in its highest form, the perfect friend is "another" or a "second" self, so similar in values and interests that self-love (of both yourself and your second self) elevates friendship to the most important and ennobling of all relationships. Based on "parity, symmetry, spirituality, and self affirmation through rational desire and free choice rather than hierarchy, physicality, and self-loss or self-dilution through irrational and uncontrollable passion or forced alliance," these voluntary, non-subordinating affiliations represent "the highest ideal of ethical, political, and social development in the human sphere," and form the basis for all

---

17 Schweitzer, p 3.  
18 Schweitzer, p 9.
communal civic life and justice.\textsuperscript{19} Perfect friendships thus lie at the root of perfect societies.

In her book \textit{Perfecting Friendship}, Ivy Schweitzer, a literary studies scholar, describes how Aristotle's idealistic maxim, "Friendship is Equality," shaped and influenced civic life and public thought up through the nineteenth century as friendship continued to be extolled as that "perfection of human nature" which alone (in the words of Adam Smith) can "produce among mankind...harmony of sentiments and passions."\textsuperscript{20} The conflation of friendship with freedom, equality, democracy, peace and justice was perhaps best exemplified by the motto of the French revolution: \textit{liberte, equalite, fraternite}. But, Schweitzer contends, by the end of the nineteenth century, with the rise of romanticism, friendship "became increasingly feminized, privatized, and removed from the public sphere of republican and democratic politics."\textsuperscript{21} Western cultures' subsequent twentieth century obsession with individualism and sexuality then further distanced friendship from its classical position of privilege in civic and political life. In the latter half of the twentieth century, friendship as a concept was reduced to a collection of quaint sayings suitable for framing or giving as a gift, and was, for all intents and purposes, irrelevant to public discourse.

But seemingly, what goes around comes around. Schweitzer points to the longevity and popularity of TV shows like \textit{Seinfeld, Friends}, and \textit{Sex and the City}, as well as the emergence of websites like \textit{Friendster} as indicators of a renewed twenty-first century cultural interest and focus on friendship. She attributes this shift to a poststructuralist decentering of the Cartesian ego, the development of relational

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{19} Schweitzer, p 9.
\textsuperscript{20} Schweitzer, p 3.
\textsuperscript{21} Schweitzer, p 10.
\end{flushleft}
ethics along with theories of intersubjectivity and a rejection of ego psychology and the traditional one-person focus of psychoanalysis: the “me generation” has given way to a “new tribalism.” Sociologists, echoing Aristotle, point to the voluntary and egalitarian nature of friendship (which is not based upon biological or formal affiliations) and suggest that friendship may well be the “relational genre of the future” and the most important “form of social glue in the future” wherein “families of choice” replace “communities of fate.”

Schweitzer herself argues for the “renascence of friendship in the new millennium.” However, she advocates a return not to the classical view of perfect friendship based on perfect equality and sameness as articulated by Aristotle and Plato. Rather, she points to a modern ongoing work of “perfecting friendship” that allows friends the freedom to not be equals or mirror images or merely another self: to be “like” one another without being precisely the same. It is this important distinction between sameness and similitude that invests the work of friendship with the power to bridge differences, to imagine connection without hierarchy, and to recognize difference within the context of commonality. Schweitzer contends that “our fate as a global community depends on our ability to act on the similitude—however illusory or fantastic—of our shared humanity.” She believes that “our national as well as global future lies in reclaiming and...perfecting friendship as an engine of equality and self-knowledge, especially friendships across differences.”

In the case of the Friendship Fest, it was the renascence of just such a friendship—one focused on similitude not sameness, imbued with the power to overcome

---

22 Schweitzer, p 12.
23 Schweitzer, p 12.
differences—that the organizers of the Friendship Fest intended and hoped to promote through both the event and its name.

It is that friendship relationship that both the American evangelicals and the Moroccan government officials hoped to foster and enhance through the Friendship Fest by confronting stereotypes that they believed could lead to extremist rhetoric, distrust, and violence. Moroccan delegate for foreign affairs, Taib Fassi-Fihri noted that it was crucial to “avoid this so-called clash of civilizations by pursuing shared values.” He expressed hope that the ongoing exchange would “help combat the image of America promoted by the Islamic extremists as a hedonistic society,” and he noted the common ground shared between American evangelicals and a conservative Moroccan society on such subjects as abortion, homosexuality, family and the importance of faith in terms of public life.27 Ambassador Mekouar agreed and further pointed out theological common ground: “Here in the United States, most people have not the slightest idea what Islam is. It is coming from the same revelation, the same scriptures, and American Christians don't know that, nor about the aspirations of moderate societies like Morocco.” Likewise, the American evangelicals hoped to combat terrorism by fostering peace and pursuing friendship on a people-to-people level during a time of suspicion and warfare. Most significantly, the goal of the Friendship Fest according to Rev. Cizik, “is not to proselytize, but to build friendship and break down hostile images.”28 All the evangelical members of the delegation agreed that any witness in the Muslim world would be passive out of respect for the people of Morocco; they were hopeful that by their actions, lives and dispositions, the caricatures and stereotypes associated with

American Christianity would be replaced with respect and understanding. Both groups committed to make use of what they called “the universal language of music” to bridge cultures and promote religious tolerance by demonstrating that people of differing faiths can be friends and live together in harmony.

At all points, the organizers placed the emphasis on similarities and commonalities that would support a transnational, trans-cultural friendship; any differences, though acknowledged, were downplayed. Thomas maintained throughout: “We are not here to proselytize. We are here to sing.” It was his hope that the cross-cultural event would help to bring “a greater understanding of Christians from the Muslim side; a greater understanding of the Muslim world from the Christian side; and perhaps, it can build some very important bridges for the future.” But, while both the Moroccan government and the American evangelicals publicly promoted the above-mentioned united and shared agenda, and adhered to a unified rhetoric of purpose, it would be naïve to conclude that these were the only agendas being pursued by either party. Nor were they the only agendas attached to the endeavor by other interested parties including the American Christian press, the European press, the Moroccan press, and Islamic opposition parties.

The President of the Marrakech region, Abdelali Doumou, acknowledged that a primary goal for the government was an improved standing in the western world. He hoped that the Friendship Fest would bolster Morocco’s image as a “modern country, a democratic country” and that it would serve to “improve our image in the

---

29 A passive witness relies on a lived out expression of beliefs as opposed to an aggressive testimony of faith which could include passing out biblical tracts, approaching individuals and initiating conversations about faith.
States in politics, in economics and everything.” The focus of those political goals was of great interest to the European press. At a pre-festival press briefing in 2005, members of the European press questioned whether the festival’s American evangelical supporters were not just acting as “shills for the Bush administration as President Bush was seeking an answer to his Islam problem.”

Alternatively, the European reporters suggested that the American evangelicals were being used as tools by the Moroccan government. They argued that Mohammed VI and his government were seeking to influence the born-again American Christian President to garner his favor, and secure his support as they sought to deflect criticism of their human rights record in their dealings with refugees of the Western Saharan conflict.

The Moroccan magazine Telquel indicated that the government’s embrace of the festival was intended to “sell the image of Morocco to the neo-conservative lobby in America.” Other Moroccan reporters, while applauding and supporting King Mohammed VI’s efforts to distance the country from the terrorist fundamentalist activities of their Arab brothers to the east, questioned the wisdom of embracing what they considered an equally radical group—Christian fundamentalists from the west. Additionally, one of the country’s main opposition parties, Istiqlal, accused the evangelicals of using the event as a covert means of conversion to Christianity. At the same time, American Christian reporters accused the evangelicals of squandering such opportunities.

---

32 Bob Thompson, personal interview, 9 May 2005.
33 Thompson, 9 May 2005.
34 Quoted in Loewenberg, sec. E: 7.
35 Thompson, 9 May 2005.
37 Thompson, 9 May 2005.
In response to the criticisms from the press and the protests of Islamic groups prior to the 2005 event, the Moroccan government cancelled a planned conference and debate between Christian pastors and Muslim religious leaders.\textsuperscript{38} In addition, the relationship between Thomas and Kirtley, Cizik and Schenck, who had strong connections to Christian values-lobbying groups in Washington, DC, was dissolved, removing the festival from any explicit political connection to the Bush administration. As Bob Thompson, the press liaison for the festival, put it, "some of us may have voted for President Bush, but beyond that, no one associated with the festival has any more influence with the current administration than any other random American."\textsuperscript{39}

Thus, even before it began, the sincerity of the renascence of friendship sought by the promoters was called into question, and the festival was cast by the press as a contested site of cultural, economic, religious, and political imperialism. Given Morocco's history, this characterization is perhaps understandable.

**Historical Background of Morocco**

The origins of Morocco's native inhabitants, the Berbers, remain unknown. Though they most probably descended from both oriental and Saharan roots, as a group, they do not comprise a homogeneous race. Historically, power relationships between the Berbers and other nations have been decidedly asymmetric, and the geographic area they have inhabited has been the site of military, political, and cultural conflict and incursion throughout the ages. As early as 400 BC, the region suffered attack and invasion by the Phoenicians, who subsequently yielded power to the Romans. Purportedly, the Romans were the first to identify the native people as

\textsuperscript{38} Loewenberg, sec. E: 7.
\textsuperscript{39} Thompson, 9 May 2005.
"Berbers." The name, synonymous with "barbarian," was culturally imposed upon the people based upon Roman descriptions of the local language as noisy and confusing: a barking tongue. With the rise of Christianity in the third century, Roman domination of the area diminished, only to be replaced by the imposition of power by the Vandals, followed by the Byzantines, who were themselves, subsequently overcome by the Arabs in the seventh century.\(^4\)

With the arrival of the Arabs came the religion of Islam which the Berbers seemingly embraced wholeheartedly. But while the Berbers embraced the religion, they did not submit to the presumed superiority of the Arab people, and in the mid-eighth century they engaged in a successful but bloody, decades-long battle for independence. Thereafter, the area that comprises Morocco was ruled by a succession of six tribal dynasties in a cycle described by the great 14\(^{th}\) century Maghrebi historian Ibn Khaldoun: "simple nomads arose and wrenched power from corrupt city dwellers, only to become urbanized, corrupt, and subsequently overthrown by other simple nomads."\(^4\) Despite periodic internal instabilities, through the years, these dynasties successfully held off invasions by Christian Crusaders, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Turks and the Ottomans. They even succeeded in conquering and holding for a time, parts of Spain (as far north as Barcelona) and the Sahara (including Senegal and the Niger). Their military success did not, however, insulate the Berbers from cultural infiltration. With political success came the influx of foreign influence. Slaves from Africa introduced African folk culture (an influence which is still visible today) from the south, and the refined Arab culture of Andalusia took hold in Morocco. Later, as Spain reasserted power, millions of Jewish and

Muslim refuges escaping religious persecution sought asylum and were welcomed into an increasingly diverse Moroccan society.\textsuperscript{42}

The Alaouite dynasty—the sixth and current ruling dynasty—came to power in 1664, but that is not to say that since then, Morocco has been free from outside intervention and influence. The age of empire in the nineteenth century brought increasing foreign encroachment as European powers pursued imperialistic agendas. England, Spain, France and Germany all sought economic advantage in Morocco, and a declining dynasty was unable to deter them. In 1912, the Treaty of Fez established Morocco as a French protectorate and marked the beginnings of French colonial rule. The sultan remained as a figurehead, but the country was ruled by a French resident general and, during this period, over 100,000 French settlers relocated to Morocco.\textsuperscript{43}

Colonialism brought modernization to Morocco, but at the expense of political freedom and the exploitation of natural resources. By the beginning of WWII, the calls for national independence were loud and widespread, and resistance intensified. Even though Morocco was under the rule of the Vichy government and it was an outpost for Nazi sympathizers, the Sultan, Mohammed V, refused to implement French fascist anti-Jewish policies, and extended protection to the Jews living in Morocco. Interestingly enough, to this day there are only two state sanctioned religions in Morocco: Islam and Judaism.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} Watson, p 49.
\textsuperscript{43} Hardy, p 33.
\textsuperscript{44} Watson, p 34.
Moroccan/American Political and Cultural History

With the arrival of the allied troops in North Africa, the balance of power shifted yet again. During a visit to Casablanca in 1943 to meet with Winston Churchill to plan the invasion of Italy, President Roosevelt reportedly promised Mohammed V, (in the presence of Mohammed V's 14 year old son Hassan II) support for Moroccan independence in return for Moroccan support of the Allies—but it was support for a deferred independence. Charles de Gaulle was also present at the meeting in Casablanca lobbying for the continuation of Morocco's French colonial status. At the time, Roosevelt invoked what Brian T. Edwards refers to as “racial time”—the injunction by the dominant group for a subordinate group to wait for rights;” in effect, denying the “immediacy of the Moroccan claim,” because the US had to balance the need to maintain stable US-French relations with courting Moroccan support. Roosevelt most assuredly sought economic involvement in Morocco, but he eschewed direct political entanglement: an American protectorate was not the aim of American foreign policy. Roosevelt supported French supremacy in the area with a gradual move towards Moroccan self determinacy, but only within the context of American interests.

As America debuted her status as a global power in a performance on the Moroccan stage of the North African military theater, Morocco became a performance site for Americans in the states by way of the Hollywood theater. At the same time that Roosevelt was meeting in Casablanca, the movie Casablanca was being viewed all across America. The significance of the movie, as Edwards posits

---

46 Hardy, p 34.
47 Edwards, p 42.
48 Edwards, p 43.
it, lies in how it relegates both the Moroccan countryside and its people to the
background, thereby silencing their voices, and insisting that they be viewed from an
American perspective.\textsuperscript{49} The movie promotes a viewpoint that trivializes and co-opts
the interests and needs of the Moroccans, and invites a benevolent American
paternalistic foreign policy agenda that insists on a subordinate role for a more
primitive racialized “other” who must wait for independence. The closing line of the
film, in which the American (Rick) tells the Frenchman (Renault): “I think this is the
beginning of a beautiful friendship,” proved to be a significant foreshadowing of the
next decade of transnational relations as “the transfer of narrative authority from
France to America” depicted in the film became a political reality.\textsuperscript{50}

In 1956, the French, embroiled in conflicts in Algeria and Indochina, ceded
control in Morocco; the protectorate ended, and the post colonial period began—a
post colonial experience that was deeply marked by US influence and cold war
politics. In 1961, Hassan II succeeded his father, Mohammed V, who had ruled
Morocco as a traditional autocrat since coming to power in 1956. Seeking to bring
Morocco into the modern world while maintaining traditional values and cultures,
Hassan II formed a constitutional monarchy, but continued to rule autocratically.
From 1965-1975, his rule was vigorously contested and marked with riots, strikes
and at least two failed coup attempts. Political resistance was invariably met with
brutal repression. In 1965, a student protest in Casablanca, quelled by the army,
resulted in over 1000 student deaths.\textsuperscript{51}

During this period, the controlling theme for US-Moroccan political relations
was stability. Faced with increasing Soviet influence in Algeria, the increasing

\textsuperscript{49} Edwards, p 70.
\textsuperscript{50} Edwards, p 71.
\textsuperscript{51} Hardy, p 35.
polarization of the Arab-Israeli relations, and the rise of Arab socialism, sustaining Morocco was deemed crucial to American interests in the world. During both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Hassan II received substantive financial and military support, despite his repressive and abusive domestic policies, ostensibly because “the King’s authority was at stake.”\(^5\) The financial support not only allowed Morocco to keep up with Algeria in an arms race, but also funded an imperial move to take over the contested Western Sahara in 1975—a move which succeeded in finally unifying and popularizing Hassan II’s political position. When he died in 1999, two million people lined the streets for his funeral attesting to his much (albeit belated) beloved status.\(^5\) Throughout his rule, he remained a devoted Muslim, but also a staunch US/Western ally. While supportive of Arab nationality, he was a proponent of peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict and, under his leadership, Morocco quietly joined the UN coalition against Saddam Hussein.\(^5\) In 1999, Hassan II was succeeded by his son, Mohammed VI, who has continued to advance the efforts to modernize Morocco, and maintain ties to the West.

US/Moroccan interactions during the cold war period were not limited to political, financial, and military engagements. Culturally, Morocco witnessed the arrival of the so-called Marrakech Express—an infusion of American hippies, musicians (including Jimi Hendrix), anthropologists, writers and tourists. Given the commonality of student rebellion in both Morocco and the US during the 60’s, it would have seemed natural that visiting US hippies would have gravitated towards, and been supportive of, Moroccan youth politics, but the hippies remained surprisingly detached from the interests and activities of their peers. In his

\(^{52}\) Edwards, p 256.
\(^{53}\) Hardy, p 36.
\(^{54}\) Hardy, p 35.
examination of the transnational cultural interactions of this period, Edwards convincingly argues that, through a practice of what he terms "the turn away," Americans of all ages consistently "painted Marrakech as a place of escape, a pastoral retreat for contemplation."\(^{55}\) Morocco was envisioned as a place that somehow stood outside of time, and according to Edwards, the Americans who engaged there "were unwittingly instrumental in constructing an American understanding of Morocco as a place of escape, and of cultural and temporal distance."\(^{56}\)

Edwards describes this "turning away" as the "turn toward the 'traditional' and away from the official...accompanied by a turn away from the urban, from the educated, from those engaged in immediate political struggle, and from those contemporary Moroccan writers and film-makers involved in the struggle for meaning."\(^{57}\) Seemingly, only those who had been geographically isolated and removed from the influences of colonialism and imperialism could constitute the true Moroccan. Jane Kramer and her husband, ethnographer Vincent Crapanzano, in an article published in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "A World of Saints and She-Demons" imply, according to Edwards that "an understanding of the traditional beliefs of uneducated Moroccan society might in fact be the key to understanding the political reality of the entire Arab world."\(^{58}\) But embracing the traditional, "authentic" and rural at the expense of the urban and developed constitutes a conscription of the majority of the Moroccan people and an occlusion of contemporary political realities,

\(^{55}\) Edwards, p 267. Edwards compares texts as varied as Crosby, Stills, and Nash’s song "Marrakech Express", Paula Wolfert’s cookbook *Couscous and Other Good Food From Morocco*, James Michener’s novel *The Drifters*, anthropological studies by Clifford Geertz and Paul Rabinow, the non-fiction of Jane Kramer and Elizabeth Fernea, and the recordings of the Master Musicians of Jajouka by Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones and then later by the jazzman Ornette Coleman.

\(^{56}\) Edwards, p 255.

\(^{57}\) Edwards, p 268, 281.

\(^{58}\) Edwards, p 268.
thereby establishing a binary dialectic between Oriental/Occidental, East/West, Muslim/Christian, Arab/American that continues to inform American thinking about the Arab world to this day. 59

Morocco might easily be understood, then, as a country which has been persistently imperialized: a nation continually besieged and assaulted politically, economically, militarily and culturally by stronger outside nations. And, from within such a vantage point, the Friendship Fest could thus be viewed as just the most current instance within a long pattern of hegemonic cultural imposition. But such a view can be only be maintained within the context of a liberal framework that presupposes that "the export of US cultural production, especially popular culture, is unidirectional, unchallenged and fully legible." 60 Such a framework, however, operates to once again lock Moroccans into a reified point of racial time that fixes their present in a perpetual past, and denies them voice and agency. 61 Further, such a limited perspective of transnational cultural exchange empowers the Western world to define Third World otherness, wherein, in the words of Amy Lawrence (who quotes Chandra Talpade Mohanty), those in the Third World become "defined in terms of their object status (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems)" that is, as victims with needs or problems, but not choices—a discursive strategy that denies political consciousness and more important, agency. 62

59 For a discussion of how the insistence on maintaining a pure unadulterated culture led to a similar type of binary dialectic between highbrow/lowbrow that informs American culture to this day see Lawrence W. Levine, Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1988.
60 Edwards, p 73.
61 Edwards, p 262.
Edwards argues that the Moroccans have, through the years, actively resisted such a totalizing discursive strategy. While acknowledging the defining power of the movie *Casablanca*, Edwards also points to instances where Morocco has chosen to capitalize on the movie’s success to further the nation’s economic advantage: “the Moroccan tourism industry has generally adopted the strategy of performing the stereotypes and profiting off the performance.”

The establishment of the piano bar “Bar Casablanca” in the Casablanca Hyatt Regency, where frequent renditions of the song “As Time Goes By” are sung by native Moroccans, is a case in point where performance has become a consciously adopted strategy utilized to further a Moroccan agenda—the attraction of American tourists and their money.

Abd al-Qader Laqt’a creatively pursued an alternative and somewhat inverted utilization of the original film *Casablanca* in his film, *Al-Hubb fi al-Dar al-Baida (Love in Casablanca)*. In his version, he recodes and recasts the national stereotypes; he rewrites America as antiquated, outmoded and tradition bound, while he presents Morocco as youthful, vibrant and modern. Through performance, he turns the power of American cultural imperialism back against itself and co-opts the explicit stereotypes to Moroccan advantage.

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said argues that “partly because of Empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.” “Far from being unitary or monolithic autonomous things,” Said argues, “cultures actually

---


64 Edwards, p 73. It must be noted that since the Hyatt Regency is part of a multinational conglomerate, not all of the profits accrue to the Moroccan performers. Still, by casting all the roles with Moroccans, Edwards argues that the film is recoded, racial time is disrupted, and Moroccans are empowered to use the film to their own advantage.

65 Edwards, p 76.
assume more ‘foreign’ elements, alterities, and differences than they consciously exclude."\textsuperscript{66} Yet despite (or perhaps because of) the ever increasing cultural hybridity experienced in this technological age, the idea that there is a distinctive “us” and “them” who remain “quite settled, clear, [and] unassailably self-evident” has remained unchallenged and continues to inform and shape understandings and views of the present in dramatic and dangerous ways, resulting in either a “politics of blame” or the “even more destructive politics of confrontation and hostility.”\textsuperscript{67} Said calls for a new approach, one which focuses on the interlinkages of culture, on learning about other cultures in such a way as “to make concurrent those views and experiences that are ideologically closed to each other and that attempt to distance or suppress other views and experiences.”\textsuperscript{68} Edwards would agree; in his opinion, optimism for the future lies in engagement rather than turning away. He finds that turning away regrettable and concludes that “given the ongoing crises of otherness,” conversations between Americans and Arabs are crucial. Ultimately, he is hopeful that lines of communication may be opened that enable understanding, respect, and real relationship.\textsuperscript{69}

It is that engagement, that conversation “to make concurrent those views and experiences that are ideologically closed to each other and that attempt to distance or suppress other views and experiences,” that lies at the root of the Friendship Fest. By focusing on cultural interlinkages and points of similitude the Friendship Fest sought to keep open the lines of communication and solidify a longstanding


\textsuperscript{67} Said, p 18.

\textsuperscript{68} Said, p 33.

\textsuperscript{69} Edwards, p 301.
transnational friendship through shared musical performance. But even given the
demonstrated Moroccan strategies of imperialistic resistance, perceived and actual
inequalities of power require that the concerns about cultural, economic and religious
imperialism be given careful consideration.

Cultural Diplomacy or Cultural Imperialism?

Prior to leaving for Morocco in 2006, I was challenged to consider the
degree to which the Friendship Fest, and I (by virtue of my involvement with the
festival) were, in effect, tools of American cultural imperialism—an idea that was
personally deeply unsettling.70 Having come of age during the seventies, I
approached my trip to Morocco well schooled in Cold War ideology and rhetoric;
imbued with a firm (if unexamined) belief in Manifest Destiny, I held to an American
exceptionalism that was both inherently anti-imperialist and which, as Amy Kaplan
describes, stood "in opposition to the empire-building of either the Old World or of
communism and fascism."71 Emotionally, I was rooted in the long line of historical
tradition which saw U.S. imperialism as an aberration: the Spanish-American War as
an isolated incident in American history. While certainly aware of the impact of
American culture in a global world, I rejected any implication of an American
conspiracy or complicity in a cultural hegemonic imposition. In my mind, "Coca-
colonization" was the result of the triumph of consumer capitalism over state
socialism; "Blue Jeans and Jazz" had won the Cold War.72 And, as Wagnleitner
points out, any talk of U.S. cultural imperialism after WWII must also include a

---

71 Amy Kaplan, The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture, Cambridge, Mass:
72 Reinhold Wagnleitner, Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: the Cultural Mission of the
United States in Austria After the Second World War, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina
discussion and an acknowledgement of the roles of “self-colonization.” As such, I embraced “the idea of culture as a medium of political communication...revolv[ing] around the idea that the U.S. does not force its influence on other nations, but engages in a mutual exchange of ideas.”

In her book *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*, Christiana Klein gives an apt description of the perspective that informed my cultural politics: “America did not pursue its naked self interest through coercion and subjugation of others, but engaged in exchanges that benefited all parties.” In Klein’s view, this perspective is in keeping with Mary Louise Pratt’s “narratives of anticonquest,” which are based upon “strategies of innocence,” whereby no overt conquest is intended; yet, because the “imperial eyes” of the “seeing man”—in this case, presumably, me—“passively look out and possess,” conquest could still be inferred.

Pratt emphasizes how “subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other...in terms of copresence, interaction, [and] interlocking understandings and practices.” She also asserts that “autoethnographic” expressions result from cultural contacts “in response to or in dialogue with” one another, and involve what Pratt calls “reciprocal visioning” and the mutual appropriation of rituals in which each party is mutually and reciprocally acting in ways that satisfy the curiosity of the other;

---

73 Wagnleitner, p 2.
75 Klein, p 13.
77 Pratt, p 80.
but, because radical asymmetries of power are almost always attached to instances of cultural exchange, cultural imperialism is inevitable.\textsuperscript{78}

While I do find Pratt’s descriptions of how “reciprocal visioning” and “autoethnography” are enacted in trans-cultural exchanges persuasive and applicable to the Friendship Fest, I agree with Edward M. Bruner’s hesitation to apply Pratt’s critical imperialistic view to all contact zones, especially touristic borderzones.\textsuperscript{79} Pratt’s analysis of “transculturation” in a “contact zone” was aimed primarily at describing a space of colonial encounter that brought together people who were geographically and historically separated in the hopes of establishing ongoing relations—a goal most assuredly embraced by the Friendship Fest. But those ongoing relations resumed their geographical separation after the festival concluded; even though all parties were interested in establishing ties of a longer duration, the contact was temporally transient, discontinuous and touristic. Furthermore, Pratt’s pre-conditions of “coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict,” if not absent, were seemingly inverted.\textsuperscript{80} The American organizers had no direct or explicit connection to the American government, so there was never any question of American political coercion; the Moroccan government, both as initiator and as host, held most of the power over the event; and with respect to intractable conflict, as has been previously noted, Morocco was the first country to recognize the United States as an independent nation, and currently maintains the longest unbroken Treaty of Friendship with the United States—dating back to 1786.\textsuperscript{81}

Conceivably, it could be argued that the Friendship Fest was as much a vehicle of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{78} Pratt, p 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{79} Edward M. Bruner, \textit{Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel}, Chicago: The University of Chicago P, 2005, p 18.
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Pratt, p 6.
  \item \textsuperscript{81} The First Waltz. See also "Background Note: Morocco," U.S. Department of State, Oct. 2007, 23 Jan. 2008 <www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>.
\end{itemize}
Moroccan cultural hegemony, as American cultural imperialism: as much, I argue a narrative of Moroccan anticonquest, as American.

Even so, the Friendship Fest must be situated within a vast history of American cultural politics and international diplomacy. In her book *Satchmo Blows up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*, Penny M. Von Eschen argues that the postwar American government recognized music as a powerful instrument of the state and as a matter of policy, exported jazz to win the hearts, minds, and “loyalties of those in nations currently emerging from decades of colonization.”

American diplomats were deeply aware of the effectiveness of “diplomacy by jamming” and saw first hand how the “creative brilliance of the musicians achieved far more in winning friends for America than any sanctimonious pronouncement of superiority.”

The importance of pursuing such friendships can only be understood in the context of the perceived threat of the spread of communism under-girding the Cold War: a war pitting the U.S. and its friends (the “free world”) against the totalitarian evil complex of the Soviet Union and its allies. The binaries of good vs. evil, capitalism vs. socialism, us vs. them, produced what Klein calls the “global imaginaries of containment” and "global imaginaries of integration" which informed American foreign policy. These imaginaries, while seemingly contradictory, actually worked together to promote an American ideology and foreign policy which insisted that Communism must be contained from further spreading evil in the world, while simultaneously encouraging democracy, modernization and capitalism. Post-colonial nations like Morocco, Ghana, and newly emerging nations in the Middle East

---

83 Von Eschen, p 45, 56.
84 Klein, p 23.
and Southeast Asia were specifically targeted for integration to keep them from falling to communism, and to integrate them into a free world market economy. Through the 50's and 60's, the American government sent jazz musicians throughout the world to educate and "win converts to 'the American way of life,'" as well as to develop and keep open the foreign markets key to U.S. economic self interests.  

The educational aspect of cultural exchange is critical to understanding how culture functions as an imperialistic tool. Klein argues that various "cultural texts perform a hegemonic function to the extent that they legitimate a given distribution of power" and that they accomplish this function by "teaching the various members of a particular historical bloc, or alliance of social groups, how their interests intersect and why a certain arrangement of power serves their needs." She goes on to say that the "processes of education and participation foster new loyalties and affiliations and thus help to secure new social and political alliances," by "developing what Raymond Williams has called 'structures of feeling.'"  

In Klein's view, cultural texts or narratives of anticonquest develop those structures of feeling by employing a sentimental framework focused on the emotional forging of bonds across divides of difference through reciprocity and exchange. These sentimental connections are personal and transcend distinctives like race, class, religion, and gender by focusing on universalizing commonalities of humanity like friendship and community that bridge differences and create solidarities.  

Clearly the Friendship Fest fits this description. Both the Americans and the

85 Von Eschon, p 7.  
87 Klein, p 7.  
88 Klein, p 14.
Moroccans focused on similarities and commonalities and engaged the affective power of music to communicate the structures of feeling integral to a sentimental narrative of anticonquest.

If the Friendship Fest had occurred in 1956, we could easily position it as just one more American Cold War sentimental cultural engagement enlisted by political diplomacy to promote the global imaginary of integration. But, by 2005, it was widely accepted that former cold war bipolarities had given way to, if not "multipolarities," then to a "unipolarity", with the U.S. the only pole left. 89 Thus a Cold War discourse provides an inadequate explanation for the emergence of such a sentimental cultural text in 2005, and suggests the need to search for a more temporally relevant discourse.

In her book *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* Melani McAlister identifies a "discourse of terrorist threat" that developed in the 80's during the Iran hostage crisis that perhaps better explains and contextualizes the Friendship Fest as a sentimental cultural text. The discourse McAlister describes, narrowly defined terrorism as "those highly visible and dramatic actions, such as hijackings and bombings that came to dominate the news coverage in the United States." 90 It was a discourse that didn't just dominate the news, it reshaped American foreign policy. In his inaugural address in 1981, on the day that the hostages were released, President Reagan announced that "terrorism' would replace 'human rights' as the nation's primary foreign policy concern," highlighting a construction of Americans as a nation of innocent victims under siege by outside

---

89 Kaplan, p 13.
By 1984, Secretary of State George Schultz articulated a new binary of containment: "Wherever it takes place, [terrorism] is directed in an important sense against us, the democracies, against our most basic values and often against our fundamental strategic interests."\(^9\)

At the same time, terrorism became conflated with Islam.\(^9\) At the Second International Conference on Terrorism, held in Washington in 1984, an expert panel concluded that there was a "supposedly special relationship between ‘Islam’ and terrorism,” predicated on the premises that “Islam is a political religion,” that “the ‘world of Islam’ invented terrorism,” and that there existed "an essential opposition between ‘Islam’ and the ‘West’" that explained why “Muslims were thus particularly inclined to international types of terrorism.”\(^9\) This view was further solidified during the 90's as terrorist attacks against U.S. military targets and America's involvement in the Gulf War coalesced with the sheer volume of literature on terrorism that flooded American culture to shape and conflate American perceptions of Islam and terrorism.

In 1996, Samuel Huntington, the chairman of the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, published *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*—a work deeply imbued with the imaginary of containment. In his book, Huntington argued that western values and culture were not universal, that they in fact bore little relevance to other cultures of the world, and that the U.S. should give up its presumptuous claims of speaking and acting in interests of the “world community.”\(^9\) He called for an “honest particularism in defense of western values”

\(^9\) McAlister, p 199, 201.  
\(^9\) Quoted in McAlister, p 218-219.  
\(^9\) McAlister, p 200.  
\(^9\) McAlister, p 219.  
\(^9\) McAlister, p 267.
which acknowledged that future conflicts would pit the West against the rest of the world. In his view, the future "nexus of conflict" would shift from economics to culture, with religion in particular functioning as the "primary organizing site for identity." In language and logic consistent with the 1984 international conference on terrorism, Huntington identified a "Confucian-Islamic connection" as the greatest challenge to an American dominated western civilization. Huntington insisted that Islam and the West confronted each other with a particular intensity. The two civilizations disagreed deeply over values and political aspirations, due to factors ranging from the universal claims of both Christianity and Islam, to the end of communism as a shared enemy, and to increased contact between Muslims and Westerners, which had only intensified each group's sense of its own distinctiveness.

The fact that the United States engaged in 17 military conflicts with Muslims between 1980 and 1999, and is currently deeply engaged in such a conflict certainly gives great weight to his argument. But as McAlister points out, Huntington's thesis is based on the assumption that civilizations are relatively static entities whose cultures are cohesive and uniform, and not subject to significant change over time. Huntington's ideas are a classic example of Said's theory of Orientalism which posits that the "world is made up of two unequal halves, Occident and Orient," and that binaries of power situate unified, cohesive civilizations in opposition to one another along "clean lines of belief and value." Said's theory was enormously significant because it identified an "extraordinary identity-forging power" to establish, through representational practices, a modern, rational European world as opposed to a

---

96 McAlister, p 267.
98 McAlister, p 267, Huntington, p 211.
99 McAlister, p 268.
primitive, irrational Eastern world in need of European imperial rule.\textsuperscript{101} But as discussed earlier, both Said and Edwards critique and denounce such limiting (though persistent) orientalist representational practices for the ways in which they foreclose meaningful relationships by focusing on differences while ignoring similitudes. McAlister also argues for “post-orientalist” representations that recognize the “far more mobile, flexible and rich” meanings of other cultures, and allow for more hopeful engagements and alliances.\textsuperscript{102} In essence, Said, Edwards and McAlister all seemingly embrace Schweitzer’s vision of perfecting friendship by advocating a resurrection of the global imaginary of integration as a corrective to both the pervasive discourse of terrorism and the binaries of Huntington’s neo-orientalism, which have increasingly influenced and shaped U.S. foreign policy and American identity formation since the September 11\textsuperscript{th} attacks. In this context, the Friendship Fest clearly can be viewed as a sentimental cultural tool engaged in just such a corrective endeavor: the perfecting of friendship. But the questions remain: engaged in by whom, for what purposes, and to whose advantage?

**Tourism: Economic Development or Economic Imperialism?**

As previously noted, The President of the Marrakech region, Abdelali Doumou, acknowledged that a primary goal for the government was an improved standing in the western world. He hoped that the Friendship Fest would bolster Morocco’s image as a “modern country, a democratic country” and that it would serve to “improve our image in the States in politics, in economics and everything.”\textsuperscript{103}

Any analysis of the Friendship Fest as a tool of cultural engagement must include a

\textsuperscript{101} McAlister, p 10.
\textsuperscript{102} McAlister, p 270.
\textsuperscript{103} Loewenberg, sec. E: 7.
discussion of the complex ways in which tourism was both a defining feature of the event (it was a touristic destination for both the Western performers who traveled to Morocco to perform and for the local Moroccans who attended the event) and an underlying explanation of how the event functioned politically and economically.

The role of tourism in the Moroccan economy is significant; averaging 4.1 billion dollars annually, it is second only to remittances from Moroccans working abroad as the largest earner of foreign currency. After the September 11th attacks on the U.S., Morocco’s income from tourism fell by 19%. Following the arrest in 2002 of alleged members of al-Qaida who were reported to be planning attacks on tourists in Marrakech, tourism operators and hoteliers reported a sharp downturn in arrivals and receipts, as visitors, preoccupied with concerns over terrorism, “stayed away amid the uncertainty associated with the war in Iraq.” In response, the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism set up a crisis team which recommended that “existing publicity campaigns in key markets...be replaced by ones stressing Morocco’s tolerance, stability, hospitality, and geographic distance from Iraq.” The focus of the campaign stressed Morocco’s economic reasons for wanting to distance themselves from Islamic fundamentalists: tourism is dependent upon the government providing security to travelers as well as suitable accommodations.

In light of this, and given that the expenses of the festival were underwritten largely by the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism and key business leaders with vested interests in tourism, it is difficult not to see the Friendship Fest as part of a Moroccan sentimental cultural campaign engaged to entice and educate Western tourists, by

---

105 “Morocco Industry: Tourism Struggles.” The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd. 16 May 2003.
106 “Morocco Industry: Tourism Struggles.” The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd. 16 May 2003.
stressing important commonalities, while maintaining the exotic difference required of touristic locations. At the same time, the festival was also used by the Moroccan government as a tool to educate the Moroccan tourists who attended the event, or who read about it in local news reports, about those same commonalities in an effort to combat rising anti-western sentiments that could delay the recovery of the tourism sector. The friendship relationship projected by the Moroccan government officials through the Friendship Fest was intended to confront stereotypes they believed could lead to extremist rhetoric, distrust, and violence, all of which had proven to be bad for business.

In recalling the original invitation to the Western evangelicals to bring a festival to Morocco, it is significant that King Mohammed VI's personal envoy, Taib Fassi-Fihri, and the Moroccan ambassador to the U.S., Aziz Mekour, emphasized shared theological and cultural values deemed crucial to avoiding "this so-called clash of civilizations." They stressed that the Friendship Fest would be part of an ongoing exchange that would "help combat the image of America promoted by the Islamic extremists as a hedonistic society" and educate Americans "about the aspirations of moderate societies like Morocco." Such comments reveal that the government of Morocco was interested in teaching the West that Morocco is safe, friendly, and not too culturally foreign, while simultaneously demonstrating to the Moroccan people how their interests intersect with those in the West in ways that can support a beneficial relationship. In essence, the government of Morocco utilized the Friendship Fest as a cultural text to perform the hegemonic functions described by

---


108 "Morocco Industry: Tourism Struggles." The Economist Intelligence Unit Ltd. 16 May 2003.

Klein, to imaginatively map sentimental pathways between the US and Morocco that could parallel and reinforce pathways along which American economic, political and possibly even military power could flow into Morocco.\textsuperscript{110}

While a causal relationship cannot be proven, after Friendship Fest 2005, in spite of the ongoing war in Iraq, Morocco experienced a 20% increase in American tourists.\textsuperscript{111} Arguably, the positive press that the festival generated in Europe, Morocco and the United States attributed to some of that increased interest. The week after the festival, \textit{The New York Times} allotted 55 column inches on the front page of the arts section, complete with 3 large color photos depicting groups of Moroccans dressed in traditional Berber robes peaceably enjoying the American pop group Out of Eden. This was followed up with 28 column inches on page 7 coupled with a color photo depicting Moroccan youth dressed in western garb. The mix of photos worked to reinforce both the message of exotic difference and commonality.\textsuperscript{112}

Morocco subsequently awarded a $1.3 million contract to a U.S. marketing firm to develop a marketing campaign “intended to capitalize on the rise in American visitors.”\textsuperscript{113} By February 2007, Morocco’s drive to attract foreign visitors had indeed paid off with a resultant 29% year-over-year increase in tourism revenue. This increasing revenue source is vitally important for Morocco’s King Mohammed VI as he seeks to defend and legitimize his political position in the face of heavy fuel import bills, high unemployment and poverty, an increasing trade deficit and the rise of adversarial Islamists resistant to Western modernization. His government-sponsored

\textsuperscript{110} Klein, p 17.
\textsuperscript{112} Loewenberg, sec. E: 1,7.
\textsuperscript{113} Garcia.
social programs to help the urban poor (including over 100,000 unemployed university graduates), relieve rural poverty, and improve the conditions of women are deeply dependent upon the influx of foreign capital that tourism supplies.\textsuperscript{114} The Friendship Fest was thus the site of an unusual melding of the discourse of terrorism with the discourse of tourism.

The Moroccan government most assuredly hosted the Friendship Fest. Saad Zniber, the former director of the Fez Sacred Music Festival, arranged all of the production aspects of the festival including the stage, lights, and sound system, and he managed the primarily Moroccan stage crew, as well as the light and sound technicians.\textsuperscript{115} The Western performers arrived as guests of the Moroccan government, who underwrote the bulk of their travel, food, lodging and entertainment expenses. And, while the artists did perform, they received no salary for their performances; the majority of their time in Marrakesh involved sightseeing. During their stay, they visited the souks, bought souvenirs, went for camel rides in the desert, and ventured into the rural Atlas Mountains to visit (and be entertained by) locals. They were, in effect, tourists.

Pierre L. Van Den Berghe would characterize their visit as “ethnic tourism,” which he defines as the search for the ethnically exotic who acts not just as host, but as “spectacle.”\textsuperscript{116} Such tourism is, in his opinion, representative of the “last wave of exploitative capitalist expansion.”\textsuperscript{117} His view is consistent with the classical view of anthropology that describes the impact of tourism on local cultures as the “clash of


\textsuperscript{115} "Marrakech to Host Christian Rock Festival," Friends of Morocco, 11 May 2005.


\textsuperscript{117} Van Den Berghe, p 10.
two cultures' between 'host' community and 'guest'," wherein the "host community is held to be damaged, both culturally and economically, by the influx of hedonistic and careless western tourists, who represent a form of cultural imperialism."118

Bella Dicks, in her book *Culture on Display*, references more "recent studies which reject the thesis of economic imperialism, arguing that tourism reconfigures relations of dependency that already exist rather than creating them." She problematizes notions of acculturation that predispose the existence of an "original, pristine cultural identity."119 As Gupta and Ferguson assert, people are much more mobile, identities are much less fixed, and cultural practices and products are much less likely to "stay put" than classical anthropology maintains.120 Dicks would agree with Bruner, who argues that "locals are not passive recipients of a touristic invader from the outside." There is no "fixed static narrative that sees producers as in control, natives as exploited, and tourists as dupes."121 Instead "both locals and tourists engage in a co-production: they each take account of one another in an ever shifting, contested, evolving borderzone of engagement: a borderzone where culture is continuously being formed and reformed through performances which are constitutive."122 Similarly, in her work, *Where Asia Smiles: An Ethnography of Philippine Tourism*, Sally Ann Ness suggests that all who are involved in tourism internalize, "glocalize" and reinterpret touristic narrative texts like the Friendship Fest

---

119 Dicks, p 54. Dicks also contends that it is impossible to attribute all cultural change to one source. While tourism indisputably impacts native cultures, to make it solely responsible for every change discounts the impact of local political, environmental and sociological shifts. In addition, Dicks rejects the notion of wholesale cultural absorption as too simplistic. While some aspects of touristic lifestyles may be assimilated, the level and the degree of that assimilation most certainly differ in every host-guest encounter. p 53-55.
121 Bruner, p 18.
122 Bruner, p 18.
"before handing them along to new generations of consumers and producers." At the Friendship Fest, while the stage performances were aimed primarily at the audience, the musicians were also involved in a co-production with one another, hoping to influence and change preconceived perceptions. Moroccan artist Edil Hanine said, "Most of the people in America think that we here in Morocco are still living with camels and living in the desert. We know a lot about America. So these musicians [Americans] when they go back to America...will talk and tell their friends and family all about what it is like in Morocco, and that it is not like in the movie Casablanca." 

All of the borderzone exchanges associated with the festival in some ways comport with Pratt's notion of innocent, imperializing eyes which "passively look out and possess," and thus potentially constitute Western anticonquest. They also exemplify John Urry's "tourist gaze," a gaze which seeks to visually consume experiences that are distinctive, extraordinary, and dissimilar to everyday life—a decidedly imperialistic gesture. But the issue of Western touristic economic and cultural imperialism becomes more complicated by the fact that these particular tourists were themselves the focus of a reciprocal Moroccan tourist gaze. The performances of the Western tourists were visually consumed by the thousands of locals who attended the event, by the other musicians, and by the people in the local bars and in the rural villages. Even when they were not actively performing, but were just "sight-seeing," the artists were often objects of curiosity as they wandered

---

125 Klein, p 13, Pratt, p 7.
through the souks, marking them as possible objects of Moroccan anticonquest. As Dicks points out, sometimes "groups of locals may see tourists as the spectacle rather than the other way around." Odds, when viewed from that perspective, Van Den Berghe's classical anthropological view would actually cast the Western artists as victims of exploitative capitalist expansion, of Moroccan economic imperialism. But, as Bruner suggests, tourism is an improvisational theater where both tourists and locals are actors. As such, Dicks, Bruner and Ness would characterize their co-production in terms of economic development, not economic imperialism.

Religious Tolerance or Religious Imperialism?

Keeping in mind Huntington's prediction that the future "nexus of conflict" between the "West and the Rest" of the world would shift from economics to culture, with religion functioning as the "primary organizing site for identity," it is important to understand how the Friendship Fest was engaged to function as a bridge over significant religious difference and distrust. As described earlier, both the Moroccan government officials and the Western evangelical organizers focused on shared moral values and shared religious traditions in an educational effort to diffuse hateful and divisive stereotypes and to dismantle the conflations of Islam with terrorism and of Christianity with coerced conversion. At the same time, the Christian and Islamic press seemed equally insistent upon highlighting and promoting those representations of difference and distrust consistent with the essentializing themes that resonated with their constituent audiences. But the

127 Dicks, p 56.  
128 Bruner, p 18.  
129 McAlister, p 267.
questions raised by the press bear examination. As we have seen, under the rubric of friendship, the Moroccan government clearly pursued an economic and possible political advantage. Did the evangelicals utilize the Friendship Fest to pursue a religious one? Did they come to convert the people of Morocco to Christianity?

The public answer was "no": the American evangelicals hoped to combat terrorism by fostering peace and pursuing friendship on a people-to-people level during a time of suspicion and warfare. Most significantly, as previously noted, the goal of the Friendship Fest as stated by Rev. Cizik, "is not to proselytize, but to build friendship and break down hostile images." And, all the evangelical members of the delegation agreed that any witness in the Muslim world would be passive out of respect for the people of Morocco; they were hopeful that by their actions, lives and dispositions, the caricatures and stereotypes associated with American Christianity would be replaced with respect and understanding. But at the same time, they wanted to be clear about their identity, and sought to insure that there would be no censorship of their music or their message. Prior to accepting the invitation to bring his music to Morocco, in an attempt to be transparent, Thomas reminded both President Doumou, and the Wali that the artists would be singing about Jesus. As Thomas recalls, the Wali responded, "that's okay, we like Jesus." During their time in Morocco, the Christian artists were not censored with respect to their music. They were encouraged to sing and speak about their faith stories—what they believed to be true—both from the stage and in informal gatherings. They were asked only to refrain from exhorting the audience to adopt that truth for themselves.

---

The terms of the invitation were acceptable to Thomas, and he welcomed the opportunity to go and share the story of God’s love for all people through Jesus Christ through musical performance on a stage in the desert of Morocco.\textsuperscript{133}

But isn’t that proselytizing—the very thing they were accused of in the press and that they denied? From the perspective of the evangelicals, there was no conflict; they see subtle but significant definitional and practical distinctions between proselytizing and evangelizing. To proselytize is to convert, to evangelize is to preach the gospel.\textsuperscript{134} Christians are biblically mandated to preach the good news: to go in God’s name and in His authority to tell His story—the story, they believe to be the salvation of all mankind: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that who ever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”\textsuperscript{135} Christians are not, however, commanded to proselytize: to convince anyone of what they believe to be true. That, according to their scriptures, is the responsibility of God’s Holy Spirit: “He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment... and he will guide you into all truth.”\textsuperscript{136} According to their beliefs, the Holy Spirit is responsible for conversion; individual Christians are responsible to share the good news of their salvation with others:

Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then can they call upon the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”\textsuperscript{137}

Christians are supposed to have “beautiful feet” and bring the good news.

In a country where it is illegal to preach the gospel or to give out Bibles, for the Christian evangelicals it was enough to have thousands people come just to listen—they entrusted understanding and conversion to God. That they would be given the opportunity to do so is interesting in and of itself and reflective of Moroccan political and religious organization. In *Islam Observed, Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, Clifford Geertz describes how the relationship between religion and political life in Morocco differs from that of most other parts of the Muslim world. According to Geertz, the force of religion—how deeply it affects you—is very great in Morocco, but the scope—how widely it affects you—is very narrow. In other words, Moroccans are religiously fervent, but the sacred and the secular areas of their lives are distinctly separate. Geertz found that the disjunction between the forms of Moroccans’ religious life and the substance of everyday life advanced “almost to the point of schizophrenia;” that the Moroccan people had an uncanny ability “for forcing things together that really do not go together.” Islam as it is practiced in Morocco sees no conflict between modernity, science, and the economic realities of a globalized world and the traditions of the faith. Moroccans, suggests Geertz, are capable of holding opposing positions concurrently without any seeming tension, even when fundamental oppositions are very apparent. The invitation to American evangelicals seems to exemplify this characteristically Moroccan perspective: because pursuing friendship with American evangelicals advanced economic agendas and potentially ameliorated some political tensions, they were invited to come and sing about Jesus even though it is illegal to preach the gospel in Morocco—where’s the conflict? From their perspective (according to Geertz’s

---

139 Geertz, p 116, 75.
assessment) the invitation (prompted by their interest in promoting Morocco as a religiously tolerant country, welcoming even to evangelicals) was in no way at odds with either Islamic religious or Moroccan governmental prohibitions on proselytizing or evangelism, the subtle Christian distinction notwithstanding.

Conclusion

The question remains: was the Friendship Fest a hegemonic imposition of Western cultural and Christian ideals upon the people of an emerging, poor, "post colonial" nation? Or was it a broad demonstration by the government of Morocco to the Western world, that Morocco is a safe welcoming place for Westerners (Christian or not) to spend their tourist dollars? My considered conclusion is that the answer to both of these questions is “yes.” As I have shown above, the Moroccan government assuredly pursued the alliance for economic reasons of its own, and the Western evangelicals had a religious agenda, but to cast the event as a purely imperialistic endeavor of either cultural conquest or anticonquest—by either party—simplistically masks the deeper bilateral cultural engagements performed through the festival.

Klein defines the realm of culture as a “privileged space in which politically salient meanings can be constructed and questioned, where social categories can be defined and delimited, where shared values can be affirmed and contested.”140 Positioning the festival as a sentimental text, within a global imaginary of integration, reveals how both the Moroccans and the Westerners employed the Friendship Fest, as just such a “privileged space,” to forge personal bonds across divides of difference through reciprocity and exchange. While the discourses of cultural, economic, and religious imperialism inevitably come in to play in the context of

140 Klein, p 6.
events like the Friendship Fest, the participants were self-consciously working to reach beyond those discourses by focusing on the universalizing commonalities of humanity. Through their co-performances they sought to educate one another (and more importantly, all those who watched the engagement) and to recast their identities by deconstructing the prevalent stereotypes that informed the discourses of terrorism, tourism and religion, and contributed to the politics of blame, confrontation and hostility. As they attempted to transcend history, politics, economics and religion both groups were actively engaged in perfecting friendship.
Second Movement: “Play nice!”

*How friends act—the performance of friendship*

Understanding how the discourses of cultural diplomacy, tourism and religion intersect helps explain why both the Moroccan government and the Western promoters sought to pursue a transnational friendship that facilitated and promoted transnational political engagement, identity formation and bilateral cultural exchange, but it does little to describe exactly how the organizers and artists presented and performed the friendship that they pursued. What performance strategies did they adopt to facilitate and highlight the similitude and cultural commonality required of perfecting friendships to bridge both real and perceived differences? Were on-stage and off-stage performances *modified* to meet and address the perceived cultural expectations of targeted audiences as actors performed friendship? In other words, both generally and specifically, how was the Friendship Fest utilized as a transnational performance site?

**Theorizing Performance**

Like Klein, Victor Turner draws connections between explicit social dramas and stage dramas in his book *From Ritual to Theatre: the Human Seriousness of Play*. He describes how performance can be used in cases of breaches in the social fabric to redress issues, and how performance can even function as a prophylactic against conflict, anticipating it and averting it by vividly demonstrating the blessings of cooperation.141 The question of how and why staged performances can be effectively employed as a means of redress for social breach is

---

addressed by Turner’s commentary on the effects of industrialization on the domains of work and leisure. Turner theorized that with the onset of industrialization, work and leisure became split: work and leisure were made separate spheres, and “work” became sacred (even the performance arts became professionalized and specialized).142 As a result of that:

In complex, large scale societies in which the sphere of leisure is clearly separated from that of work, innumerable genres of cultural performance arise in accordance with the principle of that division of labor. They may be labeled art, entertainment, sport, play, games, recreation, theater, light or serious reading, and many more...in this prolixity of genres, now given wider scope by the electronic media, some seem more effective than others in giving birth to self regulatory or self critical works, which catch the attention or fire the imagination, of an entire society or even an epoch, transcending national frontiers. In a complex culture it may be possible to regard the ensemble of performative and narrative genres, active and acting modalities of expressive culture as a hall of mirrors...in which social problems, issues and crises...are reflected...transformed, evaluated, or diagnosed in works typical of each genre...until facets of the problem have been illuminated and made accessible to conscious remedial action.143

But according to Turner, these performative genres do more than just illuminate the social drama:

The stage drama, which is meant to do more than entertain—though entertainment is always one of its vital aims—is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting, on the major social dramas of its social context (wars, revolutions, scandals, institutionalized changes). Not only that but its message and its rhetoric feedback into the latent processual structure of the social drama and partly account for its ready ritualization. Human beings learn through experience, and perhaps the deepest experience is through drama; not through social drama, or stage drama (or its equivalent) alone, but in circulatory or oscillatory process of their mutual and incessant modification.144

Turner’s view of metacommentary is seemingly consistent with both Klein’s perspectives of sentimental narrative and privileged space as previously discussed.

142 Turner, p 38.
143 Turner, p 104.
144 Turner, p 107.
Ultimately, it would appear that staged cultural events are especially effective in asserting influence because they subtly engage the emotions of the participants in an educational project aimed at fostering new social and political alliances. But, because the engagement is cloaked as entertainment, and is thus not overtly coercive, in my opinion, it constitutes what Richard White terms a “middle ground”: a dialogic process of cultural production, which relies on persuasion, perception, misperception and misinterpretation. It is not acculturation or compromise, but is rather a process wherein:

diverse peoples adjust their differences through what amounts to a process of creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings. People try to persuade others who are different from themselves by appealing to what they perceive to be the values and the practices of those others. They often misinterpret and distort both the values and practices of those they deal with, but from these misunderstandings arise new meanings and through them new practices.

Central to White’s theory is the concern of power equities, or inequalities. In his view, in order for a “middle ground” to exist, the power between the two parties needed to be somewhat equal:

The middle ground depended on the inability of both sides to gain their ends through force. The middle ground grew according to the need of people to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation or consent of foreigners. To succeed, those who operated on the middle ground had, of necessity, to attempt to understand the world and the reasoning of others and to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes.

The possibility that an American interest can ever be considered as anything other than dominant in an exchange with a third world country is certainly suspect. But the use of force was not only antithetical to the stated and un-stated goals of the festivals (they were, after all, organized to pursue friendship and peace!); it was also an

---

145 Klein, p 7.
147 White, p 52.
148 White, p 52.
impossibility—the Western promoters had no means of forcing the Moroccans to do anything. Both parties were, however, relying on “the cooperation and consent of foreigners” to successfully advance their own purposes. So exactly how were misinterpretations and misunderstandings of perceived cultural values enacted at the Friendship Fest to persuade and shape new meanings, and assert influence?

In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman provides both a useful definition of performance and a revealing analysis of how performers inter-act and why. According to Goffman, a performance is “the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants.” During these performance events, the performers’ main responsibility “is to sustain a particular definition of the situation.” Individual performers may have many motives for trying to control the impression others receive. They might be sincere, believing that what they are staging represents the “real reality” of a given the situation. Or they may have no belief in their own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of their audience, but may merely engage in a cynical performance to guide the audience’s perceptions of a situation. Goffman attaches no implicit moral assessment to sincere versus cynical performances stating that “it is not assumed that all cynical performers are interested in deluding their audiences for purposes of what is called ‘self-interest’ or ‘private gain.’ One may delude his audience for their own good, or for the good of the community,” or to tactfully meet supposed expectations.

---

149 White, p 52.
151 Goffman, p 15.
152 Goffman, p 17.
153 Goffman, p 18.
Whether performances are sincere or cynical, the goal according to Goffman, is the same: to sustain the desired definition of the situation. He asserts that in order to maintain "this surface of agreement, this veneer of consensus," each participant must, at times, over-communicate some information and under-communicate other information and, at times, conceal their own agendas behind statements asserting the "values to which everyone present feels obliged to give lip service."\(^{154}\) In so doing, together, the participants contribute to a single overall definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to what constitutes the "veneer of consensus."\(^{155}\) In the case of the Friendship Fest, the desired definition and impression that the organizers and artists sought to communicate and sustain was friendship. Both verbally and in writing—in press conferences, on banners, on websites, from the stage, in conversations—the public rhetoric continuously reinforced one theme: we're all friends. Messages highlighting Morocco's long-held ties of friendship with the United States and those affirming the universality of music were consistently over-communicated, while political controversies and religious differences were downplayed and granted diminished significance within the context of this celebration of friendship. That's not to say that the performances of friendship at the festival were not in some ways sincere, but the cynical aspects (as defined by Goffman) can not be ignored. All of the participants worked to influence each other—whether to secure economic advantage or to evangelize—but they also sought to subsume their non-mutual pursuits of economic, political, or religious advantage under the consensual veneer of friendship.

\(^{154}\) Goffman, p 7, 141.
\(^{155}\) Goffman, p 9.
To sustain that veneer, performers often give what Goffman terms idealized performances: those performances, which “exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, and may conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version” of the situation. One way that performers may idealize their performances is through modifications to either their performance style or appearance, which effectively “engender in the audience the belief that the performers are related to them in a more ideal way than is always the case.”

**Idealized Performances of Friendship:**

Prior to arriving in Morocco, all of the western performers were contacted by the American promoters, who provided them with information about Moroccan culture and behavioral norms. The information was provided so that the artists would be able to both show respect for their Moroccan hosts and help refute stereotypes portraying Americans and westerners as culturally egocentric, superior, or insensitive. In response, many of the western performers modified their appearance and their performances. In an effort to enhance his connection to the audience, R&B singer and *American Idol* finalist George Huff appeared on stage dressed from head to toe in brightly colored clothing that he had purchased earlier in the *day at the local souk*. Rock performer Jeremy Camp, during his entire time in Morocco, donned a long sleeve T-shirt to cover-up his extensive tattoos and removed his numerous body piercings so as to avoid potentially offending his Moroccan hosts. And, the female pop group Out of Eden adopted more modest

---

156 Goffman, p 34.  
157 Goffman, p 48.  
158 Thompson, 9 May 2005.
clothing than they usually wore, toned down their dance moves and added accessories with a decidedly eastern flair—perhaps to suggest a greater affinity than actually existed. Beyond changes to their attire, there were also instances where language was used to present an idealized version of self as some of the western musicians integrated French and Arabic phrases into their performances—despite their lack of fluency! Interestingly, while some of the Moroccan performers appeared in traditional dress, many of them adopted western garb. Most notably, the Moroccan rap/hip-hop group Hoba Hoba Spirit, who rapped in both Arabic and French, appeared wearing sports jerseys promoting American sports teams from New York and Los Angeles, though it should be noted that it was unclear as to whether this was their normal mode of dress or an accommodation for the event.

While most of the observed performance modifications on stage stressed cultural affinity, there were also performances associated with the festival that were idealized to meet and comport with perceived expectations that actually emphasized cultural difference. At first glance, those performances would seemingly disrupt the veneer of friendship. But friendship based on similitude implies a degree of difference and, as long as those differences fall within the range of acceptable expectation, the veneer can be maintained. Underscoring acceptable cultural dissimilarities in some ways allows deeper cultural divides and agendas to be ignored or masked. Thus, idealized performances which meet perceived cultural expectations can be engaged to perform and perfect friendship while advancing non-mutual and potentially divisive agendas.

As a display of friendship, and as part of the hospitality shown to the Western artists by the Moroccan organizers, on several occasions the Western promoters and

159 The First Waltz.
artists were treated to idealized performances of all of their exotic, foreign, orientalist cultural expectations. The artists were offered camel rides in the desert and given guided tours of the local souks where they were encouraged to interact with the snake charmers, fortune tellers, and, of course, the merchants. Many of the artists were also treated to dinner and a show at Chez Ali – a Marrakech area restaurant and performance venue. It was an evening choreographed to elicit and underscore every image of Arabia ever filmed. It was complete with belly dancers, jugglers, acrobats on horseback with swords and javelins, native singing and dancing, lamb and couscous, dried dates and apricots—all presented against the backdrop of lavish velvet tents and oriental carpets under the starlit sky. The clientele were predominantly tourists; the waiters and performers were Moroccan; the price of admission was not inconsequential. But the tourists in attendance didn’t seem to mind paying a premium to get a glimpse of the idealized Morocco they had come to see.  

This blending of friendship with economic gain through the idealized performance of cultural expectation was not limited to urban encounters. During the 2005 event, the pop group Out of Eden and guitarist Phil Keaggy were invited to a rural village to meet and co-perform with local musicians in a home and familial setting where they were entertained and shown hospitality—they were served traditional mint tea. Both groups then sang for one another. As a fellow participant in this encounter, I must admit that it was a remarkable and genuinely warm engagement of two very diverse cultures, but both appeared to be modifying their presentations to meet their individual agendas. As they had done on stage, the Americans modified to a degree their appearance and behavior in hopes of making

---

160 Personal observation 7 May 2005.
the Moroccans both more open to their message and to a more positive view of American Christians. The Moroccans also appeared to have modified their dress (they wore traditional costumes over western style clothing) and their performance to accentuate their "otherness" prior to offering the Americans their "authentic" wares for sale as they departed. I left with the distinct impression of having witnessed a charming show put on by a family cottage industry, one that is repeated frequently for the visiting tourists and is utilized to supplement the family economy. It was a very vivid reminder that tourism is the second most important industry in Morocco, and another example of how "the Moroccan tourism industry has generally adopted the strategy of performing the stereotypes and profiting off the performance."\(^{161}\)

At the other end of the spectrum, the Western artists found themselves entertained at the palace of the Wali, where they dined lavishly on local cuisine, and where ironically they were served alcohol without their knowledge: ironic in that, for the most part, neither they nor their Muslim hosts routinely drink alcohol!\(^{162}\) The faux pas constituted what Goffman would term a performance disruption—a cultural expectation gone awry perhaps? Nonetheless, it was a disruption that both sides chose to overlook in the interest of sustaining the definition of the situation: friendship.

As an adjunct to the musical aspects of the 2005 festival, the western promoters brought with them a team of 18 doctors who were affiliated with the American medical organization "Operation Serve." During the festival, and in coordination with the office of President Doumou, this group distributed over $500,000 worth of medical supplies to needy Moroccans in both rural and urban

\(^{161}\) Edwards, p 73.

\(^{162}\) The artists were offered pre-mixed drinks by waiters who were circulating through the reception. The waiters didn’t reveal that the drinks were alcoholic and the artists didn’t ask.
areas, and conducted thousands of screenings for high blood pressure, diabetes, and glaucoma.\textsuperscript{163} The efforts were humanitarian, to be sure, but they also were in keeping with the goals of the Friendship Fest which sought to build bridges of friendship based on a common ground of understanding. Both cultures, Christian and Muslim, have as a central mandate of their faith the care for the less fortunate, and both place a high value on sharing what you have with those in need.\textsuperscript{164} The medical assistance would thus be received \textit{not} as the pitiful handout of a strong wealthy nation for a poor helpless one, but rather as the compassionate outpouring of God's love, an expression of which is the duty of all God-fearing people everywhere, regardless of faith tradition, race, nation or creed. The doctors saw more than 800 patients per day, but their efforts were reported to the community both at the festival and in the press, and as such, they were "seen" by many thousands per day. While not denying the value of their work, it still could be interpreted as a performance which was intended to reshape public perceptions: a performance consistent with Christian views of evangelism which teach that people will never \textit{care what you know} until they \textit{know that you care}. The Christians' genuine performance of caring was intended to communicate Christ's love—through them—to a people who do not know Christ, in the hope that they may come to know Him.\textsuperscript{165} An act of friendship to be sure, but one engaged to promote an underlying religious agenda.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Friendship Fest was originally conceived of as a musical celebration through which both the Moroccan government and the Western

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{The First Waltz.}
\textsuperscript{165} \textit{The First Waltz.}
promoters sought to pursue a transnational friendship based in similitude. The festivals were organized to combat terrorism (by diffusing extremist rhetoric) and to demonstrate that Muslims and Christians can be friends who live together in peace.\(^{166}\) It was clearly an attempt to utilize cultural performance as a preventative measure against conflict: anticipating it and averting it by vividly demonstrating the blessings of cooperation.\(^{167}\) But the festival also operated as a metacommentary and was the site of an ongoing reciprocal cultural dialogue that relied on persuasion, perception, misperception and misinterpretation.\(^{168}\) As I have made clear, both parties had underlying non-mutual goals that they hoped to advance as they performed and pursued friendship. By maintaining a strict definition of the situation—a veneer of consensus—and employing both sincere and cynical idealized performances, the various actors were able to both pursue their independent agendas and facilitate and highlight the similitude and cultural commonality required of perfecting friendships to bridge both real and perceived differences. By modifying their on-stage and off-stage performances to meet and address perceived cultural expectations, the actors performed friendship, exerted influence and attempted to affect desired change.

---

\(^{166}\) Address given at Atlanta Fest by Bob Thompson on 6/19/ 2004.

\(^{167}\) Turner, p 110.

\(^{168}\) White, p 50-52.
Third Movement: “Let’s all sing!”

*Music is the universal language—isn’t it?*

At its heart, the Friendship Fest was a musical performance—a musical dialogue between Muslims and Christians, Arabs and Americans, and Eastern and Western cultures. Given that all the Christians’ performances were rendered in English, in a country where the two native languages are French and Arabic, and where English is not ubiquitously understood, I was challenged early on in my interrogation of the Friendship Fest to consider the validity and potential effectiveness of the festivals to promote understanding and knowledge, combat terrorism, or produce any lasting influence. Surely it could be argued that the success of such events rested more on the *limits* of understanding, wherein any potential conflicts could be masked both by language and performance. Indeed, one young Moroccan at the 2005 event, Mahmoud Zuine, a 21 year-old economics student, indicated that while he enjoyed the music, he found the Christian component irrelevant: “they know we love the music, so they use this music to pass their message. It’s like a magic way. It’s not direct. I laugh because nobody knows what they are saying.”169 Another student, Aiman Karim, 22, said, “I don’t think most people know or care about the message of the music—they have just come to listen to it.”170

Yet both the performers and the producers of the event, irrespective of nationality, insisted that music is a universal language and, as such, is capable of transcending both cultural and linguistic barriers to communicate and promote the

---

<http://telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/05/09w...>. 57
festival’s theme—friendship—and to promote its goals. According to Thomas: “the only thing that was translated were the introductions of the performers. The universal language of music translated itself.”\(^{171}\) As the band Delirious, from the UK, put it:

> It’s amazing that yesterday we were in Holland, and the day before Germany, and today we’re in Morocco. Three countries that don’t even speak our language, for us, and yet we can go to all three of them and music can communicate across different cultures and different languages and I just think that is an amazing power that it has to do that.\(^{172}\)

One of the lead singers of Out of Eden, a pop group from America, declared:

> I think music is definitely more important than words because music shows so much. It’s so much more universal, it shows your personality and what you’re feeling. Everybody can understand it. Everybody loves a good beat.\(^{173}\)

The Newsboys, a band from Australia, added:

> I think the music is an incredible tool of communication. I don’t think that this opportunity would have ever come up if it had not been for the music. To see the people dancing and the crowd and to see them respond to the beat was amazing. From such an opposite side of the world, such a different culture, complete language barrier, tons of other barriers, but somehow that connected. I’ve had a difficult time talking with people here all week, but I got up on stage and they understood what we’re doing as soon as the first note went out. That was incredible for me.\(^{174}\)

Being neither a musicologist, nor an ethnomusicologist, I had never thought deeply about what music is and how it functions. I certainly had never doubted music’s inherent ability to powerfully communicate meaning and evoke intense emotion, and on some level I, too, believed that music is a universal language. But as I looked out over the crowd of almost 100,000 Moroccans joyously jumping up

---


\(^{172}\) The First Waltz.

\(^{173}\) The First Waltz.

\(^{174}\) The First Waltz.
and down and singing along as the contemporary Christian band Newsboys
worshipped Jesus and sang "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah, He reigns," I began to wonder
about how music communicates meaning, what meanings are actually
communicated in and through music, and if those meanings are truly universal.
Ultimately, of course, I am interested in how perceived musical meanings and
understandings operate within and facilitate a transnational political discourse, in
understanding how—or if—music, especially in a festival performance setting, is a
uniquely suited to function as a bridge spanning deep culturally divides. Can music
be marshaled as a tool of peace, understanding, and friendship and thus as a
counterforce to problems of war, intolerance, and religious conflict that plague
human history and the prospects of the future? Is music, in fact, a universal
language capable of promoting and perfecting friendship, or do we just pretend to
think so because it suits our purposes?

Theorizing Music

What is universal, according to ethnomusicologist Bonnie C. Wade, is the
process of making music, what Christopher Small calls "musicking." Every known
group of people in the world creatively organizes sound in some way that is different
from speech, and agrees that both the process and the product are meaningful. At
great debate, however, is whether that "meaning resides in the musical materials
themselves, or is ascribed to the musical materials by someone for some particular
reason." In other words, is there within music an intrinsic signification—a code to
be cracked, a language to be learned, or merely a "certain something" that exists

176 Small quoted in Bonnie C. Wade, Thinking Musically: Experiencing Music, Expressing
177 Wade, p 10.
within music that projects itself onto an audience, and thereby affects them? Or are our individual understandings of musical meanings and the feelings that music evokes wholly socially constructed?

Ethnomusicologist Steven Feld argues that musical meaning is influenced by all of the above and, as such, is incredibly complex requiring “psychological, physiological, musicological, text-centric, syntax-centric forms of analysis,” but that these forms of inquiry shouldn’t be privileged over cultural analysis. In his view, one must:

recognize the social character of the musical communication process: the listener is implicated as a socially and historically situated being, not just as organs that receive and respond to stimuli. For this reason, a description, and a theory of the musical encounter must be sensitive to the biographies of the object/events and actors in question. The encounter is not simply one between a musical text and the gestalt processing of patterns of tension, anticipation, fulfillment, and resolution. Rather the encounter involves consuming and making sense out of music through interpretive procedures which are deeply linked to, but not synonymous with, the structure of concatenated sound events.

Music psychologist John Sloboda also acknowledges music’s complexity and notes that for most of us, “despite our deep familiarity with it, music still remains at many levels a mystery to us. We don’t understand what music is, how it comes to have such a profound effect on us, why it moves us, fascinates us, brings us back to it again and again.” Yet, while noting the importance of the structural nature of music in eliciting meaningful responses to music, Sloboda, like Feld, stresses the significance of the social context: “it is the whole process of being a biological human

179 Steven Feld, “Communication, Music, and Speech About Music,” Yearbook for Traditional Music 16 (1984): p 6. In this article Feld provides a detailed overview of the development of each of these theoretical perspectives on music, language and communication. See also Feld and Fox and Keil and Feld in Music Grooves.
inhabiting a physical and social world that provides the fuel and the impetus for a
dynamic understanding of music."181

**Musical Meaning and the Individual**

Daniel J. Levitin, a neuroscientist who runs the Laboratory for Musical
Perception, Cognition, and Expertise at McGill University, has studied the nexus of
the biological, physical and social extensively in the hopes of revealing the
connections between music, language, emotions and social context that are
responsible for creating the belief that music is inherently and universally affective,
powerful and meaningful. Like others before him, Levitin ties our appreciation of
music to our ability to learn underlying musical structures—"the equivalent to
grammar in spoken and signed languages"—and to our ability to predict where the
music is going based upon "musical schemas" that we began forming in the womb
and which have been "elaborated, amended, and otherwise informed every time we
listen to music."182

In Levitin's view, our memories of these schemas (and of the adjustments
that we make to them) are encoded physiologically in our brains "in groups of
neurons that, when set to proper values and configured in a particular way, will
cause a memory to be retrieved and replayed in the theater of our minds."183 This
"multiple trace memory model" assumes that context is also encoded along with
musical schemas, so that the "music that you have listened to at various times in

---

181 Sloboda, p 167.
182 Daniel J. Levitin, *This is Your Brain on Music: the Science of a Human Obsession*, New
183 Levitin, p 161-162.
your life is cross coded with the events of those times.”184 It is not, however, just the events themselves that become encoded, but also the emotions felt at the time of the listening.

Just as recorded music is produced by combining and compiling multiple sources, or tracks, so too, the internal “recording” of the music we hear is a compilation of multiple tracks: the actual music we hear occupies one track, the emotions we experience at the time of hearing occupy another, and the context surrounding our listening occupies yet a third. Once “recorded together,” these tracks form a cohesive unit, like a song, which is “replayed” or remembered in toto, not as separate tracks.

Levitin’s work on the brain reveals interesting connections between, and physiological activity within, the portions of the brain which deal with emotions as well as with memory in response to listening to music—activities and connections that are quantitatively different than responses to vocal communication. Studies show that “attending to structure in music requires both halves of the brain, while attending to structure in language only requires the left half.”185 In addition, unlike mere speech, “the rewarding and reinforcing aspects of listening to music seem, then, to be mediated by increasing dopamine levels in the nucleus accumbens, and by the cerebellum’s contribution to regulating emotion through its connections to the frontal lobe, and the limbic system.”186 Increased dopamine levels have been conclusively connected to positive mood enhancement, which is why dopamine is a

186 Levitin, p 187.
commonly prescribed antidepressant, and which goes a long way towards explaining how and why music makes us feel good. Levitin concludes that while music functions in some of the same ways as language to convey meaning and emotion, it does so in nonreferential and nonspecific ways because, “far more than language, music taps into primitive brain structures involved with motivation, reward, and emotion.”\(^{187}\) It would seem then, that humans are thus hardwired to associate music with emotion—for music to move us—but in ways that transcend or at least don’t require verbal language representation. The band Delirious? understands this: “Music does more than just speak words, it communicates to your emotions and to the heart—whether or not they necessarily understand the words that you’re singing.”\(^{188}\)

Levitin’s conclusions with respect to music, memory and the brain uphold perceptions that music is a language, universally available to being learned. But just as models of language development propose that all humans begin life with the capacity to learn any language, and that through time that ability declines as the brain reinforces the neural pathways associated with a culturally specific used language, so too, all individuals are hardwired to understand music, but through time, our musical vocabularies become culturally defined by our local experiences and exposures, and are encoded as such in our brains. Again, because music is supposedly nonreferential and nonspecific compared with vocal language, musical co-literacy appears to be more easily achieved and understood, and carries with it the illusion of the implied—and included—translation of feeling.

What music means, then, is ultimately unique and individual since musical meaning is constructed socially. It is based upon personal experience, which is

\(^{187}\) Levitin, p 187.
\(^{188}\) The First Waltz.
subject to revision; it is understood utilizing a learned musical grammatical structure, which can vary from culture to culture; and, it is deeply embedded in memory and imbued with emotion both psychologically and physiologically. Therefore, it follows logically that the degree to which musical meaning can truly accurately communicate meanings and/or feelings between individuals (or by extension, cross-culturally) depends upon the correlation of experiences, educations and remembered emotional responses—which by definition are idiosyncratic and not universal.

**Trans-Cultural Musical Understanding**

Professor Erich Stockmann, the Chair of the Scientific Board of the International Institute for Traditional Music, concludes in the IITM’s journal, *The World of Music,* that:

> Despite the oft-repeated belief that music is a universal language and can be understood at once by anyone no matter where he comes from, the nations of the world have each developed their own musical cultures. If we really wish to be in a position to become aware of them and to recognize and appreciate their aesthetic variety and values, it is necessary to learn how they came into existence, how they are structured, as well as their social and musical functions.\(^\text{189}\)

As Max Peter Baumann notes in his preface to a series of articles on hearing and listening in a cultural context in the journal *The World of Music,* education and exposure are key, because hearing and comprehending music of another culture requires the conditioning of an “ethnic cultural ear.”\(^\text{190}\) This is a task that Baumann and contributing writer Jurgen Elsner feel is especially difficult for western listeners of Arabic music because it requires them to “involve themselves intensively with the musical parameters of Arabic musical concepts such as melodic form, tonal norms,


and rhythmic structures in order to free themselves from Eurocentric listening and to acquire a culturally adequate, comprehending level of hearing.\textsuperscript{191} For Baumann, Elsner, and many others, true cross cultural musical comprehension requires years of study (preferably with a master musician) and the commitment to subvert your own musical culture as you adopt the principles, systems, repertoire, intonation and way of thinking of another musical culture.\textsuperscript{192}

The western participants of the Friendship Fest most assuredly did not embrace that level of intense edification and enculturation. For all of them, the festival was their first experience of Morocco. And, with the exception of a briefing on certain basic religious and cultural sensitivities, the artists received no in-depth musical indoctrination. By contrast, the Moroccan artists' and the Moroccan peoples' exposure to western musical culture was far more extensive: since the 60's they had been visited by Jimi Hendrix, Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones, Ornette Coleman, and countless young Americans who came to Morocco to ride Crosby, Stills and Nash's "Marrakech Express."\textsuperscript{193} As one attendee of the 2005 festival put it: "Who doesn't remember Rolling Stones, the tenors of the music rock'n'roll like Rod Steward or Joe Coocker [sic]? Who could forget large Jimmy [sic] Hendrix, which occurred on several occasions in Marrakech and especially Essaouira? Marrakchis have very good memories of them, and much nostalgia for the American music rock'n'roll."\textsuperscript{194}

\textsuperscript{191} Baumann, p 7. For more on listening and understanding Arabic music see Ali Jihad Racy, Making Music in the Arab World: the Culture and Artistry of Tarab, New York: Cambridge UP, 2003.
\textsuperscript{193} Edwards, p 250.
In light of these perspectives, it is interesting to assess the musical performances of the Friendship Fest in terms of comprehension—especially as revealed through the trans-cultural co-performances which took place both on stage and off. Not surprisingly, given their lack of cultural experience, education, and exposure, the western performers had much more difficulty melding their performances with the Moroccans—especially in local off stage settings—than the Moroccans had with the westerners. In a remote village in the Atlas Mountains, after each group performed for one another (and seemingly appreciated one another’s performances) an impromptu attempt was made to co-perform. The western members of the band Downhere tried to play along with the local musicians by joining in with their guitars, a coronet, and playing on a loaned local drum. They later expressed the difficulty they encountered in trying to find the correct key in which to play because the tonality of the Moroccan notes was intermediary to western tuning styles. They also found the polyrhythms typical of Moroccan music difficult to follow, and the experiment was soon abandoned. The collaboration was more successful when American artist Joy Williams began to sing some Bob Marley tunes. The Moroccans revealed a greater cultural knowledge of western musical culture by clapping, drumming in rhythm and singing along with the melody. On the whole, the Moroccan artists also revealed an acute awareness of the disparity of cultural understanding that they hoped their collaborations would mitigate. As one Moroccan artist from the band Hoba Hoba spirit noted:

This is my first experience to play with American musicians on the scene. We'd like to do something with the other bands to make them know a little about our culture, our musical styles. Morocco is not only the movie Casablanca: black and white, when in 2005 we have colors, a lot of things to


express. We wish you would know as much about us as we know about you.\textsuperscript{196}

In almost every case, the collaborations that were most successful involved the performance of western pop music. In the lobby of his hotel, Phil Keaggy, a virtuoso guitarist, could be found jamming nightly with the local hotel band. Said Keaggy: "We're Bob Marley, Tower of Power, and Hendrix fans, while these are Elvis, James Brown, Frank Sinatra type people. We must have played for over two hours together. We did a little medley of Beatles' songs. It was just so cool."\textsuperscript{197} On stage, Keaggy was invited to co-perform with seven Moroccan musicians in an un rehearsal, extended, improvised musical conversation based upon the Moroccans' music—what some called a testimony to the universality of the language of music, but what could also be seen as a testimony to the musical professionalism and talent of the performers who had been watching and learning from one another throughout the week.\textsuperscript{198} As one of Keaggy's band members described it:

"Musically it's been a great experience for us to learn from the Moroccans and sort of take what they do...and we're watching them and learning and watching them play. There is communication there; it's just amazing. Their hearts are great and it's fun to share that music and that love through music. Even the language barrier; the music breaks right through that—it's just amazing."

Cultural Imperialism or Transnational Collaboration

All of these co-performances could potentially be characterized as definitive expressions of western Cultural imperialism and acculturation: the unequal imposition of culture by a strong political power upon a weaker, needier nation. The

\textsuperscript{196} The First Waltz.
\textsuperscript{198} The First Waltz.
"tak[ing] of what they do," as Keaggy's band member described, could be construed as exploitation wherein Third World musicians are "treated as raw materials to be processed into commodities for the West," and their music is incorporated to revivify and exoticize western forms. While a disproportionate and largely unidirectional cultural sharing can not be denied, as David Hesmondhalgh points out in his introduction to *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*, "by the late 1990's, acculturation theory had been banished to the conceptual dark ages for unacceptable essentialism and lack of sufficient attention to global-historical structures of power." Recent years have seen a shift in ethnomusicology studies away from a cultural imperialism model and towards an emerging discourse that focuses upon global cultural flows and notions of hybridity, and interaction.\(^{199}\) Wade suggests moving beyond issues of cultural imperialism and acculturation to speak of transculturation: "a process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new cultural elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones" that avoids the "connotation of political hegemony implied by the older term...but causes us to reconsider the matter of culture contact in the process of musical change."\(^{200}\)

Beyond that, it is difficult to argue the case for Moroccan acculturation since, as Antonio Baldassarre observes, rock music has never had a significant influence on the music produced by local Moroccan musicians. For most Moroccans, rock music "became merely an easy token for communicating with western people."\(^{201}\)


\(^{200}\) Wade, p 146.

Motti Regev goes even further in his rejection of implied cultural imperialism, contending that, for non-western cultures:

the presence of rock music in their own local cultures and its influence on local music is hardly seen as a form of cultural imperialism. On the contrary, they perceive rock as an important tool for strengthening their contemporary sense of local identity and autonomy....participants of and listeners to these types of music feel, at one and the same time, participants in a specific contemporary global-universal form of expression and innovators of local, national, ethnic and other identities. A cultural form, associated with American (US) culture and with the powerful commercial interests of the international music industry is being used in order to construct a sense of local difference and authenticity.202

In his book, Beyond Exoticism, Timothy Taylor also encourages scholars to move beyond cultural imperialism and authenticity—defining discourses which he views as monolithic and rigid—to consider the discourses of globalization, collaboration and musical hybridity. Still, for Taylor, such a consideration is "incomplete and even misleading if no attention is paid to other practices such as consumption and the fashioning of identity."203 Taylor would agree with Regev that the powerful commercial interests of the international music industry must be considered within the context of an "increased commodification and consumption of otherness," and the construction of selfhood through the practices of consumption.204 Artists like Paul Simon and Peter Gabriel (among countless others) have engaged in numerous trans-cultural musical collaborations exposing what has come to be known as World Music to thousands of new fans, collaborations which have seemingly benefited all collaborators. But these musical collaborations can come to stand in for

204 Taylor, p 114.
social collaborations that, while seemingly beneficial to both collaborators, actually reify Western dominance and privilege.\textsuperscript{205}

While the economic and legal implications associated with hybridity are complex (and lie outside the scope of this inquiry), as Simon Frith suggests, "hybridity has become a way of condensing a number of arguments about globalization and identity."\textsuperscript{206} For Frith, hybridity reflects both an optimistic and a realistic view of trans-cultural musical collaboration. Because musical traditions are not static, but change with changing circumstances and exposures to other cultural influences, musical creativity always involves cultural borrowings that don't necessarily mean the loss of cultural identity, but the borrowings are also always shaped by and reflect economic realities: musicians don't just borrow what interests them, they borrow what sells.\textsuperscript{207}

Two Successful Collaborations

The two seemingly most successful collaborations of the Friendship Fest in terms of shared, mutual musical meaning and emotion took place on stage. Both incorporated common religious ground and Arabic language, but utilized western performance styles. In 2005, on the last evening of the festival, all of the bands took the stage, and co-performed a song that Keaggy, along with American Gabe


\textsuperscript{206} Frith, p 310.

\textsuperscript{207} Frith, p 312-313.
McReynolds, had written just for the festival. The song, entitled “Peace with God, Peace with Man,” was based on lines from the “Fatiha,” the opening lines of the Qur’an, and was translated into English, French and Arabic.

Peace with God, peace with man  
This is our Creator's plan  
He sends mercy from above  
He guides us in the way of love  

God of peace, Lord of man  
We seek your blessings for this land  
Joined together, hand in hand  
Here, for peace, we take our stand  

O God, to you our prayer we bring  
That hope would flourish as we sing  
And grant us from your gracious hand  
Peace with God, peace with man  

Praise to God, the Lord of all  
Compassionate and Merciful  
Guide us in the upright way  
O Master of the judgment day  

The co-performance was the highlight of the 2005 festival for the artists and the producers in as much as it embodied the hoped-for goal of friendly, peaceful collaboration based upon mutual respect, and common interests. The audience also appeared to enjoy the co-performance, but not appreciably more than any other on-stage performance at the 2005 festival.

At the 2006 festival, Southern Gospel artists, the Crabb Family took the stage and sang an improvised four-part harmony a cappella performance of a local Arabic greeting, “Salaam alaikum,” which means “peace be with you.” The crowd responded by singing back the traditional response “Alaikum Salaam,” which means “and also with you.” The call and response went on and on, and was continued by the Moroccan crowd even as the Crabb Family began singing (in English) “My Jesus, my savior, Lord there is none like you” in harmony with the crowd. At the conclusion
of the song, the 100,000 Moroccans in the audience communicated their approval and appreciation with thunderous applause, though there can be no doubt that the meaning of the English words being sung was anything but transparent to many.

The Value of Music in Cross-Cultural Communication

But does it matter that the language was English not Arabic and that the musical style was western as opposed to eastern if the illusion of communication is upheld? Is perhaps the value of music in cross-cultural communication precisely the appearance of co-literacy that is engendered by music's inherent nonreferentiality, wherein potentially disruptive meanings can be masked or elided? Ethnomusicologist Georgina Born would say: “Yes.” Born notes that it is music's:

extraordinary powers of imaginary evocation of identity and cross-cultural and inter-subjective empathy that render it a primary means of both marking and transforming individual and collective identities....it is because music lacks denotive meaning, in contrast with the visual and literary arts, that it has particular powers of connotation.208

Born contends that music does more than just reflect social identities and realities. Because of how musical meanings are constructed, she suggests that music can also play a formative role in the “construction, negotiation, and transformation of sociocultural identities”: activities (according to the producers) that lie at the heart of the Friendship Fest.209 For Born, it is music’s “hyperconnotative character, its intense cognitive, cultural, and emotional associations, and its abstraction,” that give it a unique role in the imaginary constitution of cross-cultural understanding (and possible misunderstanding) because “the connotations attached to musical representations and appropriations are potentially more labile and unfixed, and

208 Born, p 32.
209 Born, p 31; The First Waltz.
perhaps at the same time more aesthetically and discursively fertile, than those of the literary and visual arts."²¹⁰

Susan McClary contends that because most listeners don't understand how music works, or how it creates its effects, music gives the illusion of being unmediated and neutral and as such is "able to contribute heavily (if surreptitiously) to the shaping of individual" and (I would argue) corporate identities.²¹¹ Far from being just a form of entertainment, music functions in her view "as a site in which fundamental aspects of social formation are contested and negotiated."²¹² These musical entertainments are cultural performances, which don't just reflect "a given social order or cultural configuration," but rather are "active agencies of change."²¹³ They also can be employed as active agencies of resistance. As Wade has observed, singing gives "musicians license to say something not permitted in ordinary speech. A great deal of covert and overt political protest has been delivered in song," or as one of the Americans at the Friendship Fest commented: "It's illegal to preach the gospel in Morocco, but, apparently it's okay to sing it!"²¹⁴

Music as a Political Tool

In his analysis of Bulgarian music and economic practice, Tim Rice concludes that "music can be understood as economic practice, as social behavior, and as a symbolic system with the powerful ability to make aesthetic sense while hiding

²¹⁰ Born, p 32, 46.
²¹² McClary, p 54.
²¹⁴ Wade, p 11; Bob Thompson, May 2005.
meaning; to reference existing worlds; and to imagine new utopian worlds." When confronted by state claims that music is anti-state, musicians can "take strategic refuge behind claims that music is simply music. Rather than containing political meanings, music's aesthetic and structural sense is so powerful that it can overwhelm interpretations of reference." But, music's ability to simultaneously contain and suppress reference is very useful to those musicians who seek to use music politically. While musicians at the Friendship Fest may or may not have been trying to communicate pointed messages of faith, or politics, both they and the producers of the event could ultimately deflect criticism by referring to music's nonreferential nature: it's just music.

Musicians aren't the only ones who use music politically. As Martin Stokes comments in his discussion on the musical construction of place, "music is one of the less innocent ways in which dominant categories of identity are enforced and resisted."

In his article, "Moroccan World Beat Through the Media," Antonio Baldassarre traces how, as political power in Morocco shifted from the colonizing French protectorate, to the absolute rule of the monarchy, to the more democratic current political reality, so too the music promoted by those in power, and broadcast through mass communications shifted to reflect the current political hegemony and its political agenda. But Baldassarre also points out that at each point there were

---

216 Rice, p 197.
also alternative musical expressions that developed in protest to the hegemonic
political systems as people pursued and played the music they loved.218

Stokes finds the fact that pleasure is involved extremely important:

As Foucault repeatedly pointed out, pleasure becomes a significant arena of
political experience and a focus of control, through the definition of what
pleasures ‘are’ and whether or not they are permitted, and conversely,
through resistance to that control. The association of pleasure, license and a
festival atmosphere with music and dance makes them experiences which
are distinctly out of the ordinary....and do encourage people to feel that they
are in touch with an essential part of themselves, their emotions and their
“community”. Just as musical performance enacts and embodies dominant
communal values, it can also enact in a powerful affective way, rival
principles of social organization.219

In her examination of a Ukrainian music festival that challenged Soviet-
sanctioned historical interpretations, Catherine Wanner asks why the advocates of
Ukrainian independence utilized a music festival to recast the critical relationship
between Russia and Ukraine. I asked the same question of the Friendship Fest: why
use a music festival to address and attempt to ameliorate the stresses fracturing
east/west, Muslim/Christian relationships? Wanner concludes that music works
because “the demarcations between musical styles, genres, and performances,
while nonetheless reflective of a cultural tradition are infinitely more porous” than
other cultural elements. Religious affiliation, historical memory, myths and language
do not “command the immediate acceptance and visceral reactions that music has
the power to trigger.”220 For Wanner, “the public liminality created by the festival
provided a forum in which individuals” could publicly reject state definitions of identity
and articulate new versions.221

218 Antonio Baldassarre, "Moroccan World Beat Through the Media," Mediterranean Mosaic:
219 Stokes, p 13.
220 Wanner, p 148.
221 Wanner, p 148.
Musical Festivals as Educational Tools

At the heart of the Friendship Fest was the desire to articulate new versions of identity, to dispel harmful and hateful stereotypes, and to re-educate both those in the west and those in the east by articulating new ways of interacting. While music can shape politics and economics through dominance and resistance, as Slobin, Wanner, Sakolsky and Rice have shown, it also works to shape politics through re-education and exposure by updating, elaborating, amending and informing both our musical schemas and our emotional musical memories as we listen to music in new contexts. The same liminality experienced at festivals that renders them effective forums for dissent, also establishes them as optimal forums for re-identification.

Max Baumann, in his article, “Festivals, Musical Actors and Mental Constructs in the Process of Globalization,” has shown how international festivals have proven to play an increasingly important role in mediating trans-cultural encounters and conflicts. Baumann has determined that festivals have become “pioneers in propagating the peaceful idea of developing new creative forms of behavior that lead to mutual respect between different cultures” and break down “culturally determined prejudices.” Baumann believes that festival events present the ideal environment for the “negotiation of significance, and the transference of culture, knowledge and technology”:

Festivals not simply conceived self-referentially open up possibilities for transcultural understanding and the dismantling of prejudices through the personal encounters and experiences of artists and audiences. At such festivals, people are also made more conscious of their own cultural

---

222 Frith, p 316; See also Ron Sakolsky, "World Music At the Crossroads," Sounding Off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution, ed. Ron Sakolsky and Fred Wei-Han Ho, Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1995, 241-245.
concepts. Transcultural festivals become a peaceful competition of musical ideas and artistic expressive forms. The concept of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in spite of different mental constructs is thereby reinforced. In “edutainment,” musical enrichment can be seen as a fruitful symbiosis of play, seriousness and entertainment.\textsuperscript{224}

Many world festivals are organized as celebrations of encounter. Baumann references the festivals of cooperation during the reunification of Germany in 1990, and the Woodford Festival in Australia that was organized to promote reconciliation between aborigines and the white majority as festivals designed to celebrate cultural diversity and to encourage mutual respect.\textsuperscript{225} And Philip Bohlman has shown in his examination of Jewish music in Viennese society how music assists this process: “through music, difference was composed, performed, and enacted; yet, through music’s powers of pleasing and unifying, differences were also lessoned, effecting, through cultural practice, a rapprochement.”\textsuperscript{226}

The Friendship Fest is certainly not the first nor the only international musical festival organized for the purposes of promoting such rapprochement in the face of prejudice and deep cultural, political and religious difference. It is not even the first festival organized in Morocco to counter the destructive reactionary impulses wrought by terrorism, and the military conflicts between the east and the west. In 1994, in the wake of the Gulf War, Faouzi Skali initiated the The Fez Festival of World Sacred Music, in Fez, Morocco, to “encourage dialogue among different faiths in order to move toward a more enlightened approach to globalization.”\textsuperscript{227}

\textsuperscript{225} Baumann, (2001) p 15.
The Fez Festival began as a film festival and included a few musical concerts and a colloquium, but through the years its primary focus has shifted to the musical component. Skali came to believe that music most clearly accomplished his goals. In an interview with Larry Blumenfeld in 2002, Skali explains: "Music seemed more elemental, and it got around the barriers of language. It was no longer a question of what you thought or didn't think."²²⁸ A quote from Rumi's Sufi devotional poetry captures the essence of his perspective: "We have fallen into the place where everything is music."²²⁹ Blumenfeld concludes that even though music may be commodified in our culture (and thus be complicit in ways that concern Taylor, Frith, Feld, and others with respect to globalization) still, "music convinces in ways that tuneless words and beatless ideas cannot."²³⁰

**Music as a Tool of Persuasion**

But how convincing is music, and convincing of what? Considering its inherent non-referentiality, can music in fact change our minds, change our values, or change our political or religious perspectives? From Kwame Anthony Appiah's perspective, probably not; but that, he would argue, is beside the point. Appiah contends that what makes conversation, musical or otherwise, worthwhile across cultural boundaries isn't the likelihood of reaching a reasoned agreement about values—ultimately the complete consensus desired by fundamental fanatics of any persuasion, be they Christian or Islamic, Arab or American. For Appiah, the point of conversation is not to persuade or convince, but to engage in a cosmopolitanism that seeks peaceful coexistence while respecting cultural differences and peoples' rights.

²²⁸ Blumenfeld, p212.
²²⁹ Blumenfeld, p 215.
²³⁰ Blumenfeld, p 215.
to chose how they will live—in itself, a perspective that is not value-neutral, trans-historical nor trans-culturally accepted. He urges cross-cultural contact—learning about other people, their civilizations, ideas, achievements, perspectives—not because it will bring us to agreement, but because it will help us get used to each other.231

Appiah believes that practices, not principles, are what enable us to live in peace:

our political co-existence, as subjects or citizens, depends on being able to agree about practices while disagreeing about their justification. We can live together without agreeing what the values are that make it good to live together; we can agree about what to do in most cases without agreeing about why it's right.232

Cosmopolitans embrace international musical festivals because they celebrate what people believe they have in common—a universal musical language—in hopes that "once we have found enough that we share, there is further possibility that we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share."233

Thus for true cosmopolitans, questions regarding understanding in light of the impenetrability of language become moot in the face of the value of such presumed cultural understanding. As Ursula Hemetek deduces from her study of the cultural understanding and misunderstanding of Roma music in Austria: when the text cannot be understood, what matters most is the creation across cultural borders of the sense of "being together."234 People leave festival events like the Fez Festival, and the Friendship Fest, believing they have made a connection with people they don't necessarily understand, or even agree with, but with whom they have shared a

231 Appiah, p 78.
232 Appiah, p 72.
233 Appiah, p 97.
musical moment that was mutually understood to be in some way meaningful and emotional. Even though the meanings each individual takes away may be radically different, the musical schemas that have been recorded and inscribed in their memories will incorporate that sense of “being together” in peace, despite diversity or even adversity. It’s that potential re-inscription that in itself, keeps cosmopolitan possibilities open, re-informs stereotypes, and allows for peaceable coexistence despite deep cultural, political and religious rifts. It may even allow for a potential healing of those rifts.

Music functions in these festival contexts then, not so much as a persuasive or convincing agent of ideology, but, rather, as a transformative and healing corrective to our embedded misunderstandings of others. Peter Furler, of the Newsboys described it as follows:

A dangerous place we can be in is when we have stereotypes. It’s why racism exists isn’t it? All of a sudden we think that someone who looks different than us is a certain way because we’ve heard rumors about them. I think this was really two sets of people sort of saying: “Hey, how are ya? I’m Peter. I’m from Australia and it’s nice to meet ya.”

Despite their lack of cultural expertise and understanding of Moroccan music, all of the western artists were aware of the significance of these performances. As Joy Williams observed: “what’s going on here is monumental in so many ways and yet so silently monumental in so many ways.” And the guys from the band, Rock and Roll Worship Circus agreed:

It’d be rad if people liked our music, but I think that beyond that, what we’re really hoping for is that there just, like, is a musical dialogue between us and the Moroccan artists, and between us and the people; and that it would be the thing that makes the statement that sets up a relationship with this country and sets up a relationship between Christians and Muslims, just being part of a bigger picture.

---

235 The First Waltz.
236 The First Waltz.
The artists understood the significance of using music as a springboard for future dialogues that might transcend cultural, political and religious difference.

**Music as a Tool of Worship**

One can not speak of transcendence, music, and religion without considering the ways in which music functions with respect to worship at music festivals featuring religious music. While most of the Moroccan performances at the Friendship Fest were not specifically religious or sacred, the western performers were all contemporary Christian musicians, and all of the Moroccan performances at the Fez Festival were of sacred music. Since most (if not all) of what is actually understood and communicated through music at festivals is determined by what people believe music can communicate (based upon the musical schemas they have developed through time), it's important to consider how both the Moroccans and the westerners understand music and worship in order to assess how effectively music can communicate across religious difference.

As discussed previously, Skali, the director of the Fez Festival, believed that music could effectively and constructively bridge these differences because it transcended language. According to Jean During (who, in his article, “Hearing and Understanding in the Islamic Gnosis,” discusses how music functions spiritually in Sufism—the predominant form of Islam in Morocco), “music does not serve an ultimate purpose in itself, but is rather a means to access another dimension.”

The Sufi speak of “listening with one’s soul” wherein the “physical ear must give way to spiritual hearing.” The Sufis thus, follow a “path of hearing” that is an inward

---


238 During, p 132.
hearing not directed towards this life, but is one employed to seek God."239

Baumann extends this construct of spiritual listening in order to understand and receive wisdom beyond Sufism to include Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity by tracing the concept of spiritual hearing through their individual spiritual texts.240 It would appear that people, dare we say, universally believe that communication with the transcendent "Other" of their faith tradition is accessed aurally through a non-physical internal listening. They believe that they “hear” the “Other” speak as they submit to listening.241

John Sloboda posits a possible way in which music facilitates this spiritual listening:

Music’s formal structure and it’s similarities to speech (sequential, unfolding over time) suggests to us that it is saying something to us, or pointing our attention to something. What it is pointing to, among other things, is the actual sensual experience itself, which by definition can not be fully described in words. Unlike a sunset, therefore, music announces itself to us. This power of music to draw our attention to our own sensations and encourage us to consider them as significant seems also to me to have an obvious purpose in worship. Many traditions of worship encourage the development of attentiveness and a readiness to be ‘spoken to.’ Yet, few traditions encourage worshippers to expect that the ‘word of God’ will always come directly through language, spoken or imagined. Rather, the message may come through images, experiences, sensations, memories. And so worshippers are encouraged to be still and pay attention to everything. Music may smooth our path towards such attentiveness by in some way simulating a situation in which we were being spoken to, thus sharpening our attentiveness accordingly. Since music is not literally saying anything (in the strict linguistic sense), our attentiveness is available for other purposes. We are made ready to “hear God’s voice.”242

Interestingly both Sufis and Christians believe that music is a powerful evangelizing tool through which God speaks to unbelievers and well as to the faithful.

---

242 Sloboda, p 353.
Sufism employs music as a bridge to those unbelievers as well as to the divine.\textsuperscript{243}

Solo, from the Christian band, Rock and Roll Worship Circus, expressed music's intrinsic evangelical ability as follows:

\begin{quote}
I think music is like totally just awesome because it's universal, everyone can enjoy it in some form. Notes are still the same and so in a sense, like God can move through music and God can move through a feeling of music. Like when you write a song and He writes the song with you, and He says something through the music. You don't have to speak the same language to hear what He's saying.\textsuperscript{244}
\end{quote}

The contemporary Christian artists who performed were, on some level, attempting to recode Rock and Roll music for the Moroccans by attaching new religious meanings to sonic signifiers previously connected to the western drug culture of the 1960's. They hoped to reshape existing Moroccan musical schemas and stereotypes of American Christianity. But for both the Moroccans and the contemporary Christian artists, the secrets of the power of music to connect one with the transcendent “Other” do not reside in any particular musical form or musical genre. For both, the power resides in the performer as well as the listener, as spiritual wisdom is expressed through the art of the performance, to those who have “ears to hear it.”\textsuperscript{245}

\textbf{Conclusion}

So, is music the universal language? Aiman Karim, 22, a 2005 festival attendee, may truly believe that most of the people who came to the Friendship Fest don’t "know or care about the message of the music—they have just come to listen to it," but my investigation into the ways in which music transcends cultural and

\textsuperscript{243} I Am a Sufi, I Am a Muslim, dir. Dirk Dumon, Videocassette, Belgian Radio and Television, 1996.

\textsuperscript{244} The First Waltz.

\textsuperscript{245} During, p 134; Baumann, (1997) p 7.
linguistic barriers to communicate meaning, strongly suggests that he is mistaken.246 While music can not truly be construed as the universal language, American performer, Joy Williams correctly understands that “music connects with the heart in a way that simple words can’t all the time; that somehow you’re able to say more when music is behind it. It almost sugarcoats it to go down into the heart and to be absorbed a little easier.247 Those attending the festival may not care about the music, but everyone there was impacted by it, whether they were consciously aware of it or not.

I must also conclude that we do, in fact, pretend to position music as a universal language because it suits our purposes: because it hides as much as it reveals. The very nature of music—its non-referentiality, its hyperconnotative character, its deep association with our emotions and memories, its continuous social construction (and reconstruction), and perhaps most importantly, its ability to appear unmediated and politically neutral—uniquely suits it to function as a bridge spanning deep cultural divides. Especially in a festival setting, music is a powerfully effective tool for promoting a peaceful cosmopolitanism and for mediating trans-cultural conflicts: for perfecting friendship.

247 The First Waltz.
Coda: So was it “the beginning of a beautiful friendship?”

At the conclusion of Friendship Fest 2006, when asked to assess impact of festival, regional President Abdelali Doumou commented as follows:

Over the past three days, we have seen music unite our people and cultures in a way that is both gratifying and encouraging for future cultural and economic exchanges. From the size of the crowds, and their positive reaction, it was obvious to me that our people were very grateful to receive this gift of beautiful music. The goals of the Friendship Fest were most definitely achieved. We strengthened relations with our American brothers and sisters and set the stage for ongoing discussions and future cultural exchanges between our countries. We truly believe that this event represents an historic opportunity for Americans and Moroccans to celebrate together, through music, friendship and peace.248

It is interesting to note that while stressing friendship, the mutually promoted “veneer of consensus,” Doumou simultaneously conflated the advancement of peace with economic exchange. From his perspective, the 2005 and 2006 festivals successfully advanced all of the Moroccan government’s goals. And he could be correct. Since the inception of the Friendship Fest in 2005, Morocco has seen a significant increase in foreign (and specifically American) tourism revenues. Tourism earnings now top 6.4 billion dollars annually—an increase of 55.1%.249 Similar increases in tourism revenue have been reported throughout Africa where music festivals are promoted as alternative forms of cultural tourism (complementing the traditional safari) which increase foreign exchange, employ local people, attract new

kinds of tourists and work to rebrand Africa as an attractive and safe tourist
destination.250

Director Yusuf Mamoud, the director of Busara Promotions, which produces
the Sauti za Busara Festival, said job-creation is very important: "As an
alternative and complement to East Africa's other tourist attractions (wild
animals, Mount Kilimanjaro, pristine beaches and coral reefs), we are now
seeing that the music and film festivals in Zanzibar are attracting a different
kind of tourist and that these visitors to the islands are spending in a way that
has more impact on ordinary people."

From hotel workers to drivers, guides, fishermen, market traders, artists, and
crafts sellers, cultural tourists are boosting the grassroots local economy far
more than the all-inclusive package tourists who pay for their holidays upfront
in Europe and spend most of their time in bikinis next to the hotel bars and
swimming pools of Kiwengwa."251

The Western promoters and artists also viewed the Friendship Fest as
a success and expressed hope for a continuation of "the celebration of community
and friendship."252 Were their religious goals advanced? Was their witness
effective? Was it translated? The American evangelicals believe that it was, though
to what degree they may never know. Instances were reported in which Arabs in the
audience engaged with American missionaries sitting nearby requesting translation
of the words being spoken, and sung.253 The conversation, carried out in Arabic,
was described as respectful and genuinely inquisitive. Following the 2005 festival,
Peter Furler of the Australian band, Newsboys, reported getting calls from Morocco
from individuals who were open to hearing more about Jesus. One individual said:
"I'm not a Muslim anymore. I'm not a Christian, but I'm not a Muslim anymore."254

Were such instances widespread? Not necessarily, but for the missionaries and for

250 Sean Barlow, "Beyond Safaris-Rebranding for Cultural Tourism," Comtex 22 Aug. 2007,
251 Barlow.
252 Kwon.
253 Missionaries, Unnamed. Personal interview. 9 May 2005. The missionaries remain
unnamed for their protection.
the Christian evangelists, it was enough that event transpired; that the name of Jesus was lifted up in praise over the African plain; that thousands of Muslims raised their hands to the heavens alongside their Christian brothers. It was enough that it was advertised, and reported in Arabic, French and English before, during and after the event; that the story was debated and discussed by people on both sides of the religious divide within a context that bridged differences and encouraged respectful dialogue as opposed to violent rhetoric. It was enough that it was an encouragement to the Christians in Morocco, foreign and native, and that it was viewed by them as helpful to lowering the threshold of resistance to their work and their message.\(^{255}\) It was enough that the government of a Muslim nation demonstrated to its people through its invitation that foreigners can be both Christians and friends. As for the possibility of religious conversion or transformation, both the Christians and the Sufis would agree: that all depends on what each individual heard God speak through the music. Let him who has ears to hear, hear.

While the promotion of economic and religious agendas does not necessarily negate the usefulness of a music festival to also promote peace and perfect friendship by bridging differences, the question remains: was the Friendship Fest the beginning of a beautiful friendship, or merely the forum for the promotion of those secondary economic and religious agendas? Were the friendships that were pursued, performed and promoted by the Friendship Fest in any way established, fostered, nurtured or sustained? The evidence suggests that the relationships are ongoing.

\(^{255}\) Missionaries, Unnamed. Personal interview. 9 May 2005.
Since the 2006 festival, the American promoter Harry Thomas has twice traveled to Marrakech to meet with President Doumou to plan for the next Friendship Fest and Thomas and Doumou have sustained a personal relationship based on mutual respect and a shared love of music. Doumou’s perspectives on U.S./Moroccan friendship have been communicated to many outside of Morocco through the press and through diplomatic channels. In addition, as a part of the 2005 festival, a DVD entitled The First Waltz was produced by Thomas to document the event. The DVD features both on-stage and off-stage performances by Western and Moroccan artists as well as interviews with those artists and interviews with the promoters—including President Doumou. It has been used by Thomas and others in presentations in the United States to expand the impact of the event beyond Morocco and to foster an ongoing cultural appreciation of the benefits of a U.S./Moroccan friendship. The Moroccan government has also publicly continued to support and foster friendly relations with Western evangelical Christians. Dr Ahmed Abaddi, the King’s appointed director of Islamic affairs in Morocco, affirmed the King’s desire to “build bridges of friendship with evangelical Christians in the United States because [the King] knows the ‘real’ America is not Hollywood and the pornography industry but people of faith.” Abaddi went on to say: “We need our people to know the real West, to understand that the West ain’t no angel, but it ain’t no demon either.”

Morocco’s commitment to such friendships is not limited to just evangelicals, and the Western promoters of the Friendship Fest are not the only Americans to

---

256 Harry Thomas, Personal interview. 20 April 2007. The next Friendship Fest is currently scheduled for May 2009.
257 Both Harry Thomas and Bob and Nancy Thompson have used the DVD in presentations to religious, educational and community groups.
pursue friendly collaborations with Morocco. Wendy Sternberg, director of the Chicago-based not for profit Genesis at the Crossroads, organized a multi-national, multicultural ensemble that will tour around the world to promote diplomacy through the arts, based on her belief that: "through the ages, music, dance and art have transcended worldwide strife." Her "organization seeks to bring together ethnic artists to share their talents and collaborate across deepened religious and political lines to create and perform vocal, instrumental, dance, literary and visual works of art." The performances organized by Sternberg were held in late August 2007, at Lincoln Park in Chicago, at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, and in then a public square in Casablanca in December 2007. The Casablanca performances were purportedly "broadcast internationally by public radio, XM Satellite Radio and by Arab television outlet Al-Jazeera." While Genesis at the Crossroads seeks to represent the interests of Arab, Jewish and Persian communities (rather than the Christian perspectives promoted by the Western producers of the Friendship Fest) they, too, are dedicated to bridging cultures in conflict through the arts, in engaging sentimental musical narrative texts to combat stereotypes and extremist rhetoric while perfecting friendship through education and the recoding of identity.

So did the Friendship Fest function successfully as a sentimental musical narrative text? Did it effectively combat stereotypes or recode anyone's musical schemas? The embedded missionaries tell me that it did, that the perceptions of the event both locally in Marrakech and in cities elsewhere in Morocco were positive and

---

260 Sternberg.
constructive and that they themselves were viewed subsequently with less fear and suspicion. And as I returned from Marrakech in May 2006, many of the artists on my flight related how their perceptions of the Moroccan people, their music and their religion had changed significantly during the trip. They spoke about how they had made friends with the stage crew, and the guides, and had grown to admire and appreciate how life in Morocco, while different, was beautiful. Many expressed a desire to return and perform in future festivals.

As for me, since the Friendship Fest began as a personal encounter with the people of Morocco, I feel it only appropriate to conclude with my personal response to these questions. Initially, as I looked out over the crowd as people assembled each evening, I was struck by how different everything seemed compared to American festivals. In Marrakech, the people arrived mostly on foot though some rode bicycles and some came by donkey cart. Parking for a crowd of 80,000 people was limited to about 300 cars, there were public toilet facilities only for the artists, and there was only one vendor selling drinks. Many of the men and women were dressed in traditional garb. It seemed strange and exotic, and I was a bit fearful to go out into the crowd. But as the concert progressed I became more aware of similarities. Family groups were interacting in what appeared to be universal family dynamics: small boys scuffling in the dirt, and being chastened by their mothers; young girls affectionately doted upon by their fathers; husbands and wives laughing and chatting; children begging for an ice cream cone at a family outing. Virtually everyone appeared relaxed, interested, engaged, and most significantly to be enjoying the music—all of the music: they clapped, and danced, and jumped up and down just like American audiences back home. Eventually I found my way into the

Missionaries, Unnamed. Personal interview. 7 May 2006.
crowd, bought sugared donuts from a vendor, and even engaged in conversation with some young boys at the soda stand who wanted to share with me their suggestions for musical group selections for the next festival. The differences exist, but the commonalities I discovered during my time in Marrakech have significantly impacted my perspective on those differences. I truly feel that through the Friendship Fest I established a connection with the people of Morocco that remains and I too look forward to returning to Marrakech to continue using music to foster that connection.

In and of itself, the Friendship Fest probably did not change anyone’s core values or political persuasions, or suggest any easy solutions for ending terrorism; but perhaps, by emphasizing similitude rather than sameness, the festivals were able to dismantle some prejudices and help people get used to each other as they respectfully celebrated both their universalizing commonalities and their cultural diversity. As such, I believe that the Friendship Fest epitomizes Schwietzer’s renascence of friendship and stands as a constructive musical performance of transnational cooperation imbued with power to ameliorate differences: a sophisticated, cosmopolitan response to stresses that threaten peaceful coexistence in an increasingly globalized world. It may not have been the beginning of a beautiful friendship or of a perfect friendship, but it did constitute the beginning of the ongoing work of perfecting friendship.
Bibliography


Missionaries, Unnamed. Personal interview. 9 May 2005.

Missionaries, Unnamed. Personal interview. 7 May 2006.


Thomas, Harry. Personal interview. 9 May 2005.

Thomas, Harry. Personal interview. 20 April 2007.

Thompson, Bob. Personal interview. 9 May 2005.


Vita

Nancy Thompson is a career educator. After graduating, in 1978, from The College of William and Mary, with a B.S. in Biology, she taught high school sciences for four years. She has over ten years of teaching experience in local chapters of Community Bible Study, an international non-denominational study of God's word, and she was responsible for the establishment of two local chapters. In 1999, with her husband, she co-founded Micah Music Ministries (MMM), a corporation committed to translating the gospel of Jesus Christ into a language that teens can hear and understand. The corporation identifies, nurtures, supports and provides platforms for artists who see contemporary culture though the lens of God's word and can communicate a God-centered worldview in language that is both culturally relevant and scripturally sound so that the next generation can see, hear and know God. MMM is a co-owner of Atlanta Fest, the South's largest contemporary Christian music festival where Nancy serves as the Director of Christian Education. She leads both large and small group Bible studies, and speaks before church groups, community groups, and at women's retreats. She has two grown children and resides with her husband in Williamsburg, Virginia.