

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

## CONCEPTS OF SPACE

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**Daphné Bengoa and Léo Fabrizio, Fernand Pouillon et l'Algérie: Bâtir à hauteur d'hommes (Paris: Macula Éditions, 2019)**

**Fadila Kettaf, La fabrique des espaces publics en Algérie: les places dans la ville d'Oran; conceptions, formes et usages (Paris: Harmattan, 2019)**

**Aria Nakissa, The Anthropology of Islamic Law: Education, Ethics, and Legal Interpretation at Egypt's al-Azhar (Oxford, UK: Oxford Islamic Legal Studies, 2019)**

**Sara Pursley, Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019)**

**Yasmin Ramadan, Space in Modern Egyptian Fiction, Edinburgh Series in Modern Arabic Literature (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020)**

Space, in the dictionary, is “a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied” and “the dimensions of height, depth, and width within which all things exist and move.”<sup>1</sup> Those of us who are social scientists may recognize Henri Lefebvre’s unitary theory of space in the dictionary definition, which seeks to capture physical, mental, and social “fields” constituting space: spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space (such as the opening and closing of airports, requiring that people queue for temperature scans, constructing stadiums and choosing names for them).<sup>2</sup> If anything, the spread of coronavirus disease at the present moment draws the significance of space and tensions between different concepts of space to our immediate attention.

Across the Arab world, from *Mashriq* to *Maghrib*, national and local authorities in the twenty-two nation-states of the Arab Middle East demonstrate a variety of responses to the virus. Many nations have closed airports, land crossings, and maritime ports to international travelers entirely. Introducing new concepts of space, some of these are selective, such as when authorities in Cyprus indicated that passenger flights from Lebanon in particular were no longer welcome due to perceived epidemiological risk. In those few airports remaining open to travelers, passengers may be subjected to temperature scans and instructed to wear face coverings and observe social distancing measures—just a few examples of ways the “personal becomes political” amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

For historical positivism, access to archives and other repositories of primary documents is crucial. In *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman connects Jacques Derrida’s article “*Mal d’archive*” (*Diacritics*, 1995) backward to Jacques le Goff’s *History and Memory* (1992).<sup>3</sup> Algeria is distinctive in the Arab Middle East, with a postcolonial state constitution guaranteeing citizens the right to access government documents. Article 51 reads: “Equal access to functions and positions in the state is guaranteed to all citizens without any other conditions except those defined by law,” drawing the attention of historians to this jurisdiction.

<sup>1</sup>Oxford English Dictionary, “space,” Oxford Lexico, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/space>.

<sup>2</sup>Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>3</sup>Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 12–13, notes 1–2.

Complementing Lefebvre's work in sociology, subsequent ideas about the politics of space derive from architects' observations regarding capital cities and military occupations.<sup>4</sup> These are concepts of space and current circumstances that I bring into an interpretive reading of five recent titles in political history, literary criticism, and the anthropology of law.

As the coronavirus spreads in the summer of 2020, I'm writing from Oran (*Wahran*), Algeria. Albert Camus wrote his first novel, *L'Étranger* (*The Stranger*, 1942) in an apartment located between where I write and the bakery I frequent (at least until the pandemic struck), and set his *La Peste* (*The Plague*, 1947) during a time when the indigenous population was a demographic minority in the city, as is clear from the novel's two references to "the Arab population and their sanitary conditions" and "living conditions in the Arab-quarter."

In 1940, Camus lived with Francine Faure in her family's apartment above the *rue d'Arzew*.<sup>5</sup> A black-and-white snapshot, found easily online, claims to represent the novelist as a young man standing alone on a balcony. Suffering from a renewed bout of tuberculosis, he poses with a cigarette between his lips, in the shadows of the street's unique ironwork balconies. About Camus's second novel, written when Oran was a memory, Daniel Schwarz observes, "while the physically terrifying illness is rendered with searing realism, *Plague* also is an allegory of how vulnerable humans are to conditions that we cannot control as well as how we exist as lonely creatures, each in our own separate world."<sup>6</sup>

On current maps, the street with the ironwork balconies is *rue Larbi Ben M'hidi*, named after a man a decade younger than Camus, who joined the *Mouvement pour le triomphe des libertés démocratiques* (Movement for the Triumph of Democratic Liberties) and *l'Organisation spéciale* (Special Organization) the year *La Peste* was published and later commanded the *Armée de libération nationale* (National Liberation Army) forces in the region surrounding Oran (*Wilaya V*), until a photograph of him (smiling, with handcuffs on his wrists and ankles) appeared in the Algiers newspapers.

Throughout my conscious life, Camus's place in the Arab world has been a topic of similar contention. Writing in English, Connor Cruise O'Brien first identified the absence of individualized Arab characters in French fiction set in Algeria. Barbara Harlow's analytic essay "The *Maghrib* and *The Stranger*," the intellectual biography authored by Aïcha Kassoul and Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal, and, recently, Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* develop this position.<sup>7</sup> A conversation about the words and thoughts of Algerians in French literature is never restricted to the borders of France, since the fourth republican constitution (1946), with its assurances of civil rights to people living in North Africa, coincided with Egypt's revision of its civil code (passed in 1949). Any discussion of French existentialism's Algerian roots parallels issues of Egyptian fiction from the 1960s.

Drawing on the writers from Egypt's *jil al-sittināt* (generation of the sixties), Yasmin Ramadan's *Space in Modern Egyptian Fiction* emphasizes the novelists' characteristic "representation of the various spaces of, and outside, the nation [reflecting] disappointment with the increasingly repressive regimes that followed independence" (p. 2). Of these novelists, Sonallah Ibrahim, now in his eighties, again draws attention, most recently with Margaret Litvin's translation of his 2011 novel *al-Jalid* (*Ice*), currently long-listed for the European Bank of Regional Development literature prize.<sup>8</sup>

This is all quite current. Just as Ibrahim's long-lost novel *67* has recently been published in Arabic; his short story "Arsène Lupin" (written while he was incarcerated at the notorious Wahat prison camp)

<sup>4</sup>Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (Barcelona: dpr-barcelona, 2012).

<sup>5</sup>Alice Kaplan, *Looking for The Stranger: Albert Camus and the Life of a Literary Classic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 103.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel R. Schwartz, *Reading the Modern European Novel Since 1900: A Critical Study of Major Fiction from Proust's Swann's Way to Ferrante's Neapolitan Tetralogy* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 95.

<sup>7</sup>Connor Cruise O'Brien, *Albert Camus of Europe and Africa* (New York: Viking, 1970); Barbara Harlow, "The *Maghrib* and *The Stranger*," *Alif* 3 (1983): 38–55; Aïcha Kassoul and Mohamed Lakhdar Maougal, *The Algerian Destiny of Albert Camus*, trans. Philip Beitchman (Ghent: Academia Press, 2006); Kamel Daoud, *The Meursault Investigation*, trans. John Cullen (New York: Other Press, 2015). I am grateful to Emily Walker for drawing Daoud's work to my attention.

<sup>8</sup>Sonallah Ibrahim, *Ice*, trans. Margaret Litvin (London: Seagull, 2019). Giovanni Vimercati, "Love in the USSR: On Sonallah Ibrahim's *Ice*," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 21 February 2020, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/love-in-the-ussr-on-sonallah-ibrahims-ice>.

currently appears in *ArabLit Quarterly*.<sup>9</sup> After Egypt's 25 January Revolution, Ibrahim became something of a superstar among the *jil al-sittināt* novelists when his novel *Zaat* was adapted as a Ramadan television series.<sup>10</sup> In both the novel and the television series, the female protagonist exemplifies the crass materialistic ideals of the liberalizing *infītāh* (President Anwar Sadat's policy of "opening the door" to private investment) policies promulgated during the Sadat era. Her name, "Zaat," is the characteristic Egyptian pronunciation of the technical term (*dhāt*) for the philosophical subject; her dreams of a new tile bathroom bring her into the same realm of truth as Camus suffering tuberculosis with a cigarette dangling between his lips and Larbi Ben M'hidi, handcuffed yet smiling.

Ibrahim structured his groundbreaking 1966 debut novel, *That Smell* (*Tilka Ra'iha*) around the male protagonist's return home after a compulsory meeting with his parole officer.<sup>11</sup> Yasmin Ramadan offers a key analytic point about how time and space in the novel work together to reinforce a general sense of constant surveillance and unending incarceration that dominates the protagonist's relationship with his native city. Ramadan finds this novel's four-page stroll through Cairo to be excruciating in its precision; as she points out, "we are told exactly which streets he took and which squares he crossed." She quotes the passage in its entirety:

I got up and left the café. I walked to the bridge and boarded a bus. I got off at the beginning of Soliman Street. I sat down into the first café I came to. I drank a coffee, then lit a cigarette. I got up and walked to Tewfik Street, then I branched off into Tewfikiyya and stood in front of the Cairo Cinema. It was showing a comedy. I went off in the direction of Fouad street, which I crossed. I turned down into Sherif Street. I continued walking, crossed Adly Street, then Sarwat [Abd el-Khalek Tharwat] Street, and went off in the direction of Soliman Street, and continued on until I reached the Square. Water from the sewers overflowed the street. Pumps were set up everywhere, pumping the water out from the shops into the street. The smell was unbearable . . . I crossed the street and went back in the direction of the Square, then I plunged down into Kasr El-Nil Street until I reached the cinema there . . . I left the cinema and once again walked in the direction for the Square, and back into Soliman Street. This time I walked on the opposite side to the one I had come by. When I reached the Metro Cinema I found that it too was showing a comedy. I passed by it. I stood in front of the *Americaine* café, undecided. The Rivoli Cinema was on my left and there was a vast crowd in front of it. The cinemas of Emad El-Din Street came to my mind. I crossed the street and continued walking up Fouad Street to Emad El-Din; I turned into it, walking on the left-hand side. (pp. 35–36)

These are the choices Sonallah Ibrahim's protagonist makes, to retain the authenticity of his subjectivity. Questions of access to public space, conceptualized as "walkability," provide one means to identify what Egyptians suffered from the neoliberal ideals of the *infītāh* policies. In this context, Abdelbaseer Mohamed, a member of the faculty of engineering at al-Azhar University and an urban blogger, raises questions about "understanding (and measuring) walkability in Cairo." For Mohamed, Sherif Street serves as an example of a "well-serviced and connected settlement." Although an individual is subject to constant surveillance and a walk in the city is part of an unending incarceration, central Cairo at the same time offers enhanced opportunities for social interaction.<sup>12</sup>

Yet as the protagonist of *That Smell* moves easily through public space, the "unbearable" stench of the sewers "overflowed the street," leaching any possibility of pleasure from the cinema, café, or shops' offerings. For Ramadan, the protagonist's alienation and detachment from his surroundings characterize the militarized socialism of the Nasser period (1954–1970). She contrasts the alienation and detachment with the recent past by means of what she calls "a nostalgic flashback": "instead, here is a moment that

<sup>9</sup>Sonallah Ibrahim, 67 (Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, 2017); Sonallah Ibrahim, "Arsène Lupin," trans. Emily Drumsta, *ArabLit Quarterly* (Summer 2020), <https://arablit.org/2020/07/27/summer-of-lock-in-lit-sonallah-ibrahims-arsene-lupin>.

<sup>10</sup>Sonallah Ibrahim, *Zaat*, trans. Anthony Calderbank (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup>Sonallah Ibrahim, *That Smell and Notes from Prison*, trans. Robyn Creswell (New York: New Directions, 2013).

<sup>12</sup>Abdelbaseer A. Mohamed, "Understanding (and Measuring) Walkability in Cairo, *thisbigcity* (blog), 26 February 2015, <https://thisbigcity.net/understanding-and-measuring-walkability-in-cairo>. Mohamed notes that "Downtown Cairo has a Walk Score of 98 percent—Walker's Paradise."

recuperates his potential to feel; the memory is replete with emotion, the neighborhood is described with a fullness and texture, and the experience is recreated in his mind through the sights and sounds of the street” (p. 37).

Although base and bland details of everyday life are in sharp focus, characteristic of Ibrahim’s hyper-realism or neorealism (part of a larger attempt to articulate the author’s ongoing rejection of existing forms of power), Ramadan draws attention to how this description contributes to the reader’s disorientation within the city’s public spaces: “This is familiarization to the point of exhaustion; the protagonist is perhaps the anti-flâneur, unable to experience joy from his excursions, and yet obsessively tracking his own movement to exercise control in a world in which he has none” (p. 36).

Acknowledgment of embodied experiences (specifically, flatulence and masturbation) in Ibrahim’s *That Smell* drew critics’ ire. Yahya Haqqi, in the weekly newspaper *al-Masa’*, found the protagonist “truly disgusting” and described the text as “shameful repulsiveness.”<sup>13</sup> As Ramadan relates, Ibrahim responded to this in an introduction to the novel’s 1986 edition:

Doesn’t the situation require a little baseness to express the baseness exemplified in physiological behavior like that of hitting a defenseless individual until death or placing an air pump in his anus and an electrical wire in his genitals? And all this because he expressed a different opinion or defended his freedom or his national identity? (p. 40)

Ibrahim acknowledged the unutterability of state torture in Egypt. Here in Oran, maltreatment at the hands of legal authorities is metonymically invoked by martyrs’ names that identify public spaces, connecting the torture these heroes experienced (as they took part in an honorable national liberation struggle in the past) with citizens’ free and easy circulation between cafés, cinemas, and shops during the present. By way of illustration: in Oran, “Ahmed Zabana” designates a traffic circle, a national museum, and a sports stadium, all named after a man who, when taken into custody in November 1954, was in poor health, having received gunshot wounds in one leg and one arm. After several months’ incarceration on death row, Zabana showed visible signs of torture, before being scheduled for execution by guillotine.<sup>14</sup> By way of further illustration: in Egypt, the issue of state servitors’ illegal violence was iterated in June 2010, when Khaled Mohamed Saeed’s brother took pictures of the murdered blogger’s fractured skull, dislocated jaw, broken nose, and other signs of trauma, contradicting the forensic authorities’ initial autopsy reports.<sup>15</sup>

As Léopold Lambert points out, Arabs living under illegal military occupation are subjugated through the imposition of space-based categories.<sup>16</sup> We bring this mind map of concepts of space with us into the current pandemic. We read news bulletins from the Palestinian Ministry of Health enumerating cases of the coronavirus in the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. In the occupied West Bank (we learn that) a sophisticated phone surveillance technology Shin Bet normally uses to track political activists now forces Israel’s Arab citizens into quarantine.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Egypt’s prime minister blames “negligence and mismanagement” in the medical profession for the spread of disease, Amnesty International blames state organizations for a “campaign of harassment and intimidation” against nurses, doctors, and hospital administrators.<sup>18</sup> Algeria’s head of state justifies controls over international travel and personal mobility in the country, telling foreign reporters on 1 July 2020, “*la décision de maintenir*

<sup>13</sup>Haqqi quote Ramadan, p. 40, citing Marilyn Booth, “The Experience of a Generation,” *Index on Censorship* 16, 9 (1987), p. 20.

<sup>14</sup>At the time France’s penal code permitted release of an individual who survived two successive guillotine malfunctions; Zabana’s execution was technically illegal, since his torturers killed him after the second malfunction of the apparatus.

<sup>15</sup>In another iteration, this incident is evoked by the initial autopsy, and subsequent independent autopsy, on the occasion of George Floyd’s death in June 2020.

<sup>16</sup>Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture*.

<sup>17</sup>Richard Silverstein, “Israel Is Militarizing and Monetizing the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Jacobin*, 16 April 2020, <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/4/israel-military-surveillance-coronavirus-covid-netanyahu>.

<sup>18</sup>Amnesty International, “Egypt: Health Care Workers Forced to Make Impossible Choice between ‘Death or Jail,’” 18 June 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/egypt-health-care-workers-forced-to-make-impossible-choice-between-death-or-jail>.

la fermeture des frontières soulèvent de nombreuses questions à propos du bilan sanitaire quotidien du Coronavirus" ("the decision to keep the borders closed addresses many questions with regard to the daily health toll of the Coronavirus").

In Oran, this street I walk from my flat to where I buy bread, known as *rue d'Arzew* when Camus lived here and *rue Larbi Ben M'hidi* now, recalls Pierre Nora's term, "*les lieux de mémoire*." Realms of memory serve as symptoms of a commemorative consciousness, and the fact that this street in Oran has two names recalls Franz Fanon's distinction between "the settler's town [that] is a town of white people, of foreigners," which *rue d'Arzew* represents, and "the colonized's sector, or at least the 'native' quarters, the shanty town, the medina, the reservation, [that] is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people."<sup>19</sup> Oran was French, and the indigenous population was a demographic minority within its urban environment; for Fanon, such built environments were useful metaphors for explaining a dichotomy (colonizer/colonized) that substantially informs this review. Zeynep Çelik's "Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections" addresses Fanon in Algiers; in Léopold Lambert's concept paper for his magazine *Funambulist*, Fanon is essential to a "critical reflection on space."<sup>20</sup>

In *Fernand Pouillon et l'Algérie*, photographers Daphné Bengoa and Leo Fabrizio's brief introductory text places their images in the context of Fabrizio's first encounter with Pouillon's work during an "Arab Spring." As he describes his own artistic vision, it was in 2014, "after a period of reflection and a new opportunity, that the conditions necessary for the realization of the first shots in the city of Algiers were met" (p. 1). Four years later, Fabrizio had exposed six hundred large format negatives. Politics continued to dominate the necessary conditions for collective possibility: "As this text is written, in the spring of 2019, fifty-seven years after its political independence, the future of the Algerian people is at stake" (p. 1).

Fanon's binary opposed the world of Albert Camus ("the settler's town") with the world of Larbi Ben M'hidi ("the native town, the Negro village, the medina"). A generation younger than Le Corbusier and approximately Camus's age (both young men were one-time members of France's Communist Party), Ferdinand Pouillon trained as an architect in France, graduating the year Camus arrived in Oran. Bengoa and Fabrizio emphasize characteristics that distinguished this particular architect's work in French North Africa from that of other architects active in the *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* (International Congresses of Modern Architecture) group.<sup>21</sup> For Bengoa and Fabrizio, whereas Le Corbusier preferred the universality and anonymity of concrete, Pouillon found that its raw appearance (when new) and degradation (as it aged) rendered it unsuitable for the facades of buildings, preferring locally quarried stone.

Bengoa and Fabrizio credit Pouillon with the aesthetic pleasures of what Fanon called "the settler's town," as he brought an artisanal approach to all his commissions, even public housing: "each space of which, private or public, is meticulously thought out with a view to living together, using a warm and soft stone" (p. 1). Readers of Zeynep Çelik's *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations* may identify Le Corbusier's concrete modernism with colonial power; during the 1950s, Pouillon offered a "warm and soft" architecture for France's increasingly militarized presence in North Africa.<sup>22</sup>

Ibrahim's protagonist in *Smell* crossed Cairo to meet a parole officer; for all its locally quarried stone in warm colors, a public housing complex designed by Pouillon during the 1950s was located adjacent to the main police station in Oran. The eighteen-floor tower at the center of Pouillon's Cité Lescure housing complex was available to ensure surveillance of Oran's city center.<sup>23</sup> Given an implicit relationship between the nation and its parole officers, somewhat understandably Bengoa and Fabrizio faced

<sup>19</sup>Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove, 2007), 4.

<sup>20</sup>Zeynep Çelik, "Colonial/postcolonial Intersections: Lieux de mémoire in Algiers," *Historical Reflections* 28, no. 2 (2002): 143-62; Léopold Lambert, "Publishing a Post-Colonial Magazine" *Future Architecture Platform*, 2017, <https://futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/02c5bc0a-27de-465b-87d6-4c5f94da7fc2>.

<sup>21</sup>In Oran, the *Institut Français* hosted a 2014 photographic tribute, "*L'architecture de Fernand Pouillon en Algérie*," by architect Myriam Maachi-Maïza. In addition to these still photographs, Pouillon's architectural work in French Algeria has drawn the attention filmmaker Marie-Claire Rubinstein in *Fernand Pouillon: Une architecture habitée: Alger 1953-1957* (2018).

<sup>22</sup>For conversations about architecture, see also Muriam Haleh Davis, "The Transformation of Man' in French Algeria: Economic Planning and the Postwar Social Sciences, 1958-1962," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 1 (2017): 73-94.

<sup>23</sup>Myriam Maachi Maïza, "*L'architecture de Fernand Pouillon en Algérie*," *Insaniyat* 42 (2008): 13-26.

challenges to identifying documentation of Pouillon's career as an architect. Without equity capital, the architect's *Comptoir National du Logement* collapsed; Pouillon fled from a psychiatric clinic, reappeared theatrically in the middle of the "*point du jour scandal*" (scandal of the day) trial, was sentenced to three years on appeal, and served part of his sentence in France before settling down as an architect in post-colonial Algeria.<sup>24</sup>

As Bengoa and Fabrizio observe, "a large part of the archives of or on Fernand Pouillon are generally still largely inaccessible, at best scattered. Even today, many of his creations are neither listed nor located. To understand, it was necessary to delve deeply and by successive investigations into incomplete, second-order or, very often, alternative documents" (p. x). Lacking access to a substantial group of personal papers, and with criminal records in France sealed by law, Bengoa and Fabrizio's solution was to turn to the archives of Swiss Radio Television. There, they consulted transcripts of talk shows *Literary Life* and *Miroir du monde*, programs recorded during the middle and late 1960s.

Into this world of colonialism, with the state's power to impose silence, Fadila Kettaf's monograph, *La fabrique des espaces publics en Algérie*, introduces the public-private divide widely present in the anglophone North Atlantic. Trained as an architect and urban planner, Kettaf's inquiry into the built environment of Algeria's second-most-populous city is guided by questions: how and with what urban logic was the public square introduced in Oran, and how did it evolve? What roles do public places occupy in the urban structure of Oran? How have European influences been exerted on planning, organization, and practices in Oran, and how have these evolved, both before and after 1850? In addition to the National Center of the Overseas Archives of Aix-en-Provence and the National Library of France, Kettaf introduces interesting new collections, such as those of the Academy of Overseas Sciences; the joint research unit (UMR), research center for the organization and dissemination of geographic information (PRODIG); the Institute of Town Planning in Montpellier; unique collections of the library at the university named after Paul Valéry; and, in Vincennes, the War Engineering and Depot Service.

From these Kettaf derives a "politics of space" that is as contingent and local as Cyprus's ban on flights from Beirut. In Oran, Kettaf consults geographers, historians, journalists, mapmakers, novelists, politicians, and urban planners, finding primary documents not only at the Center for Research in Anthropology and Social Sciences, but also at the Center for Economic and Social Documentation, the Department of Architecture of Oran, and the Geographic Society. From these rich and varied sources, Kettaf identifies Oran's oldest neighborhood not as Fanon's "native town, the Negro village, the medina," nor as Camus' "Arab-quarter," but as a Spanish city.

In what is now the Sidi el-Houari neighborhood, Kettaf proves that Oran's first central square, the *Plaza de Armas*, was a parade ground on which a network of converging, narrow and very steep streets, some even built as staircases, came together. "A little further, the *Plaza del Yglesia Mayor* surrounded by several churches was, no doubt, the seat of religious power; it disappeared under the rubble of the 1790 earthquake and was subsequently occupied by a French camp and military hospital" (p. 83). Not far away, a *Plaza del Mercado* or *Las Verduras* (the *Place aux Herbes des Français*, a small square at the end of Monteba Street) was a marketplace of which only a few traces remain. With the development of the new port during World War II and new housing developments with ironwork balconies on the *rue d'Arzew/rue Larbi Ben M'hidi*, the center of the city's commercial life shifted to the east.

According to Kettaf, only the main square, *Plaza de Armas des Espagnols*, still follows Tomàs Terreiro's plans of straight lines, perspectives, and monuments.<sup>25</sup> Built around the year 1500, the Doric columns of a new town hall (*Casas consistoriales*) supported semicircular arches, establishing the facade's uniformity, balance, and symmetry. Although this colonial city's monuments honored a monarch, Kettaf notes that there remains some ambiguity about which monarch was intended. Did two Basque sculptors carve a marble statue of King Charles IV, or was that a Spanish monument in honor of King Charles III? Kettaf evokes Oran and the transformative possibilities that emerged after 2011 in the comparison, "Like the *Place des Martyrs* in Algiers and Beirut and Tripoli, like *Tahrir*

<sup>24</sup> *Le Figaro* broke the story describing that, through his *Comptoir National du Logement*, Pouillon functioned as both contractor and client for a publicly funded project (4 February 1961). According to Bertrand Le Gendre, Pouillon wrote a novel, *Les Pierres sauvages* (1964), while he was in jail ("Fernand Pouillon, le panache et l'escroquerie," *Le Monde*, 10 July 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Called *Place de l'Hôpital* and later *Place de la Perle* by the French and, today, *Place el-Sheikh Abdelkader*.

(Liberation) Square in Cairo, the Pearl Roundabout in Manama, by their toponymy each expressed independence from colonialism's yoke, at the same time taking new meaning as each became ostentatious testimony to their autocratic leaders' cults of personality" (p. 17).

During the 2019–2020 Algerian protests (also called the Smiles Revolution, or the #Hirak), we watched Baghdad, where in Liberation Square simultaneous protests also erupted over high unemployment, poor basic services, and state corruption. Writing of the 20th century, Sara Pursley's *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq* draws on space as a transnational metaphor for an ambitious gendered analysis. Pursley introduces Anthony Anghie's argument that the League of Nations mandate system imposed on Palestine and Iraq addressed "the unconscious, and thereby administer[ed] 'civilizing therapy' to the body politic" of the state whose sovereignty was being formed (p. 31) as counterpoint to her own idea about Iraq, that "the two sides of the dual mandate aligned with two prominent uses of 'development' in British discourse during this period: 'economic development' as the exploitation of a colonized territory's resources and 'development along native lines' as the welfare and containment of the territory's native population" (p. 34).

Pursley merges public and private space, observing, "the historically peculiar mandate system of semi-colonial rule enshrined in Article 22 of the League of Nations charter was itself based on certain parallels between adolescence as a stage of psychological and national life" (p. 35). She analyzes the Dujayla Land Settlement Project as "a paradox at the heart of development's orientation toward the future" (p. 127). Iraq's Hashemite monarchy responded to Ja'far Khayyat's *al-Qarya al-'Iraqiyya: Dirasa fil Ahwaliha wa-Islahiha (The Iraqi Village: A Study of Its Conditions and Reform, 1950)*, calling for renewal of rural communities. The 1945 Law for the Settlement and Cultivation of the Lands of Dujayla conceived of a "table-flat, dry, treeless plain" as a family-farm model based on 19th-century North American ideas of a "self-sufficient farmer as the ideal citizen," revived for the Cold War's main battleground. Norman Burns of the US State Department's new Bureau of Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs described the Dujayla experiment as fostering "the kind of progressive stability that the Middle East needs" (p. 131).

Located 135 miles southeast of Baghdad, the "rich alluvial soil" of Dujayla received only six inches of rainfall each year. After construction of the Kut Barrage was completed, water from the Tigris was diverted into the Dujayla Canal to irrigate these 88,000 acres with their artificial "small family farms." The law required that would-be settlers come from the Dujayla province of surrounding areas and be experienced farmers, married, with a child, free of a criminal record, and possessors of a medical certificate. Each selected homesteader was awarded 100 donums (62.5 acres) of "land free of rent and other charges upon occupancy." The "rich alluvial soil," however, proved "too heavy for cotton," so no cotton was grown in this experimental community. Individual farms were laid out in units of four, a kilometer from the next group of four, the "four-corners" settlement pattern depriving these women and men of "a typical Middle Eastern community life which is centered around a shop, a coffee house, and other rural social organizations" (p. 136).

Government funds paid for irrigation in Dujayla, but not a drainage network, leading to salinization of the soil. Isolated homesteads, which precluded "the costly piping of pure water into each dwelling," forced farmers to "rely upon the all-purpose irrigation ditch for water," fostering the spread of disease. In Dujayla, UNESCO established a "fundamental education center," a concept that the Iraqi Ministry of Education's Division of Fundamental Education considered went "hand in hand" with a "concept of small landholding" (p. 140). UNESCO specialists Margaret Hockin, Noemi Lopez, and Enriqueta Lopez recommended a survey of domestic life in Dujayla, followed by establishment of a school to teach girls home economics and a women's health clinic, and training of women in Dujayla in "modern practices of family care and home management" (p. 142).

In Dujayla, women and children were told in their own dwellings that their "housework, sanitation, hand work and home industries (knitting of socks, cutting out and sewing of garments)" was inadequate and that they lacked modern techniques of "washing clothes and babies"; they received vaccinations (p. 143). At risk to themselves (the law forbade them to leave their homes for more than a three-day period), Dujayla women rode "in from great distances" to receive treatment in the women's clinic. As Pursley points out, "treatments provided by Enriqueta Lopez at the women's clinic were usually ineffective, since 'once cured, the people will certainly be contaminated again within a few days or weeks by

drinking the polluted water from the canals” (p. 145). It became common knowledge that the irrigation canals spread disease—bilharzia, trachoma, and malaria—among inhabitants of Dujayla and their children. Pursley turns to Andrew Zimmerman’s assessment, that such development failures “do not merely give the lie to liberal ideology; they reveal its truth” (p. 128).

Aria Nakissa’s *The Anthropology of Islamic Law* addresses what she calls “traditional Islamic learning” which is “organized around texts rather than topic-based courses” (p. 161). Nakissa’s work contains an explicit conversation with Brinkley Messick on his *The Calligraphic State*. “One of the most revealing expressions of the relationship between the spoken and the written word,” Messick observes, “concerns the use of documents and the rules of evidence.”<sup>26</sup> Nakissa draws on Messick, identifying widespread resistance to print among Muslims, “because they think that the Scriptures, that is, their sacred books—would no longer be *scriptures* if they were *printed*” (p. 24; emphasis in original).

In addition to Messick, Nakissa draws on the work of Clifford Geertz and Talal al-Asad from the *jil al-sittināt*, choosing hermeneutic theory and practice theory to unite cultural, legal, and religious traditions. For her anthropology of religion and Islam, key terms are “mind” (*qalb*; she points out, “for the majority of Arab Muslim thinkers, the heart is the seat of the entire mind,” containing “beliefs, desires, emotions, intentions, and character traits,” p. 97), “action” (*fi’l* or *‘amal*), “mental attitude” (*ṣifat al-qalb* or *wasf al-qalb*), and “disposition” (*malaka* or *khulūq*). For her, “the fact that Muslim religious scholars equate shari’a rules with God’s intentions has important implications” (p. 36); and “Muslim scholars hold that God’s mental attributes have caused chains of effects” (p. 38), which underscores the implicit significance of spatial concepts for her larger project.

To the ethnography of education in Egypt, Nakissa introduces innovative concepts of space regarding the “free flow of testimony” among trained jurisconsults beyond Egypt’s borders. Since al-Azhar “was probably the most prominent Islamic educational establishment in the world, enjoying a status at least equal to that of the Süleymaniye in Istanbul, the Qarawiyyin in Fez, and the Zaytuna in Tunis,” the world of Islamic law equates with “higher religious learning in modern Egypt” (the title of her chapter 2). Nakissa’s *Islamic Law* connects the linearity of individual texts with the linearity of the scholarly community that shares the text: “All texts must be received through an unbroken chain” (p. 163). A key concept in her analysis of spatial practices is *sanād*, an unbroken chain of religious scholars.

For Nakissa, the three acceptable modes for transmission meriting a student’s *ijāza* (certification) are examples that include a wide variety of spatial practices. Although ideally an *ijāza* is issued after the *samā’* (audition), in her fieldwork Nakissa never witnessed one; rather, she witnessed a *qirā’a* (reading), the student’s oral recitation to confirm that the student has mastered contextual cues including the vowelings of texts; and *munāwala*, in which the student has access to an undeniably authentic copy of the text and is prepared on the basis of past education to understand the text. The context-providing commentaries on *matn* (a short, basic text serving as an overview of a particular field) are possible at three levels. First-order commentary is *sharḥ*, in which every line is systematically explained; second-order commentary is *ḥāshiya*, which focuses on specific portions of the *sharḥ*; finally, the *ḥāshiya* itself may be unpacked in third-order commentary, which is *taqrīr*.

During her fieldwork, Nakissa’s informants emphasized the value of embodied proximity between shaykh and student: “The obligation to hear a text from a shaykh necessitates being in his [sic] physical presence, thereby enabling direct observation of the shaykh; moreover, when a student is in the physical presence of the shaykh, the shaykh can use discipline/punishment to ensure that the student is properly imitating his practice of Shari’a rules,” distinguishing knowledge with companionship from independent reading (p. 171). As an informant told Nakissa, “individuals who are book-learned and lack a *sanād* must be avoided, as must book learning itself: ‘if there is a shaykh without a *sanād* do not take knowledge from him. Be careful about the *sanād*, because the *sanād* is the religion.’” (p. 176). The proper method of Azhari learning is expressed in a poem: “The honor of the sciences is obtained from their [human] masters; without them, books have no honor” (p. 176).

Although I started this discussion with a two-part dictionary definition, equating space with both “a continuous area or expanse which is free, available, or unoccupied” and “the dimensions of height, depth,

<sup>26</sup>Brinkley Messick, *The Calligraphic State: Textual Domination and History in a Muslim Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 115–16.



and width within which all things exist and move,” the five books under review bear their own debt to Lefebvre’s three-part definition drawing on spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space. Daphné Bengoa and Leo Fabrizio’s analysis of Fernand Pouillon’s architecture recalls the strategic space of the archive. For Fadila Kettaf, the cities’ experience of colonialism (and, by extension, the development of the public) is multilayered. Both works emphasize the contingent and the local. For Yasmin Ramadan, a protagonist’s affective relationship with the public space through which he moves serves as an index to civil freedoms.

If anything, the current pandemic draws the significance of space and tension between different concepts of space to our attention. Sara Pursley identifies Dujayla as a tragic experiment, in the course of which Iraq’s Hashemite monarchy handed out farms as an attempt to create ideal [male] citizens; instead, these farms proved to be locations for the oppression of wives and children in the name of “home economics” and “medical treatment.” Finally, Aria Nakissa finds space a means to conceptualize transmission of Islamic legal texts from masters to students, a conversation that could not be more timely during months in which modern institutions of higher education are embracing digital delivery. Elements of Nakissa’s scholarly analysis find their echo in contemporary conversations about face-to-face and distance-learning models of education, substituting “assessment” for “honor.”