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Urban Margins: Envisioning the Contemporary Global South

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Introduction

Urban Margins

Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker

The negotiation of the conceptual-spatial boundaries of the urban modern, the city as the space of the production of the modern citizen-subject, constitutes a major preoccupation of much twentieth-century social thought.[1] The concomitant problem bodies and problem categories (e.g., rural migrants; tradition) that such discussion has produced critically inform our contemporary conceptual grammars. While few would revisit the "peasant in the city" narrative that dominated much of the social science literature of the 1960s and 1970s, many of its underlying presumptions remain.[2] However, grand narratives of invasion have given way to narratives that struggle to capture the newness of both urban and rural areas. In the language of the World Bank, this "new influence" marks a global phenomenon called "the urban transition."[3] It is this new inscription of urban space and rural back spaces that informs, directly or indirectly, the inordinate attention also given to urban poverty by projects influenced by the new "urban turn" in the language of international development. These new spatial inscriptions beg the question as to the role and function of ruralities within "the urban transition." In the context of Egypt, to take one example of developmental concerns, the Demographic Health Survey over the last decade has clearly shown that the real impact of neoliberal restructuring has been spatial.[4] Since the beginning of the twentieth century the poverty line had clearly separated urban and rural space. A decade of neoliberal restructuring has fundamentally altered this relationship, positing the poverty line as a phenomenon categorically dividing lower Egypt (the megacities and their agrarian hinterlands) and all of upper Egypt (the back spaces). At least in the conceptual models offered

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by the World Bank, the demographics of the urban transition mark this new urban space from which the "winds of change" will come.

The world presently consists of more than four hundred cities with a population of over 1 million (by 2015, there may be 550 of these cities). Future growth is projected to happen exclusively in cities, not in rural or suburban areas. Alongside megacities like Jakarta, Dhaka, Karachi, Mumbai, and Shanghai and Lagos (all in the global South), which will have populations over 20 million by 2025, there has been a concomitant growth of small and second-tier cities. These enlarging urban spaces, with inadequate planning, job opportunities, and infrastructure, absorb most of the rural migrants who are forced to leave their homes due to policies of market reforms and agricultural deregulation. Hence, the older dichotomy between city and countryside can be conceived as being replayed and contested by the gap between small cities and megapolises.[5] In other words, with megacities furnishing the parameters of our understanding of contemporary urban landscapes, small cities and provincial towns increasingly are becoming marginal within these new global hierarchies of urbanism taking shape.

In this issue we seek to revisit conceptually and theoretically the question of marginality in the production of contemporary urban cartographies in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. Notwithstanding the heightened interest in urban studies in the last few years, the megacities have, as suggested above, structured our understanding of cities and the questions we bring to the study of urban space at large. Very little attention has been given to other urban landscapes, including the small- and medium-sized towns on the margins of this discourse (e.g., Sana, Hebron, Peshawar, Thimpu). Even less attention has been given to the different set of questions the study of such "marginal" cities may bring to our understanding of twenty-first-century urban landscapes. Among others, these may shed light on a very different kind of rural-urban nexus that the working poor negotiate as they variously move through and/or reside on the margins of municipal boundaries of these larger cities. Thus we seek to rethink the issue of marginality in at least three particular frameworks. One is to focus research on smaller cities within a hierarchy of regional (and global) urban spaces. Second is the production of marginal spaces within such cities. If we concentrate on the second proposition, it is evident that we know very little about the complex economic, social, and cultural life of those communities that lie at the juncture of the rural-urban divide. Third are questions concerning the networks, the textures of everyday life, that shape various forms of marginality in both small cities and megacities. To return to the above-discussed Egyptian case, migratory trajectories there are enmeshed with networks connecting an array of periurban localities: from the margins of smaller agrarian towns in upper and middle Egypt to

the periurban zones of the big agribusiness cities in the Delta. What critical insights might the social history of these periurban margins elucidate about contemporary urban life and its back spaces?

The case of Pakistan exemplifies some of the dynamics that lead to the social and demographic shifts we highlight. In a recent review paper, Ali Cheema and Shandana Mohmand have argued that the rapid growth in industrialization in Pakistan in the 1950s led to an increase in rural-urban migration. However, since the 1960s, due to the dispersion of industries and development of transportation facilities, the rate of urbanization is fastest in districts that did not have high levels of previous urbanization. By the 1970s the rate of growth of small- and medium-sized cities of certain regions of Pakistan outstripped the rate of urbanization of the ten largest cities in the country. This process has in turn affected a social and economic decline in the population's dependence on rural structures, an increase in internal trade between rural and urban areas, and also an agricultural raw material linked industrialization strategy. These transformations have clearly manifested in the shift of political and social power from more traditional village systems to traders, industrialists, money-lenders, and those who control the transportation networks.[6]

Such processes are present in many countries of the global South and have given rise to a proliferation of fringe urban communities whose residents oscillate between urban and rural identifications. They compete for low-paid agricultural work while seeking to enter the urban labor market.[7] This push-and-pull phenomenon is amply demonstrated in Ananya Roy's work on urban transformation and poverty in West Bengal, India. Roy shows how the reduced possibility of agricultural work has led to large immigration to the cities by men and women. Yet the recent deindustrialization process in the region has made urban work equally difficult to access for these migrants. Rail links to Calcutta connect periurban spaces to the city as the poor commuters create spaces within the urban labor market while retaining a sense of place and community in the village. Men and women experience this commute and access to the urban differently. There is always a gendered element, Roy argues, in how sexual freedoms, moral economies, domestic responsibilities, work processes, and labor segmentation operate in these processes.[8] The essays that follow offer a comparative discussion and visions of some of the above-mentioned processes in the contemporary city in the global South. A focus on such cities allows us not only to present a more complex picture of new urban forms, but also to explore how urban life and urban marginality take on quite distinct local forms.

The essays emerge out of a long-term dialogue initiated by the Shehr Network on Comparative Urban Landscapes (www.shehr.org), an academic initiative that seeks to further a social-historical and critical understanding

of contemporary cities and urban practices in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa. It examines the efficacy of the category of the city in modernist discourse and seeks to chart this spatial imagination and its effects through an exploration of the complex processes through which gendered, classed, and raced citizen-subjects have negotiated and been the object of urban projects in these regions. Attuned to both the legacy of modernist conceptual grammars and their inadequacy for understanding the remaking of space and place in the neoliberal present, the network aims to open up an arena in which to address the particular positioning(s) of contemporary urban landscapes and urban practices.

The Uncertainty of Urban Life

The conceptualization of the social divisions referred to above is significant for understanding how the modern city is experienced by its citizen-subjects. The tensions, polarizations, and entanglements that accompany these processes across and within state boundaries shape new forms of historical categories, which Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls "fragmented globality."[9] As capitalism manifests itself in contradictory forces of hope and despair, constitutionalism (democracy) and deregulation, hyperrationalization and avant-garde experimentation, controlled markets and speculative exuberance, antimodern nostalgia and progressive narratives, it is no wonder that risk, uncertainty, and fear have become its constitutive cultural icons.[10] The spread of magic, witchcraft, and the occult in Africa, which Peter Geschiere[11] so eloquently discusses in his work, or the anxiety, stress, moral panics, and "millennial apocalypse" of the contemporary United States that Kathleen Stewart and Susan Harding describe in their influential essay,[12] become representations of these contradictory forces of hope and hopelessness, and of fear, which Massumi posits as the most economical expression of form of late capital that we inhabit.[13]

Infrastructures, new modes of technological interconnectivity, have been intimately linked to this vision of the modern, the dream that the urban promises its inhabitants. This relationship is refreshingly brought forward in Caroline Humphrey's recent paper on a midsize Siberian city and the breakdown of the taken-for-granted infrastructural projects. The extreme dependency of city life on the regular supply of heat, electricity, and water takes on a crisis mode when in this specific case supplies are interrupted. The lack of heat in subfreezing temperatures, the lack of electricity for public transport—trams, trolleys—in societies with a low percentage of car ownership, and the lack of streetlights for darkened streets in the middle of winter (with myths of lurking "others," such as "gypsies" who snatch children, and the perceived destabilization of public space with increasing numbers of unattached men wandering the

countryside looking for shelter and jobs) bring home the uncertainty and vulnerability of a city living without adequate infrastructure. Half an hour of bus journeys becomes fifteen kilometers of walking on frozen roadways. Humphrey shows that in distant reaches of postsocialist Russia the process of deindustrialization has produced new categories of the expendable as part of the retraction of state support to infrastructural projects, thereby adding to the uncertainty of civic life in extremely harsh physical and social environments.[14]

The modernist dream of infrastructural investment leading to an urban-based, technologically informed, and progressive culture has become illusionary in many parts of the world. Like contemporary Russia, other states have not been able to meet fully their modern responsibility to provide basic services and consequently leave their citizens to fend for themselves within configurations of unstable microservices and petty trade.[15] Take the case of Lagos, which has grown from a city of 300,000 in the 1960s to one of 10 million today, where during the oil boom of the 1970s, international planners and the Nigerian government redesigned the city and put in an extensive network of roadways, bridges, intersecting cloverleaf highways, and huge housing projects. In the aftermath of the plundering of the country's and the city's wealth by a succession of dictatorships and the abandonment of Lagos as the capital for Abuja, Lagos today has two hundred distinct slum settlements where along with the local poor reside refugees from the wars in West Africa—principally Liberia and Sierra Leone. Not dissimilar to the decaying infrastructure in Humphrey's Siberian town—with increases in ethno-nationalism, xenophobia, and poor-on-poor violence—only one in twenty Lagos households is connected to the municipal water supply, waste water is disposed of through open drains, in many instances buckets or pits are the only latrines, and private generators are the main source of most reliable electric supply: the tender mercies of petty trade and microservices with an absence of the state in any form.[16]

These themes are adequately brought forward in AbdouMaliq Simone's essay on Douala, Cameroon, and Dakar, Senegal. The crisis metaphor that invades the description of African cities is rethought in Simone's work in creative and innovative forms.[17] In response to the total abandonment of the state to provide for its own citizens and the nonexistence of welfare regimes, many turn in African cities to informal forms of "getting by" through kin networks and manipulating social capital. Simone does not entirely dismiss the efforts of civil society organizations or NGOs to mitigate the situation of marginality and deprivation, yet in an earlier work he shows how in communities across urban (West) Africa people recombine contingent relationships between bodies, spaces, signs, and infrastructures to connect with varied ways of life and different social actors.[18] In the same

work, he argues that there is a production of a micropolitics of alignment, interdependence, and exuberance linked to a particular emotional field that connects people in the emergent urban fabric.[19] Here the concept of emergence and emergency is central to his argument. In a critical engagement with more modernist understandings of political mobilization that demands democratic rights and economic resources from the state, Simone argues for a rethinking of these categories by putting forward the concept of emergency democracy, which encapsulates and entangles the dual meaning of emergence and emergency. It helps him to show how in the large or midsize African cities that he studies people collaborate, without sometimes knowing about it, through a wide range of affiliations that may be kin-based, local, translocal, gendered, religious, or secular. His rendering of the contemporary urban landscape may enable us to rethink political possibilities for African cities where a diverse, multilingual, and ethnic population considers the challenges, pitfalls, and compromises of coexistence.

This theme of compromised coexistence is eloquently picked up through the lens of gender and the city by Sandya Hewamanne in her work on female migrant workers in the Free Trade Zone outside Colombo, Sri Lanka. The issues of female disorder, lack of control, and chaos, so often the concern of modern, bourgeois, and national imaginaries, are critically contested in Hewamanne's description of these workers' lives and their negotiation of the city with its contingent freedoms. Her work critically examines ways in which gendered subjects negotiate their lifeworlds in a major South Asian urban landscape by ethnographically detailing how the city represents a site of personal autonomy and political possibilities. At different moments public discourse in distinct national urban spaces has produced the city as both the site of modern citizen making and the site of corruption and pollution. Hewamanne shows how rural women reconfigured the city for themselves through their distinct grammars, aesthetics, and performance of the urban. Her essay raises pivotal questions about how women and men map the city differently. As these migrant women's "freedoms" are read in terms of promiscuity by the dominant moral codes, Hewamanne sensitizes us to forms in which women's and men's interaction with various sites, routes, and spaces within the city are represented, commented upon, and restricted within the larger society. Yet the city is also, as she shows, a space of mobility, transgression, and different pleasures that women seek, in the process negotiating the everyday in favorable and unfavorable terms.

Put differently, the essay seeks to make visible the contradictory character of our modern lives. To take a cinematic representation from another society in the global South, a certain type of women's mobility such as is depicted by cycling women in Marzieh Meshkini's *The Day I Became*

a Woman (Iran, 2001) powerfully informs particular modernist rendering of emancipatory narratives. Yet the privileging of these modern urban tropes such as mobility, speed, and rationalized spatiality forecloses certain critical questions that examine ways in which the multitude of poor women in the Middle East and South Asia negotiate urban space in conditions of declining public transportation infrastructure. Working-class women's relationship to city life and to those who are "unfamiliar" creates its own sets of bodily and emotional disciplining.[20] For many urban residents public life does not always allow for the pleasures of the modern: the cafés, parks, concert halls, beaches, or the promenade for women to enjoy alone. Rather, especially for poor women, it offers the options of harassment in the narrow alleys of industrial townships, in long waits at bus stops of the unpredictable public transport system, and in the discriminating work culture that needs to be negotiated due to the compulsion of earning a living. This rendition is not to argue for an "insufficient modernity" or a lag in some teleological sense, but it asks us to explore the context of urban social politics enmeshed in the multiplicity of discourses and everyday struggles that working-class and poor women have to encounter.[21]

Smaller Towns, Other Pleasures

Within the study of the contemporary Middle East research on urban spaces focuses almost exclusively on the megacities such as Cairo, Istanbul, Beirut, and more recently Tehran and Khartoum. One effect of the focus on these megacities in the region is that they have furnished the new grammar for our understanding of the trajectories that urbanity takes in the region. The articulation of colonial modernities across the region set in place a spatial recasting of space and place. For example, the shift from Saharan to Mediterranean and Atlantic trade in North Africa led to the deurbanization of southern North African cities and the hegemony of northern cities. The establishment of nation-states in the Middle East, the selection of capital cities, in turn constructed the framework in which urban life came to be seen as the equivalency of national life. The essays by Lisa Taraki and Mandana E. Limbert portray marginal urban spaces in the Middle East and hence go against this trend, aiding us to explore how the regional history of urban modernity disciplines its boundaries. We would argue with them that if the urban is the future, creating endless rural backspaces, the role and function of smaller cities and towns in the regions require special attention (e.g., Gaza City, Asyut, Abadan).

Taraki takes seriously the histories that detail how urban life has been affected by the collapse of regional populisms as viable ideologies, the rise of religious nationalism in the Middle East, and the systemic erosion of the welfare state and state socialist programs. In an embattled space of

the contemporary West Bank, she shows how some sections of the middle strata in Ramallah—the city that has become the de facto Palestinian capital and only cosmopolitan space in the occupied territories—are dealing with the unraveling of the postcolonial nationalist project with its incumbent promise of modern, educated, productive citizen-subjects. Rather, they have seen the deployment of myriad privatized individual and family projects for social mobility and distinction. Driven by anxieties and aspirations of a potentially hegemonic nationalist secular and modern project of the post-Oslo era, the members of the new middle class sought to execute their projects with singular determination. This led to increasingly commoditized urban spaces where quality education, modern and globally marketable skills, taste and refinement, self-improvement, and entertainment are sought by an eager clientele of middle-class individuals anxious not only to appear modern but also to distance themselves from their sometimes quite recent peasant, bedouin, or lower-middle-class urban origins. However, in the process of constituting and reproducing itself (most conspicuously through the unceasing drive for the accumulation of material and cultural capital), this class also produces its subaltern others, be they migrant peasants, refugees from the camps, or lower-class youths, all of whom threaten the collective vision of the desired modern urban order. So as much as Israeli aggression threatens Palestinian public and private life, the Palestinian urban middle class remains haunted by the "unmodern" within its own history and present.

Finally, Limbert's work on the cultural politics of a small oasis town in the interior of Oman explores ways in which marginal urban pasts and presents are constructed in the everyday life of the people of Bahla. Situated at the historical nodal points of centuries-old Indian Ocean trade between Africa, South Asia, and East Asia, Muscat-Oman and other Persian Gulf city-states have reclaimed their space as financial and leisure-seeking destinations in the postoil boom period. While attention has been given to the making of modern metropolitan Muscat, and by extension the modern Omani state,[22] less attention has been given to understanding more fully the social dynamics in towns of the interior except that of their unmaking on the margins of the construction of the modern center of power. In her urban ethnography that links the history and everyday life of Bahla to larger changes in the Omani state and the Persian Gulf area, and to other global forces that impinge upon these transformations, Limbert raises important questions about how the modern urban is understood and lived outside the megapolises. These questions, we contend, offer new possibilities for alternative, dynamic, and more complex understandings of the contemporary urban in the global South.

Conclusion

Looking at the building boom in China's cities and the pavementization of its farmlands for industrial growth and housing development—harking back to the Siberian experiment of the early Soviet state—we see almost nine thousand high-rises built in Shanghai alone since 1992. Thousands of buildings have no tenants, can never be paid for under capitalist conditions, and cannot be justified under market conditions. This said, the countryside is urbanizing at rapid speed, generating migrations of epic proportions by displaced peasants. Where the future lies for this new exponential growth in China, linking the coastal megacities along the Pearl River and Yangtze River deltas—Shenzen, Guanzhou (Canton), Zhuhai, Shanghai—with the hinterland in a series of interlocking highways and industrial parks, is anyone's guess. The cost in terms of human and social disruption is extremely high, and China remains a socially volatile space where more than 70 million underemployed people roam the land looking for economic security.[23] In the post-1979 "economic reforms"–oriented China, there are almost two hundred protests daily against the government's social abandonment of the poor and its land seizure policies for industrial plants, highways or housing, and infrastructure. One can only wonder whether Shanghai and other booming megacities of coastal China will end up like Lagos, after the current speculative bubble bursts. Rem Koolhaas notes, although in a peculiarly positive way, that such conditions for modern cities are emblematic not only of the African metropolis, but rather remain the terminal condition of all major cities, even London and Los Angeles, in an era of civic and social abandonment of the poor and the expendable.[24]

Such provocative future imaginaries motivate us to think through some of the ways in which urban transformation is occurring in the global South. In doing so and sharing this body of work, we seek to fill a persistent gap in the existing literature on urban space in the regions under discussion. Moreover, as the literature on contemporary urban issues concentrates on the megapolises, this collection of essays on smaller and medium-sized cities and the periurban spaces of large cities also explores questions as to how definitions of urbanity, and by implication rurality, have shifted within the context of these new urban cartographies, and with what sorts of *effects*.

While African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian cities may not have witnessed the same intensity of modernist industrialization as cities in other regions of the world, research has seldom taken into account how larger structural changes in distinct economies have affected the practices and experiences of people on the ground. The larger field does not have the sort of social histories that have explored urban lifeworlds in an era of

deindustrialization and major structural changes such as those available for many cities in the West.[25] Hence, the attempts presented in this collection enable us to ask further research questions in order to understand how real estate speculation in Beirut, the decrease in state-sponsored employment in Cairo, and the rapid urbanization of Dhaka affect the lived experiences of the citizens of these cities. The collapse of regional populisms as viable ideologies (e.g., Arab nationalism); the rise of religious nationalism, whether in South Asia or the Middle East; the erosion of the welfare state and state socialist programs; the increased migration to and from the two regions; and the transnational flow of goods, capital, and information call for a move beyond a formalistic and legalistic account of the process. We argue that there is a lack of social histories to provide an understanding of how the process of globalization—and its influence in decreasing employment opportunities in the formal sector, increasing the numbers of nonorganized female labor in entire sectors of the economy, increasing piece-rate work, elevating the percentage of noncontractual industrial labor, and decreasing state-sponsored employment in Karachi or Mumbai—affects people's experiences. Within this context, recent global economic restructuring has provided arguments for free trade and open markets and has acclaimed the emergence of difference, plurality, and tolerant coexistence. Yet it has also obscured how the forced integration of national markets into the world system has resulted in the disappearance of national subsistence and given rise to new forms of division of labor.[26] Building on these sets of issues, our endeavor remains to bring together scholarship that seeks to highlight the changing social dynamics in Middle Eastern, African, and South Asian cities through new theoretical lenses. We argue that questions raised in the essays that follow are essential to place the field of urban studies within the three regions in a comparative dialogue with each other and with similar efforts across the globe.

Notes

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Emergency Democracy and the "Governing Composite"

AbdouMaliq Simone

The Productive City

Recent years have witnessed a substantial extension of thoughts and work on cities in Africa. Much of this work has tried to get out of the conceptual frameworks that usually render African cities as failed cities, cities always in need of something more—whether it be infrastructure, governance, or economic development. As David Satterthwaite so ably demonstrates, cities in the global South in general are caught in a series of powerful myths that represent them as more parasitic and more economically fragmented than cities elsewhere.[1] The prevailing notion is that of an urban fabric overrun, unable to accommodate all of the escalating demands made of it; of environmental degradation spawned by widespread impoverishment; and of increased social conflict among residents who find few institutional platforms to promote coherence and collaboration. In the following discussion, I emphasize the implications of trying to see the emerging fabric of urban Africa as the result of a productive deployment of sensibilities, practices, effort, and collective formations that are made possible by the very uncertainties incumbent within cities deeply punctuated by fragmented infrastructures, social contestation over the uses to be made of the city, and political regimes thoroughly made partial through their entanglement within diverse networks of exchange.[2] In particular, this essay deals with the often peculiar process through which actors come to make their mark on collective transactions and the way in which idiosyncratic constellations of such actors provide a workable balance between the provisional and incessantly mutating practices required to viably "make do" in most African cities and a sense of order, if only temporary.

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Taking a view of the essential productivity of urban effort has broad ramifications for notions of what gets valorized and how, and it reorients social economies based on inclusion and exclusion. Although efforts to expand and regularize broad-based political participation may be critical to viable urban life, the emphasis on such a formula—popular public participation as a conduit to increased democratization as a conduit to livelihood generation and the cultivation of responsible provisioning by government—tends to occlude the prolific and real political struggles waged to maintain the capacity, possibility, and right to create different ways of living in the city.[3] These practices of keeping things open are what I call emergency democracy—the disentangling of emergence and emergency is impossible, and thus the practice demands the potential resourcefulness of relatively invisible architectures of sometimes highly dispersed collaboration among actors who may or may not know they are indeed collaborating. As such, increasing swaths of African urban life are characterized by the proliferation of provisional, even experimental "municipal actions" where residents concretely upend a wide range of sectoral and social distinctions—private and public, religious and secular, local and translocal—in order to be greater involved in a broader range of lives and events. By finding ways to expand their own circuits of movement across the city (and sometimes other cities), residents bring together people and things that otherwise might remain disconnected. These webs of intersection open up new uses for ordinary objects and infrastructure, thus altering what they mean and what their value might be. This essay explores these dimensions of such emergency democracy in a major slum upgrading project in a suburb of Dakar, a marginal space in the urban geography, and the operations of a neighborhood market in Douala, Cameroon.

Some Historical Antecedents

The entanglements between civility and incivility, formal and informal, urban and rural, extraversion and parochialism, highly fixed identities and rhizomelike associations are not universal in African cities. They do, however, show up as some kind of legacy in specific domains and quarters across the continent. In the early settlement of colonial cities, some quarters manifested a fairly straightforward reproduction of village life. Others were simply transition zones for highly mobile labor. Still others reflected an intricate interlacing of trends, identities, and influences.

Older quarters of cities retained forms of local accumulation and regulation based on clearly understood and respected systems of local, commonly religious, authority—with their concomitant networks of enterprise and social welfare. Public salaries supported a heterogeneous range of extended family members, clients, and activities anchored in a logic

that livelihood was best attained through securing diverse and relevant positions within and across multiple networks. Substantiality in the urban public sphere was largely created through the sheer intricacies and entanglements of various strands of everyday life, which without such entanglements might only barely function in their own terms. In other words, the ability of households, social institutions, economic organizations, religious groups, and judiciaries to do what was expected of them (something not always definitively clear in endogenous and exogenous terms of efficacy) necessitated complex interactions along highly porous boundaries.[4]

So while a broad range of "traditional" institutions persisted, the configuration of urban solidarity, realized at primarily local, neighborhood levels, occurred through an interpretation of domains and sectors rather than through the consolidation of citizenship within well-defined and well-managed "modern" institutions.[5] Religion, business, politics, social welfare, training, mutual support, and identity claims intersected with each other, so that any modality of association wasn't really disconnected from any other.[6] While such arrangements provided multiple opportunities for problem-solving, especially the ability to compensate during times of crisis in what were largely fluid urban environments, they did often limit the generation of new forms of independent action and innovation that could be brought to the larger public sphere. The interdependencies among religion, governance, politics, family life, and business also meant that the stakes were high for any shift in the internal dynamics of any one sector. Again, the locus of independent action is constrained, at the same time as the resolution of any particular difficulty within one sector was potentially given the influences and resources of another.

As the city grew and extended into more provisional, unserviced, and informalized settlements, the conventional rules and networks that governed most aspects of life in many of the older quarters found limited applicability—with points of entry and mechanisms for survival more diffused across often competing practices and associations.[7] Everyday life depended on more provisional assemblages of resources and alliances.[8] The explosiveness of urban growth has meant that the entry into the urban system over the past decade, while remaining largely family based, was not as thoroughly controlled or inscribed in the wide net of social and family relations that formerly had situated the new urban immigrant within a more comprehensive or ordered field of activities and obligations.[9]

Intensifying economic difficulties have reaffirmed in some respects the salience of extended family networks as the primary locus of livelihood formation. Increases in the cost of health and schooling often produce a more blatant stratification of opportunities within these networks, as some children can be sent to school or provided other kinds of support, whereas others cannot. Under circumstances of economic hardship, labor mobiliza-

tion once again becomes important, as youth, in particular, "donate" their labor in return for promises of future support. In some cities, while family size through increased birthrates has declined, average household size may increase due to tendencies to form households on the basis of both kin and nonkinship relations possessing complementary skills and advantages.[10] But overall, the ability of extended family systems to manage increased economic difficulties has grown more precarious.

A critical question then becomes the extent to which the extension and substantiation of associational life in new, more diverse forms is related to the diminution of extended family capacities, as well as embodying urban survival logics and strategic approaches to urban livelihood that reflect practices that are neither rural or urban or, conversely, that constitute elements of a progressive transformation of African urban life.[11] These are not mutually contradictory possibilities, so the thrust of new research endeavors might be to more comprehensively examine what new modalities of associational life are being used for—particularly in the elaboration of new livelihoods.[12]

African residents developed specific places and domains for being specific things and for accommodating what were often contradictory needs and aspirations. There were places to keep tradition alive and there were places to be modern, places to be a kinsman and places to be a cosmopolitan urban dweller, as well as more textured and subtle combinations of these primarily artificial polarities. This process of spatializing memory, options, and alternatives had a large effect on making African use of the city as dynamic as possible.[13]

There were limits on how strict such spatializing could be. After all, different facets of African everyday life and identity had to nurture each other under often rigid colonial and postcolonial controls. Nevertheless, the establishment of clear sectoral boundaries is viewed by most urban professionals as an important step in the consolidation of effective municipal regulatory environments. To delink religious life from the political, the political from the entrepreneurial, or the familial from the public may, however, weaken African urban societies. In cities facing many different kinds of crises, this interdependency means that the resolution of any particular difficulty within one sector is potentially availed the influences and resources of any other.

On the other hand, the intermeshing of sectors may not create sufficient space for changes to take hold within the operations of individual spheres of activity, be they religious, political, economic, or familial. Without this space, it may be difficult to generate new forms of independent action and innovation that could be brought to the larger public sphere. If changes in how local politics operate are seen as having substantial effects on how religion, business, family life, and community affairs are practiced,

people will be cautious about bringing about such political change. This is because too many dimensions of life may be at stake, and independent action is limited.

The Difference between Interlocutors and Partners

Even though diverse actors can collaborate to reach heightened economic opportunities across the world, it has been another matter to use these often very sophisticated arrangements to take care of local development issues, such as sanitation, waste collection, and other aspects of neighborhood improvement.

Take the situation in Yeumbeul South, one of the sixteen localities making up the municipality of Pikine in Dakar—and a situation that has been widely documented by the Projet de Ville undertaken by the Program on Popular Urban Economy of Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ECOPOP, ENDA Tiers Monde) over the last decade. At the height of a major municipal redevelopment project in the mid-1990s, the then-mayor attempted to dominate every facet of life and development within the ward, in part by trying to play off different associations against each other. He neither supported the process of community mobilization and development nor entered the scene with specific proposals and practices of his own. Instead, he used his position as a means of distorting the dynamic yet contested and volatile process of community restructuring that was under way. Here, municipal "authority" was constituted almost by default, as the mayor played on the convergence of opportunity and vulnerability that usually characterizes a community in transition.

The shortage of potable water in Yeumbeul had been particularly acute, and sanitation problems had reached crisis proportions. A partnership composed of UNESCO's Managing Social Transformations Program, ENDA Tiers Monde, and several grassroots organizations—the Association des Jeunes de Yeumbeul pour la Promotion Sociale, the Association des Jeunes pour l'Education et le Développement, the Union des Frères de Yeumbeul, and the Association pour le Bien Etre de la Population—undertook to increase the supply of potable water in the two wards, as well as improve sanitation. The first phase of this effort, which began in 1996, provided five communal water taps and seventy-five ventilated pit latrines, as well as a system of solid waste collection via horse-drawn cart.

As these inputs were to be locally managed, a capacity building program was implemented to train local residents in maintaining the infrastructure, as well as in administering the financial aspects of the service delivery system. A community management committee and technical committee for maintenance and repair were established. This initiative introduced needed infrastructure and improved waste collection and

sanitation. It instituted important local administrative structures in order to improve environmental management and the management of extralocal services and political relations. The project also amplified challenges that were widespread throughout Pikine, as well as other cities.

As resources were scarce, the initial phases of such a project are able to introduce only limited improvements in infrastructure capacity. If only a limited number of water taps can be provided, where they are to be located is important, as is who will have what kind of access to them. Certainly, an important consideration in locating such taps, depending on whether they are reticulated to natural wells or to the bulk supply system, is the ease and costs entailed. Given the costs and technical complexities, certain locations are more viable than others in engineering terms. How do these locations correspond with the most viable "social" locations within a community? How does the process guarantee that the diverse interests and capacities of the community have access not only to the resource, but to the possibilities of deliberating the disposition of that resource? These were considerations subject to intense debate in the Yeumbeul project.

The associations in Yeumbeul also reflected varying points of view, capacities, and interests. They range from the representatives of traditional authorities to more politically militant youth groups. How can often widely divergent orientations to everyday community life—with their own visions about well-being and the future—collaborate over important decisions such as the distribution of essential resources within the community? Associations are implicitly strengthened by virtue of their capacity to deliver needed services to the community. Therefore, the disposition of development products becomes a locus of competition among associations.

Resources such as water and electricity, and services such as waste collection and environment cleansing, cannot always be provided house-to-house. Accordingly, how are they most judiciously targeted in such a way that will promote efficient use and social cooperation? If grassroots management processes are the best means of ensuring a judicious public character to resource provision and use, what are the most appropriate structures to ensure efficient management?

Efforts were made in Yeumbeul to ensure broad representation on these local management structures. Much time, however, was also wasted negotiating who was to be responsible for particular facets of the project. In management, decisions often have to be made quickly and decisively. Tariffs must be collected for the use of the resource in order for it to be maintained. Having too many hands involved in the management process subjects it to excessive political considerations. Therefore, much effort was spent in Yeumbeul trying to figure out what specific actors could do best. Potential lines of equivalence among discrete tasks were drawn. If, for example, representatives of the traditional Lebu authorities were not

involved in managing the construction of latrines or financing the *charette* pick-up systems, then their roles chairing irregular meetings with the public water agency could be widely viewed as a task having equivalent importance or prestige.

Development inputs and their management change the character of a community. They change the nature of what residents have to consider in order to get water or lighting. Successful access concerns not only appropriate social considerations, but technical ones as well. These technical considerations require specific levels of education. Traditional authorities frequently lack the education to understand many of these basic technical considerations. Many cannot even read or write. They are frequently threatened when critical features of community life seem to pass from their competence and control. Those local actors with sufficient education can then use their more proficient understanding of technical matters to shape the community in ways that exceed the once relied-upon social norms and hierarchies.

At the same time, as new modalities of resource and service provision can alter these social hierarchies, they also must be respected in order to prevent subterfuge. Additionally, working through customary practices may be an effective way of convincing people to change their behaviors in ways better suited to the service provided. Improved service also means that people must pay for it. Therefore, consumers must be persuaded that the benefits of improved service outweigh the sacrifices entailed in mobilizing scarce resources for maintaining it. In localities where improvements in living conditions tend to center around various locally initiated projects and the mobilization of local funds, a saturation point is frequently reached where the costs involved in attempting to sustain these initiatives are seen as too high.

At the same time, the more "modern" associations are concerned that it may take some time before the new patterns of social behavior and cooperation establish themselves. These new patterns of behavior are necessary in order to make the most beneficial use of new levels of service provision and access to resources. In the interim, the lingering power of customary authorities could be mobilized around these new development inputs to reiterate and entrench inequitable patterns of access and use. These inequities could be particularly unfavorable to the women and youth whose activism and role in environmental management has been most critical. In these circumstances, it is important to establish some mechanisms of financial autonomy.

In Yeumbeul, an investment fund was started in order to generate income that would ensure an available pool of money to maintain these services. In order to establish such a fund, a series of income-generating opportunities was set in motion. These opportunities were targeted par-

ticularly to those whose economic circumstances would not permit even the most minimal financial contributions to service use in the future. The poor need to access independent incomes in order to contribute to enhanced levels of service delivery and development in their communities. As a result, they also become less available to the patronage or manipulation of more powerful interests within the locality.

The role of ENDA ECOPOP centered on maximizing points of contact and negotiation among actively or potentially discordant interests within the community. Once these intersections are more thoroughly entrenched in the life of the community, the direct role played by such an NGO can diminish. During the first phase of the Yeumbeul project, associations remained quite weak and vulnerable. This was the case even for those organizations that had been formally in existence for some time. Their willingness to deal with each other was also largely predicated on their sense that they had little choice but to deal with each other, given their relative isolation and lack of access to broader institutional networks. Associations have been strengthened through this development process, and they increasingly become sites of conflict themselves. There are more opportunities for individual groups to establish alliances with other institutions and associations outside the locality in order to consolidate their internal strength.

Increasingly, the protocols worked out in some kind of partnership arrangements among agencies providing technical assistance, municipal government, and a thickened and more complicated tapestry of local associations for managing the political relations in communities like Yeumbeul find difficulty both encompassing the shifting alliances, but also in getting actors to "speak the same language." While different associational actors pursuing affiliations and opportunities in wider networks of action may still share a basic sense about the position of "their locality" within a larger municipal, regional, or global arena, the heterogeneity of these pursuits also makes it more difficult for them to formally concur on issues increasingly understood and mediated through multiple discourses. In Yeumbeul particularly, these have included intensified renderings of Islamism, technical planning languages, reinvoked pan-Africanism, feminism, ecological consciousness, and a home-styled cultural radicalism. Actors increasingly rely on a variety of provisional mechanisms, including much informal local networking, to transmit information and to conduct negotiations. Again, a very particular social architecture is elaborated—with a range of channels, conduits, barriers, and circumventions inside and outside—in order to attain a semblance of local coherence.

As Jacques Rancière indicates, interlocutors are not partners, in that their interchanges are not based on some common assumption about what brings them together or an idea that their togetherness is based on

advancing some common project. Rather, to be interlocutors is to open up the possibility of some alternative kind of communication that itself may generate new ways of working.[14]

Politics, Invisibility, and the Governing Composite

Eric Tchoyi is the chief of the Bepanda market. It is a small civil position equipped with a variety of ordinances, levies, sanctions, reprimands, licenses, and concessions. It is a neighborhood market, with most of the inputs derived from the major Douala markets of Congo and Madagascar. There are some exceptions in terms of produce delivered direct from periurban gardens. But there is no dearth of complexity entailed. Much of marketing is straightforward: the *commerçant* buys in some bulk, usually with others, divides the goods, transports them to a local market such as Bepanda, and retails the items at a small markup, always recalibrating the value of the convenience that such local marketing provides with the lower prices associated with securing the item at a major market. Tchoyi must preside over the allocation of stalls and the balancing of sectors, making sure that a range of goods and services can be housed across the market. He must ensure the accessibility of vendors, so that those who are hawking by foot or who line outside the official retailing spaces do not interfere excessively with the business of those who are more stationary within the interior of the market itself. He must act against excessive price-fixing, where the complicit hoarding of goods or the underpricing of them by those retailers who are working in collusion with others is used to undermine competitors. He must make sure that certain standards of cleanliness and safety are adhered to, and that revenue collection is timely and comprehensive. Again, for all of these tasks he is equipped with certain administrative powers.

However, like all kinds of economic transactions, marketing practices have also been intentionally complicated in order to derive value from attaining a more diverse series of synergies between the delivery of specific goods and services with the constraints and possibilities of particular capacities of consumption. In a place like Bepanda, available income is seldom regularized; it comes and goes in erratic rhythms of accumulation and need. As many households depend on members' remittances from elsewhere, their purchasing practices increasingly shift from a weekly or daily purchase of basic inputs—the practices that these local markets most directly addressed. In order to better capture their consumption, local retailers configure specific deals whereby purchases on credit or paid for in advance are worked out, or increasingly where a portion of money earned by the migrant is remitted directly to the *commerçant*, who releases an agreed upon volume of goods at specific intervals. Arrangements are

even made among a group of distinct retailers, all selling different kinds of goods, to bundle diverse items into a specific package that is then subject to a negotiated price with a group of households.

These complexities have been added on to a market already thick with a range of symbolic and relational economies. The purchase of a particular item, such as a kilo of tomatoes or a package of ten children's track suits, was always more than the attainment of the commodity itself. Measures themselves were always variable, depending not only on the identity of the consumer, but also on the time of year, the amount to be purchased, and the intention of the purchase itself. Even in a local market where residents are usually highly familiar with one another, most purchases are accompanied by some conversation, usually small talk, but sometimes important information and gossip about the health of associates held in common, local and city events, and the prices of many things.

Markets are thick with talk, and thus with impressions, rumors, interpretations. Potential customers are always steered toward or away from certain opportunities not only for consumption, but also for exchange—you do this for me, I will do this for you; I know that this is going on; do you want to come in on it. The *this* and the *it* may refer to places to live, goods to acquire, places to work. Everyone in a neighborhood like Bepanda is looking for small advantages, more things and opportunities to acquire for less. Whether they have any sanctioned belonging there or not, hundreds of people, neither buyer nor seller, use the market every day to make something happen, to see who they might see, to take or be taken into some scheme. Given these needs, there is much room for dissimulation; much room for making things seem as if they are real when they are not, or making them real simply through the sheer mobilizing of money, interest, or support on the part of those schemed or part of making a scheme. The market becomes the site of such incessant jockeying, of turning transactions into an opportunity to perform more than the transaction itself.

While Tchoyi's institutional toolbox provides him with some instruments that enable him to maintain some order, they are not really adapted to the complexities of the transactions for which the market provides a context. Adding to the complexity is the fact that local government, the Douala municipality, and the national state—who share at various levels in the welfare of Bepanda—provide little in the way of employment generation, livelihood formation, infrastructure, or social services. In neither policy nor programming do these levels of the state facilitate social cohesion, complementarity, knowledge production, or a viable division of labor and social stratification that does not have to be incessantly renegotiated.

In terms of the rules and regulations that officially govern the market, things then have to get out of hand in order to really work. In other words, clear demarcations among sectors, buyers and sellers, licensed

and unlicensed retailers, mobile hawkers and stationary *commerçants*, and locals and strangers cannot really stay put in order for any transaction to exceed the surface appearances necessary in order for some surplus, profit, or advantage to be garnered. The generation of such surpluses creates a market of ambiguities. It is not always clear what actually is being gained, who is actually working together, or who is actually making money, coming out ahead. There are so many settlements of past obligations mixed with hedges on the future—transactions geared toward cultivating the possibility that at a future time, loans might be made, large quantities of rice might be accessed for a very low price, individuals might be available for sexual encounters, or wealthy visiting uncles might be introduced to aspiring young students—that it is seldom clear what is being bought and sold.

What governs this ambiguity, keeping things that must get out of hand from getting too much out of hand? As Tchoyi himself indicates, he must depend on the rule of the invisible in order to do his job. This invisible sometimes entails various facets of divine intervention or sorcery but has, according to the chief, a more quotidian dimension. Tchoyi is the chief of the market, but he is able to be chief only through a dispersal of administrative power through a composite of actors whose identities may shift but whose characteristics remain somewhat stable. In other words, the "real" chief is a hybridized entity of local residents, whose combined actions and features are able to get the bulk of participants in the market to see all that transpires according to a basically shared, if flexibly drawn, point of view.

At a certain point each day, as Tchoyi would point out, a local healer would pass through the market to buy herbs. According to the time of day, this visit would correspond either with that of a young man who headed a local youth development committee taking particular interest in organizing young boys who worked the three-wheel carts that transported goods between markets, stores, and households; or with an owner of a series of buildings contiguous to the market whose family owned large tracts of land in Bamenda, a Bamileke town in the northwest of Cameroon from which many families in Bepanda had their origin.

These latter visits also coincided with those of a Madame Ngouna, who over the years had parlayed her dominance of local cassava retailing into a series of flour processing workshops across Douala and who returned frequently to Bepanda to buy small items such as lingerie or toothpaste from a large number of retailers simply as a symbolic gesture, and a sergeant in the gendarme who would buy large quantities of sweets to hand out to children coming out at the end of their school days as an occasion to lecture them on the need to get a good education, and who was widely viewed as someone powerful enough to keep the neighborhood relatively

free in recent years of the arbitrary military raids that had been a common feature throughout the prior decade. The paths of these personalities all would cross, usually daily. Who they spoke with and how became key topics of speculation, and the instructions, advice, or admonitions they would give acted as momentary anchors to the pursuant conversations those in the market would have with each other. The words of these personalities themselves were not as important as the fact that they were able to mobilize attention, first by the inordinate attention that these individuals paid to each other, and then as a means of engaging particular buyers and sellers in the market that they would otherwise not notice.

Crucial to this process is an economy of generosity applied and withdrawn. Given the intense needs of a mostly impoverished community, the availability of offerings of goods and services that go beyond what can be afforded has long been an instrument that solidifies affiliation and loyalty. It provides the platform from which individuals might sustain a sense of hopefulness, a sense that it is possible to go beyond what is presently experienced. So when such generosity is withdrawn, individuals are left disoriented. They will find it difficult to access the support and collaboration of those who remain the recipients of generosity or aspire to it.

Such generosity has become even more significant as the criteria of equivalence in transactions are being stretched to encompass larger demands and more domains. For example, at funerals, weddings, and birthing ceremonies, extended family units now frequently will be asked to provide a specific quantity of meat, rice, alcohol, or services such as influence with government officials or sex as a guarantor of keeping those attending the ceremony from the consequences of witchcraft. One can observe requests in the market for idiosyncratic quantities of items, especially on days when a major ceremony is occurring in the neighborhood. So .63 kilos of chicken gizzards may come to equal 3 large bottles of beer; or 3.66 kilos of rice come to equal a two-paragraph letter of introduction from a local chief to the principal of a secondary school. At times these numbers have specific meanings in terms of people's ages, addresses, or other, more opaque, references to numerology. But the terrain of equivalence is being stretched, and a form of mutual extortion comes to characterize more daily exchanges. Within such an environment, then, an economy of generosity is all the more important.

For those Tchoyi sees and relies upon as constituting the "governing composite," there is little in their official positions that warrant them either individually or collectively from being eligible to assume such temporary power. Each possesses a particular capacity that provides them a basis to exert some authority—whether it be land ownership, customary ties, successful businesses, or influence among a certain group of the local population. But Bepanda has other, often more powerful local figures—local

chiefs, Bamileke entrepreneurs, politicians, religious leaders, or mafia heads, for example. Although each of these personalities Tchoyi identifies has a reputable and substantial position, they are all, with the possible exception of Madame Ngouna, tangential to the activities of the market itself. These are not the major wholesalers and producers; these are not the movers and shakers of the big entrepreneurial networks that control the big production and distribution networks.

The procedures that make up their precise role in the Bepanda market are not so clear, nor are the precise qualifications that make them eligible for fulfilling such a role. They are not so easily identifiable as the purveyors of certain actions, interpretations, impressions, knowledge dissemination, or mobilizations to which the market gives rise. In other words, given the volatility of markets as sites for the generation of surplus values and collaborations of all kinds, they are potentially dangerous places for the production of untamed socialities. While the "governing composite" may, as claimed by Tchoyi, keep such sociality from really getting out of hand, the dominant political interests of the city will see in the market always a potential countervailing force to its rule—and with good reason, as markets have been sites of insurrection in Douala in the past. As such, those who are at least implicitly steering market transactions and particular negotiations in specific directions, even if simply by constituting points of reference through which circulations of conversation, interpretation, and performance pass, most strategically operate by virtue of not being readily identifiable by official political power. Thus we have Tchoyi's version of the invisible hand of the market.

Such invisible governance, while relying on this composite of actors, will, as Tchoyi's own account of his history as market chief demonstrates, experience some degree of interchangeability. Different actors will make up this composite, all having some kind of larger credibility that can be easily and widely recognized, but not directly derivative from specific positions of authority, not rooted in a specific formula whereby the composite is a homegrown version of an intersectoral partnership—one part customary authority, one part business representation, one part civil society, and so forth. At times the "network is cut"[15] and specific people, embodying the crystallization of multiple transactions, stand out and appear to be the drivers of influence and change.

In the composite at hand during my discussions with Tchoyi, each participant was propelled into the market by specific consumption needs—herbs, lingerie, and candy, for example. In part, these consumption needs were particular enough to make each stand out as a particular kind of "regular customer" and a regularized interruption from a norm of buying that was, in turn, being substantially reconfigured and particularized to the diverse consumption profiles of households in the community.

But Tchoyi also indicates that each of these people embodies a wide series of connections to various facets of life in Bepanda, through their own personal histories, networks, and affiliations, so that their mutual coincidence in the market provides a site and occasion for there to be a symbolic condensation and then rendering of the coming together of these various facets of life in a way that is visible to those who spend a great deal of their lives in the market but not to those who have reoriented their political and economic lives to standing outside and above it. What is mobilized is the common sense that something significant is taking place, and that this mobility of actors making up a governing composite brings buyers and sellers in the market into particular connections by positing the possibility of understanding just what may be going on in the scores of negotiations, provisional accommodations, deals, bargains, and complicities taken not in their entirety, but in multiples that exceed the one by one. In order to subsist, the players in the market need to understand the complex games, so in this way, they are ready to pay attention.

Given the heightened state of ambiguity the market produces, where goods and services, as well as individuals, are being converted into uses of all kinds, where the acts of buying and selling become more particularized, and where each transaction attempts to attain some surfeit of meaning and possibility, there exists the potential for the parochial—the reterritorialization of interactions within smaller domains of familiarity and trust—even though such narrowing of the circle of affiliation may go against the grain of the extensionality required by limited resources.

The politics affected by this governing composite facilitates circulation, keeps things open in a way that provides a measure of focus and stability—some kind of guarantee against the openness of transactions simply dissipating without the consolidation and scale necessary to make things happen—whether those things be the assurance of steady supply of food, of transporting goods from one place to another, of pooling money and time to access things cheaply and in some sizable quantity, and importantly, of keeping people in some kind of concerted action and thus being able to reach larger swaths of the city, in terms of more people, more space, more possibilities.

These market politics, informed and sometimes haunted by the intersecting political and economic practices that shape, enliven, and constrain specific possibilities of actions, are sometimes cited as important references and sometimes kept out of view. Cameroon was built from the agglomeration of two distinct colonial legacies, British and French, anglophone and francophone—an amalgamation that appears stabilized at times by the embittered remembrance of its accomplishment. Fear of the social disintegration exemplified by many other African countries has produced a politics of inertia, where the preservation of an image of

political stability secured through the regime's highly visible practice of seeming to involve as many actors as possible in matters of policy and decision making means that few decisions are actually made. Everyone thus becomes convinced that invisible forces are behind any significant endeavor. For most citizens it is not clear how anything happens, and in the rampant expansion of the sense that things are not what they appear to be, there is little confidence in any form of mediation that would enable residents to have a working sense that specific actions they undertake are likely to produce certain results.[16]

Inertia permits a facade of normality, allowing a level of economic accumulation that fuels a practice whereby elites from diverse regions and ethnicities can feel they have a stake in maintaining the system, but where any other substantial social development flounders. Any effort at sustained contestation seems haunted by the murky political machinations of the past, in part because the independence struggles of the 1950s and 1960s are not talked about.

For example, the Unions des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), the key anticolonial and reunification movement in the prelude to independence, is seldom mentioned. As colonial administrations shifted sizable populations to key plantation areas, there were particularly large numbers of francophone émigrés within areas under British control who supported reunification as a means to minimize their foreign status and, with local support, largely tempered countervailing tendencies expressed by some anglophone members of the southern Cameroon elite to deepen an articulation with Nigeria. When the UPC was outlawed in French Cameroon in 1955 following violent anti-French demonstrations, the party commenced a long and vicious guerrilla struggle. The UPC, in an adamant attempt to erode the various local institutions that helped underline the colonial divisions, was often ruthless in these efforts, estranging much of southern Cameroon.

The pro-French political forces that would inherit a newly sovereign Cameroonian state, always lukewarm to reunification with anglophone southern Cameroon, supported it primarily as a means of weakening the UPC. The international community basically forced a decision upon the anglophone areas whereby independence could be attained only by joining either Nigeria or Cameroon—a choice that had little popular support. Eventually, the marriage was with Cameroon, but only because the impression had been widely cultivated that southern Cameroon would keep most of its governance institutions. What prevailed instead was a political disposition wherein the south was systematically marginalized, and the vision of the UPC to generate national institutions that would cut across ethnicity and region was wiped out.[17] Today, the UPC is barely mentioned, as if a cross-cutting articulation of diverse Cameroon citizens

cannot be constituted as an objective of politics either in a more closely integrated national state or through federalism. If the aim of politics cannot therefore be either the enhanced autonomy of regions or greater national integration, what can it be? How are people to organize their sentiments and alliances?

In Douala, and particularly in Bepanda, the challenge faced by the locality is that the state itself, in order to intersect with neighborhoods where markets continue to renovate their practices and thus reinvigorate their status as sites of quiet yet persistent contestation, attempts to appropriate this mode of invisibility. The state attempts to penetrate into the very intimacy of everyday life by acting as if it is in charge of a kind of invisible circulation. In other words, that it possesses a capacity to bring the mundane, traceable activities, contexts, and relations relaunched daily by residents to seemingly impossible intersections with unseen forces, unknown lives, distant places, and a whole range of unspeakable occurrences.

The state has managed to convince many that it rules by sorcery, that it is able to control through deploying invisible powers that take what is discernible to residents and connect it to unknown events, people, and situations. The state plays on a basic fear incumbent in urban life: residents who navigate the city never can be sure how their own existence may be implicated in the narratives of others. They can never be sure whether their immediate positions and actions inadvertently place them in some line of fire—on a trajectory of some conveyance capable of taking them out. As the possibilities of mediation—the possibilities to convert differences of intensity, of disorder, into clearly defined sets of locations, corresponding entities, and fields of reliable interpretation—diminish, the sense of potential harm increases.

Yet cities, no matter how depleted and fragmented, still constitute platforms for trajectories of incrementalism. Houses and limited infrastructure are added onto bit by bit; the mobilization of family labor buys time for a small business to grow; migration is used as an instrument to pool together savings in order to start a new economic activity; mobile work crews are formed to dig wells, help with construction, or deliver goods until they make enough contacts to specialize on one particular activity. Incrementalism can produce unacceptable stratification, which can be seen across most neighborhoods in Douala, where some houses attain the status of villas while proximate ones seem to remain permanently incomplete. Certain actors and groups are able to organize labor, money, and contacts to finish roads, complete water reticulation projects, or electrify their compounds and neighborhoods, while others languish. Incrementalism, long an important element of urban development policy across many cities, can provoke intense social conflict.[18] Yet it still embodies the capacity of residents to use what they have and what they are doing as a base to further elaborate and

diversify urban social economies, as well as reflect particular interrelationships with larger scale infrastructure and communication networks.

The Bepanda market is a critical locus through which negotiations around the inputs of goods and services are made, incorporating particular possibilities and practices of incrementalism. The ability of a mobile governing composite to draw in and recalibrate the attentions and affiliations of those using the market becomes an important tool in keeping the various manifestations of the incremental from becoming overly fragmentary or polarizing and keeps a broad swath of residents in play.

Emergency Democracy

The prevailing policy frameworks regarding impoverished cities in the global South conventionally bemoan the absence of municipal structures adequate to socializing sustainable and appropriate uses of the urban environment and to enroll residents into predictable and transparent management practices. The lack of "good governance" is proffered as something nearly always self-explanatory. Yet the situation cuts both ways. Mediations that might have ensured the ability of residents to mark out daily continuities and the sense that the efforts they made were headed somewhere, linking residents, land, built environment, social economy, and institutionalized decision making, have worn away, leading to widespread conviction as to the arbitrariness of events and power. It is difficult for more and more residents to get a sense of what could be done. At the same time, the weakening links connecting actions to specific connotations and objects to specific utilizations permit the appearance of multiple thickets of operations, where the many elements that pass through markets, households, public spaces, derelict buildings, institutions, transport stations, and ports are reworked, recombined in heterogeneous ways that both compromise the integrity of the traditional responsibilities of these domains and interpenetrate in ways that both dissipate and extend their efficacy. Residents make themselves available to be taken into a wide range of schemes, often without any clear sense of what the payoff will be—yet, nevertheless, a hedge on the future—as they take others into fleeting operations in which they already are participants. Thus constant incorporation—to seize and be seized—is the predominant game. Objects and experiences, as well as their valuation, are realigned, and their actualization gives rise to more unanticipated possibilities. New forms of calculation and risk are entailed, as it is not clear to participants on what basis any given decisions are to be made; ambiguities are promoted as they are also furiously sorted through in efforts to produce the impression of clear answers and a clear way forward. So while the performativity of urban space and actors may be enhanced, these intensities engender capaci-

ties that are not easily translatable into the languages that demonstrate accountability, efficacy, and productivity to a larger world of multilateral relations. The emergency is not diminished even if it is lived through.

A long and detailed political history is at work here, although I clearly gloss this history that has continuously deferred state formation and turned much of Africa into entrepôt economies.

With the absence of maps or the plethora of incomprehensible ones, everyday life can become an incessant state of emergency, in a doubled sense of this term. On the one hand, *emergency* connotes a state of alarm. It is a rupture in the organization of the present where normal approaches are insufficient, where what has transpired in the past threatens the sustenance of well-being at the same time that it has provided an inadequate supply of resources in order to deal with this threat. Emergency leaves no time for accounting, no time to trace out the precise etiology of the crisis, for the sequence of causation is suspended in the urgency of a moment where recklessness may be as important as caution. The past brings the community to the brink, and at this precipice what can there be to remember?

At the same time, *emergency* describes a process of things in the making, of the emergence of new thinking and practice still unstable, still tentative in terms of the use to which such thinking and practice will be put. This is a present, then, able to seemingly absorb any innovation or experiment, a temporality characterized by a lack of gravity that would hold meanings to specific expressions and actions. There are no bearings and disorientation is guaranteed. Yet the crisis is dissipated: there is no normality to refer to, no experience of something unraveling, even though there is also no guarantee that the community will not return to the very place from which it started. So *emergency* connotes both the end of certain flexibility of interpretation, of the ability to put off until another day a reckoning of commitment and conviction now found to have been the wrong way to go. At the same time, this state of emergence enables, however fleetingly, a community to experience its life, experiences, and realities in its own terms—this is our life, nothing more, nothing less. Thus much of the process of remaking urban everyday life lies in an attention to the gestured, contingent, and shorthand annotation instead of the memorial; exchanged glances and murmurs rather than documents; deportments, practices, and trades—all a kind of emergency democracy.[19]

The city is a constant reminder of what could be but isn't. For some, extraordinary efforts are made, with generosity and ingenuity, to articulate the disparate people and things around them in compositions of opportunity. If what is attempted does not always work or seldom works, at least things are kept open, and there is sufficient evidence generated about the worthiness of effort. But such attempts are done in the face of others for whom the memory of what might have been possible is continuously effaced

in the escalating dramas of desperate transactions played out in narrowing arenas. As the old conventions of making oneself a real person seem either to no longer apply or are under apparently permanent seizure by calcified political and social interests, many fellow residents are seen less as resources or virtuous elements than as blockages to a better future that already—through machinations of religious devotion, cultural entitlement, or inflated personal destiny—has one's name written on it.

So emergency democracy is not the configuration of a representational voice, and it does not so necessarily render residents or their practices more visible. In other words, the social architectures that residents put together using their time, bodies, inclinations, tools, and all the material stuff that exists around and within them to reach and connect to public necessities such as water, opportunities for income, or good times fade into a larger world of operations. These architectures—not easily mapped out with their ever-shifting topographies of openings, closures, circumventions, retreats, and dissimulation—are both material and ephemeral, infused with shifting tactics but also a concrete shaping of bodies and places. They are conduits, connectors, spinning out unanticipated by-products and opportunities.

These experiences in Dakar and Douala demonstrate the mobilization of effort that continuously attempts to put the possibilities of certain stabilities at risk—in contrast to investing in circumscribed, defensive posturings based on the localization of everyday actions and the tight specification of attributes required for making affiliations—so as to configure more extensive possibilities of collaboration. What is particularly risky about such maneuvers is that there are no apparent institutional mechanisms that could sustain the collaborations that ensue, thus relegating them to an almost incessant provisionality. The locus of regularity tends to be constantly relocated into a preparedness to do different things in different situations, and to simply move on to the next opportunity, dealing with whatever it brings. It is not so much that urban residents here embody some deep-seated aspiration to "be all over the place." The dissipation of formerly relied-upon structures of mediation that linked individual, household, locality, and city has forced residents into such opportunistic actions. But once ensconced within them, a field of participation is opened—contested, often injurious, often without discernible gains—yet a field that is being replayed, and where constellations of power, if not upended, become more porous and tentative. In this way an emergency democracy is at work in the regimes that settle in to emergency as a mode of rule. Perhaps ironically, the aspirations for the city—as a place where it is possible for people to exceed the terms of existence previously known to them, as well as their particularistic identities of ethnicity, territory, or religion—are partially actualized in the very inability of the nation to do the job it was supposed to do.

Notes

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"City of Whores"

Nationalism, Development, and Global Garment Workers in Sri Lanka

Sandya Hewamanne

Intersection of the Modern and Dangerous

The Colombo-Negombo highway runs past the entrance to the Japan–Sri Lanka Friendship Road, which leads to both the country's only international airport and the Katunayake Free Trade Zone (FTZ). This highway is considered one of the country's best and most dangerous arteries. The intercity buses speed along this road, almost always exceeding the legal speed limit. One of the most difficult tasks at the Katunayake FTZ is to cross this road. Vehicles do not stop or slow down, forcing hapless pedestrians to find the right gap between two vehicles to cross.

One day in August 1998, several FTZ worker friends and I had to wait a while at the pedestrian crossing before crossing the road. When we were well into the middle of the road we spotted a van coming at breakneck speed toward us, almost as if willing us to stop crossing and let it pass. While my friends started to back off, I decided to show the driver that we had the right of way, and I pointed to the yellow crossing and stood my ground. The van skidded to a halt and the driver started yelling at us, using the filthiest words I have ever heard. I remember repeated references to "no-good whores."

My long-term field research in the area surrounding the Katunayake FTZ in 1999–2000 showed me that street vendors, shopkeepers, bus conductors, and even policemen often referred to FTZ working women as whores. It was not uncommon for FTZ workers walking in groups near the main bus terminal, the shopping plaza, or the night bazaar to find men

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asking for sexual favors in the most graphic terms. This understanding that FTZ workers, as a group, were women with loose morals was related to their position as young unmarried women who lived away from their families in an urban area and the unique way they negotiated city life. This also had much to do with the particular spatial and discursive production of the city as it intertwined with the discourses on nation, modernity, and female morality.

While Katunayake had not witnessed the same intensity of modernist industrialization as have some other cities in the world, it was nevertheless a space that had been intensely affected by structural adjustment programs. The rapid urbanization and industrialization of Katunayake, resulting from the transnational production at the FTZ and the related globalized sociocultural flows, affected the lived experiences of the people in this new urban space in varied ways. While neighbors reinvented themselves as the moral guardians of the FTZ's migrant women workers, many agents and institutions, including the media and NGOs, involved themselves in spatial and conceptual production of the new city and its gendered citizen subjects.

My article explores the fragmented production of the gendered and classed subjects within the particular modern-urban project of the Katunayake FTZ. The essay first focuses on the discursive production of Katunayake as a city and then analyzes NGO activities that sought to create social and political spaces to enable women's participation even while seeking to create particular subjectivities that limited that very participation. The essay thereafter explores how FTZ women workers responded to this modern urban project by negotiating an identity that in many ways refused the particular subjectivity enforced upon them by middle-class and capitalist narratives. I focus on the way workers engaged in oppositional cultural practices and created and participated in gendered public spaces, which were constantly contested by male and middle-class elements. Analyzing the new spaces and cultural practices in order to delineate the gender and class critique contained within these new practices, I assert that their performances in public spaces conveyed a specific identity as migrant FTZ garment workers and registered their differences from men, other women, and their counterparts in other working-class spheres. Through registering difference, they participated in politics of citizenship. While the discourses surrounding FTZ employment identify it as bringing modernity to rural women, workers refused these modernizing narratives by negotiating an identity that transgressed the image of an "ideal modern female subject." Based on long-term ethnographic research carried out in the Katunayake FTZ, the essay also argues that while FTZ workers' participation in stigmatized cultural practices and spaces was explicitly transgressive and critical at some levels, they also demonstrated acquiescence to different

hegemonic influences, especially capitalist hegemony. In that sense their oppositional practices marked the way transnational flows of ideas and resources shaped responses to marginalization in a way that discouraged transformational political activities.

Katunayake FTZ and the "Respectable Women"

When Sri Lanka established its first FTZ in Katunayake in 1978, thousands of rural young women migrated to the area seeking work. This was not surprising as the government, in order to attract investors, had touted the availability of "well disciplined and obedient women workers, who can produce more in a short time."[1] Today more than 100,000 women work at the FTZ factories, while about 70,000 more work in smaller factories in the vicinity. They live in insecure, poorly built, and overcrowded rooms and have poor access to running water, electricity, and health and sanitary services. While negotiating the burgeoning city, the women have to struggle to access public goods and services and to keep the disciplining forces of the state and other various agents away. The other subaltern groups within cities, such as slum dwellers, have the "vote," which they use as a bargaining chip to access their rights to public goods. The structure of the FTZ employment is such that workers are assumed to be in the city for a short time. This allows the city to relegate the FTZ workers to the status of "semipermanent strangers." However, there is no lack of agents and institutions seeking to produce subjectivities for the female migrant workers.

When people referred to the FTZ area as "city of whores" or as the "love zone," it produced particular gendered and classed subjects of a local urban project. It also set the FTZ workers apart from the city's "respectable women." Local residents of the FTZ area liken the "free-living women" (*ayale yana*) among them to a great (cultural) disaster (*maha vinasayak*). The reasons for such anxiety derive from an ideal image of the Sinhala Buddhist woman that was constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Primarily constructed as a response to colonial discourses on women and culture, this ideal projected women as passive and subordinate beings who should be protected within the confines of their homes. As a result, women leaving their parental homes to live alone in urban, modernized spaces aroused intense anxieties about cultural degradation and female morality.

Protestant Buddhist traditions and discipline constructed "decent and correct" manners and morals, as well as a proper attitude toward sexuality for middle-class women. Early Christian missionaries and educationists saw Sinhala Buddhist women as unrestrained and sought to make them more civilized, obedient, and serene in manner.[2] Male members belong-

ing to the early-twentieth-century nationalist movement also saw instilling virtues of Victorian femininity, domesticity, discipline, and restraint as essential to transforming Sinhala Buddhist women into a symbol of national greatness. These discourses played a significant role in recasting women as religious, moral, educated, and accomplished. Many sections of society enthusiastically embraced these codes of gendered behavior, which were comingled with anti-imperialist rhetoric.

The importance given to virginity also contributed to the anxieties over women living alone in the city and having unsupervised leisure time, because it provided the opportunity to transgress norms relating to premarital sex. Furthermore, a discursively constructed notion regarding the moral superiority of the village also burdened rural women.[3] Notions of superior morals and undisturbed traditions were superimposed on women, initiating expectations that village women were naive, innocent (in the sense of being sexually ignorant), and timid and that they were also the unadulterated bearers of Sinhala Buddhist culture. Therefore, when they migrated to the city and started enjoying their time away from patriarchal control, fears about their morality became a major preoccupation for urban, middle-class nationalists.

Although the socioeconomic circumstances of lower-class women were not conducive to following hegemonic norms of respectability, in rhetorical and written expressions all Sinhala Buddhist women were measured by this unitary notion of respectability. FTZ garment factory workers, who were rural women now living in the city away from their villages and freely moving around, came under harsh criticism, and their conduct became the space where deep anxieties and ambivalences over notions of development, modernity, and sexuality were played out.

Discursive Production of the City

Even though the country's only international airport was located at Katunayake, it remained a minor town council (*sulu nagara sabha*) up to the time the 1977 government decided to establish the first FTZ there. Katunayake is located more than one hour away from Colombo's main bus terminal and belongs to the Gampaha District. This periurban space covered by the FTZ was surrounded by villages that did not have running water or electricity. The open economy and other structural adjustments led to Katunayake being included in what was officially referred to as the Greater Colombo Economic Plan. This resulted in Katunayake achieving a peculiar position within local politics in that the area still belonged to the Gampaha District as an electorate while it received differential treatment in infrastructure development due to its inclusion in the Greater Colombo Economic Plan.[4]

This peculiar position must have played into people's imaginations: rural people usually referred to the Katunayake FTZ factories as Colombo factories. Women workers themselves, when returning from vacations, referred to their journeys back to Katunayake as "going back to Colombo." Most women had no other choice but to travel to Colombo's main bus terminal before taking another bus to Katunayake, and this was perhaps one reason for alluding to Colombo. In addition, identifying Katunayake synonymously with Colombo seemed to have its roots in a particular constructed dichotomy between the city and the village corresponding to bad and good, respectively. The romanticization of the village has its roots in Orientalist writings that celebrated villages as self-sufficient centers of harmonious living that should be protected from the influences of colonialism and its attendant individualism, which had already corrupted the cities.[5] These writings had a significant impact on emerging nationalist leaders, whose writings that the village was the locus of pure and authentic Sinhala Buddhist traditions soon entered everyday discourses.

Literary work during the twentieth century focused heavily on this dichotomy, in which the village was portrayed as the epitome of all that is good albeit vulnerable to the city's evil influences. This constant theme intertwined with anxieties over women living alone in distant places and the subsequent stories of FTZ workers' "disrespectable behavior" have figured into creating Katunayake as the evil city where young rural women get corrupted. This perception is further strengthened by the new fashions and behavior patterns that FTZ women developed, which closely matched the discursive descriptions of the bad city woman: "westernized, trouser wearing, aggressive, loud mouthed, and of loose moral character."[6] The men who congregated in droves around Katunayake after women began working there and reports of premarital sexual activities, rapes, abortions, and suicides that were reported daily in mainstream newspapers helped create an image of the Katunayake FTZ area as being a city where evil lurked and urban men led innocent village women astray.

When former president Ranasinghe Premadasa initiated the Two Hundred Garment Factory Program (200 GFP) in 1992, it was heralded as a solution to many problems faced by rural youth. The 200 GFP aimed to establish a garment factory in each of the two hundred Assistant Government Agent Divisions (AGA) in the country and was to generate nearly 100,000 jobs. More than 80 percent of the jobs generated by the 200 GFP, in keeping with the perception of women as "nimble-fingered and docile," were filled by women. Every factory was inaugurated with pomp and pageantry by the president himself. It was through his inaugural speeches that Premadasa managed to reconcile the ideal woman image, modernity, and the city/village dichotomy. In one speech, Premadasa referred to the depraved and debased activities into which the FTZ workers had been

forced in the city and pledged that with the opening of village factories such consequences would be avoided.[7] Owing mainly to these speeches and various forms of media reinterpretations, people started to see the 200 GFP as designed to prevent rural women from migrating to distant cities for employment. Village factories soon came to be known as places that saved "innocent" young rural women from coming under immoral influences in the city. The meanings generated by the propaganda surrounding the 200 GFP intensified the already stigmatized image of FTZ workers, and as a result even village factory workers projected their "purer" morality in comparison to the Katunayake FTZ worker. According to Caitrin Lynch, village factory officials preferred rural workers to the workers in urban FTZs because the latter workers abused their freedom, were spoiled, and acted more stubborn because they were away from their parents. Furthermore, these village factory officials contended that cities were full of bad people who led village girls astray, and they also cited reports of illicit sexual activities of village women in Colombo as evidence.[8]

Literary work also recreated the notion that the FTZ is a space where innocent rural women got corrupted and faced tragedies. Two recent films, *Kinihiriya Mal* and *Sulang Kirilli*, focused in different ways on FTZ village workers who got entangled in sexual relationships and other city attractions that resulted in tragic consequences. Several teledramas focused on rural women's troubles in city FTZs and depicted "what happens to women who take the fast road." These media have had a profound influence on people in Katunayake, who frequently used such stories to explain their views of FTZ work and female morality. The influence of such discourses was evident in workers' own writings, which have appeared in two monthly magazines called *Dabindu* and *Niveka*, published by the NGOs of the same names.

The following poem is an example of how the author understood migration in terms of how modern and dangerous city life contaminated the pure and innocent village upbringing:

Little sister
You came to the city from the village,
Why did you change?
You cut your hair short
Started wearing trousers and short dresses—
You were the most innocent girl in the village
What happened to you after coming to the city?
We can't correct the city
But we can keep in mind to
Protect the village [customs].[9]

Katunayake was thus discursively created as a city full of urban evil no less scary than Colombo. In that space, rural women encountered new global cultural flows and acquired new knowledges—or in the popular perception, they got "corrupted." When a young rural woman first arrived in the FTZ and assumed duties at an assembly line, she also inherited a subjectivity that positioned her in a particular way vis-à-vis other industrial workers, men, and middle-class women. The contradictory image of the workers as sexually promiscuous and as innocent victims of evil men was created through media and artistic representations. The spatial production of the city surrounding their lives also depended on the particular understanding of these women as morally degenerate and needing help and protection. Even though politicians found it easy to ignore the appalling work and living conditions of this "nonvoting female community," they spent lavishly to create a little park called *Pem Uyana* (garden of love) close to Katunayake's main bus terminal. The politicians celebrated this as a place where FTZ workers could spend time with their boyfriends without going to rooming houses. There were two assumptions underlining this idea: (1) women were often taken by men to rooming houses, where they then engaged in premarital sexual activities, and (2) women were unwilling participants and would cease going to rooming houses if public/private space was provided to communicate with their men friends. It is also important to note that the park was constructed as a place for FTZ workers and not for the Katunayake city, thereby making a distinction between "normal female citizens" and the "peculiar newcomers." When I visited this garden in 2000, it was a lonely place with unkempt flower bushes and hedges. According to the workers and NGO officials, nobody used the place and young couples especially avoided it. Both *Dabindu* and *Niveka* magazines published workers' opinions in which they lamented the image created about them by the very existence of the garden and critiqued the way politicians overlooked much more immediate needs such as a rest area for women workers' visiting family members.

In fact, the authorities had done surprisingly little spatial ordering with regard to the actual accommodation of the migrant worker population. According to Sally Engle Merry, management of space has been deployed by many authorities lately as part of transnationally circulating notions of urban governance.[10] Rather than restricting the female migrants in certain areas, the Sri Lankan authorities let them find their own accommodations among the neighboring families. The reason for this apparently stemmed from the understanding that migrant village women were purer, with a strict sense of shame and fear, and thus they needed the family environ-

ment. Local families, who needed the extra income, provided accommodation to women by building lines of substandard rooms in their backyards. Reports of behavioral and sexual transgressions soon started to surface, and the nonmigrant population began to be alarmed about possible contamination. This led to young women from the area projecting an image that differentiated them from the collective fashion tastes and behavior of FTZ workers.[11]

Spatial ordering has long been a strategy of registering social distance.[12] Most local families started displaying middle-class accoutrements, thanks to the economic activities generated by the presence of FTZ workers. Several families that earned enough money moved out of the area while still renting their houses in Katunayake to FTZ workers. Some others started displaying demarcations such as a barbed-wire fence that separated the boardinghouse area from the owner's house while still letting him supervise the residents' behavior from his porch.[13] Others who could not afford to move out or clearly separate themselves from the workers sought to display difference through their strict control of women's movements. City dwellers who wanted to exclude themselves from the workers stayed away from social arenas such as the shopping bazaar, eateries, and recreational spaces created for and by FTZ workers. While both spatial and metaphorical boundaries were continuously being set and reshaped within the urban social space, the workers daily contested the institutional and private forces that sought to constrain and structure their lives. Through this struggle, the new gendered and classed subjects of the Katunayake FTZ were created and recreated within the social, cultural space of the city. The maneuverings of NGOs and the workers' responses were significant aspects of this struggle.

The Competition for Clientele

While there were five NGOs dedicated to working among FTZ workers, there were many others interested in helping FTZ workers or learning about them in order to later support them. These NGOs were foreign-funded, and their financial survival more or less depended on how convincingly they proved that FTZ workers were unwise and prone to get into trouble and therefore badly needed outside help. Contrary to Arjun Appadurai's rather romantic version of NGO alliances as international advocacy networks that created deep democracy and globalization from below,[14] I saw NGO politics and their international networks as another device that sought to create a particular subjectivity for the workers.[15] While FTZ work and living conditions and the resultant social conditions were certainly shocking, NGO representations all but covered workers' newfound sense of self, in which they celebrated relatively more free-

dom in the socioeconomic realm and the new forms of knowledge they acquired through FTZ employment and city living.

From the outset, however, NGOs seemed the only avenue that could generate a political space that respected the rights of the individual and strengthened community. Because they stood outside the government and appeared to be above economic interests, they seemed capable of providing the space for a public dialogue across divisions. However, NGOs formed around the FTZs competed with each other for foreign funds, study tours, and to attract more FTZ workers to their particular activities, which in turn legitimated their claims on foreign donor funds.[16] Ideological and class differences among the NGOs resulted in a visible hierarchy among the organizations and a tense competition for legitimacy and the right to speak for FTZ workers.

In 1999 I had the opportunity to attend a meeting of Labor Ministry officials, members of trade unions, and NGOs that worked among FTZ workers. This meeting, organized by Federic Ebert Stiftung (FES) Sri Lanka, a German funding agency, was held at a posh tourist hotel in Colombo. The seminar, titled "Achieving Social Partnership in the FTZ," focused on finding ways to create a dialogue between workers and employers on an equal footing. The seminar was conducted in English with some Sinhala translations. However, everyone struggled to continue the dialogue in English—perhaps out of respect for the German representatives of the FES. This resulted in shutting out members of some of the NGOs, including Dabindu, which has a grassroots base. Representatives from the American Organization for Labor Solidarity (AFLI) and the Shramashakthi (Strength of Labor) spoke with authority, and they seemed to have been unofficially chosen to present the NGO point of view at the seminar.[17] This distressed the members of Dabindu, who seemed to have somewhat different opinions but found it difficult to dissent due to their lack of English knowledge. They retaliated later at the lunch break by telling me secretly that those organizations considered workers as ignorant, low-class fools and treated them badly.[18] During their contributions at the seminar, it became clear that both AFLI and Shramashakthi considered NGO work to be akin to charity. This attitude was more pronounced in the Shramashakthi representative's contributions. An upper-middle-class female lawyer, she talked eloquently about the way her organization helped poor, hapless FTZ workers to adjust to city life.[19]

Traditional trade unions were also interested in roping the FTZ workers' votes for political parties with which they were affiliated. The United National Party had figured out by 1999 that forming a NGO was the best way to reach this valuable voting block. Three young women at the conference represented a NGO called Pragathi (Progress). They had two centers in the Katunayake FTZ and one at the Biyagama FTZ. In an

interview with one of the representatives from the United National Party (UNP) trade union JSS (Jathika Sevaka Sangamaya, or National Workers' Union), it was revealed that the Pragathi centers were actually UNP-sponsored and established with the intention of garnering the workers' support during election campaigns. According to the interviewee, the centers were in the process of organizing cookery and sewing classes for FTZ workers since they believed the women would support UNP candidates in their villages during elections.[20]

An organization called the Association of Joint Council of Workers, also operated with foreign funds, was active among FTZ workers as well. This too was a male-dominated organization that sought to create and reproduce certain subjectivities for FTZ workers.[21] In 2000 this organization produced a video titled *Slaves of the Free Trade: Camp Sri Lanka*. This was an extension of another video produced in 1994, *Women of the Zone: Garment Workers of Sri Lanka*, and it included several new interviews. Both videos, produced with funding from a Labor Video Project in San Francisco, California, provided footage of women workers tearfully talking about their difficult and helpless conditions both at work and at boardinghouses. Neither video talked about the positive aspects of FTZ work, which workers themselves usually cited. Rather than calling for improvements in the conditions within which they negotiated city life, the videos seemed to reproduce the idea that city life was inherently bad and women preferred to stay at home if that was financially feasible. This was perhaps a genuine misinterpretation of the scene, but the overall tone and the focus on crying women prompted one to assume that the portrayal of women workers as a victimized and helpless constituency could well be designed to satisfy supposed donor concerns.

Brokers of Governmentality?

NGOs also were the intermediary bodies through which the state, funding agencies, and scholars collected data about FTZ workers' lives. The NGO staff members had gotten so used to filling out questionnaires for outsiders that I myself was approached several times by such staff members who expressed willingness to gather data for me. They told me that it was very difficult to walk in the sweltering sun and get workers to respond. On the other hand, they said that they already had a number of workers identified as women who were willing to talk and could finish filling out any complex questionnaire within a few days. While the state and its methods of classification and surveillance remained the major instruments of modern governmentality, the form of data gathering done by several NGOs created knowledge that facilitated the exercise of power from above. It is unfortunate that I cannot term this data gathering as

"governmentality from below," as Appadurai could for the Mumbai NGO alliance.[22]

Some staff members of an NGO used their cultural capital to put the workers in their supposed place, which was at the bottom tier of the alliance (see note 18). These same NGO members suffered almost the same treatment at the hands of the office staff in their Colombo funding agencies. The American Organization for Labor Solidarity funded Mithurusevene, and I knew three of the AFLI staff who coordinated this work. They were educated, had some foreign training, spoke English, and had their meetings at fashionable restaurants and clubs in Colombo. I was present at two meetings between two different AFLI (mother organization) staff members and the Mithurusevene staff (peripheral organization) and witnessed the low regard with which the former held the latter. AFLI members openly looked down on the Mithurusevene members and kept a tight hold on their work schedules and programs. They brought questionnaires formulated in their offices and asked the Mithurusevene members to administer them, under the condition that the results would have to be handed over to the AFLI. The Mithurusevene staff was resentful of the overbearing attitude of the AFLI coordinators, yet they thought it was part of their duty to fill out questionnaires for the Colombo office.

Even NGOs with grassroots foundations found it difficult to avoid being instruments of data gathering. Once Dabindu activists complained how the workers got angry with them for letting a woman representing a donor agency videotape their boardinghouse late into the night. The residents were angry and shouted at them, asking whether Dabindu was getting anything from these people for allowing them to ruin the workers' hard-earned leisure time. Activists found the workers' grievance fair, but they could do little to prevent that since their funding depended on the goodwill of the representative from the funding organizations and also on providing enough evidence of difficult living conditions.[23]

According to Appadurai, negotiating deep-seated differences while forming local alliances was like "riding a tiger" and this necessitated politics of patience in making partnerships.[24] In fact, long-established alliances like the one described by Appadurai could well have succeeded in playing such politics, and the surveys they conducted might improve the visibility of nonvisible citizens. But when alliances are weak and have not risen above the petty differences like the ones I described above, NGO politics ended up being another form of party politics in which FTZ workers were used as numbers to gain legitimacy. It is then that the NGO-conducted surveys became part and parcel of governmentality from above. On the other hand, grassroots alliances, which were above hierarchical differences, were rare, and Appadurai does not delve into the complex relations between the leaders and members of the alliance enough for us to see whether it is

the urban poor themselves who are engaging in the forms of politics that he describes. Differences in cultural capital (language and other skills needed to connect with international partners) form hierarchies, whether they are written into organizational charts or not,[25] and the alliance's very existence depended on international donor funds, which sometimes made it part of the politics to provide numbers, images, and reports on urban poor to these agencies. All the other strategies that Appadurai describes as means of politics of patience are fraught with power relations, and the participation of marginalized people in these activities, such as women's saving groups, may not always mean they themselves are playing politics of "financial citizenship."[26]

NGO Activities as Recreational Opportunities

While some NGO staff made careers out of writing reports on FTZ workers, the latter themselves became adept at manipulating the opportunities NGOs provided them to their own advantage. Given the competition between the NGOs to create their own FTZ clientele, women found a constrained space in which to shape their activities according to their preferences. On the one hand, NGOs were the forum through which women expressed their claims to certain rights as workers and women. On the other hand, NGOs were a means for them to engage in certain leisure activities that were denied them due to poor pay and social restrictions. NGOs found it important to have at least a few workshops in locations outside the city, thus providing women a chance for all-expenses-paid trips. In most such cases the workers were also given a per diem for attending. Mithurusevene, for example, conducted a youth camp to disseminate reproductive health knowledge, but they were forced to make it a carnival with music, dancing, games, and free food in order to attract female FTZ workers. The same held true for Mithurusevene's May Day activities, in which the organization had to include free lunch, a trip to the Galle Face greens, and a film show in addition to the free trip to Dehiwala to attend a formal May Day activity at the Migrant Services Center.

Once, during my research in 2000, the Dabindu staff asked whether I could encourage some Katunayake FTZ workers to join a three-day workshop to be held at a picturesque convention center in Kegalle. When I invited some workers at Saman's boardinghouse to do so, Sujani asked how much Dabindu was going to pay per day. When I said they would be paid Rs. 150 a day, she curled her lips and said, "Well, they deduct Rs. 150 from our salary when we miss work. So there is no profit [*labha*] for us in joining this trip." Before I could respond, Kalyani joined the conversation by stating, "I will come if they pay at least Rs. 200 per day." Although they complained about the low per diem payments, both Sujani

and Janaki joined the trip and cited their preference to spend time with me as the primary reason for doing so. They enthusiastically participated in some of the workshop activities while having great fun exploring the scenic convention center grounds and posing for many photographs before the lush mountains.

However, I also noticed that several women were able to fulfill their emotional need for family attachment through their association with certain NGOs. The NGOs themselves actively encouraged such attachments by providing extra support, both material and emotional, to these women. One such woman, Nilanthi, started working at an FTZ factory when she was fifteen and faced many family tragedies since then. "Now, Dabindu is the only family I have," she said.

Dabindu and another NGO, Kalape Api (Us in the Zone), published monthly magazines, and workers found them to be a good forum to display their new knowledges and to express conflictual feelings. While some writings critiqued conventional leftist parties for treating them as second-class workers,[27] others expressed militant ideas on inequality and revolutions. There were others who followed the middle-class rhetoric on the need to uphold traditions and morals. Unlike when they wrote to several pornographic magazines, women did not write anonymously to the NGO magazines and published their names and the names of the factories in which they worked along with their writings.[28] Thus NGO magazine forums remained one of the few available places where women could express at least some of their ideas and feelings.[29]

Learning and Negotiating the City

Occupying the margins and interstices of the city that was flourishing around them, women workers did not passively bare the subjectivities created for them. They sought to reshape their lives through and against the narrow spaces available. A young rural woman who first came to the city learned of her particular positioning within the city not only through the forces that were seeking to marginalize her but also through other women who had struggled against such marginalization via different means and strategies. It was through this struggle that they refused the particular subject position imposed on them by the middle-class and male discourses, and instead collectively expressed their difference and articulated their identities as a gendered group of migrant industrial workers. In this way, they sought to create a unique constituency, making it difficult for authorities to ignore their demands at least in rhetoric, especially when a general election was around the corner. It was by cultivating different tastes, engaging in oppositional cultural practices, and creating and participating in gendered public spaces that they sought to negotiate an

alternative identity that was different from the image of the "respectable Sinhala Buddhist woman" yet allowed them space to coexist within these subjugating and civilizing narratives.

Creating Public Spaces and Expressing Public Identity

The particular social relations and cultural practices within a space define and label a space. The way the workers chose to use specific spaces around the FTZ contributed to a process that saw these spaces being reconceived as sites of gendered resistance through which women challenged hegemonic cultural norms. However, the practices that created gendered public spaces in and around the FTZ were constantly contested by male and middle-class elements. The stigma attached to the very characterization of their industrial employment, as women living away from their families, had a two-way relationship with the dynamic commercial, cultural, and public spaces they created. While these spaces became marked and degraded due to their association with the workers, the very nature of the newly created spaces added to the stigma of being away from one's home. However, FTZ workers enthusiastically consumed the public space created around their lives. On weekends they went to Aweriwatte junction to buy their food items, to shop, to get their horoscopes read, or merely to socialize. The area became full of women, with vendors catering to them and groups of young men following them. Women gathered in circles by the roadside, bus stops, and shop fronts to engage in loud conversations. The young men gathered near these groups of women and communicated via jokes exchanged from a short distance. This appropriation of public space for a group's activities had always been contested, and when the group was socially marginalized it generated fear and jealousy among middle-class people. According to Herbert Schiller,[30] "the uses of the public streets in the city has been a 'site' of social struggle as far back as the early nineteenth century." Middle classes always contested those who congregated on streets to socialize or participate in parades.

Dabindu maintained a street-drama group comprised of FTZ workers and regularly performed on the crowded streets near the bazaar on Sundays. Both women and men gathered around in a circle that took up more than half the street space. The police turned a blind eye to the obvious violation of rules, emphasizing how unique the FTZ area and FTZ Sundays are. However, FTZ workers' appropriation of the streets provided them only an ambiguous and contested space for social participation. While their presence was tolerated, the ways they used the space for assertive behavior and flirtation were similarly feared as a sign of moral degeneration and a challenge to the nation's purity.

Workers contested the prying eyes and eroticized language of male

participants in the commercial sphere to continue consuming this public space as well as several other spaces, including the railway tracks.[31] There were boardinghouses attached to all the houses along the railway tracks for at least three miles. In the evenings, and especially on weekends, women got out of their crowded boarding rooms to sit on the railway tracks and socialize. They sat on the tracks in groups to comb each other's hair, sing, gossip, and quarrel. When family and friends visited, it was along the railway track that they sat and talked. Lovers walked hand in hand back and forth along the tracks, making visible that they were not up to anything funny. Petty traders, food vendors, palm readers, snake dancers, monkey dancers, and NGO music groups visited the railway tracks, providing women with cheap thrills. Every hour trains threateningly rushed toward them, continuously tooting their horns. Women waited till the last moment to get out of the tracks and then stood dangerously close to the tracks to reclaim their seats. This silent battle with the train extended to its passengers, and women stared back at suburban office workers who looked on disapprovingly.

Male neighbors and visitors to the area sometimes stopped to talk to women, but the tracks remained predominantly a women's gathering area, where they had relatively more room to freely express themselves. This more or less isolated gendered social space was significant in educating newcomers to the FTZ way of life. "Propriety" would seem an inappropriate term to describe FTZ workers' lives, but that was what they learned within this space—how to present an image that was understood, recognized, and approved by all who consumed the public space. Pierre Mayol writes, "Propriety is simultaneously the manner in which one is perceived and the means constraining one to remain submitted to it. . . . That is why it produces stereotyped behaviors, ready-to-wear social clothes, whose function is to make it possible to recognize anyone, anywhere."[32] Strangely, it seemed highly appropriate to use this very same term to analyze a space characterized by transgression to dominant culture.

Performing Identity

Toward the end of my research, Sujani and Janaki visited my parents' home in a Colombo suburb. While Janaki wore a maroon tunic over a long maroon skirt, Sujani was attired in a bright yellow– and orange-shaded blouse with a black skirt. They both wore almost all the gold jewelry they owned. When my mother heard that we were planning to visit two temples in the vicinity after lunch, she asked me to loan them some of my clothes that were "appropriate for the temple." Since Janaki and Sujani had no qualms about their dresses, I did not offer them different clothing as my mother suggested. We had talked about taking some photographs at

the temples, and it was clear that they chose these prized clothes in anticipation of photographs. At the temple we drew many angry looks both for our choices of colors and for their exaggerated poses for the camera.

Kathy Peiss writes that "dress was a particularly potent way to display and play with notions of respectability, allure, independence, and status and to assert a distinctive identity and presence."[33] Similarly, the colorful dresses and other accessories FTZ workers habitually chose to wear on special occasions registered for them a distinctive identity as garment factory workers. They wore bright-colored *shalwars* and *gagra cholis* that were embroidered with gold or silver beads, in combination with dark red lipstick, nail polish, and heavy makeup. They also wore high heels (even if going on a trip to a beach) and frequently wore multicolored dots (*pottu*) on their foreheads. Such choices loudly proclaimed a difference from other women and made it easier for people to recognize them even if they were hundreds of miles away from the FTZ.

Wherever they went in groups—to shrines, temples, or movie halls, with their colorful clothes as well as social habits displayed through language and demeanor—the women rendered these urban social spaces arenas of expression that celebrated their new identities. This creation and celebration stirred intensely ambivalent responses from different sections of Sri Lankan society, again characterizing the conflicts generated by modernity. On the one hand, the creation of gendered social spaces as well as new cultural practices was resented for the contamination they brought upon Sinhala Buddhist culture. On the other hand, people across classes were relieved that the FTZ workers were creating exclusive differences, thereby keeping intact the extant categories of respectability.

Furthermore, FTZ workers learned, performed, and registered an exclusive identity as migrant women industrial workers through the symbolic functions of body, its adornment, and its accessories (words, gestures), as well as through their aesthetic preferences. In the urban, modernized, and globalized areas of the FTZ, women developed unique tastes in the realms of music, dance, film, reading material, styles of dress, speech, and mannerisms. By performing subcultural styles that were subversive critiques of dominant values in public spaces, they posed a challenge to the continued economic, social, and cultural domination they endured. Moreover, their cultural practices and new styles were gender critiques in that the workers refused to perform the ideals of respectability sanctioned for women by middle-class men. In sum, FTZ workers' insistence on unique tastes and their play with established categories of style, language, and demeanor subverted middle-class values and tastes, on the one hand, and enabled them to register distinctive identities as migrant working women, on the other.

New workers who came directly from their villages learned about

the appropriate attire, fashions, and behavior within the FTZ through an intense socialization process at the factories as well as in their boardinghouses. After a few months of FTZ life workers acquired dresses and accessories that conveyed their membership in the community. Workers considered adopting FTZ fashions to be a necessary step in community identification and solidarity and ostracized those who sought to follow middle-class fashions. They also expressed considerable pride in being able to follow fashions and tastes that were their own and were happy in the knowledge that their actions irked middle-class people.

I once asked those at Saman's boardinghouse why women workers wanted to buy expensive FTZ clothes when they could easily buy cheaper pastel-colored dresses and try to pass as university students or other middle-class women. Saman succinctly expressed what many workers tried to explain in many ways: "This is the situation Sandya *akke*: however much we try to be like them, they always brand us as lower class. Only when you realize that do you start seeing the stupidity of those hi-fi fashions. Then you start to think, *Hmm, there is value in what we do and what we like.*"

When I related this at a Suishin factory lunch group discussion, Niluka said, "That's exactly what I would have said. They say our fashions are third-class. Well, third-class is my class, and that is just fine with me."

Many Sri Lankans use the term *third-class* (in English) when referring to working-class tastes and in general try to dissociate themselves from such tastes in public. The discussions I had with the few urban, low-income shantytown dwellers during previous research showed how they tried to identify themselves with dominant middle-class values and tastes. Ann Sheeran also reports similar tendencies among Colombo's shantytown dwellers.[34] The few Suishin workers who were from low-income communities in Katunayake or Colombo tried to create a difference between FTZ workers and themselves by more firmly embracing middle-class tastes. Migrant FTZ workers, however, celebrated this stigmatized identity by unhesitatingly claiming stigmatized tastes and engaging in counterhegemonic cultural practices. Women were keenly aware of their subordination along class lines and consequently developed their own tastes, cultural practices, and spaces to contest such subordination. These new tastes, practices, and spaces contained many elements of what middle-class people consider disrespectable.

However, despite resisting some aspects of Sinhala Buddhist cultural hegemony, FTZ workers compromised on other aspects, such as in their desire to enter into romantic relationships and to get married. Finding boyfriends and enjoying physical intimacy transgressed norms of sexual conduct. But their acceptance of male domination within their romantic relationships marked accommodation to a different set of hegemonic cultural expectations. More important, their performance of alternative

identities required that they participate in the consumer culture surrounding the FTZ and ensured their acquiescence to capitalist hegemony even as they sought to subvert dominant cultural values.

Consumer Culture

A vibrant consumer culture developed around the FTZ area, and it played a vital role in workers' attempt to build community through identity performances. Workers were given space to express a specific identity through consuming certain symbolic commodities such as dresses, magazines, music, and films. Much of the literature on commodification focuses on resistance by local populations to its contaminating character.[35] There are, however, studies done on its positive aspects that celebrate the way communities may appropriate the possibilities represented by the consumer cultures for their own ends.[36] D. Miller holds that communities "with a particular experience of rupture and dislocation may use commodities to embody more extreme forms of modernity such as radical freedom or transnational identity."[37] FTZ workers' enthusiastic participation in the consumer culture built around their lives was an important foundation to building community and creating identity. They learned what was needed and appropriate for an FTZ worker through this space and by choosing to consume the same commodities as others expressed their willingness to be a member of the community. These goods in turn became the signs that signaled this membership to outsiders. By enthusiastically displaying and performing the stigmatized and transgressive FTZ worker identity, women resisted the subjectivities enforced on them as "innocent victims of evil city life" and attempted to negotiate the urban-modern on their own terms.

Rather than just consuming what was on offer, FTZ women workers contributed in structuring a specific commercial space surrounding their needs and demands and then converted the physical space into a social gathering place for women workers. Many new jobs were created to satisfy their demands—so much so that the "respectable," legal citizens of the newly formed city worried that the American government would soon end its garment quota to Sri Lanka, thus collapsing the economy built around the FTZ. Analyzing the new consumer culture around the FTZ evidenced how the subaltern shaped city landscapes and activities in unintended ways.

Mary Beth Mills writes that Thai migrant female factory workers intensely pursued standards of modern womanhood and attempted to achieve an "up-to-date" identity through new consumption practices. But constrained by low-status and low-wage employment, they were margin-

alized within the urban consumer culture, and the "up-to-date" identity remained unattainable.[38] However, in the case of FTZ workers, they seemed to achieve something quite different from an "up-to-date, middle-class" identity. Their consumption was geared toward (by design or not) registering difference, and they succeeded in becoming branded as a less than respectable group of women. The women seemed to embrace this difference and the identity as women who transgressed.

This identification as transgressive women sometimes resulted in workers being publicly humiliated by the middle class. In one instance, I witnessed how a group of male vacationers surrounded a group of FTZ workers on a pleasure trip to Unawatuna beach and repeatedly drenched them in seawater. When women ran back from the sea, men tossed sand on their wet clothes. Looking at the way men singled out garment workers for harassment, I could not help but wonder whether this symbolized a communal punishment for women who transgressed. It was only a few weeks before that that the residents at Saman's boardinghouse, where I did my research, were crudely awoken from our beds and sprinkled with holy water as part of a ritual ceremony aimed to cleanse the impurities (*kili*) supposedly present at the place. The humiliation and pain they collectively endured at that time was fresh in my mind, and I wondered how closely this apparently playful activity on the beach resembled that cleansing ritual.

Amila was the only worker who chose to dress differently from the easily identifiable FTZ dresses that others wore for this trip to the beach. I was not surprised by this choice, since she continually refused to be identified as an FTZ worker, insisting that she worked only because she was bored at home. By constantly pointing out that she came to work from her family home, which was located close to the FTZ, she had emphasized the fact that she was not a migrant worker from a rural area. For the trip to the beach, Amila wore tight black jeans with a black checked shirt and little jewelry. She used makeup sparingly and applied a soft pink lipstick, in stark contrast to the bright shades of reds the others wore. Perhaps the biggest difference in attire was her simple pair of beach sandals, which were popular among Colombo youth. But with many of us wearing bright-colored party dresses, we attracted much interest from the many male vacationers present at the beach. The indirect, group flirtations between men and the workers climaxed when a group of men surrounded the women and dragged them to the sea in all their finery. As women ran back from the sea, men tossed sand on their wet clothes.

When the men started to drag the women to the sea I was sitting at the back of the group, and Amila caught my hand and pulled me along with her as she ran along a dirt path up an incline that ended up in a deserted temple. There were four of us who escaped this way, and we had

a bird's-eye view of what was going on on the beach. After about half an hour, the men's laughter and women's good-natured protesting wails ended as the groups prepared for picnic lunches on the beach. When we finally came down, the other women had taken showers and were opening their lunch packets. As they saw me, they started happily reporting how often each was dragged to the ocean and how some managed to exchange mailing addresses. When Amila sat down with her lunch, a conspiratorial air enveloped the excited group. Sanka and Nuwan (Suishin factory's Line C supervisor and the quality controller), who accompanied us on this trip, grabbed Amila by her arms and dragged her to the sea. With all her clothes soaked with salty water, Amila came out cursing everybody, only to be dragged back to the ocean. After dipping her three times, the men allowed her to pay Rs.10 and take a shower. As soon as she finished the shower they again dragged her to the sea. The workers, obviously enjoying the scene, encouraged the men with clapping and whistling. Their comments focused on how they had all gone through the forced drenching and that Amila ought to suffer the same experience. But I was puzzled by their focus on Amila, since there were at least three other women who managed to escape the drenching.

"Look, my nice blouse has shrunk in size because of the seawater," Amila loudly complained when she came back to eat. Ever ready with a combative rejoinder, Mangala answered, "Our clothes are nice clothes too." Although she motioned to Mangala not to aggravate Amila further, Vasanthi whispered, "Whatever we wear, we all are garment workers" (*Oya monawa andath api okkoma garment thama*).

The punishment meted out to Amila, who willfully refused to be identified as an FTZ worker, demonstrated the importance of collective identity to FTZ workers and the role clothing and style play in expressing this identity. The incident showed that workers consider adopting FTZ fashion to be a necessary step in community identification and solidarity. The abuse that Amila was subjected to was a rebuke to the latter's refusal to identify herself with the workers in narratives and in clothing and fashions. The choice of clothing not only signaled a woman's willingness to be identified as an FTZ worker but also signaled her membership in a stigmatized women's group and paved the way for "humiliating" incidents at the hands of men. Workers, however, refused to acknowledge the incident as humiliating or as an act of violence against them, opting instead to recognize it as a mutually pleasurable game. In this way they not only refused to be victims but also embraced the consequences of being identified as FTZ workers—in other words, as women who transgressed.

Conclusion

FTZ women workers, through their creation of public spaces and a gendered urban culture, disrupted modern governmentality's desire to subjugate and civilize. Their disruptions were within the existing hegemonies but still represented a particular local articulation of the need to be different. To this end the urban modern project of the Katunayake FTZ seems to have only partially succeeded in its modernizing project. While agents and institutions associated with the FTZ sought to transform workers' lives in the image of an "ideal modern female subject" (which was, of course, a middle-class female subject), it succeeded only so much that they, in their own words, became "FTZ mod."

The staff of most NGOs working for FTZ workers are genuinely concerned about protecting workers' labor and human rights as well as their general well-being. However, they are also steeped in cultural norms of morality, respectability, and women's behavior. At the same time, their solutions to improving workers' conditions are influenced by Western models, which may not apply in the specific cultural scenario in which the workers are enmeshed. This situation, coupled with the NGOs' race for foreign funds, results in the report-writing and census-taking activities described above. Workers used their own logic to decide which NGO activities to participate in and created a space for themselves to exercise limited power over the structure of NGO activities. Their participation mostly depended on their personal connections to NGO staff, financial remuneration, or recreational opportunities tagged on to educational activities. While the NGOs continued creating particular images for FTZ workers as young women in need of help, workers responded by participating in NGO activities for their own ends and forcing the NGOs to modify their approach to include workers' preferences.

The NGO activities thus provided another forum for workers to display their changed sense of selves. The media represent such transformations as innocent women getting corrupted due to evil city forces. Such representation denied women the rights and capabilities of being self-governing individuals. This essay, in contrast, focused on workers' responses to subjugating forces by creating public spaces and new identities. The focus on those positive aspects is not intended to cover the difficulties young women faced in negotiating city life with limited access to public goods and services and in conditions characterized by violence against women.[39] Rather, it is to draw attention to the particular ways in which subaltern groups find creative space even within tremendously oppressive circumstances.

Women workers' lives were full of contradictions that corresponded to the positions they straddled as unmarried daughters of rural families

and as urban industrial workers. Women who expressed a collective identity as urban FTZ workers through their new tastes and cultural practices denied developing such tastes or having taken part in these practices when they visited their native villages. This was made necessary by the fact that the workers had to reintegrate into their village lives once they left FTZ employment, usually in about five to seven years. Women who enthusiastically participated in the above activities displayed adherence to sexual and behavioral norms (obedience, timidity, coyness, etc.) once they got married and went to live in their husbands' villages.[40] Most of these married women were trapped in poverty-ridden lives constrained by many barriers common to all village women and some specific circumstances initiated by the stigma of their FTZ experience.[41] In that sense, if the modern urban space of the Katunayake FTZ represented a site of personal autonomy and social and political possibilities, the effects of these appeared to be limited to a certain space and a phase in their lives.

However, some of the former workers also showed that they were different from other women who never migrated by being adept at engaging the limited social and political space in their villages. For example, several former FTZ workers took advantage of microfinance programs offered by NGOs working in rural development, and it is fair to assume that their FTZ experience helped them in this regard. There were former FTZ workers who were trying to migrate to the United States, as opposed to Middle Eastern countries, to work as housemaids, while others were attempting to go to Western countries as mail-order brides. I analyze the way former gendered and classed subjects of the Katunayake FTZ negotiated their lives in increasingly globalizing Sri Lankan villages in another essay. Here, it is sufficient to note that the identities they fashioned were shaped in response to the particular subjugating forces they encountered while at the FTZ. On the other hand, when they faced different forms of domination from their village elite, elders, and nonmigrant women, the former FTZ workers started fashioning new identities for themselves. It would not be surprising if this new identity downplayed their time in the "city of whores" but emphasized the modernizing possibilities of the city, to which they traveled to fulfill filial duties.

Notes

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1. Dabindu Collective, *A Review of Free Trade Zones in Sri Lanka* (Boralesgamuwa: CRC, 1997).

2. Malathie De Alwis, "The Production and Embodiment of Respectability: Gendered Demeanors in Colonial Ceylon," unpublished manuscript, 1997.

3. See Vijaya Samaraweera, "The 'Village Community' and Reform in Colonial Sri Lanka," *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, n.s., 8 (1978): 68–75; James Brow, "Utopia's New-Found Space: Images of the Village Community in the Early Writings of Ananda Kumaraswamy," *Modern Asian Studies* 33 (1999): 67–86; Mick Moore, *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

4. While the villages surrounding the FTZ did not have running water, they had branches of all the banks, quality roads, warehouses, and many small factories that depended on the FTZ. The consumer culture that developed around the FTZ also brought modernity to the area's longtime residents, but it was understood to be different from that experienced by migrant workers.

5. See Samaraweera, "The 'Village Community' and Reform in Colonial Sri Lanka"; Moore, *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka*.

6. Sunila Abeysekera, "Women in Sri Lankan Cinema," *Framework* 37 (1989): 53.

7. Caitrin Lynch quotes journalist Suresh's account of this speech in her article "The 'Good Girls' of Sri Lankan Modernity: Moral Orders of Nationalism and Capitalism," *Identities* 6 (1999): 55–89.

8. Lynch, "'Good Girls' of Sri Lankan Modernity," 68.

9. Niluka Lakmini, "Little Sister," *Dabindu* (December 2003): 6.

10. Sally Engle Merry, "Spatial Governmentality and the New Urban Social Order: Controlling Gender Violence through Law," *American Anthropologist* 103 (2001): 16–17.

11. Sandya Hewamanne, *Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone: Gender and Politics in Sri Lanka* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Sandya Hewamanne, "Performing Disrespectability: New Tastes, Cultural Practices, and Identity Performances by Sri Lanka's Free Trade Zone Garment Factory Workers," *Cultural Dynamics* 15 (2003): 71–101.

12. See Teresa Caldeira, "Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation," in *Theorizing the City: The New Anthropology Reader*, ed. Setha M. Low (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 83–110; Setha M. Low, "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," *American Anthropologist* 103 (2001): 45–58; Alan Smart, "Unruly Places: Urban Governance and the Persistence of Illegality in Hong Kong's Urban Squatter Areas," *American Anthropologist* 103 (2001): 30–44.

13. Hewamanne, *Stitching Identities*.

14. Arjun Appadurai, "Deep Democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics," *Environment and Urbanization* 13, no. 2 (2001): 23–43.

15. All NGOs in the area claimed to be part of alliances involving international donor agencies, their Colombo offices, and the workers.

16. The same donor agencies funded several NGOs initiating competition. All NGOs strived to show that they had a grassroots base and tried to create a group of workers who attended their activities. The intense photographing and video recording that went on at NGO activities further evidenced their need to showcase the workers' participation. Taking a group photograph was given high priority, while the contents or the presentation style of lectures was not given much attention.

17. The American Organization for Labor Solidarity (AFLI) was funded by an American organization of the same name. As is with all other NGOs, Shramashakthi also received substantial foreign funding.

18. I was able to discern this attitude among the members of several NGOs. For example, several NGO staff members spoke English, and there were a number of occasions when they talked to FTZ workers in Sinhala but quickly switched to English to explain their opinions to me. Thus while pacifying a worker in Sinhala, the staff member would turn to me and say in English, "It is her fault that she is in trouble" or "These people do not understand the simplest of instructions." Workers looked pained and humiliated whenever this happened. At another NGO, workers were asked to remove their shoes before entering the office while the staff strutted around in high heels.

19. These class divisions were conspicuously played out at the lunch table, where the "hi-fi NGO people," according to some other NGO members, ate efficiently with forks and knives while many others struggled with the cutlery. Several younger NGO members used their fingers to eat. The three groups sat at different tables. I wondered whether a dialogue on equal footing was feasible when class differences were so noticeably played out among the people who were supposed to work together to make workers' lives better.

20. When he was informed of my research among the FTZ workers he offered the services of one of the Pragathi staff members as an assistant and said I was welcome to interview the women who attended the cookery and sewing classes they planned to start soon.

21. Joint Council of Workers (JOC) is an organization that, according to the BOI manual, operated mostly as an intermediary between workers and FTZ management. The top official of the company chaired the council. The worker representatives were usually chosen by popular vote, but many women workers informed me that they had been informally discouraged to run.

22. Appadurai, "Deep Democracy."

23. In a somewhat similar incident, the Dabindu activists had to be silent when a male counselor conducting an educational program on reproductive health tried to persuade the workers to reveal their sexual experiences and resultant problems. The program was funded by the Family Planning Bureau (through international funding), although the activists were troubled by the fact that the bureau's counselor was a male. Since the bureau was working in association with many other NGOs within the FTZ, Dabindu did not want to jeopardize its chances of receiving future funding. However, the women workers protested by staying stubbornly silent whenever the man prodded them to talk. The counselor was thoroughly embarrassed, since he had promised me that there were juicy stories he could get the workers to recite for me!

24. Appadurai, "Deep Democracy," 30.

25. Ibid., 31.

26. Ibid., 32. For example, Sri Lankan rural women's participation in women's saving groups, as a prerequisite for obtaining microcredit, is more often than not dictated by their husbands. In many instances, women explained how their men ordered them not to participate any more, since they did not get a loan at the latest loan disbursement.

27. Sandya Hewamanne, "Uneasy Alliances: Sri Lankan Factory Workers' Writings on Political Change," *SAGAR* 8 (2002): 1–7.

28. While their writings on their everyday lives mostly reproduced middle-class narratives, women workers found an alternative space to express more transgressive ideas through a pornographic magazine called *Priyadari*. This magazine published stories about FTZ workers by jilted lovers as well as stories written by workers themselves on their own sexual escapades.

29. Moreover, Dabindu had formed an action committee consisting of several FTZ workers to decide matters pertaining to their magazine. This, however, was done according to a grant proposal authored by a consultant. Through his superior technical knowledge this person, to an extent, controlled the Dabindu staff. In several instances I witnessed the way he treated Dabindu activists as his maidservants. Several activists resented this but were unable to express their anger since they needed his help in writing grant proposals to secure future funding. All this evidenced how difficult it was to form a dialogue that respected all opinions.

30. Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture Inc.: The Corporate Takeover of Public Expression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 103.

31. Their enthusiastic participation in alternative religious spaces also allowed them to create and engage with urban religious spaces where they felt more at ease. Workers' enthusiastic consumption of an alternative religious space, called Pillawe Temple, contributed to this newly created religious place being labeled as a "garment girl temple."

32. Pierre Mayol, "Living," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, *Living and Cooking*, ed. Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 17.

33. Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 63.

34. Ann Sheeran, "White Noise: European Modernity, Sinhala Musical Nationalism, and the Practice of a Creole Popular Music in Modern Sri Lanka" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1997).

35. C. Toren, "Drinking Cash: The Purification of Money in Ceremonial Exchange in Fiji," in *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, ed. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Goodly Beasts and Beastly Goods: Cattle and Commodities in a South African Context," *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990): 195–216; Diane Zimmerman Umble, "The Amish and the Telephone, Resistance and Reconstruction," in *Consuming Technologies*, ed. Roger Siverstone and Erich Hirsch (London: Routledge, 1992), 183–94.

36. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Ritual: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (London: Hutchinson, 1975); Dick Hebdige, "Object as Image: The Italian Scooter Cycle," in *Hiding in the Light*, ed. Dick Hebdige (London: Routledge, 1988), 77–115; Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

37. D. Miller, "Consumption and Commodities," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 150.

38. Mary Beth Mills, "Contesting the Margins of Modernity: Women, Migration, and Consumption in Thailand," *American Ethnologist* 24 (1997): 43–54.

39. FTZ workers faced mental and physical abuse within their romantic/sexual relationships in their factories, boardinghouses, and the neighborhood.

40. Sandya Hewamanne, "'Participation? My Blood and Flesh Is Being Sucked': Market-Based Development and Sri Lanka's Women Workers," *Journal of Third World Studies* 23 (Spring 2006): 51–74.

41. The stigma attached to FTZ employment followed them even after they left the job. For example, marriage proposals were published in weekend newspapers that specifically stated "FTZ garment factory workers need not apply" (*Slaves of the FTZ*, video, 2000). My research showed that any slight tension within the household or neighborhood often led to comments that the women's behavior was due to "bad habits developed while in the city."

Urban Modernity on the Periphery

A New Middle Class Reinvents the Palestinian City

Lisa Taraki

Palestine was stripped of its cosmopolitan coastal cities in 1948. The bourgeois, middle, and nascent working classes of these cities were flung across the world, and Palestine's steady trajectory of urbanization was abruptly aborted. The emigration of thousands of educated and professional Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza in the following decades, and the ghettoization of Palestinian society there as a consequence of military occupation and thus isolation from the larger Arab hinterland, left Palestinian urban centers with a distinctively small-town aura and ambience. The new Palestinian metropolis, meanwhile, was being built in Jordan, in the rapidly expanding city of Amman. East Jerusalem, which may have had the potential for becoming the Palestinian metropolis, has been marginalized, encircled, and cut off from its natural Palestinian extension as a result of Israeli policies of cantonization since the early 1990s.[1]

The Palestinian lands in the West Bank and Gaza are characterized by the absence of large-scale rural-urban migration, one of the most significant factors in the rapid urbanization of the rest of the region. By regional standards, Palestinian cities are small, with the largest city (Gaza) at slightly over 400,000. In the West Bank, the largest city (annexed East Jerusalem) has a population of a little over 250,000.[2] Cultural critics and other writers have characterized cities and towns as nothing but extensions of the countryside and have noted the absence of urbanity and other markers of urban life.[3] A certain nostalgia for the lost cosmopolitanism of the bourgeois and middle classes of pre-1948 coastal cities and Jerusalem also pervades some of their writings.

This article shows that more than half a century after its urban modernity was aborted by war and occupation, Palestine is witnessing

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the reemergence of a cosmopolitan center in one of its smaller cities, the twin cities of Ramallah-al-Bira in the central highlands of the West Bank. This gradual process, accelerated by the Oslo accords in the early 1990s, is taking place within the context of nascent state formation (although the realization of the state-building project is becoming increasingly unlikely) and transformations in the class structure, primarily the consolidation of a new and aspiring modernist middle class. Looked at from a wider perspective, this process can also be viewed as a local instance of transformations under way in the cities of the Arab world. The most salient of these for our purposes is the articulation of a new globalized and modernist urban middle-class ethos that is shaped in the metropolitan centers of the Arab world and then radiates to the farthest reaches of the region. This ethos is reflected in the sensibilities, dispositions, life projects, and practices of wide sections of the urban middle strata.[4]

The centrality of the new middle strata to the transformations in the urban landscape in the Arab world has not been properly recognized. In fact, most recent scholarship on Arab urban life has focused on the lives of the poor and rural migrants and their various strategies for survival in big metropolises, especially in Cairo. For the Middle East as a whole, the most interesting work on the urban middle class has been done by Turkish scholars who have explored the agency of the middle class, particularly in the large cities of Istanbul and Ankara.[5]

In the Arab world, the new urban middle class is caught up in the currents emanating from the unraveling, if not demise, of the postcolonial nationalist project. The decline in the quality of public education, the erosion of guaranteed employment, and the withdrawal of state support for public services and subsidies have rendered precarious the lives of millions of citizens. While the poor eke out a living on the margins of the formal and informal economies and cannot imagine better lives, the aspiring middle classes have discovered that social mobility cannot be realized without the acquisition of the proper tools. Learning foreign languages, acquiring the various kinds of cultural capital necessary for employment, and, above all, providing their children with better prospects in a globalized economy have become a primary preoccupation for increasing segments of the middle classes. Robbed of opportunities for social mobility through the state bureaucracy, the middle class has responded by deploying myriad privatized individual and family projects for social mobility and distinction. At the same time, what may appear to be atomized, private ventures and their related practices and discourses are actually (and are recognized to be) part of the process whereby a class conscious of itself in relation to other classes and groups is being constituted.

The practices, life projects, and sensibilities of the middle strata must thus be viewed within the broader frame of state projects and class rela-

tions in these societies. The grand project of these strata, social mobility and the quest for social distinction, can be viewed in terms of Bourdieu's "reproduction strategy," the set of practices whereby individuals or families tend "to maintain or increase their assets and consequently to maintain or improve their position in the class structure."[6] But maintaining or improving one's position also entails a simultaneous distinguishing of oneself from those below. The aspiring new middle class, through its practices and lifestyles, thus constitutes itself as a social group vis-à-vis others. Those originating from other classes and groups work hard to keep the distance between their present (or anticipated future) and their past.

Modern Imaginings

In his sweeping denunciation of the "neopatriarchal petty bourgeoisie" in the Arab world, Hisham Sharabi views the "fetishized modernism" of this class as a false and distorted modernity and locates "all the contradictions of neopatriarchy—between tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, capitalism and socialism, production and consumption" in this class.[7] Indeed, the imperfect modernity and urbanity of the contemporary Arab city—and society at large—is a prominent theme in writings by Arab scholars and writers. However, I believe it is best to view their writings more as expressions of a secular and modernist Arab intelligentsia's critique of society and polity than as scholarly analysis. I think that a more nuanced understanding of the ethos of this class would above all call for studying the urban middle strata on their own terms, as socially valid groups and not as exemplars of a defective or incomplete modernity. We must understand them as carriers of a uniquely Arab expression of modernity, and thus cultivate a more sympathetic appreciation for their predicament by exploring the imagination that fuels their strategies.

Arab cultural critics have reserved much of their scorn for the fixation of the urban petite bourgeoisie on acquiring symbols of Western modernity. But while the appropriation of items from the Western cultural repertoire can be viewed as fetishized practices, as Sharabi and many others have observed, we need to understand their social import, particularly in relation to the redrawing of social boundaries, the construction of hierarchies of status and distinction, and the fashioning of selves, families, and communities. Very often, we find that these appropriations are invested with meanings and significations at odds with the "original," Western frame. In fact, the "imported" items are assembled into a social field that has its own logic; in our case, these serve as symbolic markers in the delineation of social boundaries, the formulation of strategies for social mobility and distinction, and above all in self-fashionings. Take the mundane practices from Western middle-class culture such as jogging in public, mixed-sex

swimming in pools and the sea, or the adoption of midriff-revealing or sleeveless shirts by young women on city streets. The social meaning of these practices and items can be grasped only within the local context; the messages they transmit constitute a dense text that must be deconstructed for its implications for class relations (antagonism, insularity, resentment, conflict), the drawing of social boundaries, and the secular-Islamist wars, only to mention a few.

Charles Taylor has maintained that the differences among today's multiple modernities can be understood best in terms of the divergent social imaginaries involved.[8] While Taylor's thesis runs the danger of overprivileging culture over political economy as a distinguishing marker among a plurality of modernities, it nevertheless illuminates what I have been trying to articulate in terms of the self-consciously modern dispositions, subjectivities, and outlooks being crafted by the new urban middle class in today's Arab cities. Arjun Appadurai draws attention to the imagination as "an organized field of social practices, a form of work . . . , and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility."[9] He suggests that ethnography in the age of globalization should be reoriented toward illuminating the power of large-scale, imagined life possibilities over specific life trajectories, and "a new alertness to the fact that ordinary lives today are more often powered not by the givenness of things but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggest are available."[10] It is clear that new dispositions, articulating with global images, myths, and currents, are taking shape in the Arab world. In her study of the appropriation of the global myth of the "ideal home" by the middle classes of Istanbul, Ayse Oncu has observed that global myths are "directly involved in the production of the cultural frames within which life strategies of various social groups are negotiated."[11]

The new social imaginary encompasses a new consciousness of self, family life, and family futures. It also reconceptualizes private/domestic and public space and the relationships that are embedded in these spaces. Consumption is the overarching medium through which this new consciousness is expressed, whether it is of material or symbolic commodities. While most of these commodities are products of Western bourgeois society and culture, their "indigenization" is neither a direct replication nor unproblematic or without potential for anxiety and tension, particularly between the generations, women and men, different social strata, or, finally, Islamists and secularists.

Trans-Arab satellite television, despite its relative novelty, has been one of the most important media for the shaping of the new modern middle class's subjectivities, but other means such as private education, the electronic media, trans-Arab tourism, advertising, and even international conferences are also implicated. It is important to note, however, that these

homogenizing forces are continuously tempered by the varying historical trajectories of middle classes in different national contexts, and by the varying extent to which Arab economies and societies have been "opened up" to the relentless transnational flow of goods, capital, and information. Cairo and Beirut, after all, are not San'a', Basra, or Ramallah. In this regard, it may be useful to view Arab cities within a hierarchy of sites of modernity, in the fashion of what Eric Kit-Wai Ma in the Asian context has called "satellite modernities," those "magnetic sites between centers of high-modernity and developing modernities in the rest of the world. . . . newly modernized cities are reproducing, hybridizing, and domesticating a simplified western modernity, a modernity that is in turn consumed by less developed cities and territories within the same regions."[12] We could thus view Beirut, for example, as a "satellite site" with what Ma calls "powerful points of discursive relay."[13]

The Making of a Palestinian Mini-Metropolis

The difference between Ramallah and other cities in the West Bank and Gaza is palpable; it resides in its pace, heterogeneity, standard of living, and self-identity. One of the smaller cities in Palestine, it has become the de facto capital of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). The combined population of Ramallah and al-Bira in 2006 was estimated at slightly over 70,000;[14] the cities of Nablus and Hebron, twice as large and more important centers of trade and production, have a distinctly different ambience and tempo.

What was the unique configuration of political, social, demographic, and economic forces that launched Ramallah on the path of cosmopolitization, while other, larger cities were bypassed? Why was Ramallah the most hospitable site in Palestine for the elaboration of the new middle-class ethos? Three broad sets of factors can be identified.

The first has to do with the city's status as the capital of the PNA, and its historic designation as a liberal, open, and tolerant town. Its history as a Christian town has been critical in its march toward becoming a city, even when the vast majority of its residents today are neither Christian nor original city natives.

The second set of factors is a direct outcome of the fateful decision by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to pursue a negotiated settlement with Israel. Of particular note are the unraveling of the hegemonic discourse of the national movement of the 1970s and 1980s under the weight of the Oslo process; the increasing legitimation of social disparities; the emergence of a deradicalized, globalized form of "normal" politics advanced by some elements of the new middle class; and the normalization of a new individualistic ethos embracing leisure, self-enhancement, and social mobility.

The third, and I will argue most critical, set of factors is sociodemographic and concerns the coming of age of a new middle-class cohort with modern and modernist dispositions and aspirations in the context of both a changing political landscape and the preexisting social and cultural terrain (both in reality and in myth) upon which the new metropolis is being built. While this new middle class is to be found in other towns and cities across the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in Ramallah it has discovered the most hospitable and accommodating terrain for the realization of its social agenda and strategic vision. Thus, a considerable wave of immigration into Ramallah of this class (or would-be class) has been taking place in recent years; this has been accelerated since the installation of the Israeli regime of cantonization after the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000.

Ramallah, the Place

Apart from Gaza City (and to some extent Jerusalem), Ramallah is the Palestinian city most affected by the war of 1948 and its aftermath. Refugees fleeing coastal towns and villages settled in Ramallah in 1948. By the 1950s, it was home to a heterogeneous population of Christians and Muslims, "natives" and refugees, townspeople and peasants. Throughout the period of Jordanian rule (1950–1967), its summer resorts offered Gulf and other well-to-do Arabs an escape from the stifling social and physical climates of their countries. This diversity was an impetus to further heterogeneity, and Ramallah, with its reputation as a city tolerant of strangers, began to attract students, intellectuals, and professionals from other areas in the West Bank and Gaza. The town also became a haven for political activists and a center for party politics, political organizing, and demonstrations. By the 1980s, it had become an important node in national politics. This was a time of mass resistance to the occupation, and the town drew large numbers of youth from outlying villages and other cities to rallies, demonstrations, book fairs, and cultural events. In short, the town had generated a sufficient quantity of what David Harvey has called collective symbolic capital upon which to build its future expansion.[15]

Representations of Ramallah as a tolerant and open town have a great deal to do with the fact that it was originally a predominantly Christian town. In the wake of the Nakba of 1948, Ramallah's native Christian population was augmented somewhat by Christian refugees from Jaffa and Jerusalem, and also (in larger numbers) from the smaller towns of al-Lidd and Ramla. This infusion of Christians cemented the Christian cast of the town, even though in subsequent decades the original Christian population of Ramallah was greatly reduced due to emigration.[16]

There are virtually no data about the magnitude of the migrations of past decades into Ramallah. Internal migration data from the 1997 census tend to support the view that migration to Ramallah may have been considerable. And when compared with the much larger cities of Hebron and Nablus, the uniqueness of Ramallah is amplified. The data reveal that less than half (48 percent) of the population of Ramallah-al-Bira had been living there since birth (the figures for Nablus and Hebron are 74.6 percent and 87.5 percent, respectively). Analysis by age shows that for each ascending age group, the proportion of the population resident in the city since birth decreases, with the highest proportion (73 percent) in the zero-to-fourteen age group and the lowest (16 percent) in the population over fifty.[17] Significantly, there is a sharp decline beginning with the thirty-five–to–forty-four age group, the group that I will argue is the backbone and main source of the new middle class. The age profiles for Nablus and Hebron are extremely different, indicating a stable population over time; there, we see a significantly smaller gap among the age groups (the percentages for the zero-to-fourteen age group are 90 percent and 95 percent for Nablus and Hebron, respectively, while the percentages for the over-fifty group are 52 percent for Nablus and 71 percent for Hebron).[18]

Increasing restrictions on movement within the West Bank and between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by the end of the 1990s led to a concentration of government, international, and NGO institutions in Ramallah. Since the eruption of the second intifada in 2000, and with the deepening of the new spatial regime consisting of the Wall and the dense network of checkpoints and barriers, increasing numbers of hitherto commuting employees of Ramallah institutions have settled in the city. It is a matter of speculation whether these individuals will opt to settle permanently in Ramallah. There are many indications that this will be the case, since it does not seem likely that the cantonization of the West Bank can be reversed soon.

Over the years, Ramallah had become a market and administrative center for its rural hinterland. With the coming of the PNA, this status was enhanced, primarily because of the optimism generated by the Oslo agreements. Many large-scale projects in construction, telecommunications, services, and the media were undertaken by an emerging group of globally oriented investors, both local and expatriate. This was also the impetus for the proliferation of apartments for sale in multistory housing estates, and the emergence, for the first time, of upscale suburban areas removed and distinct from the older, more mixed, residential neighborhoods. Spatial segregation by social class and status was installed rather quickly in a town that had not hitherto witnessed strict separation of neighborhoods by class.

The Unraveling of a Hegemonic Culture: Hierarchy, Officialdom, and Social Disparities

In retrospect, it appears that the Oslo agreement of 1993 had more far-reaching consequences for the cultural-ideological and social fields than it did for the political, at least in respect to the achievement of its purported political objectives as an interim stage on the way to statehood for Palestinians.

In "Area A" cities (those under full Palestinian control),[19] the first palpable impact of the agreement was the departure of the Israeli army. On 28 December 1995, the last Israeli troop carrier rumbled out of the Tegart Building in Ramallah, the British mandate–era fortress that had been run by the Israeli military since 1967. Young and old descended upon the much-hated compound, particularly drawn to the interrogation rooms and graffiti-covered prison cells familiar to so many of them. After a few days of this mass exercise in political catharsis, Palestinian armed men, dressed in the smart uniforms of the many security forces, began to bar sightseers from the compound. The rule of the PNA had begun. The compound was renamed the Muqata'a, roughly rendered as "the seat of the governorate."

The installation of the PNA had several consequences for the unraveling of the prevailing hegemonic culture of resistance, and for the elaboration and normalization of a hierarchical culture of officialdom. Many subtle changes began to be observed. The casual attire and attitude at Palestinian institutions gradually gave way to more formal looks and ambiences, and the new group of government officials, bank executives, and businessmen began to set new standards of dress and deportment. Titles such as minister, deputy minister, director-general, and a range of other high- and low-ranking designations (director A, B, and C) helped to consolidate a hierarchical system very similar to that in place in other Arab countries. While derided at first by local critics as so many empty titles and meaningless trappings of statehood in an authority devoid of sovereignty, these titles and designations became normalized and dignified by sheer use and repetition. In fact, they were highly sought after by cadres in the various PLO-affiliated factions, particularly in Fatah.

Young Palestinians who had spent all their lives under occupation were especially unnerved by the plethora of bodyguards ("accompaniers" in the official discourse), security men, aides, doormen, chauffeurs, and coffee servers springing up in and around official institutions. Automobile license-plate colors, which had been deployed by the Israeli military to enhance surveillance and control, acquired new significance as social markers; the red and white plates on cars driven by PNA officials became one more symbol of the introduction of rank. Official correspondence began to incorporate hitherto alien phraseology in line with bureaucratic

custom in the PLO and the Arab world, and a novel phrase, "VIP," entered the popular lexicon, as in "so and so has VIP," in reference to the permits granted by Israel to high-ranking Palestinian officials and business executives to facilitate their movement between the West Bank and Gaza, into Israel, and across the borders controlled by Israel.

In addition to (or as a consequence of) the normalization of rank and hierarchy, cynicism, resignation, and fatalism became the order of the day among the critics of the Authority and indeed among large segments of the population. This has been embodied in satire, gossip, rumors, jokes, cartoons, broadsheets, and newspaper opinion columns. Especially targeted are the real or imagined lavish lifestyles and wealth of the new political elite (including stereotyping of "returnees") and, above all, corruption within the PNA. In this respect, what we are witnessing is not very different from prevailing currents in other Arab countries, where the disenfranchised population has few channels for political expression and influence; where rank, authority, privilege, and corruption are naturalized as inevitable features of life; and where cynicism is a pervasive form of political expression.

A combination of factors, including co-optation by appointment in the PNA bureaucracy, active exclusion from the decision-making process, and the withering away of their constituencies, resulted in the neutralization of many of the harshest critics of the Oslo process, particularly members of the "opposition" groups within the PLO. Some cadres in the left-wing factions, especially those with a record of struggle under Israeli military rule or in exile, were given honorary posts within PNA ministries. Bereft of the ability to influence the course of events and robbed of the youthful and enthusiastic supporters of the first intifada in a gradual process of attrition, the leaders of the PLO-affiliated political fronts and parties entered a period of political insignificance, marginality, and delegitimation.

Upon the establishment of the PNA, the already fragmented political field splintered into several arenas. These were not mutually exclusive, and social actors were found to move freely across the divides separating them. These were the arenas of official PNA politics; factional politics centered on the established PLO-affiliated political groups; and Islamist politics. The last major arena, one that expanded considerably throughout the 1990s, was that of what we may call the "new normal politics," a new, deradicalized politics of normality. It was and continues to be dominated by middle-class professionals, former members of mass organizations, and some academics, working mainly through nongovernmental organizations. Some of these individuals continued to play a role in factional politics, keeping their old affiliations with their parties and groups.

Of major concern for us here is the "new normal politics" of advo-

cacy and activism for social, political, and economic rights, and for good governance and democratic rule. Its practitioners have contributed to the devaluation of the old-style, pre-Oslo nationalist politics; the middle-class professionals presenting themselves as "the voice of civil society" have begun to organize themselves in new formations and coalitions, even though the influence of the old-style factional politics is not altogether absent there.

The new urban middle class has been one of the most important agents if not the key force behind the transformations being described here. Much like its opposite numbers across the borders in the Arab world's other cities, it has found itself thrust upon a changed world witnessing the collapse of the national project in its different variants, thrown to the vagaries of global markets, and forced to fend for itself. The coalescence of the momentous political events at the local level with the general collapse of the nationalist project of the Arab nation-state and the relentless currents of globalization sweeping the Arab world constituted the fertile ground in which the middle classes began to incubate their new life agendas.

The New Demography of Class

We now turn to what I consider to be the most critical factor in the transformation of Ramallah from a small town to a prospective metropolis. The post-Oslo era in Palestine coincided with the coming of age of a sizable demographic and social cohort of university-educated individuals from diverse backgrounds. They infused the existing urban middle class with new elements and today constitute an important component of the new middle class. Members of this cohort, who had been students in the 1980s, reached maturity by the end of that decade. They had married, had children, and were beginning to cope with the realities of educating their children, managing households, and having meaningful careers.

This cohort is a product principally of the expansion of opportunities for university education, both inside the occupied territories and abroad. Between the years 1975 and 2001, Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza granted BA degrees to more than 55,000 students.[20] While concrete data are unavailable, we know from anecdotal evidence that a considerable number of university graduates (from Palestinian, Arab, and foreign universities) settled in Ramallah throughout the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, attracted to the city by better work opportunities, and this trend continued after 1994, as a result of the concentration of PNA, NGO, and private sector institutions there. Social considerations, such as the availability of private schools for children, were also important in the decision to settle in Ramallah.

Internal migration, while extremely limited for the population at

large, has been instrumental in the consolidation of the middle class in urban areas. Ramallah appears to be the most significant of these urban areas, since it has been the principal focus for the ingathering and consolidation of this national class after the 1980s. It was then that Ramallah began to attract professionals and other educated people not only from rural areas in its environs and beyond but also, more significantly, from other West Bank and Gaza cities and towns such as Jerusalem, Gaza City, Nablus, Hebron, and Bethlehem. The increasing centralization of the Palestinian Authority bureaucracy in Ramallah has been a further impetus to this consolidation of a national middle class of diverse regional and social origins.

The New Ramallah: Constructing New Boundaries

The town that the new governor of Ramallah took over from the Israeli military administration in December 1995 was an urban nightmare, victim of the first intifada, the Gulf War and its extended curfews, and a general state of neglect and breakdown of civic life. Within a very short time, the landscape began to change. As residents of the town reclaimed public space, new spaces (mostly commercialized) were created to accommodate the new thirst for urban pleasures. Internet cafés sprang up, new hotels and restaurants were established, several swimming pools were opened, a number of upscale and more modest fitness centers were set up, and even a disco was allowed to operate. Ramallah began to attract young people from other towns and cities to the north and south (including Jerusalem, which was beginning its slow death by strangulation as a result of restrictions on the entry of West Bank residents). Young women in particular were the beneficiaries of the new commercialized spaces such as cafés and restaurants. Youth from the surrounding villages and refugee camps, however, had free rein in the streets, and complaints of loitering and sexual harassment soon began to be voiced by concerned middle-class parents.

One of the most significant measures taken by the new governor of Ramallah was the protection he offered to the new lifestyles. The intifada culture of austerity and self-sacrifice and its youthful policers had all but eradicated nightlife and other forms of entertainment. The new lenient policy was nothing short of a declaration of war on the intifada culture and Islamists and other conservatives. While the larger cities of Nablus and Hebron and the smaller towns (with the exception of Bethlehem, a tourist town) remained more or less on the same footing as before, Ramallah flourished under the benevolent eye of the governor and the protection of his troops. The historic notion of Ramallah as a Christian town served this strategy well.

It may be worth observing that the new middle class can also be seen to be reproducing some of the traditional prejudices of the established middle and upper classes pertaining to peasants and refugees. Fear of the subaltern other was exemplified in a case of near-hysteria among Ramallah's middle class in the late 1990s following rumors (or actual incidents) of theft by PNA security forces brought in from Gaza (it can be assumed that most of these young policemen accused of theft were refugees). Refugees from the surrounding camps, on their part, have also sensed the changing climate in Ramallah; this found expression in a particularly violent episode in February 2002 involving rampaging youth from a nearby refugee camp, during which many of the symbols and sites of Ramallah's middle-class modernity were vandalized and torched.

Education and Culture: Instruction in the Arts of Survival in a Global World

I am conceiving of education here in the broadest possible terms. In Ramallah, there is an implicit hierarchy of schools and other sites where education for distinction can be acquired. Even private schools, which by definition exclude the poor and working classes, are ranked not only in terms of their academic excellence but also by the kinds of cultural capital they have to offer. The quality and amount of foreign-language instruction, the diversity of the curriculum, coeducation, and international links appear to be of great importance. Even in a small city such as Ramallah, schools are ranked and compared with one another according to the different school cultures they nurture; the more conservative members of the middle class valuing "discipline" (especially for girls) might prefer church-run schools, while those valorizing "independent character" may opt for the more secular schools. Contrary to impressions among the public, a good proportion of children in private schools are not from the upper levels of the middle class but rather are children of middle-level employees in public, private sector, and nongovernmental institutions.[21]

Acquisition of competence in the finer arts has also become a preoccupation of the middle class. The National Conservatory of Music in Ramallah has a solid middle-class clientele of young girls and boys, and an examination of the family backgrounds of a sample of students supports my argument that it is not an institution catering primarily to the wealthy or the established Ramallah middle class.[22] Other sites, such as the Popular Arts Center, Kamandjati, and 'Ashtar Theater, also attract the children of the new middle class.

No other sociologist has captured better the psyche and disposition of the upwardly mobile middle class than Pierre Bourdieu. In *Distinction*, he shows how the petit bourgeois, "having succeeded in escaping from

the proletariat, their past, and aspiring to enter the bourgeoisie, their future, in order to achieve the accumulation necessary for this rise . . . must somewhere find the resources to make up for the absence of capital." The most significant resource for the fraction of the middle class richest in cultural capital (basically education) lies in the educational system; "the whole existence of the rising petit bourgeois is the anticipation of a future which he will, in most cases, only know by proxy, through his children, on whom he projects his ambitions. The future he 'dreams of for his son' eats up his present."[23] Bourdieu's observations encapsulate the essence of the middle-class strategy for social mobility and distinction: the accumulation of cultural (acquired) capital through scholastic investments in their children's education, and the acquisition of signs and markers of "legitimate culture" for themselves and for their children.

But Bourdieu has also captured the tensions inherent in this drive for the accumulation of cultural capital: "Torn by all the contradictions between an objectively dominated condition and would-be participation in the dominant values, the petit bourgeois is haunted by the appearance he offers to others and the judgement they make of it. He constantly overshoots the mark for fear of falling short, betraying his uncertainty and anxiety about belonging in his anxiety to show or give the impression that he belongs."[24]

It is important to note that Bourdieu's rising European petit bourgeois and our aspiring new middle-class subject inhabit vastly different social universes. Bourdieu speaks of "dominant values" and "legitimate culture" as the standard to which the middle class aspires, the legitimate culture being that of the Western bourgeoisie, to whom this (inherited) culture purportedly comes instinctively, as "second nature."[25] In our case, the "legitimate" culture that is the point of reference for the aspiring is neither an indigenous bourgeois culture, nor is it a legitimate culture in society at large. This culture is the hybridized culture of what we may call a trans-Arab upper middle class, a culture sought after and honed with considerable effort, diligence, and often sacrifice. The hallmarks of this culture are the symbolic (linguistic and behavioral) and material markers of distinction and are acquired in a multiplicity of sites, the most important of which are private schools, music academies, fitness centers, foreign and local cultural centers, cinema clubs, resorts, and for the more fortunate, international conferences and meetings. It may be added that in this respect, the Palestinian upper-middle-class culture is part and parcel of the trans-Arab culture of the same class being crafted and nurtured in the more "globalized" cities such as Cairo, Beirut, or, more recently, Amman.

The refashioning of artistic and cultural taste away from "folklore," the reigning paradigm for many decades, has taken place at the hands of a small group of poets, writers, and critics, many of them returnees from

places of exile in Tunis, Beirut, and other cities in the Arab world. While the lead was taken by these articulators of the new highbrow culture, the initiative was rapidly followed by a plethora of homegrown cultural workers who, it would appear, were only too eager to open the floodgates of "world culture." The sites where the new cultural hegemony is being articulated are in fact few in number, but they are critical sites in that they enable a community of devotees of world culture to come together, to see and to be seen. The halls of the new Palace of Arts, the Sakakini Cultural Center, and the Qattan Foundation are among the sites not only where the protocols and rituals of the new artistic sensibility are learned and practiced, but where the aspiring new middle class constitutes itself as a self-conscious category. In the process of taking in an abstract art installation, a Bach cantata, or a North African film with a French inflection, the practitioners and consumers of the new sensibilities do so in the acute awareness of their membership in a new social category; furthermore, the very coming together of its members and aspirants to membership constitutes a form of validation in a society largely indifferent to the new sensibilities.

The desire to make a rupture with the past and the anxiety and uncertainty in relation to "legitimate culture" that Bourdieu discusses in the context of the European middle class resonate very clearly in the Palestinian case. Both the more "established" urban middle class and the more recent members or aspirants to membership in this class are keen on effecting a dramatic rupture, mainly through their children, with the culture of their own and their parents' generation in matters of cultural competencies such as modes of speech and deportment, skills, and taste.

It should be noted here that we are *not* in the presence of the mythologized Palestinian strategy of social mobility through education deployed for decades by peasants or the petite bourgeoisie in Palestine. Education was a crucial avenue of social mobility for urban middle-class and rural and refugee youth for the first three decades after the Nakba. The rapid expansion of higher education in the 1980s, however, began to show diminishing returns in terms of employment opportunities. Thus, because the employment market became flooded with new graduates and since job opportunities abroad became severely restricted, the middle class began to seek other avenues for social mobility. What we have been witnessing since the end of the 1980s is the pursuit of a new, "modern" education, and specifically modern and distinctive *types* of cultural and social capital. The acquisition of these markers of distinction is fraught with tension, however. Vacillating and torn between the "tastes they incline to and the tastes they aspire to," the members of the aspiring middle class are caught in time and culture warps that can cause great anxiety, embarrassment,

and unease. The most extreme cases are seen when, driven by a "reverence for culture," they become eager consumers of cultural items without referents in local protocols, practices, and rules.[26] This is exemplified in the many and diverse micropractices of everyday life, as in inappropriately timed applause at a concert of Western classical music, or in confusing the English *p* with *b*.[27] Anxiety and tension are also manifested in the dread of mixing localized peasant dialects with the more prestigious urban *madani* inflection in critical social encounters.

This segment of the new middle class identifies with its higher echelons, emulating some of their practices and adopting some of their strategies for distinction and social mobility. One outstanding example is found in the arena of children's education in Ramallah. While many members of the lower reaches of the new middle class do not have the means to support the more expensive lifestyles of the better-off segments (such as the de rigueur summer holidays abroad), they nevertheless strive to give their children the best education available, widely believed to be found in private schools. Thus, their children share school desks with the children of the elite in the PNA, private, and NGO sectors, proving that they know instinctively what Bourdieu has revealed about the school as a site where not only academic knowledge but also "cultivated" or "legitimate" dispositions are acquired.[28]

The Modern Home, Domestic Life, and Parenting

The new ethos of the urban middle class in Palestine entails the elaboration and amplification of new, modern concepts of the ideal home and community, domestic life, parenting, and selfhood. These are exemplified by the "villa," suburbanization, the conversion of the home into a learning and entertainment center, parents' commitment to the instruction of children in the arts of distinction, self-improvement through fitness and the arts, only to name a few.

The results of the building boom that exploded onto the scene in the early 1990s can be seen today in the increasing urban sprawl of the Ramallah conurbation. Virtually every empty plot of land within the areas allowed Palestinian building in accordance with the land-use regulations put in place after Oslo has been engulfed in multistory apartment buildings, independent villas, and one gated community. In Ramallah alone, there was a steady increase in building permits issued by the municipality from 1992 to 2000, peaking and doubling in the years 1997–2000.[29] While the dream of every middle-class family is an independent villa with the mandatory red-tiled roof, in reality most of Ramallah's middle class has had to settle for new communities of multistory buildings, in what is popularly called the *iskan* (housing project). The more well-to-do segments of this

class, on the other hand, have built or bought villas and apartments in more exclusive neighborhoods. The overarching architectural paradigm for these sections of the middle class is what I would call the "Amman model," the most proximate and intimately known instance of the material culture of the Arab bourgeoisie and upper middle class.[30]

The daily routines of many women of the new middle class are most indicative of the new ethos, which finds expression in new conceptions of self, parenting, and domestic life. These women have tight schedules that juggle work or careers; workouts in fitness centers; chauffeuring children to school, music lessons, and other activities; and overseeing school assignments and music practice. Children are thought to require "enriching" activities such as playing a musical instrument, reading (not a widespread practice), and learning computer skills. The home in particular is transformed into a house of discipline, with significant investment in cultural and educational infrastructure (piano, Internet connection, library; the satellite receiver and video are now available in working-class homes as well). Women are active agents in effecting this transformation, which entails new conceptions not only of the successful family and motherhood but also of selfhood (the latter dictates attention to the appearance of the body, self-enhancement, and "doing something for oneself").

The middle-class women of Ramallah are no doubt building upon a century's worth of Arab discourse on the "advancement" of women and women's crucial role, as modern and scientific "household managers," in the raising of productive citizens for the nation. The refashioning of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within the context of nationalist modernity projects in Iran, Egypt, and Turkey has been investigated by several scholars.[31] But while some of the nationalist-modernist rhetoric of earlier decades may still resonate in the discourse of the twenty-first century, the social project within which family strategies are articulated is vastly different. This project is being conceived in an era of globalization, privatization, and the withdrawal of the state from the social arena. Its ideology is the ideology of a class that locates itself not within a national or nationalist project (the discourses of "civil society" adopted by some notwithstanding), but within a competitive world where the possession of the right (private) cultural capital is the most pressing preoccupation.

Culture and Resistance

It may be fitting to close with a discussion of the circumstances in which the new middle class finds itself today, eight years after the eruption of the second intifada. A Palestinian cultural critic, reflecting on Palestine's rebellions over the past century, warned that just as in past revolts

when the countryside imposed its conservative values on the modernity of the city, the second intifada is likewise threatening to stifle the modern spirit.[32] I believe that this fear is misplaced, at least in the context of the modernity being crafted by the middle classes of Ramallah. Ramallah in the second intifada is resolutely not the Ramallah of the first. Its intellectuals, many of them the veterans of the first intifada, are fashioning a new cultural hegemony in which the old-style austerity and puritanism have no place.

The contrast with the first intifada (1987 to early 1990s) is particularly instructive. Then, the national movement endorsed a culture of austerity, what one social critic has called a "joyless culture of resistance"[33] banning popular music, weddings, dance, fashionable dress, and all other trappings of "normalcy," lack of seriousness, and frivolity in honor of martyrs and in respect for the sacrifices made by the thousands of detainees and the wounded. Only particular forms of artistic expression were permitted, largely infused with a peasant ethos and presented as "folklore." Few dared to put forth alternative forms. But hardly a decade later, new ideas began to be articulated, and intellectuals and other trendsetters, emboldened by the collapse of the nationalist "consensus" and the erosion of the "culture of resistance," began to articulate not only new conceptions of "culture," but new ideas of the place of art in resistance. With time, even recreation and entertainment were subsumed under "resistance."

An e-mail announcing a Summer Nights program at the Sakakini Center in Ramallah in August 2002, when the particularly destructive Israeli assault on the city was continuing, proclaims,

> We here at the Sakakini offer our consolations to all. This is a hard time for everyone. This occupation has rid everyone of his right to a normal life and it has certainly interrupted the natural flow of our cultural life. But we have no other choice but to resist. . . . our work will not be suspended. . . . Maybe people will say it is inappropriate, but we believe now the most required action of all is perseverance, especially in our right for a steadfast cultural life.[34]

This refashioning of the meaning of resistance constitutes not only a critique of the austerity of the first intifada and of the culture of resistance, but also a direct engagement with Islamists. Two incidents in the summer of 2005 involved a confrontation between Ramallah-based intellectuals (as well as the prime minister) and Islamists, including the Mufti of Jerusalem. A performance of the Palestine International Festival (organized by the Popular Art Center in Ramallah) was banned in the northern town of Qalqilya by the Hamas-controlled municipality, and the Mufti agreed to issue a fatwa declaring the immorality of an event where men

and women held hands and danced together. At Najah University in Nablus, the popular singer and Arab Superstar runner-up Ammar Hasan was prevented by armed youth from completing his performance before thousands of students. Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish, housed at the Sakakini Center, warned of the specter of "Talibanism" and warmly welcomed Hasan in Ramallah. The singer later performed to a packed hall at nearby Birzeit University.

Another example of new conceptions of resistance is embodied in the formation of Nawat, a group of young professionals—many of them women—in Ramallah. An e-mailed announcement for a demonstration in April 2003 against "the new colonialism in Iraq and the old occupation in Palestine" promises children's activities such as face painting and drawing on eggs. Nawat also pioneered new forms of resistance such as pot-banging during the long curfews.

The previous example illuminates another aspect of the new sensibility: we note the emphasis on children's right to enjoyment and personal development, a concept that was largely absent during the first intifada but which gained resonance in the years after Oslo, largely at the hands of Palestinian and international NGOs and agencies. Many middle-class people today feel that during the first intifada, children were deprived not only of their right to an education, but also of their "childhoods," notwithstanding the strategy of popular education practiced in neighborhoods and communities faced with long school closures and curfews. However, the striking aspect of the new sensibility is that while it is endowed with the mandatory nationalist inflection, it is very much a part of the larger global discourse on children's rights, largely conceived in an individualistic frame. Incorporating face painting for children into a street demonstration against the occupation in Iraq and Palestine fuses the discourses of individual rights and collective resistance and moves them into a new terrain. However, it remains to be said that it is an uneasy synthesis, as intellectuals and professionals find that the most mundane cultural or recreational activities still require justification in terms of their contribution to the national struggle. The old-fashioned culture of resistance is not entirely dead, and thus a sustained effort is required on the part of intellectuals, professionals, and cultural workers to invest what was previously deemed as frivolous with grand meanings and import.

Nearly sixty years after the nascent cosmopolitanism of Palestinian Jerusalem and the coastal cities was aborted by war and uprooting, a Palestinian city is on the threshold of urbanity, its main agent a new middle class with new sensibilities fueled by a modernist imagination. This process was triggered by momentous political events that seemed to set Palestine on a trajectory of state building and independence. Yet it is not clear whether this course will reach completion and whether the

new middle class will materialize as a hegemonic national class. This will depend on the fortunes of the PLO and its success in realizing the national project of a Palestinian state.

Notes

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1. For a discussion of Jerusalem's "truncated urbanism" and the recent decline of Jerusalem as a Palestinian metropolitan center, see Salim Tamari, "Jerusalem: Subordination and Governance in a Sacred Geography," in *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*, ed. Seteney Shami (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001), 175–203.

2. The first national census was carried out in 1997 by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS); these are PCBS estimates for mid-2006. See www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/populati/popu_list.aspx (accessed 30 July 2007).

3. Jamil Hilal, *The Palestinian Political System after Oslo: An Analytical and Critical Study* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies and the Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 1988), in Arabic; Azmi Bishara, *Ruptured Political Discourse and Other Studies* (Ramallah: Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 1998), in Arabic; Mourid Barghuthi, *I Saw Ramallah* (Casablanca: Arab Cultural Center, 1988), in Arabic; Sarah Graham-Brown, "Impact on the Social Structure of Palestinian Society," in *Occupation: Israel over Palestine*, ed. Naseer Aruri (Belmont: AAUG, 1989, second edition); Zakariyya Muhammad, *On Palestinian Culture* (Ramallah: Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 2002), in Arabic.

4. The analysis and description in this essay are based on more than thirty years of observation of and participation in some aspects of the life of the new middle class in the city of Ramallah, and on a critical reading of various texts, including but not limited to scholarly articles, demographic and other statistics, town and school histories, memoirs, newspaper columns and advertisements, billboards, storefronts, grocery store shelves, restaurant menus, piano concert programs, swimming pool rules, political broadsheets, graduation ceremony programs, Web sites, and other texts of daily life on the streets and other public and private places. Interviews and discussions with children, youth, and adults were also carried out between November 2001 and January 2003.

5. See, for example, Sencer Ayata, "The New Middle Class and the Joys of Suburbia," in *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey*, ed. Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayse Saktanber (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 25–42; Nilüfer Göle, "Islam in Public: New Visibilities and New Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14 (Winter 2002): 173–90; Ayse Oncu, "The Myth of the 'Ideal Home' Travels across Cultural Borders to Istanbul," in *Space, Culture, and Power: New Identities in Globalizing Cities*, ed. Ayse Oncu and Petra Weyland (London: Zed, 1997), 56–72; Ferhunde Ozbay, "Gendered Space: A New Look at Turkish Modernization," *Gender and History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 555–68; Ayse Saktanber, "Formation of a Middle-Class Ethos and Its Quotidian: Revitalizing Islam in Urban Turkey," in Oncu and Weyland, *Space, Culture, and Power*, 140–56.

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 125.

7. Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 126.

8. Charles Taylor, "Modern Social Imaginaries," *Public Culture* 14 (Winter 2002): 91–124.

9. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 31.

10. Ibid., 55.

11. Oncu, "The Myth of the 'Ideal Home,'" 69–70.

12. Eric Kit-Wai Ma, "Consuming Satellite Modernities," *Cultural Studies* 15, nos. 3–4 (2001): 444.

13. Ibid., 460.

14. These figures include the population of two refugee camps within the two cities, al-Am'ari and Qaddura. See www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/populati/popu_list.aspx (accessed 30 July 2007).

15. David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 405.

16. Today, 32 percent of Ramallah's population is Christian (the figures for Nablus and Hebron are 0.8 and .1 percent, respectively). Calculated from the PCBS data set from the 1997 census.

17. Lisa Taraki and Rita Giacaman, "Modernity Aborted and Reborn: Ways of Being Urban in Palestine," in *Living Palestine: Family Survival, Resistance, and Mobility under Occupation*, ed. Taraki (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 43.

18. The figures were calculated from the PCBS data set from the 1997 census.

19. The Oslo agreement divided the Palestinian territories into three areas: Area A was to be under Palestinian security control, B under Israeli security control with Palestinian responsibility for civilian affairs, and C was designated as under full Israeli control.

20. Compiled from data from Ministry of Higher Education, *Statistical Guide to Palestinian Universities, 1991–2001* (Ramallah: Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.), in Arabic; and Council for Higher Education, *Statistical Guide to Palestinian Universities, 1975–1995* (Ramallah: Council for Higher Education, n.d.), in Arabic.

21. Long-term observation and interviews with students and administrators at the two Friends Schools in Ramallah, possibly the top schools in the hierarchy of providers of "modern" cultural capital, bear out this point.

22. A sample of 60 students (out of a total of 195 in 2001–2) was interviewed.

23. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 333, 352–53.

24. Ibid., 253.

25. Ibid., 86.

26. Ibid., 326, 321.

27. For the more established Palestinian upper and upper-middle class whose education in Western languages began in childhood and in private schools, the *p* sound comes "naturally," a fact not lost on the aspiring middle class of less fortunate backgrounds.

28. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 23.

29. Compiled from records of the engineering department, Ramallah Municipal Council, 2002.

30. For a discussion of upper-middle-class housing styles in Amman, see Tawfiq Abu-Ghazzeh, "The Dialectic Dimensions of Homes as an Expression of Identity and Communality in Amman, Jordan," *Housing Studies* 12, no. 2 (1997): 247–63.

31. See, for example, Lila Abu-Lughod, ed., *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

32. Zakariyya Muhammad, *On Palestinian Culture* (Ramallah: Palestinian Institute for the Study of Democracy, 2002), 72, in Arabic.

33. Salim Tamari, "The Mountain against the Sea: Social Wars in the Mediterranean," in *The Mountain against the Sea: Studies in Palestinian Urban Culture and Social History*, ed. Salim Tamari (Ramallah: Muwatin, 2005), 15–33, in Arabic.

34. E-mail announcement from Sakakini Cultural Center, 1 August 2002.

In the Ruins of Bahla

Reconstructed Forts and Crumbling Walls in an Omani Town

Mandana E. Limbert

The two-lane Muscat-Buraimi highway cuts through the middle of Bahla, the pre-Islamic walled town in the "Interior Region" (Dakhiliya) of the Sultanate of Oman where I conducted fieldwork in 1996 and 1997 and visited again in 2002. Coming from the direction of Nizwa, the capital of the Dakhiliya region, the road reaches the town, first through the suburb of al-Ma'amûra, then curves past the fort on the left and the new Friday mosque and suq on the right, runs through the middle of what used to be gardens in the neighborhood of Bûstân Lahma, and finally exits the former town boundaries continuing in the direction of the Abu Dhabi border.[1] It takes about one or two minutes to drive the one kilometer from one border of the old walls to the other.

The road's division of Bahla is significant, both in terms of what it means for Bahla's relations with Muscat and in terms of the structure of the town itself. The road through the middle of town is an indicator of the changes that Sultan Qaboos bin Said al-Bu Saidi's rule inaugurated. Most statistics illustrating the dramatic changes in Oman after the 1970 coup d'état do not fail to mention road construction: in 1970 there were 6 kilometers of paved road; by 1980 there were more than 12,000 kilometers of paved road.[2] This particular road—from Muscat to Sumayl to Nizwa, Bahla, Ibri, and Bureimi—is one of the hallmarks of the early construction projects. The road that cuts right through the middle of Bahla does not only point to the changes in Oman in terms of infrastructural development, however. This road also suggests that Bahla cannot be separated or

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isolated politically from the other towns on the path. The towns along the main road are connected to each other and form part of the backbone of the unified nation, subject to a central government.[3] The road is a constant reminder that the Omani government has the power to build and destroy, to create roads and make defunct old protections, to connect the towns along the road to each other and to a single state.[4]

At the same time that the road has become an icon of Oman's transformations since 1970 (including the new regime's system of administration), other architectural features—forts, town walls, neighborhoods—that helped maintain order in Bahla in the past have become ruins. This article examines how these structures have changed and the different perceptions and dispositions that have emerged in the wake of these transformations. I ask: How has the new state refashioned, and do people encounter the ruins of former power? What do the shifting sensibilities toward these sites reveal about people's relationships with the past and with the management of local order today? The disjuncture between state interpretations of physical features and everyday practice, between state attempts at incorporating architecture into a nationalist paradigm and local understandings, is a disjuncture that Michael Herzfeld has described as between "monumental" and "social" time, between time formed by well-defined periods and destiny rather than formal relationships and daily interactions.[5] This disjuncture is similar as well to the one between what Valentine Daniel has called "epistemic" and "ontic" dispositions to the past, between dispositions to the past that emphasize "seeing-the-world" rather than "being-in-the-world," visualizing the past rather than inhabiting the past.[6] In Bahla, while some structures have come to be incorporated into the state's heritage projects, shaping the very disjunctures and shifts that Herzfeld and Daniel describe, other structures are ignored, left to ruin, or transformed into new bureaucratic and administrative (rather than nostalgic) systems. Despite their differences, the three types of structures explored in this article were all central to the management of order in the past and reveal, in their transformations under the new regime, the multiple ways that the state's system of rule and policing has been transformed.

While "local" understandings and practices of town structures may reveal differences with state nationalist narratives, whether in the large urban centers or in the smaller towns, the local too, of course, is also imbued with power struggles and tensions, the management of social order and its always, already potential disruptions. Indeed, like the Moroccan village that Stefania Pandolfo has described, the various divisions of Bahla reveal how the image of the totality is a self-image that may be a "remedy to contain fragmentation."[7] Although many people speak about the town's fort and the wall as structures to oppose attacks from the outside, as the core (or heart) of the town and its outer skin, they are also structures of

internal control. The fort is fortified not only against attackers from outside the walls, but also against possible attack from within the walls. In addition, each of the neighborhoods has a wall and at least one gate—almost as though each neighborhood had, at one point, been a village, with its fields outside. The outer walls of the town, therefore, became a way of controlling and collecting taxes from about eighteen different villages and their fields.

Thus, tensions over maintaining order are nothing new; what has shifted is the ways this is done and some of the dispositions and perceptions produced in its wake. In particular, personal memories, expressed in stories of local figures or apparent in everyday habits, are confronting national accounts of the past (which of course can also become entangled in and part of people's memories) and new spatial arrangements. My focus here is on the memories and perceptual shifts associated with changing forms of governance in a medium-sized town outside of the capital area, as it is increasingly incorporated into the bureaucracy and history of the nation-state. I examine how the fort has changed from local and regional political-military center to national museum, helping shape more abstract and impersonal relationships to the past; and, how the town's crumbling wall, whose origin myth and grandeur are no longer legitimized as an emblem of Bahlawi identity, nevertheless continues to evoke for some the limits of order and the sense of a protective boundary. I also explore how the town's neighborhoods are succumbing to simultaneous centrifugal and centripetal pressures: state attempts at streamlining the administration of neighborhoods are emerging just as the control of the neighborhoods through locked doors ends, giving way not only to the self-regulation and disciplining of movement (in part through discourses of fear), but also to the realignment of forms of belonging and identification.

These architectural features critical to former systems of order have not all become ruins in the same way under the new regime, and none is that kind of ruin—like the Acropolis or Persepolis—that evokes, in its decay, a past and picturesque glory. Indeed, the fort is being rebuilt to evoke such a glory, but no longer left in decay. The walls, on the other hand, are officially ignored, and the neighborhoods are completely refashioned into purely bureaucratic rather than spatial entities, both left to complete collapse, and not acknowledged as picturesque by Bahlawis, or at least not while I was conducting work there in the late 1990s. This selective and uneven appropriation of the former regime's system of governance has produced in its wake shifting and various senses and memories of former life. The shifts in perception and spatial experience that have accompanied the ruins of the old regime are also, it seems, further reminders of the possibilities of Oman's future after the demise of the sultan and when oil reserves are depleted. As the new monuments to the mechanisms and

symbols of state progress and power, such as asphalt roads, are projected into a future of ruins, one cannot help but be reminded, although in revised form, of Walter Benjamin's famous injunction: "In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled."[8]

Forts

In 1987 the Bahla fort was "inscribed" as a UNESCO world heritage site, the first such site in the Arabian Peninsula. In line with an already existing policy of maintaining national heritage and culture through the reconstruction and restoration of forts,[9] the honor bestowed on the Bahla fort further confirmed and supported government policy, both of fort restoration and of defining the Interior Region as the region of national heritage. The Omani government, with the technical support of Moroccan architects, began its restoration efforts in Bahla in the early 1990s and continued through the late 1990s. In Oman, fort reconstruction has taken precedence over any other type of national conservation work. The centrality of forts and fort imagery in Oman cannot be overemphasized: the Omani government has not only supported the reconstruction of forts but has also built and encouraged fort imagery and fort characteristics to appear as features of office buildings, personal homes, mosques, rooftop water tanks, bus stops, and telephone booths. Throughout Oman, in other words, many new state (and private) constructions are often adorned with fortresslike crenellations. As the visual proof of Oman's strength and historic grandeur, fort characteristics have provided a proud theme in contemporary Omani architecture.[10]

According to some people in Bahla, its fort, which is called Hisn Tammâh, was named after the Iranian ruler of the town in pre-Islamic—and probably Sassanid—times.[11] Others, instead, say that it has this name because it was built on a hill in the middle of the town; *tammâh* means "covetous" in Arabic. While the origins are vague, people in Bahla note that different parts of the fort complex were built at different times; the oldest section of the fort, I was often told, was the tall, narrow tower (*burg*), known as Burg al-Rîh, in the southern part of the fort complex. According to the main written histories of Oman, the Bahla fort is also said to have been completely destroyed at the beginning of the seventeenth century, near the end of the Nabhani dynasty.[12] This destruction is important in the records of Omani history because it, in some ways, marks the end of the Nabhani dynasty and the rise of the Ya'ariba dynasty, the dynasty that preceded that of the al-Bu Sa'id, the present ruling family of Oman. Whether it was completely destroyed and then built again in sections after the early seventeenth century or whether parts of the older structure remained and

further sections were rebuilt or added on seems to be less important to Bahlawis than the connection between the town and national history as well as the ways that the Bahla fort is proof of the town's antiquity.[13]

Today, forts are one of the main tourist sites in Oman, for both foreign and domestic tourists. No longer inhabited by governors (*wâlis*) and their entourages, by prisoners or spirits, the forts have become museums. This transformation from sites of political-military control to emblems of Omani grandeur is very recent. In 1960, as part of its long-term plans for Muscat and Oman, the British military recommended the reconstruction of the forts after its own bombing campaign during the reignited Imamate rebellion in 1957.[14] In 1957, British Royal Air Force jets stationed in Sharjah (in today's United Arab Emirates) bombed forts throughout Oman, including Bahla.[15] Upon seeing these British recommendations in 1960, however, the sultan of Oman, Sa'id bin Taimur, told the British consul general that he wished to take care of the forts himself. The British subsequently dropped the reconstruction project from their own plans for Muscat and Oman, and in the end, the Sultan did not invest in a program of reconstruction either. This reconstruction program was proposed under the rubric of a defense program for Oman. For the Sultan's army and *wâlis* to be able to administer the towns of Oman, they had to have seats of power—and, clearly, these were the forts. Although the RAF bombed many of the forts in Oman in 1957, some, like Bahla, were not completely destroyed, and the governors continued to use them as their residences, offices, and town jails through the middle of the 1970s. In the late 1990s, *wâlis* and the police were housed in cement, air-conditioned buildings outside the walls of the town. Although it seems that by then hardly anyone imagined using the forts for military or political control, it would be naive to deny that forts were not important symbols of state control: the major forts, whether renovated or not, have large Omani flags flying above them.[16] Nevertheless, the forts themselves are associated with history rather than modern governance.

The transformation of the forts from seats of military and political power into emblems of Oman's great past has not gone unnoticed in Bahla. This shift was of interest to several older women I knew in Bahla, and one woman in particular, Ghania, asked whether we could organize a trip to the nearby palace of Jabrin, also a newly restored emblem of Oman's grandeur.[17] She wanted to see for herself what the great palace of Jabrin was like; she had heard about it and its inhabitants her entire life and now she could go inside and explore.

Although not within the walls of Bahla, Jabrin village and its palace was and has continued to be an integral part of Bahla. The Jabrin palace was built in the late seventeenth century by the Sultan Bal'arab bin Sultan al-Ya'ariba, who ruled as Sultan of Oman from Jabrin.[18] By 1842, it had

fallen into the hands of the increasingly prominent Sheikh Rashid bin Humayd al-Ghafri, who shortly afterward took the Bahla fort as well.[19] Jabrin and Bahla remained under the control of Rashid bin Humayd and his grandsons until the early twentieth century.[20] The most famous (or infamous) of the grandsons, Nasser bin Humayd, ruled Bahla from 1884 to 1915–16 and is remembered in local oral and written histories as having been particularly brutal and indiscriminate in his expropriation of peoples' lands. When supporters of the newly elected Imam, Salem bin Rashid al-Kharusi, expelled Nasser bin Humayd from Bahla, he and his entourage first went to Jabrin. Several years later, the new *wâli* of Bahla, the famous Sheikh Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Riyami, better known as Sheikh Abu Zayd, expelled Nasser bin Humayd and his family from the Jabrin palace, letting them remain in the village of Jabrin. From then, Abu Zayd, who was the *wâli* of Bahla from 1916 until his death in 1945, also controlled Jabrin. Today, Jabrin is an administrative village that is part of the "county" or *wilâtat* of Bahla. Therefore, from the middle of the nineteenth century, at least, the Bahla and Jabrin forts have been connected; whoever controlled one tended to control the other. For many older Bahlawis, the Jabrin palace is associated more with the exploits of Nasser bin Humayd than with its original founder, Sultan Bal'arab bin Sultan al-Ya'ariba.

The thirty-year rule of Nasser bin Humayd and then the thirty-year rule of Abu Zayd have marked Bahla's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century history. Key actors in Bahlawi history, the former is considered evil and unjust while the latter is described as religiously righteous, hard-working, humble, and able to perform miracles (*kârîmât*). Abu Zayd's reputation, however, is not completely untarnished.[21] Nevertheless, Abu Zayd—as opposed to Nasser bin Humayd—is regarded, in many ways, as the savior of Bahla's economy and soul. Ghania would often speak of her memories of the times when Abu Zayd was the *wâli* of Bahla and Jabrin and knew many stories of the evil Nasser bin Humayd of Jabrin. Her relationship with the Jabrin palace was formed through her memories of these figures.

One day in April 1997, Ghania, two of her grandchildren, and I borrowed a car and drove the thirty minutes to visit the Jabrin palace. As we drove toward Jabrin, Ghania asked: "Will there be a guard at the gate? Will they require us to identify ourselves? Are you sure it is open to the public?" "Yes, yes," the grandchildren insisted, "we've gone to Jabrin on school trips, it's open." Ghania's first reaction upon entering was to note that it was a shame that no one was actually living in the palace. She said, "This place is so big; it could house a lot of people. Are you sure it's empty?" For Ghania the palace was still a living place. It could—or, rather, should—be both guarded and inhabited. It is, or was, a house, a palace that was occupied by Nasser bin Humayd and later controlled by

Abu Zayd, figures who affected her childhood and whose lessons now help manage ideal behavior in Bahla.

As we toured the rooms, Ghania's granddaughter and grandson were interested in the secret passages and "tricks" of battle: where one of the planks of the staircase could open up and hot oil or honey could be thrown on unsuspecting attackers below. They were curious about aspects of battle that seemed too distant to be real, parts of the fort that were strange and fascinating. Ghania, instead, was interested in the daily implements of the kitchen: the objects of domestic and quotidian life, a past that she knew and recognized. Actually the implements mounted on a wall were, she pointed out, objects she used when she lived in Zanzibar in the 1950s, not objects that were commonly used in Bahla or Jabrin. They would most likely not have been found in this palace anyway. For the foreign and young Omani tourists, including Ghania's grandchildren, this lack of authenticity would not matter; they are "primitive" instruments and would signify a past that they did not recognize.

The Jabrin palace, like the other fort museums of Oman in the 1990s, was not didactic. They did not have tour guides, legends explaining their histories, or plaques transcribing or translating inscriptions found on tombs or walls. Only the names of some of the rooms and the carefully placed props signaled the function of different rooms and areas of the forts. The props included rifles on the walls, Ministry of National Heritage books in the libraries, carpets or mats on the floors of sitting rooms (*majâlis*), and perhaps a few kitchen implements in cooking areas. None of these "props," however, was dated, and like the names of the rooms, they were there simply to suggest what might have taken place in specific parts of the forts, in some generic past. The props were "traditional," and it did not matter whether they were used during the time of the founders or later—whether they were used in 1660 or 1960.

As we continued our tour of Jabrin, Ghania became more and more silent and her grandchildren became more and more animated. The children ran from one room to the next repeating the basic stories of Sultan Bal'arab bin Sultan that they had heard on their school trips and read in their textbooks. They began calling out the names of the rooms they could read from the signs on the walls. "This is where Sultan Bal'arab established his famous library and school; these are the women's quarters," they pointed out. Ghania instead entered the rooms with care, taking her sandals off in rooms with carpets or mats. She had entered someone's house, formerly Nasser bin Humayd's, and she had to act accordingly. No one would wear shoes inside a carpeted sitting room in a house, so neither would she in this house. After a little while, though, Ghania got bored and wanted to return to Bahla. It seemed as though there was nothing to be interested in since there was nothing left that was real for her. In

fact, this was no longer a house. Ghania had been interested in seeing the place that she had heard so much about growing up: maybe she could have learned something about the occupants she had heard stories about and remembered. Instead, we had entered a museum, almost empty, rebuilt, and completely unreal. It gave no clues as to the lives of the inhabitants she knew, just generic stories of an ancient sultan whom she did not know.

When we returned to Bahla and her daughter asked how the fort was, Ghania's only response was that it was "big, big and empty, there was no one there." The same was expected to happen to the Bahla fort. No longer part of the daily workings of the town, it would become "empty." Its significance would be geared toward its origins: a few facts and a general atmosphere of ascetic grandeur would suffice for the visitors, mostly foreign tourists and school groups. This is not to say that people did not talk of the fort (they actually spoke a lot about how long the reconstruction was taking) but that the fort, as a working institution of control, was part of their memories, memories that were becoming less about daily events and intrigues and more about the great founders and generic sites.

Walls

While the Bahla fort, like other fortlike structures in Oman, has captured the attention of the government and foreign visitors, in some ways it was the walls of the town that seemed to convey more what the town was to the inhabitants while I was there. Bahla is surrounded by a twelve-kilometer-long mud wall, which was built, according to Bahlawis, by a woman named Ghaytha to protect the town from the *'ajam*, or Iranians. Unlike the Bahla fort, which did not have an established origin myth, the wall's story was known and repeated. My landlord told me two slightly different versions of the story while I was living in his house. In the first account, which he told me during my first week in Bahla, my landlord described how there once was an *'ajam* named Hamed al-Farsi, who would arrive every year and steal money and food from the people. One year, Ghaytha decided that she would pay for a wall to be built. She convinced the Iranian to leave them alone for one year and the following year when he would return they would give him double the amount of money, dates, and wheat. He agreed, and during the following year, townspeople and spirits built the wall. When the *'ajam* came the next year, he did not recognize the town and kept on going. In the second account, which my landlord told me two months after I had been in Bahla, Ghaytha built the wall to protect the town from attacks from the *'ajam*, who would arrive every year and pillage the town. When they arrived one year and saw the wall, they decided to try to enter the town through the water channels. The guards, who were placed along the walls, realized what was happen-

ing and killed the *'ajam*. The blood flowed down the water channels and thus warned the townspeople of the attack.[22] Whether from the trick or a violent defense, the walls of the town helped protect the people from evil foreigners.

The importance of the wall in the imagery of the town is evident not only in the oft-repeated story of its building. According to a local history recently written by the former judge (*qâdi*) known as Dawood, the Sheikh Abu Zayd once said that the wall (rather than the fort) is the emblem of the town:

> And in the first days [of Abu Zayd's governorship], the river of Bahla dried and the wells dried and Bahla closed up from fear and hunger and lack of fruit [dates] and that is what the people earned from their deeds from the wisdom and justice of God.[23] Abu Zayd got to work and prepared for everything and began with the struggles of the hostilities of the town. He said: "the security of the town [has] priority and the sign, *'anwân*, of Bahla is this wall and [it was] not built only for beauty, but rather created [for] violence and the protection of the town." And sensible [people] take examples from the past and prepare for the future and Abu Zayd began with the repairs of the wall and he chose strong workers.

Dawood quotes Abu Zayd as saying that the sign of Bahla, its "flag," so to speak, was the wall. The twelve-kilometer wall symbolized the town's identity: closed, strong, and independent.[24]

The town's wall, as Abu Zayd's biographer noted, was not there simply for beauty; it served a purpose: it protected the town from the people on the other side. Abu Zayd not only had the wall repaired but, I was often told, put guards all along the walls and particularly in the towers (*burg*). At night he would call out the names of the guards or the names of their posts to make sure they were not sleeping. Whoever did not answer would be called to the fort the next morning and punished. The town walls also enabled control of the inside. Just as the fort stood at the center of the town, controlling from the position above the neighborhoods and fields, the wall limited the boundaries of the town. The guards along the walls were not only responsible for looking outside the walls, but were also there to control what was going on inside.

Control of the town, in terms of protection from attacks from the outside or from fragmentation inside, was not limited to watching from the fort or from the wall. Control also came from Abu Zayd's nightly walks through the streets: he would walk the length of the town, accompanied by and talking to his guards (*'askar*). Not like now, I was told: "Now, it's *only* the police [*shurta*], and they drive." Abu Zayd's nightly walks clearly represented more direct control than the police, who *simply* drive through, presumably missing potential conflicts and tensions.

Within (*dâkhil*) the walls, I was told, is the place of the town and its *hâdar* (settlement, civilization); it is contrasted with the *barra* (outside), the place of *khatar* (danger). The other side is where the cemetery, known as Maqâbir Bû Knânîb, is; it is where people meet to try to get drunk off cheap cologne and where people gather to perform *zâr* (spirit possession). On the other side of the wall are the bedouin: "Sometimes they would even come into the walls and kidnap people, take them to Dubai or Saudi Arabia, sell them like *hawsh* [goats]," an elderly man explained to me. Although "outside the walls" does not have a single name, the names of the different areas outside the walls indicate what is, or was, expected there. Outside of the walls were places of danger.

Some of the names of the places outside the walls reveal their status in the eyes of Bahlawis. In one direction, to the north-northeast, there is the area formerly called Maskhûta, which means "odious, hated." This area, which became a suburb of Bahla, was renamed by the current regime as al-Ma'amûra, "the inhabited place." In the southwest of Bahla, there is the area of al-Mustaghfir, which means "someone who asks forgiveness." Then, to the south of the walls, there are the areas of Maghîwa, al-Khurm, and al-Bidû. Maghîwa seems to derive from *ghawaya*, "to seduce, stray, or sin"; al-Khurm means "the hole" and is related to the words *kharm*, a "blank" or "gap," and *inkhirâm*, a "state of unsettlement," "disturbance." Al-Bidû refers to the bedouin. Another area to the south of the town is called Sîh, "to cry." As Bahla sits along a small riverbed valley, to the east and west are hills. These hills are quite steep and are of barren rock, reaching in both directions to about 700 meters. If the riverbed to the north and to the south of the town was dangerous because of the bedouin, the hills to the sides of the town were even more dangerous because of "evil cannibal and dog-eating spirits."

The juxtaposition between inside and outside, of civilization and danger, is both undermined and reaffirmed by the constant movement of people and water. Although the other side, the outside, is described as a place (that used to be) of danger, it does not follow that people would not venture outside. In fact, women would collect wood for cooking outside. One of the five smaller water canals (*sâqîya*), called Ray, off the main canal (*falaj*), Falag Maytha, of lower Bahla even runs outside the walls and serves the area of al-Sîh. This *sâqîya*, although outside of the walls of Bahla, is maintained and controlled by the *'arîf* (water-time controller/organizer) of lower Bahla. The distinction between the inside of the walls and the outside of the walls helps create the sense that within the walls is a totality, a totality that defies the constant threat of fragmentation.

Although in the late 1990s parts of the walls were crumbling and the gates were no longer guarded, the wall still evoked the sense of a protective boundary, a boundary that was most evident when one passed from

one side to the other, especially on foot. A distinction between inside and outside was not noted in all areas of the wall or in all means of passage, however. Driving on the main highway in any direction—toward Nizwa or toward Ibri, toward Ma'amûra or toward Mustaghfir—for example, was rarely noted, and driving through the various gates and expanded holes was only occasionally mentioned. Although the main highway through the middle of the town was the newest and most dramatic transformation of the town's structure and the one path that carried with it the most significance in terms of the changes in Bahla and Oman more generally, it was also the least noted in relation to the boundaries of the town. The road seemed simply to expand the area of Bahla into the new suburbs.

But walking from inside the walls to the outside through a hole tended almost always to be noted: a held breath or a prayer marked the passage on foot from inside to outside, from the place of safety to the place of danger. Memories and habits of protective borders as well as fears of former dangers continued despite the new state's forms of policing and systems of control. In writing about New York City in his article "Walking in the City," Michel de Certeau draws a distinction between walking and other forms of movement through cities.[25] He argues that it is "on foot" that particular spatial configurations become experienced. In Bahla as well, it was in the experience of movement on foot that the spatial boundaries of the outer walls of the town were most noted. Walking, as an "earlier" form of mobility, was itself also a way of remembering the former boundaries, systems of control, and organization of space. Driving, associated with the new order and new forms of mobility, was not subject to the former spatial structures, dangers, or systems of control. Entering the car, like the police, one entered a new spatial and administrative regime.

Neighborhoods

While the fort was the center of town power and the outer wall made it easier to maintain order, the neighborhoods (*al-harat*) formed and form the organizational backbone for most of the services and administration of Bahla. When describing how much has changed since Qaboos bin Said al-Bu Saidi became sultan in 1970, many people noted that now, at least, there was no fighting between the neighborhoods and it was perfectly safe for someone to go from one to another: safety and danger. Thus, while the outer wall of the city contained the imminent danger of fragmentation and division within the town, the interior walls of the neighborhoods maintained a fragile peace through separation.

An official publication from the municipality of Bahla from 1996 lists eighteen neighborhoods of the town.[26] Each official neighborhood has a sheikh or *rashid*, who is responsible for the neighborhood and who reports

to the *wâli*. It is the sheikh of the neighborhood who, under the new regime, is responsible for keeping the peace in the neighborhood and for noting if there are problems to be addressed by the local government or police. The neighborhood sheikh has come to serve as the intermediary between the local administration, appointed from Muscat, and the townspeople. Although the neighborhood sheikhs have come to have official positions within the Ministry of the Interior and receive a small annual salary, they are also usually descendants of sheikhly families. In other words, the Qaboos bureaucracy subsumed sheikhly families into its administration hierarchy and organization. Whereas most top officials and some of the middle-ranked officials in local administration such as the mayor, judge, religious endowment officer, and police come from outside Bahla, the neighborhood sheikhs are from the particular neighborhoods and most often come from local sheikhly families.[27] Occasionally, the neighborhood sheikh is also a religiously respected figure, but this is not always the case, and there are other people within the neighborhood who might take on the role as religious scholar, healer, and advice giver.[28]

The neighborhoods are not only administrative locales but also sources of affiliation and identity, sometimes overlapping with "tribal" association. Some of the neighborhoods are associated with particular tribes,[29] and occasionally the names of the neighborhood are evident in the names of the tribe (*al-qabîla*): for example, al-Furag is the neighborhood of the Mufargi. With the establishment of the new bureaucracy under Qaboos, in addition to the neighborhood sheikhs, each "tribe" also has a sheikh.[30] Several elderly men lamented to me about this double structure (that there are sheikhs of neighborhoods and sheikhs of tribes) and the increased emphasis on tribal affiliation in general under the new regime. Neighborhood and tribal identification are further enhanced through other forms of population management of the new state: schoolchildren, for example, must give their address by neighborhood and personal identity by tribe.

Just as each neighborhood has a person to oversee that the people in his neighborhood are behaving properly, each neighborhood also has a meeting room, or *sibla*, in which the men of the neighborhood can gather to make community decisions or where male or female groups from the neighborhood may gather for lectures or study groups. In Dawood's account mentioned above, he also reports how Abu Zayd was disturbed by the fact that men were meeting in mosques to discuss local issues and even to mourn. Abu Zayd said that the mosques should only be for praying and for remembering God. He therefore ordered each neighborhood to build a *sibla* where the men could meet and could mourn.[31] The consolidation of neighborhood activity and belonging, therefore, certainly existed before the current regime. The current regime has taken an already existing administrative system and transformed it into the new bureaucracy.

The single institutions of each neighborhood often gave and give way to multiple sites of gathering. While each neighborhood has one sheikh and one *sibla*, it may have more than one mosque: I counted thirty-five mosques in lower Bahla, including the old Friday mosque.[32] Although some of these mosques were not in use because they had too few attendees or because the mud buildings were washed out, there was still more than one mosque per neighborhood, and neighbors might even attend different mosques.[33] Alliances, friendships, and family disputes played out in and through mosque membership and mosque attendance. Men would sometimes switch mosques when there was a dispute, making a point of displaying their differences and arguments through their unwillingness to pray together. According to one official I interviewed at the Ministry of Religious Endowments in Nizwa, however, the government had a new policy of not approving more than one mosque within one and a half kilometers of another one in order to "prevent competition."[34] Although people could petition for funds to repair or rebuild older mosques, such rebuilding has been discouraged. During the time of my fieldwork, only one man, after quite a struggle and even though he had good connections with local and national officials, was able to get a mosque rebuilt. There is, therefore, clear pressure to reinforce the uniformity of the neighborhood organization, with one sheikh, one meeting room, and, ideally, one mosque.[35]

While the term *neighborhood* is reserved in official usage for areas with a group of mostly attached houses, other areas within the twelve-kilometer Bahla walls operate in daily activities as neighborhoods and are even named by some as neighborhoods.[36] Rather than walls, people's movements and control of each other's movements help create the limits of these spaces (as well as the now unlocked walled neighborhoods). The unofficial neighborhoods have become particularly important recently as more and more families, with the means to do so, are moving out of the old, walled neighborhoods to houses on agricultural plots within the larger walls of the town, places where they had previously lived only during the summer months. Others, who do not own such land, have rented houses on common land (*bayt al-mâl*)[37] or on other people's land outside the old neighborhoods. These new residential patterns have affected how people identify themselves, as the new areas do not all have names and, even when they do, if the family had a reputation from being from a particular neighborhood, they may continue to claim residence there on official documents and when asked where they are from.

This is not to suggest, however, that people were bound by their neighborhoods until the early 1980s. On the contrary, the town's earlier dependence on subsistence agriculture meant that men and women were often moving back and forth from neighborhood to field during the days. Women's visiting routines and obligations were still important to daily life.

Contrary to what might be expected, there were also no restrictions on the movement of servants in the areas of the "Arabs" or vice versa, although there were some boundaries about where one could live.[38] Nevertheless, until the mid-1980s, most people in Bahla lived in the old neighborhoods, with the limits of the walls and the gates as well as with the knowledge that their movements could easily be controlled by those physical structures.[39]

In the dramatic changes in the town's recent political and economic organization, in addition to decreasing dependence on agriculture as well as some of the caste restrictions, women's visiting practices have been transforming as well. Most women in Bahla belong to groups known as *gîrân*, determined by proximity, which gather every morning in one of the houses of the group. Each morning, the women would go to a different house, rotating among the women included in the group. These married, widowed, or divorced women would eat dates, drink coffee, and discuss town news, their own health, and the prices of goods. They would often also, together, visit other groups or host groups in their homes. On the one hand, women's daily visiting patterns illustrate how the spatial boundaries of neighborhoods, or their most recent incarnations as "areas," are more flexible than might be expected of a town known for its piety, control, and religious rigidity. On the other hand, however, both men and women often described strictures and unease about women's movement, often expressed through the language of fear. Indeed, I was often asked whether I was "afraid" (*khâf*) to walk alone to another neighborhood. As the walls of the neighborhoods no longer marked the boundaries of one neighborhood from another and as people continued to move away from these walled neighborhoods to the fields, the repeated limits of women's individual movements helped mark local boundaries of acceptable proximity. The movements of women's neighborly groups create their boundaries as well as the boundaries of appropriate movement, both by maintaining some of the limits and by crossing them.

The tendency to reinforce the town's administrative efficiency through the offices of the sheikhs, meeting rooms, and mosques into a bureaucratic order that assumes spatial limits, ironically, emerged at a time when the physical boundaries of the old neighborhoods were disappearing. By the late 1990s, many families who had the means to do so had left the old walled neighborhoods and lived in houses on their agricultural plots, places where they might have spent their summers in the past. The gates to the neighborhoods were no longer closed or guarded and men and women moved from one area to another without much trouble, although women did not tend to move on their own from one to another. The maintenance of order and control through the institution of the neighborhood shifted not only through the reformulation of bureaucratic management and the self-regulation of women's individual movements in particular, but also through discourses of fear.

Conclusion

The coup d'état in 1970 that brought Sultan Qaboos to power and inaugurated the establishment of the modern nation-state meant not only the transformation of the systems of local administration and governance but also shifts in the ways people perceive the past, experience boundaries, and manage their identities and propriety. Transformations in the maintenance of order—through the reorganization of the role of governors and forts, through modern policing rather than locked and guarded gates, and through the reappropriation of local neighborhood hierarchies into the new state structure—have also meant shifts in perceptions and experiences.

Town forts and palaces, no longer sites of political and military power, have become national historical sites. Similar to some extent to Daniel's distinction between heritage and history in Sri Lanka, between dispositions toward the past that emphasize being-in-the-world or seeing-the-world, experiences of the forts (now symbols of national historic grandeur and origins) also reveal distinctions and shifts in the ways people experience local and national pasts.[40] However, while Daniel draws this distinction through the difference between mythic (or "ontic") and epistemic dispositions toward the past as articulated, for example, in embodied rituals as opposed to chronologies, in Bahla what is also shifting is the place of personal memory in understandings about the past. The disposition toward the past that comes closest to what Daniel describes as the "ontic" or being-in-the-world, in other words, also emerges in Bahla from relating to the past through personal recollections, however fraught and entangled with heritage projects, and to "historic" figures as part of personal pasts, whether these figures were spirits or humans. Like Herzfeld's monumental (versus social) time, in the contemporary reformulations of these sites, there has also emerged an aura of the distant, a sense that the figures are outside or beyond personal experiences.[41]

While forts have become museums, Bahla's town walls sometimes continue to be understood as the protective boundary that they once were, even though the danger of neither outside attack nor town fragmentation is imminent. Nevertheless, people would express such sensibilities about the protective border, especially when the form of travel through the wall recollected previous rather than contemporary passage. A similar distinction between forms of passage, walking and driving, also appeared in the distinction Bahlawis made in the ways that previous and contemporary control was established. In some ways, it was the contemporary regime that did not even need "to see." Or, at least, one only needed to know that the police *could* see if they wanted, but generally, self-discipline served to maintain order. The power of the state, in other words, was exhibited as potential, in the parades of military convoys through the middle of town,

for example. Finally, as forts and walls were being completely transformed or neglected, the neighborhood—the primary unit of local management—was reappropriated into the new regime's system of order, albeit with the additional effect of reinforcing and rearranging forms of identity and belonging. While the neighborhood was no longer walled, social control continued through other systems of self-regulation, including discourses of fear and gendered propriety and obligations.

As Bahlawis confront the various ruins of power, they do so within the historic chronology of the division between the contemporary regime and the pre-Qaboos era, a chronology that is repeated in official, and many personal, accounts of modern Oman. These same ruins of the past regimes, however, also serve as reminders of what might become of the landmarks and infrastructural monuments of modern Oman in the future. It is, perhaps, a monumental time in which the future is less than predetermined. With a mortal sultan, who inaugurated this new state and who has no heir, and with oil wealth that, I was often told, is projected to end in twenty years, Oman's future uncertainties and possible ruins can hardly be ignored, shaping, perhaps, people's understandings and experiences of the reconstructed forts and crumbling walls.

Notes

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1. Since the time of my fieldwork in the late 1990s, a second, newer mosque has been built in the outskirts of town.

2. B. R. Prindham, "Oman: Change or Continuity," in *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States*, ed. I. R. Netton (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 141.

3. For a somewhat similar argument about infrastructure and the nation-state, see, for example, Robert Foster, "Taking Care of Public Telephones: Moral Education and Nation-State Formation in Papua New Guinea," *Public Culture* 4 (1992): 31–45. For discussions of roads, in particular, as integral to dreams of modernity, see Rudolf Mrazek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), and Naveeda Khan's essay on roads in Pakistan, "Flaws in the Flow: Roads and Their Modernity in Pakistan," *Social Text*, no. 89 (2006): 87–113.

4. Although the road inaugurated a new relationship with Muscat, it is misleading to suggest that until the early 1970s Bahla was isolated from other towns and from the coast. Bahlawis, both men and women, frequently traveled throughout the twentieth century, to Zanzibar and to other Gulf states as well as to other towns in the region. Nevertheless, the highway that cuts through the middle of town underlines the newness of the easy connections between Bahla and the rest of Oman. In fact, one could

say that the road not only marks the easy connections between different parts of Oman but also helps to define those connections as new. The newness of Bahla's relationship with Muscat is seen in contrast to its previous opposition to Muscat in the Jebel Akhdar war of the 1950s as well as its supposed isolation in the pre-Qaboos years.

5. Michael Herzfeld, *A Place in History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

6. E. Valentine Daniel, *Charred Lullabies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

7. Stefania Pandolfo, "Detours of Life: Space and Bodies in a Moroccan Village," *American Ethnologist* 16 (1989): 3–23.

8. Walter Benjamin, *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 162.

9. I use the terms *restoration* and *reconstruction* almost interchangeably here since much of the work on the forts has been not only to repair the forts, but to rebuild them, not always according to their original or most recent architectural features and plans. In fact, during a recent trip to Oman, UNESCO representatives warned the architects working in Bahla about their reconstruction and that they were straying from the original plan.

10. For a discussion of UNESCO heritage projects and forts in other contexts, see Edward Bruner, *Cultures on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), and John Collins, *The Revolt of the Saints* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming). See also John Collins, "Sounds of Tradition," *Ethnos* 72 (2007): 383–407.

11. It should be noted that although the fort has a single name, it is not one building. Rather, it is a complex of buildings, towers, a mosque, and wells. As one young man explained, it is like a neighborhood in itself.

12. In these accounts, the destruction of the fort took place during fighting between the Bani Hinai (with the aid of the *amîr* of Sumayil, Sheikh Umayr bin Himyar, and the *amîr* of Dar Sayt, Sayf bin Muhammad al-Hinai) and the supporters of Sulayman bin Mudaffar al-Nabhani, one of the last Nabhani *amîr*s. See Abu Sulayman Muhammad bin Amir al-Ma'wali, *Qisas wa Akhbâr* (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, n.d.), 88; Sirhan bin Sa'id bin Sirhan, *Annals of Oman* (*Kashf al-Ghumma*), trans. E. C. Ross (London: Oleander, 1984), 39; Abdullah bin Humayd al-Salimi, *Tuhfat al-A'yân bi Sîrat Ahl 'Umân* (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1927), 1:394; and John C. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 217. A. H. al-Salimi's account in *Tuhfat al-A'yân* of the fighting in Bahla at this time is almost exactly the same as the account in *Kashf al-Ghummah* as well as the account in *Qisas wa Akhbâr*. However, while *Qisas wa Akhbâr* puts the date of the destruction of the fort at 1024 A.H., the *Kashf al-Ghummah* puts the date at 1019 A.H.; A. H. al-Salimi follows the *Qisas* date.

13. Although the sources mentioned above do not refer to the rebuilding of the Bahla fort specifically, it is generally assumed that it was rebuilt and expanded during the period of Imam Nasr bin Murshid al-Ya'arubi (d. 1649). Imam Nasr bin Murshid appointed his cousin Sultan bin Sayf al-Ya'arubi (d. 1680) to be *wâli* of Bahla (Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 351n31). An inscription above one of the doors of the houses in the fort, I was told, notes that the house was built under Sultan bin Sayf. Sultan bin Sayf succeeded Nasr bin Murshid as Imam.

14. Public Records Office FO, 371/149018; confidential letter from Consul General Monteith in Muscat to Consul General Bullock in Bahrain.

15. For an excellent account of the events of and leading to the rebellion, see

John E. Peterson, *Oman in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1978). He does not mention, in this text, that RAF fighters bombed Bahla, but he does furnish information about British bases and British military involvement in Oman at the time.

16. The main exception to this is the Tanuf fort, which was completely destroyed in 1957. For a description of the destruction of the Tanuf fort, see Anthony Shepherd, *Arabian Adventure* (London: Collins, 1961), 47–48.

17. Whether Jabrin is more of a "fort" or more of a "palace," a *hisn*, *qal'a*, or *qasr*, is not particularly important here, since although Jabrin tended to be a house, it was also fortified. Furthermore, depending on who was living there or controlling it, it was used for different purposes. In Oman, Jabrin is sometimes called a *hisn* (fort), sometimes a *qal'a* (fort), and sometimes a *qasr* (palace). Nevertheless, I will use the term *palace* to describe Jabrin to maintain a distinction with the Bahla fort.

18. For more on the history and architecture of the Jabrin palace, see Eros Baldisira, *Qasr Jabrîn wa Kitâbâtuhu* (Muscat: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, 1994), and Eugenio Galdieri, "A Masterpiece of Omani Seventeenth Century Architecture," *Journal of Oman Studies* 1 (1975): 167–79. According to Galdieri, there is an inscription in the room known as "The Sun and the Moon" that states that "the houses which rise up toward the sky are vine, but this one of the Qal'a of Bahla surpasses all of them." This is to suggest that the palace was considered part of Bahla when it was built. Galdieri also notes, incorrectly, that there are no references to "Jabrin" in the fort. Instead, in another room of the fort, there are quite a few references to "Yabrin." Baldisira, who has documented the inscriptions of the Jabrin fort, does not mention the inscription that Galdieri notes.

19. Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 126.

20. When Rashid bin Humayd died in 1863, his eldest grandson Barghash bin Humayd, under the guardianship of a servant, became *amîr* of Jabrin and Bahla. See Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Salimi, *Nahdat al-A'yân bi Hurriyat 'Umân* (Cairo, n.d.), 282. Barghash was expelled from Bahla and returned to Jabrin during the brief waliship of Bahla of the famous scholar Majid bin Khamis al-Abri during the short-lived imamate of Azzan bin Qais (1869–71). However, when Azzan bin Qais's imamate fell and Majid bin Khamis al-Abri fled to Rustaq and then to Hamra (Wilkinson, *The Imamate Tradition of Oman*, 356n5), Barghash bin Humayd returned to control Bahla (M. A. al-Salimi, *Nahdat al-A'yân*, 282). This close relationship between Jabrin and Bahla continued after Barghash's death in 1883. Barghash's brothers, Rashid and Nasser bin Humayd al-Ghafiri, organized the assassination of Barghash and then installed Rashid, the next eldest of the three brothers, as *amîr*. However, soon after, in 1884, Nasser killed his second brother, Rashid, as well. In "On the Border of the Great Desert: A Journey in Oman," *Geographical Journal* 36 (1910): 159–79, 405–25, Samuel B. Miles states that when Rashid bin Humayd died, his son Humayd bin Rashid became Amir of Jabrin and Bahla. A. H. al-Salimi, in his *Tuhfat al-A'yân*, instead notes that Humayd bin Rashid died before his father.

21. Non-Bahlawis have suggested his "improprieties" with women he was curing; a local biography of Abu Zayd describes an incident when he was reprimanded by an older scholar (Majid bin Khamis al-Abri) for his severe punishments; and finally, elder Bahlawis describe their fear of Abu Zayd's wrath.

22. Over the centuries, Iranians have attacked Bahla several times. The eighteenth-century historian Abu Sulaiman al-Ma'wali mentions two incidents in particular in his *Qisas wa Akhbâr*. The first incident mentioned in the history occurred in 1265 when an army from Shiraz reached Nizwa and then Bahla, block-

ading it for four months. Nur al-Din al-Salimi relates the same event, putting the date at 1277, while the *Annals of Oman* (*Kashf al-Ghummah)* by Sirhan bin Sa'id bin Sirhan, mentions that in 1279 a Fakhr el-Din Ahmed-bin al-Dayah and Shihab el-Din from Shiraz occupied Nizwa for four months but were unable to take Bahla (bin Sirhan, *Annals of Oman*: 31; A. H. al-Salimi, *Tuhfat al-A'yân,* 1:353–54). None of these accounts, however, mentions a wall.

The most notable attack of *'ajam* against Bahla, however, was in 1737–38, at the end of the Ya'ariba dynasty, during Nader Shah's time. See John G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1915), 1:406–7. Rivalries among the Ya'ariba had led to the intervention of Nader Shah's army, who were in Oman notionally aiding Sayf bin Sultan II against his cousins Bal'arab bin Himyar and Ya'rab bin Bal'arab. Although Imam Ahmad bin Sa'id al-Bu Sa'id was able to expel Nader Shah's troops, which effectively led to the end of the Ya'ariba dynasty, Omanis continued to pay a tribute to Nader Shah until 1747 (Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia*, 1:411). As my landlord's account suggests, the *'ajam*'s arrival was not part of a singular attack, but part of a more organized tribute-collecting procedure. This eighteenth-century expedition might be the time of the building. However, the eighteenth century is too late for the construction of the walls. In fact, the main histories of Oman first mention the walls when describing the end of the Nabhani dynasty in the seventeenth century. In the events leading to the destruction of the fort mentioned above, supporters of the Bani Hinai are said to have scaled the walls of the town and moved to control most of its quarters (*Qisas wa Akhbâr*, 86; bin Sirhan, *Annals of Oman*, 38; A. H. al-Salimi, *Tuhfat al-A'yan*, 1:392).

23. The punishment from God was due to Bahla's support for, or at least acquiescence to, the ruler Nasser bin Humayd, as well as the opposition to the imamate of Salem bin Rashid al-Kharusi.

24. Zaher bin Abdulla al-Shaqsi (Dawood), *Abu Zayd al-Riyami* (Bahla: Published by the author, 1995), 7. Although histories of Oman tend to associate Bahla with the other towns in the region, it is clear that, except for Bahla and Jabrin, in the nineteenth century, at least, many of the towns of the region were quite independent of each other politically. The high point of political unification in nineteenth-century Oman was during the brief imamate of Azzan bin Qais (1868–71), mentioned above. Azzan bin Qais appointed a *wâli* from outside who administered the *bayt al-mâl* (state-owned religious endowment or state-appropriated) lands as well as collected *zakât* (religious tax). While the *waqf* (local religious endowments) water, date palms, and land—that is, those religious endowments belonging to the mosques and Koranic schools—would continue to be administered by the local wakil or imam of the mosques and schoolteachers, the *bayt al-mâl* lands, those lands that belonged to the religious community as a whole, would—during the times of the imams—be administered by the government of the imams. Imam Azzan bin Qais was the only Ibadi Omani imam between the death of Imam Ahmed bin Sa'id al-Bu Sa'id in 1783 and the imamate revival of 1913. During the rest of the nineteenth century, the al-Bu Sa'id Sultans, who ruled from the coast and even from Zanzibar, were not only unable to administer the interior region physically, but were also unacceptable as *zakât* collectors or *bayt al-mâl* administrators. In the twentieth century, with the revival of the imamate in 1913 until the mid-1950s, the region of the imamate was once again unified administratively.

25. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

26. The list begins with the most northern neighborhood of al-Khatwa and ends with the neighborhood of al-Hadîtha, which means "the new one," in the east of the town. Al-Hadîtha is the newest neighborhood, as its name indicates, and is made up, in part, of refugees from the destruction of the town of Tanuf in 1957, when RAF bombers demolished it as part of the Jebel Akhdar campaign. Al-Hadîtha, unlike the other neighborhoods of Bahla, does not have direct access to a water canal and is structured, again, unlike other Bahla neighborhoods, with one road running down the middle and houses lined up on both sides. Other neighborhoods in Bahla tend, instead, to be made up of alleylike paths running in a variety of directions.

27. It would be misleading to suggest that this is new. In fact, mayors (*wâlis*) and judges (*qâdis*), even before Qaboos, tended to come from outside. Since 1970, however, more local administration is managed by officials from other towns and areas. This turn of events is the source of concern for some townspeople, especially those who had controlled local *bayt al-mâl* lands, for example, and who could have chosen the best plots for themselves. Theoretically, now, there is less favoritism.

At the same time, with certain families having been inscribed as "sheikhly," it seems that there is less chance for shifts in neighborhood hierarchy. While it is clear today that earlier *wâlis* would appoint their own neighborhood sheikhs, that is, those who were supportive of them, with the new bureaucratic system, the sheikhs who were sheikhs at the time of Qaboos's coup remain sheikhs no matter who the *wâli* is.

28. The term *mufti* is rarely used locally in Oman. Today there is a "grand mufti," who is the national religious leader, but this particular government role is recent, as many people will point out. The current national mufti, Ahmed al-Khalili, is himself a Bahlawi who spent many years in Zanzibar and speaks, so I am told, perfect Swahili.

29. The following tribes, for example, are associated with the following neighborhoods: hârat al-'aqur: al-Qassabi, al-'Abri, al-Hashemi; hârat al-mustâh: al-Shukri (Bani Shakayli); al-hârat al-hadîtha: al-Riyami, al-Nabhani; hârat al-furâg: al-Mufargi; hârat al-rim: al-Mahruqi; hârat al-lahma: al-'Alawi, al-Hamimi; hârat al-khadra': al-Wardi, al-Kharusi, al-Zahimi, al-Khalili, al-Niri; hârat al-hadâd: al-Shakayli; hârat al-khatwa: al-Yahyai (not on the official list: hârat al-khurm: al-Hitali).

30. Some of the neighborhood sheikhs are also the local sheikhs of their tribes, although this is also not always the case. Occasionally, a man from a tribe may be the sheikh of a neighborhood, but not also the sheikh of the tribe. Further, not all tribes are represented as sheikhs of a neighborhood.

31. The relatively recent (early-twentieth-century) addition of the *siblas* to the life of the neighborhoods is evidenced by the fact that many of Bahla's neighborhood *siblas* are not in the middle of the neighborhoods, but on the edges, either right within one of the gates or right outside.

32. For an excellent study of this mosque, see Monique Kervran, "Mihrab/s Omanis du 16e siècle: Un curieux exemple de conservatisme de l'art du stuc iranien des époques seldjonqide et mongole," *Archéologie islamique* 6 (1996): 109–56. Although her work focuses on sixteenth-century stuccowork, she has dated the mosque, from an inscription inside, to 1494. A Bahlawi scholar counted eighty-three in all of Bahla, but this was someone from upper Bahla who did not mention some of the mosques in lower Bahla.

33. In Bahla, the imam and muezzin of each mosque is someone who lives nearby and takes on this role by consensus of the attendees. Growing up close to each other, people know who is qualified to lead the prayer. While there are complaints sometimes, the selection is generally pretty obvious.

The records of the mosques are now divided between the imams and the local

office of religious endowments; each mosque has a booklet with a list of who donated what religious endowment. After the Friday mosque, the wealthiest mosque, according to local *waqf* and water records, is the Mahd mosque.

34. I suspect that the control on the number of mosques has less to do with minimizing disputes over the numbers of attendees and more to do with controlling the amount of money that would be needed for the upkeep of the mosques as well as what goes on in mosques.

35. Despite the pull to make more uniform the administration, including the religious organization, of the town, the numerous mosques continue to suggest how the pull toward bureaucratic uniformity is not complete. Even the Friday mosque, which moved from near the fort to near the market and, most recently, outside of town, hardly brings a unifying sense to the town. Attendance in Friday prayers for men is a controversial issue in Oman among some Ibadis. Some claim that there should be Friday prayers only when there is an imam, and since there is no imam now, there should not be Friday prayers. This question was even asked of the national mufti while I was in Bahla, but he, not surprisingly, as a state official, argued that it was mandatory for Muslim men to attend when they could. The Friday prayers are the places where the state disseminates, through officially sanctioned speakers, some of its policies and argues about how these policies fall squarely within religious precepts. This is not to say that all the Friday prayer leaders follow all state policies: some deviations are themselves sanctioned by the state, as was the case with the Omani government's decision to open and then close an Israeli trade mission. At other times, the speakers will carefully allude to their opposition to a particular policy, official, or practice.

36. For example, in lower Bahla such neighborhoods would include al-Gisa, Rahab al-Fawq, and Rahab al-Taht.

37. *Bayt al-mâl*, although considered government land, is a particular "type" of government land, land that had been owned by the imamate, usually through confiscation. More than one half of the land in Bahla, including the main market, is *bayt al-mâl* land.

38. Not all of Bahla's eighteen neighborhoods were divided into servant and Arab neighborhoods. The one main exception to this was the division of al-'Aqur and Hawîa neighborhoods, the former being predominantly an Arab neighborhood and the latter being a predominantly servant neighborhood. In fact, some servant families lived in al-'Aqur and had their own servants.

39. Control of people's movements was and is highly gendered: women tend to move around in groups, men on their own, women rarely go to the central market or through the "men's entrances" in the houses, young men generally do not enter the "family" area when there are "unknown," prospective wives there, women do not enter mosques, men do not enter the bathing rooms. In the street, as well, contact between men and women tends to be guarded: some husbands and wives will not greet each other in the streets, while other men and women will greet each other under their breaths in passing, eyes lowered, and with increased speed. At other times, instead, groups of women will command the entire road—with their physical presence and voices—requiring men, if a certain kind of propriety is to be maintained, to choose another path. At still other times, the gendered tensions and relations mentioned here hardly seem to phase anyone. An older man might walk right up to a group of women (rarely a woman on her own or the other way around, a woman walking up to a group of men), shake their hands, and ask about their health and what they are doing.

40. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies*, chap. 1.

41. Herzfeld, *A Place in History*.



"Mardi Gras Geishas (Batters)," New Orleans. Nic Sammond, June 2007.
Courtesy of the artist. Thanks to Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World.

The Gnat and the Sovereign

Allen Feldman

From the Talmud:

> Vespasian sent Titus who said, Where is their God, the rock in whom they trusted? This was the wicked Titus who blasphemed and insulted Heaven.[1]
>
> What did he do? He took a harlot by the hand and entered the Holy of Holies and spread out a scroll of the Law and committed a sin on it. He then took a sword and slashed the curtain. Miraculously blood spurted out, and he thought that he had slain himself, as it says, "Your adversaries have roared in the midst of your assembly, they have set up their ensigns for signs."
>
> *Abba Hanan said: Who is a mighty one like unto You, O Yah? Who is like You, mighty in self-restraint, that You didst hear the blaspheming and insults of that wicked man and keep silent? In the school of Rabbi Ishmael it was taught; Who is like thee among the gods [*elim*]? Who is like thee among the dumb ones [*illemim*]?* Titus further took the curtain and shaped it like a basket and brought all the vessels of the Sanctuary and put them in it, and then put them on board ship to go and triumph with them in his city, as it says, "And withal I saw the wicked buried, and they that come to the grave and they that had done right went away from the holy place and were forgotten in the city." . . .
>
> A gale sprang up at sea which threatened to wreck him. He said: Apparently the power of the God of these people is only over water. When Pharaoh came He drowned him in water, when Sisera came He drowned him in water. He is also trying to drown me in water. If he is really mighty, let him come up on the dry land and fight with me!
>
> A voice went forth from heaven saying; Sinner, son of sinner, descendant of Esau the sinner, I have a tiny creature in my world called a gnat. (Why is it called a tiny creature? Because it has an orifice for taking in but not for excreting.) Go up on the dry land and make war with it. When he

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landed the gnat came and entered his nose, and it knocked against his brain for seven years. One day as he was passing a blacksmith's it heard the noise of the hammer and stopped. He said; I see there is a remedy. So every day they brought a blacksmith who hammered before him. If he was a non-Jew they gave him four zuz, if he was a Jew they said, It is enough that you see the suffering of your enemy. This went on for thirty days, but then the creature got used to it. It has been taught: Rabbi Phineas son of Aruba said; I was in company with the notables of Rome, and when he died they split open his skull and found there something like a sparrow two sela in weight.[2]

Titus in the Temple behaves allegorically, yet as a pagan he is lost in literality—he uses sexual potency and sexually mimetic swordplay to lay claims of sovereignty. Titus's sexualization of the Jewish deity through phallic blade-work is ludicrous for the Talmudic narrator—all this somaticization of sovereignty is Titus's pagan illusion, a profound moment of misrecognition. In defiling the temple through politicized sexual aggression Titus slays himself by enacting a Lacanian mirror relation—he attacks his own model of sovereignty in slashing the curtain, confusing what it hides with a stage, a Romanized theatrical politics. The Roman wounds only himself in transgressing the presumed body of the Jewish deity whose sovereignty and law is neither embodied nor dramaturgical. Titus's violence is self-defeating by enacting the limits of the pagan worldview on deity and sovereignty. This self-wounding violence returns with his torture by the gnat, a decided case of anti-imperial asymmetric warfare. The retaliation of the gnat reveals the body of the Roman sovereign as permeable and violable—the imperium leaks. Magnitude is brought down by the minimal, by the animal. Does the Jewish God have such an orificial body? Rather, this deity's embodiment is anamorphic and metamorphic, it is coextensive with yet commands nature; it is as large as the ocean and as small as a gnat.

What is the relation between the violence of the gnat and the colonized's visual pleasure at the theater of sovereign suffering? The denial of payment to Jewish blacksmiths whose hammering distracts the wounded sovereign and alleviates his suffering is posed by the Talmud as Roman recognition of colonial guilt. In the Talmud, if not in history, the Romans recognize the Jewish/Nietzschean economy of guilt as debt and exchange. The Romans witness the subjugated's gaze on the suffering sovereign and are so thoroughly offended by it as not to render customary monetary payment—oppression brings its own exotic rates of exchange such as the gnat's haunting of Titus's skull. In Walter Benjamin's analysis of the seventeenth-century *Trauerspiel*, the exemplary representation and redress of collective political suffering is the spectacle of the mad sovereign undergoing bodily and iconographic disintegration and his manifestation as a creature.[3]

Titus's suffering is the coercive push of his body from sovereignty

to creaturely life as personified and mediated by the gnat. His expansive sexuality is reduced by and to the gnat. Titus's offense is that he has a bad theory of sovereignty tied to the body and sexuality, tied to finite binaries of earth and ocean, tied to sacral space (national space) and its violation. He seeks a territorial sovereignty; he wants his adversary the Jewish god to abandon the diasporic boundless ocean for the finitude and positivity of land and for the war of the territorial; in reply he is sent the gnat whose undifferentiated microscopic orifice correlates with Titus's attempted phallic-political penetration/pollution of the Other.

The transformation of the gnat into a sparrow from the death's-head skull of Titus speaks to the transcendental nature and exceptionality of this asymmetric anti-imperial violence. Ironically, it is as if in his suffering and death Titus is purified as expressed by the miraculous redemptive transmutation of the tortuous gnat into the sparrow (even though this is later described in the Talmud as a thoroughly militarized sparrow whose beak and claws are clad in iron and brass). Titus undergoes a punishing passage from what Benjamin termed the mythic violence of law conservation (through image-making) to its alter, iconoclastic messianic law–founding violence.[4] The Jewish god's sovereignty is the kingdom of exception in relation to Roman law, and therein lies the crux. The true sovereign here is that which converts others to and commands bare life. The pagan Roman emperor does not govern the creaturely but is commanded by it, both in his sexual investments and later by the rule of the gnat. Titus must fornicate and rape in order to reveal his mastery over bare life via his body. The sovereign instrumentally deploys bare life in the mode of sexual potency and as mimetic display, but to do so he must descend into it, and touch it to materially fashion it as a tangible sign, and thus he does not command the bodily. Unlike the Roman emperor, the Jewish god has no such body to bring into relation with bare life; bare life is this power's unalloyed means against imperial territorializing sovereignty.

The Jewish deity deploys the minuscule gnat to reduce the ruler of the world to the creaturely and to the chronic. Titus is animalized in his suffering; he is captive to monomaniacal stimuli, the peripatetic buzzing of the gnat, and is consequently captivated by the noise of Jewish hammers. The afflicted Roman emperor is like Heidegger's animal, poor in world, captivated and benumbed by his disinhibiters, be they eros, violence, noise, or pain.[5] The material reduction of Titus to animality, to a world of benumbment, noise, and pain, through the violent concentrate of the gnat's torture inversely bears witness to the sheer transcendent exceptionality, difference, and alterity of the Jewish God's singular sovereignty, which is here the rule of the disrupted, the displaced, and the scattered. If Titus's rule expresses a law, his undoing is achieved by a counterlaw, one that derives from no territoriality, presence, or site, but is epitomized by the

specter of the peripatetic, that is, by all that is not encompassed, stabilized, and anchored by law.

The post-Talmudic lesson is that the imperium is haunted by the specter of the inaccessible singularity of the infinitesimal gnat. Perhaps now is the time, as the philosopher Reiner Schurmann proposed, to begin "gathering singularities" to begin remembering and mourning the scattered and the singular collateral damage of the universalizing and maximizing project of imperium, to recall the limit experiences of such political magnitude as did the Talmud. Unfortunately the Talmudic gnat of singularity has not yet engendered an alternative politics. In the interim, Christianized Rome and its political heirs reworked the transcendent extrasomatic Jewish model of sovereignty and iconicized and bureaucratized this specter, transcribing and incarnating transcendental, miraculous, and violent exceptionality into the militarized Christian state. The subsequent development of the state form has been, both then and now, dedicated to silencing the perennial buzzing of the gnat in the skull of sovereignty.

Notes

1. Titus (Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus, AD 39–AD 81, Roman emperor AD 79–AD 81) was the son of the emperor Vespasian. Vespasian was campaigning in Judea when he was proclaimed emperor; Titus stayed on in the province to repress the Jewish revolt and on his return to Rome was awarded a triumph for his victories in Palestine.

2. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Gittin, www.come-and-hear.com/gittin/gittin_56.html.

3. See Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. J. Osbourne (New York: Verso, 1998).

4. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings, Vol. 1: 1913–1926* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1996).

5. For Heidegger, a difference between human and animal is that the latter is "captivated" by its surround (*Umwelt*) and in a condition of "benumbedness" (*Benommenheit*) as it is trapped by a ring of sensory lures. See Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysic: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). See also Giorgio Agamben's discussion of Heidegger in relation to Jakob von Uexküll's biosemiotics in *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004). For Agamben the expulsion into bare life by state violence is tantamount to the animalization of the biopolitical subject. The operative norm of animality here is as violent to animals as it is to people, as it is coupled with a state-sanctioned norm of the human and based on the Western metaphysics of the human/animal divide.

With Ice in Their Ears

Allen Feldman

In Sarajevo on 5 February 1995, Bosnian Serbs fired a 120mm shell that landed in an open-air market, killing sixty-eight Muslims and Serbs and injuring more than two hundred others. The market was littered with heads and limbs when *Los Angeles Times* reporter James Rainey arrived on the scene. He had an appointment the next day to interview Radovan Karadzic, then head of the Bosnian Serb Republic and currently wanted as a war criminal. Rainey told Karadzic of what he had seen at the market in the aftermath of the shelling. Karadzic responded with a single question: "Did you notice the ice in their ears?" Only later did Rainey realize that Karadzic was implying that the massacre was a fabrication in which the corpses and body parts had supposedly been removed from refrigerated morgues and dumped by Bosnian Muslims in the marketplace for the press to photograph.

Karadzic revealed his own disturbing sense of how historical truth is currently made in this accusation. For Karadzic history is a mounted tableau, a decoupage, a display screen upon which ideological verities are projected in the manifestation of broken bodies, collective pain, and social suffering. The light show of the Shock and Awe bombing in Iraq and the erotic/zoological posing of tortured Iraqis at Abu Ghraib bear witness to this new virtualization of history, where political puppetry and technological artifice create truth effects and reversion historical process. The orchestrators of such image games are anchored in an ahistorical synchronic space of absolute moral certitude, such as the ethnic essentialism of Radovan Karadzic and his supporters or the current American universal of compulsory democracy, from which they project and propel scenarios of diachronic trajectory. Technologies of terror render life worlds into fabricated cartographies of political allegory, into frozen surfaces of

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ideological confirmation and affect. Both Karadzic and George Bush see the technologically created corpse as a political actor and special effect. (Karadzic's troops terrorized Sarajevans with long-distance assassination by telescopic sniping.) They epitomize the new politics of "first-person-shooter" media mastery. The first-person-shooter video game, relished by American youth, is not pushing violence into everyday life, but rather refracts a wider militarized biomedia that recodes human life into disposable pop-up targets. The first-person shooter as political hegemon stands outside the ludic arena of the history he stages and plays. He manipulates lives-as-images from afar, insulated by ideological bunkers and technocratic cocoons. The first-person-shooter hegemon codifies political mastery in violence rendered casual and convenient by user-friendly technological reach. Addicted to the aestheticized politics of technological sensuality and visual puppetry, the new hegemons of scenographic terror compulsively push the buttons of human destruction with frozen senses, and with ice in their veins, creating an arctic history.

Witchcraft

Rosalind Morris

For Jim, and for Tony

Frank Sinatra, it seems safe to say, did not understand witchcraft. Sure, he made the song "Witchcraft" famous, transforming a terrifying idea into the kind of desire that can be spoken in public without shame.[1] And yes, he understood that romance is—or has been, since the 1950s at least—the only space that Americans permit to be suffused by powers that can undo someone, that can undermine reason. But even that insight seems to have possessed Sinatra only inadvertently, in the way that any other cultural truism possesses someone.

It may be the case that Sinatra was a magician, if by *magician* we mean one who produces an illusion so perfect that it appears to be real, one who can, thereby, seem to defy the laws of nature. Frank Sinatra may well be a magician according to this rather lethargic criterion. Like every great artist, he appeared to possess and be possessed by a quite inexplicable talent—one that he cultivated, trained, and nurtured, to be sure, but one that exceeded what he, as an ordinary man, could rightly have expected. This talent made it possible for him to do things with his body that most people could not—to move people with the force of song. But even so, few would ever refer to him as someone capable of sorcery.

To move people with the force of song requires that music lift off from language, and from meaning, to be more than the content of the lyrics—and, at the same time, to animate them with this now foreign-seeming element. Sinatra could surpass meaning as well as any singer, transforming lyrics into the mere shapes of words. He filled those evacuated contours with an aural richness so mellow and so mellifluous that you

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almost feel sated with food after listening. It's the soaring glissando, the swinging, finger-snapping melodiousness of the songs that are his legacy. It's not that the words have receded from the horizon of his music, but the words are not what we recall as having been his.

Oddly enough, when he first burst onto the scene, many people described Sinatra's singing as being too much "like talking." But it was a strange kind of talking, because the speech itself, the lyrics, could be uttered by anyone. It wasn't Sinatra talking, it was his style of singing that confused the boundary between speech and music. This confusion could be a kind of witchcraft. Sinatra renewed a recurrent anxiety from the history of Western music. From the repressed histories of chanting, he called forth an old sense of song's magicality. Henceforth, one might say, song that sounded too much like talking (at least in the moment it was heard), but which was nonetheless not simply the speech of the one singing, would appear to be dangerous. It would appear to have powers of commandment and to conceal a potent foreignness—at least when considered from the perspective of those at the center of the culturally dominant universe. Girls would swoon in its presence, boys would want to imitate it, and to claim its capacities of ensorcellment for themselves. Rock, heavy metal, punk, and rap would, at different times, seem to realize and then apotheosize this danger. But that is to get ahead of the story. Let's stick with Sinatra for a while longer.

Sinatra is a sound, but not precisely a voice—at least not in the sense of a voice that we identify with the quality of someone's speech when understood as the expression of their thought. Even his sound may not be his own, for he credited Mabel Mercer with teaching him everything that he would ever know about phrasing.[2] In any case, when we praise Sinatra's voice (or detract from it, as some critics are wont to do), we praise it as a bodily capacity, as a technique, and as a quality of sonority. But it is not merely Frank Sinatra's music that entails this distinction.

Most contemporary song entails this split between voice as the articulation of an individual's mental life, and voice as the embodied carrier of a language that comes from elsewhere. There are some exceptions, of course. The intensely subjective narrations of some blues and ballad traditions come to mind, and one often hears performances of pieces in these genres as the raw expression of individual experience—to the extent of feeling sympathy for the singer and regret for the unredeemed suffering that seems so often to be the compulsive origin of his or her music. These still singular forms of popular music would seem to constitute a last refuge for the lyric voice in mass culture, as understood by literary critics. But at the same time, they reveal by contrast the peculiar quality of everything else that falls in the alienated penumbra of contemporary music, and especially

postelectronic pop song. It may well be the case that electronification has intensified the split between the musical and the lyrical—even though some artists, like Dylan or Beck, transcend that rift, earning for themselves the moniker of poet above and beyond that of musician. Yet electronification is not in and of itself an explanation of the power of popular music today—even if the electric instrument sometimes competes with the singer for the right to say "I" am here.[3]

When we are transported by music with lyrics within the field of popular song, it is because song has split wide open along the fault line of the difference between the two voices—the embodied voice of a historical discourse and the textured expression of a subjectivity. The singer as magician confuses the two and makes words seem his own by giving them the sound of his body. If, thus, we can imagine ourselves singing Sinatra's songs, it is because they can be identified with him without our imagining that they are precisely his speech. We do not, for example, confuse singing a Sinatra song with quoting him. He merely lent these songs his voice, which then dominated all else. It is when this force returns to the linguistic element of the lyrics that we can speak of something like witchcraft—but that is possible only because they have first been separated.

There is often an enormous chasm between the content or meaning of the lyric and the sense conveyed by the music in which the lyric reaches us as song. You only have to listen to "I Shot the Sheriff," with its languid rhythm and violent confession, to grasp this fact. Until recently, nearly everyone could remember the soaring hooks with which Sinatra established his authority. But who ever really thought about the words from which they were themselves snatched? Who today recalls the narcissistic insipidity or maudlin anticipatory grief in "My Way," the violent braggadocio of "Mack the Knife"? Or the erotic keening of "Witchcraft"? Indeed, when Sinatra intones, in his honey-dripped voice, "When you arouse the need in me, my heart says 'yes indeed' in me," there is barely a hint of carnal sexuality—and certainly nothing compared to that which drips from Santana's "Black Magic Woman."[4] There is, rather, a kind of indolence weighing down what otherwise appears like coyness, and it is this odd mixture that lets listeners attend and repeat the ludicrous last refrain, "It's such an ancient pitch, but one I couldn't switch, 'cause there's no nicer witch than you." The ironic result would lead someone like Al Aronowitz to invoke the anonymous listeners who responded to Sinatra's songs with amazement by remarking, "He really believes those silly little words he's singing."[5]

Nice witches were the fashion in the early 1960s. Beginning in 1964, television, finally reaching the majority of middle-class homes across

the country, transmitted the image of a witch with unlimited powers and the entirely limited ambitions of a housewife. *Bewitched* featured Elizabeth Montgomery as the irresistibly intelligent but mind-bogglingly self-unaware Samantha.[6] It gave to Americans the figure for that stupefied consciousness of the normal that the previous decade had attempted to establish in a hegemonic form—through the more violent expulsions of difference that are, elsewhere, associated with real witchcraft. Samantha's feckless husband never managed to grasp his luck, for, emasculated though he was, he never imagined himself to be anything other than the head of the household. A few years later, a slightly more exotic image of the same fantastical situation offered itself, this time with a lithe genie (in *I Dream of Jeannie*) who could see no use for her illimitable powers other than seducing the dumb military man whom she desired as husband but addressed as "Master."[7]

This spectacle of witchcraft in so benign a form, and moreover as the art of domesticity and of patriarchal family life, is surely an oddity in the world. Almost everywhere else, witchcraft is a violent practice that unleashes the anarchic powers of the mob, often in the name of social order, against vulnerable individuals. Or it is the name of an otherwise unspeakable force that people invoke to explain the injurious fate that seems, so unjustly, to afflict "innocent" individuals. Witchcraft is, in fact, the discourse that turns accident into violence, attributing agency to seemingly random events. In other words, witchcraft is cathartic theater in its purest form—tragic, universal, written in blood, and always failed. That is what anthropology teaches us.[8]

It should be noted, however, that the order that arises from the ashes and blackened fields where witchcraft was given rein is never an old order restored, nor a peace regained. It is always a new order, albeit sometimes in the image of an older one. But, as in all tragedy, the new worlds that cohere in these contexts are achieved only after the annihilation of those who represent the power of the passing generation. They arise only after the visitation of death. When we look at the historical record of witchcraft accusation and trials, the pages are strewn with corpses—from South Africa to Indonesia, from Puritan New England to Inquisitorial Spain.

What is specific to witchcraft is that the new order carries within itself the seeds of the same morbidity. It is always haunted by old fears, which manifest themselves in new accusations and efforts at expulsion. It is an unending cycle, structured less by the real resolution of conflict than by the ebb and flow of those energies required to combat death by killing. Some social scientists have argued that witchcraft is a mechanism for restoring social order in places where people do not have elaborated codes of law to moderate personal interest, probably because they have mistaken exhaustion and the stasis it produces for postrevolutionary social order.

What could witchcraft of the sort that Frank Sinatra sings about, or that Elizabeth Montgomery enacts, mean in the United States? What could possibly lead Americans to fantasize about witchcraft in so banal a form? Why did magic have to take the form of witchcraft at all?

The fantasy arose, it must be recalled, during the most intense period of the Cold War, amid conspiracy theories and fear of state-sponsored brainwashing, to say nothing of absurd experiments in telekinesis and slightly less absurd programs on artificial intelligence—the kinds that were so magnificently and terrifyingly evoked in that other Sinatra masterpiece, *The Manchurian Candidate* (and how dreadfully literal-minded seems the 2004 remake when compared with this first, ambiguous, and appropriately noir film!).[9]

The fashionably harmless witch, like Casper, the harmless ghost of an earlier era, initially seems to be the figure of a crude domestication. *Bewitched* made the prospect of abnormal powers seem not only innocuous but delightful. It harnessed the more fearful possibility of truly unknown forces to serve the industry of domestic mechanization. Watching *Bewitched*, it is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a witch and a labor-saving appliance. Yet beneath the veneer of mindless abandonment to a domesticity rendered as merely charming, *Bewitched* revealed and concealed something more sinister in the American imaginary. As Anthony Lane so perspicaciously observes, it also sensed the emergence of an antipatriarchal discourse—what would later become the social movement of feminism—and made viewers laugh at the idea.[10] The revolt that it anticipated and disavowed would never ultimately cohere as a true revolution. But if there were such a revolution (if patriarchy was every truly overturned, anywhere), it would no doubt appear to many to be as violently disordering as the force that witchcraft unleashes when it erupts in the form of accusation.

Revolutions and witchcraft purges have this in common: they call for violence and they defend their call in the interest of renewal and of a better society, but they end up in frenzies of accusation and suspicion, without any general mechanism for determining their own success. Hence, they are in some profound respects insatiable. Perhaps this is why, in those places that made a virtue and a system of eternal revolution, the blood that it demanded could always be rationalized, but it could not be stopped without a reactionary counterrevolution being implemented.

This recognition fueled the American imagination of witchcraft a few short years before television made it into a spectacle of middle-class benignity. In 1952, Arthur Miller had invoked it as an allegory for the frenzy and the hysteria of anticommunism in the McCarthy era. Miller's choice of the Salem witch hunts, rather than, say, the Spanish Inquisition,

for subject matter in *The Crucible* permitted something other than the abuse of law and institutional power to appear as the driving force behind the hearings—in which case witchcraft would be reducible to mere corruption, and its excesses as well as its generalizing power would remain utterly incomprehensible. Miller's reticence to indulge in the idiom of lynching, so identified with racist violence in the United States, also saved his drama for a more universalist reading. But, more than this, it opened up a vantage point from which to grasp the entire culture of the Cold War as being riven by something that exceeded the political—but that nonetheless had political effects.

This excess is the force that makes people want to harm others; it is the form of a pure antisociality. In a society premised on the value of individualism, such as the United States of America, antisociality is a lurking, omnipresent threat. Anything that can serve as an alchemical agent, transforming individualism into overt antisociality, must threaten the entire social fabric. Perhaps it is as threatening as communism itself. Nothing threatens that precarious relationship more than sexuality—or rather, nothing appears to threaten that relationship more than sexuality in the public sphere, where it can dissolve the boundary—so tenuously erected in the aftermath of the Enlightenment—between privacy and publicity.

Few texts have depicted with greater acuity the collective libidinous frisson that seems to become available for participants in witchcraft accusations than *The Crucible* (though Huxley's *The Devils of Loudon* is a serious contender). In a direct line of descent from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, *The Crucible* grasps a sexual drive in the moralizing accusations that a "community" or its (often self-appointed) representative brings to bear on individuals who are thought to possess unnatural powers, or to somehow exceed the normal—and normative—expectations for their world. Miller locates the play at the heart of the dissident religious tradition at the repeating origin of the American nation. In Miller's drama, the discovery of crime (of witchcraft) becomes a source of pleasure and validation for the accuser—even though it does not yet mitigate the power of the accused.[11]

The drive of witchcraft accusation wants constantly to subvert the law, even when it claims to act on behalf of the law and even when, as is so often the case, it mimics the law and its institutional forms. This drive is impatient, aggressive, and destructive. It satisfies itself not in the oblivion of sexual intimacy but in murderous bloodletting. Almost invariably, it demands that the accused confess—and, moreover, that she or he implicate others. In this manner, the victim affirms the victimizer's right to violence. This affirmation is an important part of many witch hunts, even

if it is elicited only through the falsely concrete signs that trials by fire or drowning produce.

Such accusations thrive on belief, but they can exist only in the space of doubt. They are loquacious, but they invoke the unspeakable. This is also why it is so easy to *say* that one doesn't believe in witchcraft, even when chasing witches. To speak of it is already, in some way, to depart from it. Witchcraft thrives precisely in those domains where words and discourse in general are not enough to explain the world and even their own force.

Arthur Miller's *Crucible* notwithstanding, American society presumes that witchcraft is a delusion. The occasional practitioners of Wicca who profess their commitment to what they believe are the ancient Celtic forms of therapeutically oriented worship do not in any way threaten this fundamental self-representation of America as a society liberated from witchcraft. They are, for the most part, considered ridiculous, and the vast majority of people do not credit their claims to either ritual or medicinal knowledge.

The point, however, is that Miller's play, like all idiomatic invocations of the witch hunt, is an allegory. As such, it implies as much difference as similarity between the two referents of its text: political totalitarianism and theocratic excess. It is therefore instructive to recall the explanatory "Overture" that Miller wrote to explain his work: "The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom." In Miller's reading, the balance was that between order and freedom, and the witch hunt erupted in a theocracy wherein repression had far exceeded the need for order. The result, he observed, was that everyone was afforded an opportunity to "express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims."

Even for Miller, then, the excesses of witchcraft originate in a compulsion to reveal that interiority which the social order wishes to repress, and which its structure repudiates as contrary to its interests. Ironically, perhaps, the thrill that accompanies the hunt is finally achieved not in the brutalizing of others, but in the exquisite dissipation that confession enables, as though confession afforded speakers the same kind of release as does sexual ecstasy.

In Christian contexts, witchcraft accusations may well entail an element of what Miller imagined in nearly orgasmic terms, but that does not explain its violence, its origins, or its persistence in other forms. For witchcraft accusations are precipitated when an event occurs for which there is no adequate explanation. They occur either when someone without guilt, someone whom we therefore believe should not have been wounded, suf-

fers an injury, or when someone does something that they would not have been expected to do. Witchcraft is a way of saying: "Something made me act against my will. There is a force or a substance within me that compels me to do this, against my nature." It inserts itself between will and agency, between intention and action.

Psychoanalysts would, of course, read statements of this sort as evidence of a split in the psyche. *Witchcraft* would perhaps even be the name of that split in its pathological form. In Europe, as the great anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggested, psychoanalysis would stand in the place of witchcraft accusation and sorcery in general.[12] In the United States, where psychotherapeutic culture is not always (perhaps even rarely) psychoanalytic in nature, we consider such a rupture to be a form of madness—one that militates against any attribution of responsibility or guilt in cases of violent crime. But the possibility of explaining violence of this sort constitutes a limit. When, as occasionally happens, more than one person commits a heinous act, and when they do so outside of any ideological project (such as one finds in the racist violence of the Ku Klux Klan), Americans are confronted by the utterly intractable silence of their explanatory frameworks. The trotting out of sociological explanations for the mass deaths in McDonald's restaurants, post offices, shopping malls, and schools ultimately proves irrelevant in the face of that question that every survivor asks: Why were those particular people caught there, in that place, at that moment? Why was I not? Even explanations for mass violence that attribute causality to psycho-pharmaceutical agents, and especially withdrawal from them—as in the recent mass killing at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb—confront the incapacity of such narratives to explain why certain individuals are vulnerable to the drugs in this particular manner, and why their actions should affect some people and not others.

Most often, random collective violence not attributed to pharmaceutically induced crises—even the self-destructive sort associated with cults, like that at Jonestown—is attributed to the charismatic power of a single person, who is then said to be responsible for inciting others to violence. Yet in recent years, there has also emerged a kind of violence for which the explanation of brainwashing or charismatic seduction is inadequate. The most acute form of this violence occurs as mass murder in schools. The most famous recent instances are those at Columbine High School, in Colorado, when two young men, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, opened fire on their classmates and systematically executed several of them, and the Virginia Tech shootings that resulted in the deaths of thirty-two college students and faculty members.[13] But there are others, some successful, some merely attempted. Between 2 February 1996, when a fourteen-year-old opened fire on students and a teacher in Moses Lake, Washington,

and 16 April 2007, when Seung-Hui Cho laid siege to Virginia Tech, eighty-four students and fifteen teachers were killed in American schools. Another 125 were wounded. In eleven of the incidents, more than five people were shot. The total number of deaths in school shootings from all other nations combined during this period was twenty-nine. In February 2008, the U.S. phenomenon seemed to be accelerating; there were shootings and killings on campuses in California, Illinois, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

These atrocious events are characterized by a double horror. First, they cause the deaths and injuries of young people—the archetypically innocent and always premature sufferers of any violence. Second, they are perpetrated by youths. The second fact threatens the presumptions underlying the first, for the categorical innocence of the victims ought to apply to the killers. When a school is ravaged in this way, something has intervened to transform those who should have been innocent into those who would destroy innocence.

By now, there have been enough of these events, each one imagined as exceptional, that some patterns can be discerned, though there is much difference of opinion on the etiology of the events, the mental states of the perpetrators, and so forth. Many of the murdering youths have suffered social stigma and felt themselves to be deeply alienated from their peers. Often enough, killings take place in rural or suburban environments (mass murders in schools are extremely rare in urban contexts), where there is relatively little social difference—and where the main forms of social difference are class-based. Of course, they occur in places where access to firearms is commonplace—and this very accessibility of arms is, no doubt, the most significant factor in the scale of the violence.

Social commentators responding to the collective and individual trauma of these events are always quick to read them as symptoms of a society that lacks moral direction, and that exposes children to an unbearable and undistinguishable barrage of imagery that valorizes and provokes violence. Often, they assign blame to the culture industry, which is said to have made violence fashionable. In this context, they invoke the gun-toting bravado of cinema icons, or the sensuously styled murder and rape in the films of directors like Quentin Tarantino or Oliver Stone. It is certainly true that popular culture has made violence beautiful. It may also be true that it has made violence fashionable. For fashion, as Gertrude Stein said with typically succinct brilliance, is reality in abstraction (in this respect, she was not so very far from the famous German sociologist Georg Simmel).[14] Similarly, we might say that fashionable violence is violence that lacks reality and that can therefore be underestimated. But it is not clear that the unreality of violence leads youth to murderousness.

Sometimes, of course, what people say and what they think they say are two different things. Popular culture is said, in the wake of events like the Columbine killings, to have annulled young people's capacity to fully grasp the consequences of his or her actions—for these actions have been imagined only in their unreal form, the form that cinema, television, video games, and popular music provide. Oddly enough, then, these narratives do not suggest that popular culture has violated youth or that young people have been prematurely abducted from the halcyon days of their innocence. Even though their actions violate and betray the ideals of childhood and youthfulness, the young killers are never said to have acted like adults. Rather, the opposite. The logic of these narratives implies that by inhibiting their capacity to recognize the real consequences of their really violent actions, popular culture effectively infantilizes youth, redoubles it and distorts it by blocking its relationship to adulthood. Legal maturity requires that a person be able to understand the consequences of his or her actions. Children and people with reduced mental faculties are assumed to be incapable of this imaginative gesture, and therefore cannot be held accountable for their actions in the ways that adults are.[15] Explanations that would blame popular culture for random but collective violence end up with a paradox. That which society should protect, childhood, is also the point of origin for that which would destroy childhood.

Quite rightly, survivors of school killings tend to rebut such facile sociology with the observation that everyone in American society is bombarded by similar imagery and similar music, and hence, that something else must explain the fact that it solicits mimicry from some people and not from others. It is remarkable how articulate and analytically precise these young survivors are, and it is unfortunate that they are not listened to with greater care. Listening, then, we note the recurrent idea of "something else." This "something else" would occupy the place that witchcraft occupies elsewhere. But, of course, no one in America believes that witchcraft is responsible for the schoolyard variety of mass murder. Or do they?

There is an odd persistence to some of the explanatory gestures that commentators within American society make when tragedies like Columbine occur. There is, first, a concern about the cinematic aestheticization of violence, and about the ethical anesthesia thought to emanate from television's overexposure of both actual and fictional violence. Television and cinema are said to contribute to an environment in which such events become possible. And the rehearsal of reactive trigger-pulling in video games is said to prepare youths' bodies for the transformation of alienation into deathly rage. But there is plenty of evidence that these forms of entertainment dull our senses more than they heighten them; on their own, they are not enough to spur the eruption of such bloodletting. True,

the young shooters of Columbine were linked to the characters of *The Matrix* by virtue of the long black coats that they wore, but this was an extremely weak attribution—more a condemnation of fashion than the discernment of a real relationship. While parents sought damages from entertainment corporations for inciting violence following Michael Carneal's shooting spree in Paducah, Kentucky, in 1997, the judge dismissed the case on the grounds that tragedy defied rational explanation. Carneal had not simply imitated what he had seen, the judge asserted. No direct linkage could be discerned.

By contrast, suspicion of music's role in events of this sort has been more difficult for Americans to shuck off. Very few people doubt that music makes one feel different. Nonetheless, the attribution to music of a power that can overcome all others, of a force that can transform innocence into that which destroys innocence, reason into irrationality, is something altogether different.

After the Columbine shootings, the killers' affection for the German industrial rock band Rammstein and the alternative techno group KMFDM was much remarked. The iconoclastic goth rocker Marilyn Manson's lyrics were more directly invoked as a possible precipitating factor of the atrocity, the young men having listened intently to his melancholically electronified, rhythmically pulsing music before their assault. For his part, Manson responded to these insinuations with a defensive collection of songs about the disposability of youth in American society and remarked that the youths had suffered from a lack of audience. When asked what he would have done if confronted by the murderers, he said he would have listened.

Manson was also mentioned in connection with Kip Kinkel, the fifteen-year-old who, having murdered his parents, killed two students and wounded twenty-two others at his school in Springfield, Oregon. Kinkel wrote down and then framed the lyrics to Manson's "Reflecting God" before his rampage: "No forgiveness, no salvation, no forgiveness, no salvation, no forgiveness." More recently, media reporters have remarked on the fact that Asa Coon, the fourteen-year-old shooter who opened fire at a school in Cleveland, Ohio, in October 2007, wore a Marilyn Manson T-shirt on the occasion of his violence, and that he was a fan of the rocker.

Then there was Charles Andrew Williams, who killed two students and wounded thirteen others at Santana High School in Santee, California. He reportedly wrote a note to his father, in which he copied out the lyrics of a song called "In the End" by the "rapcore" band Linkin Park. As Greg Moran, a staff writer at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, remarks, "the song laments lost chances." Its haunting expression of abject despair is uttered in the language of alienated but also petulant youth: "I tried so hard and go so far, but in the end it doesn't even matter."[16]

These details are assiduously noted by journalists, parents, and cultural critics, who generally seek in the lyrics of the songs the commandment to commit violence. But of course it is not simply the words, but the transformation of the words into a compulsion via music that they worry about. They recognize a power in music, whether in the wall of electronic sound and the impossibly close distance that reverb provides, in the aching or petulant riffs of a guitar pursuing its solitude, or in the throb of a rhythm that is as much the sound of the urban-industrial world as it is the echo of a primordial heartbeat. Yet, they seem to believe that this power comes from language, from the lyrics, and they are unsure about what gives to this language its special force. Some of the killers seem to share this sense. And they leave us with the urgent question, What indeed is the nature of that force that turns a child into a killer?

Seung-Hui Cho, the collegiate killer who videotaped messages of hate, bitterness, and a sense of exclusion and sent them to news media before shooting his fellow students at Virginia Tech, is described in a Wikipedia article as listening in an obsessive-compulsive manner to a song called "Shine," by alternative rock group Collective Soul.[17] Its lyrics are rather lachrymose when compared to those of another song, "Mr. Brownstone" by Guns 'n' Roses, that Cho also quoted.[18] The latter is invoked by many commentators on the Virginia Tech killings, though less directly than in the case of Marilyn Manson and the Columbine killings, because Cho himself cited the song in his own play by the same name.[19] One of two pieces of dramatic writing left behind by Cho (the other titled "Richard McBeef"), "Mr. Brownstone" explores a violent fantasy of vengeance against teachers, but most especially the elder math teacher whom the student characters of the play call "muthafucker."

The play is perhaps the most extraordinary document of the whole vile episode that has come to be known as the Virginia Tech massacre. In it, Cho's central character, John, overinterprets his teacher's name to mean "kidney stone of the ass." He imagines the teacher to be a pedophile who suffers acute constipation, and whose difficult bowel movements both reduce him to the status of a woman giving birth, and drive him to "ass-rape" his students. There is a great deal of obvious homophobic and homoerotic projection in these scenarios, but what enrages the students is less Mr. Brownstone's predatory sexuality than his refusal to let them assume control of the world: "Make room for the new generation, you old fart," John says. They want to be free of his authority, his supervision, and his desire.

The rage of youth against age, of masculinity against femininity, the refusal to submit to the master, the unleashing of generational conflict: these themes dominate all stories of witchcraft, wherever they arise. It

might be possible to say that Cho was acting out the same kinds of rage and desire to escape the power of authority that underwrite all frenzies of witchcraft. What is perhaps most interesting about Cho's discourse, however, is that it arises in a case of misrecognition and mistranslation.

The song "Mr. Brownstone" is finally acknowledged in the play to be about heroin addiction—the expression being a slang term for heroin, which, like all opiates, is notoriously associated with constipation. But one could almost believe that the author of the play discovered this fact belatedly, after listening to the song and dreamily associating its lyrics with more literal images. If so, it is perhaps the guitar rather than the lyrics that bore him along. The song, which commences with a drum solo redolent of battlefields, shifts quickly to a strong vocal line, but it is the guitar that takes flight here, running up and down scales as though they were stairs in the brownstone house of the title and producing a kind of aural depth where imagination might project itself. Perhaps a classmate in the writing workshop for which he wrote the play told him about the actual referents of the song. In any case, the mistranslation and misrecognition seem to be of a piece with the general rage against both racial discrimination and class difference. In the narratives about Virginia Tech that proliferated in both the American and the Korean press, the young immigrant comes to America and is oppressed by the wealth his parents seek, or rather their desire for such wealth. He is then reviled by his peers as an Asian and denied the status even of immigrant. On every level, it seems, there was confusion.

Perhaps, in the vacillation and play between what is written and what is heard, something happened. Perhaps this something felt less like confusion than like power—a power from elsewhere for those who feel they cannot access it here. Would this perhaps explain why Harris and Klebold, Cho's predecessors, so loved Rammstein?

Rammstein, the name of a band, is also the name of a song on the group's 1995 album, *Herzeleid*. The lyrics of the last stanza go as follows:

Rammstein
ein Massengrab
Rammstein
kein Entrinnen
Rammstein
kein Vogel singt mehr
Rammstein
die Sonne scheint

(Rammstein
A mass grave
Rammstein

No escape
Rammstein
No birds are singing anymore
Rammstein
The sun is shining)

One is tempted to read these words as prescriptions for a massacre. But the apparent malevolence and uncanniness of these words is somewhat illusory. According to translator Jeremy Williams, the lyrics refer not to the battering stone of a literal translation (of *rammstein*), but to the Ramstein Airbase disaster—despite the different spelling of the word.[20] The collapse of difference that occurs in the aural play on words allows the lyrics to carry two meanings, including both the Ramstein base and the battering stone (*ramm* implying here the sense of battering ram, with the same sexual innuendo that can accompany the English term).

The more conventionally interpreted word *rammstein* appears in another song on the same early album, "Wollt ihr das Bett in Flammen sehen?" ("Do You Want to See the Bed in Flames?"). There, one finds the lyrics:

Wollt ihr das Bett in Flammen sehen
wollt ihr in Haut und Haaren untergehen
ihr wollt doch auch den Dolch ins Laken stecken
ihr wollt doch auch das Blut vom Degen lecken

(Do you want to see the bed in flames
do you want to perish in skin and hair
you want to stick the dagger in the sheet as well
you want to also lick the blood from the sword)

In the 1970s, acid-tripping listeners and frantic parents wondered if secret messages could be transmitted by playing certain LPs, such as those of Alice Cooper, backward. But the real mystery of song, even that which is screamed to the grating sound of electronic feedback, is not what might be transmitted in reverse, but what might be lurking within the musically enabled lyric.

If, for Cho, a force inhered in the music of Guns 'n' Roses, it was less because of anything intrinsic to the words, or the music that carried them, than because of a mistranslation, which, like music, gives to words a meaning beyond that which is predictable because conventionally understood. But that force has taken different forms at different times; it has a history, even though it has been and will always be utterly unpredictable.

It is, perhaps, only a historical irony, albeit an irresistibly and poetically provocative one, that the era of such linkages—between music and vio-

lence—really began with another Manson, not Marilyn but Charles Manson, claiming that his own violence had been compelled by music—the music of the Beatles. That was in 1969. Charles Manson's delusional "family" had just slaughtered the pregnant Sharon Tate and her friends in Hollywood's most luxurious district. Joan Didion would later concur with those who claimed that the counterculture of the 1960s culminated and ended with this event, and she was partly correct.[21] This is not because of the disillusionment that she implies emanated from it (that would not come until later), but because Manson's own narrative expressed in its purest form the unassailable fact that music had become a general force in American culture, a force capable of moving people in ways that defy historical explanation and the presumptive laws of the social order.

By the time of the Manson family's murders, music had become a force in the political sphere. Its power lay in the fact that although it had consequences for the political life of the nation, it was nonetheless a non-political force. It could precipitate groups without providing them with an image with which to identify, and this was perhaps the most frightening development in the history of the mass-mediated world. Previously, groups were either constituted in face-to-face interactions, or they were gathered under an ideal image: of nation, ethnicity, class, and so forth. In the 1950s and 1960s, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, the Doors, and countless others manifest the emergence of a capacity to precipitate masses and not merely crowds. They could infuse them with anarchic energy and leave them with an object of imitation but not an image of themselves.

It is difficult, in the wake of music's transformations and the rise of everything from punk to gangsta rap, to imagine that the Beatles could ever have been said to incite murderousness—even in their later, more psychedelic days, and despite the violent end that came to their most visible member, John Lennon. Today, after punk, grunge, heavy metal, hip-hop, and gangsta rapping, they are the Doris Days of pop rock. But, of course, they did incite hysteria, collective delusion, and an ecstatic kind of stupefaction that left concertgoers in the tens of thousands (mainly women) mute, in tears, and completely "beside themselves." Recall the news footage depicting their first arrival on American soil—with the throngs of keening young women, the policemen in pitiful efforts to hold back the desiring masses, and the paramedics attempting to revive the joyously swooning fans.

The association of music with mass hysteria is the historical antecedent of its association with random violence. In the earliest days of this phenomenon, people tended to attribute music of such powers to the devil, and if, today, they are more likely to try to link the force of music with the malevolence of the musician, the idea that these heroes of popular culture

are the instruments of evil continues to haunt conservative discourse about its dangers. Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley, among others, were reviled for their overt sexuality, for their explicit indulgence in that sensuousness with which nearly all Western music since the romantics has been associated. And the accusation, heard in the churches of America's heartland, that they were indulging the devil and doing his work implied that there was an active and coherent agency behind them. They were as though possessed, and in this way not unlike witches.

Witches are as much the victims of their awful talent as are those whom they ensorcel. There is little sense of authorship that accompanies witchcraft, and even the great sorcerers, those who are renowned in their own territories as master technicians of secret wounding, lack the status of a devil, of the great patriarch of evil. At best, they are his servants. That is why the Amish manager of an auction house could forgive Carl Charles Roberts after he shot ten young Amish girls in their schoolroom, killing five of them: "The devil took control of him," Sam Fisher said.[22] That is also why others can believe that witches, unlike the devil, can be killed—or at least exiled, and thus silenced. Their power is never misrecognized as the only power, the One power.

Something like witchcraft is being postulated when people say that music makes them do something that they wouldn't otherwise do. But such claims are not made for all kinds of music—even if the medieval church associated the tritone, the minor and major sixths, with the devil. A paranoid reader might note the fact that tritone compositions are much favored by heavy metal bands, but composers as diverse as Beethoven and Leonard Bernstein also used it. It is not merely the *diabolu in musica* that provokes affective excess.

Indeed, it is a truism in the West that all music is thought to have an immediately affective force. So it is reasonable to ask why, today, music can be attributed the properties of witchcraft and be held responsible for the violence that we cannot otherwise understand. How did music acquire this power? And how is it possible for people to believe that individual musicians are responsible for its insidious effects?

It is not incidental that the music which comes most readily to the angry minds of those who would blame it for violence is also, and in the same moment, denied the status of music by these same accusers. Music is, of course, a common point of antagonism between members of different generations, and in the United States the expression of generational conflict almost invariably entails an argument over what constitutes real music, or at least good music. But there is surely something odd in the suggestion that young people may be moved to violence most readily by a music that is not one. This nonmusic is so frequently referred to as noise

by the defenders of tradition that one can quite easily forget the fact that the accusations always discern a message in its lyrics.[23]

We might say that the music which frightens people most is that which appears most like everyday language—ordinary talking—but which has the power of music. It is a fantastically, we might even say magically augmented rhetoric. This is partly why rap is the musical form most subject to censoriousness in America today. This, and the fact that it is dominated by black youth speaking in a rhetoric that lacks apparent ideological coherence but which nonetheless addresses itself to the social problems that are often considered the provenance of politics: namely urban poverty, racial discrimination, and sexual desire and violence in economies where young men feel themselves to be disenfranchised.

The rappers and hip-hop artists whose obscenities and real-life gun-slinging antics are held responsible by the musical moralists for schoolyard violence and social disorder in the inner cities are also often described as poets, word artists more than musicians. But they are rarely held responsible for mass murder. Why? Because their music is rarely thought of as that which can seduce innocence. Its performers don't occupy the role of the Pied Piper so much as that of Jeremiah, railing angrily against the corruption around them, the failures of their elders and of society at large.

Yet, on any given day, the cars and trucks driving along both city streets and suburban boulevards pulse with a rhyming stream of discontent, anchored in an exaggerated and relentless base. The iPods of subway and bus riders leak the same percussive drone. From a distance, their listeners seem more catatonic than energized by the music, and one can wonder, on occasion, if they have not been possessed, ensorcelled, placed under a spell. This spell would be different than that which possessed, if it possessed, the schoolyard murderers. But it is nonetheless that which withdraws them from the world and plunges them into that kind of radical solitude which inhabits the illusion of a shared practice, when it is really a mass kind of automatism.

Gertrude Stein, with her characteristic abstraction in the form of concreteness, remarked that war is more like a novel than real life, being based on reality but invented. The observation led her to reflect on the peculiar fact that, during World War II, a profound transformation took place as people began to listen to the radio all the time. The omnipresence of music "with everybody really everybody listening to the radio" seemed, to Stein, to represent the antithesis of what she called civilization. In this it was linked to a new kind of war, to total war. All wars make music, she noted, but in World War II there was "nothing but music."

Something about the relentlessness of this making music and of listening to it via the radio disabled people's analytic capacities in Stein's

reading. More important, it dissociated them from the two qualities that she identified with civilization: tradition and freedom. Always listening to music all the time, one became attentive only to the new (the latest hits, the newest arrival on the charts), and, moreover, one listened to what everyone else was listening to. Nothing has changed since then. Or rather, things are the same but more so. Perhaps, from the vantage point of the new millennium, the world of World War II would even seem quiet now. Sitting in a New York subway, or walking across a college campus on the West Coast, one is struck by the fact that, as Stein said, "everybody really everybody is listening"—to their Walkmans or, now, their iPods. Even more than with radio, this listening to what everyone else is listening to produces extreme isolation. A multitude of solitary youths is constantly listening to something other than their neighbor.

Sometimes, this profound loneliness is associated with a killing. Sometimes, it is the collectivism of the experience that seems to transform itself into death. Watching Michael Moore's incendiary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*, one is taken by the scene of young soldiers in their tanks, listening to the Bloodhound Gang's "Fire Water Burn," at the moment when the Bloodhound Gang lead singer intones, "Burn Mutherfucker Burn." A thousand images of ravaged corpses and chemically burned figures, ghosts of gunpowder and acid from countless wars, are conjured by the line.[24]

The young men seem to understand that they need an additional force to become the kind of people who will fire weapons causing the deaths of others, that it is difficult, even for a soldier, to want to kill or maim people without some stimulant that will transgress the boundaries of everyday morality. They seem to believe that music can alter their consciousness with or without drugs—whether those officially prescribed to keep them alert over long hours, or unofficially to give them a now difficult pleasure and to blot out the horror that surrounds them. They run the soundtracks of the music that can arouse, incite, and enrage them through the tanks, and they raise and fire their guns, pressing the buttons that release death and destruction. Like the inquisitors and the witch hunters of other times and places, they point their sticks, assert their right to authority, and try stupidly to eliminate what they fear. They must be possessed so as not to be murderers. To become men, they must also become children. This is the witchcraft they seek in music.

It is a different witchcraft than that which could be equated with sexual desire, as it was, however chastely, by Frank Sinatra and Johnny Mercer, or however voluptuously, as by Santana. It is perhaps worth recalling here the sentiment expressed in the Rammstein lyrics for "Do You Want to See the Bed in Flames?": "Sex is a battle / Love is war." The threat of feminism, ridiculed and nullified in the trivial renditions of magic with which early television watchers enchanted themselves, *Bewitched* and *I*

Dream of Jeannie, is no longer so containable. It erupts here in the extreme literalization and intensification of that old Freudian insight, that all love is ambivalent, even aggressive. This lunatic literalism—mark of reading's demise—accompanies the experience of always listening all the time, and it is what we so often imagine to be the property of music. One should really call this listening all the time a constant exposure to music. In any case, this literalism seems destined to produce violence.

If all wars make music, and if World War II gave us nothing but music, we now live in a world where music is that which can enable war. It is an awful power, to be sure. When we seek in the biographies of the youth who have become murderers of other youths a secret history of the power of music, we both recognize and deny this other, deeper, and more powerful fact: not that music has become a kind of ammunition—for it is still many other things—but that our era is one in which we expose ourselves to music too much and listen too little. In this way, we become paranoid and also indifferent. We attribute malevolence and show no mercy. Such is always the case with witchcraft, whatever its language, whatever its sound.

And yet. Every once in a while I am convinced that what antiwar movements need, more than anything, is music: a sound and an anonymous lyrical form for antiwar sentiment, such as was produced in the 1960s. That music would be one that could possess people. It would fill their mouths with words that come from elsewhere, but that nonetheless seem to express their deepest sentiments. It would precipitate crowds and even masses, and without giving them an image, it would let them assume collective force. This would be what anthropologists call therapeutic magic, witchcraft in its benign form, but witchcraft nonetheless. No doubt, this therapeutic magic would fail to mitigate the tide of gun violence in schools, for witchcraft, even the witchcraft of music, is not the true cause of that violence, but rather the name of a gesture by which one force of violent desire is substituted for another. Yet, such substitution has and can occasionally interrupt the drive to war. It is not yet a politics, to be sure. But then this is the world Americans invented, a world in which music has political force without being properly political.

Notes

This paper owes much to conversations with James Siegel and Tony Morphet, and I would like to acknowledge my debt to them here.

1. Frank Sinatra recorded Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh's "Witchcraft" in 1957 for the Capitol label. The song was published by Edwin H. Morris & Co., Ltd. It reached the top of the billboard charts in February 1958. Sinatra did other similarly themed pieces, of course, most notably Johnny Mercer's "That Old Black Magic," which Sinatra sang in *Meet Danny Wilson* (1952).

2. Edmund White mentions Sinatra's debt to Mabel Mercer in *The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), 68.

3. Philip Tagg notes that rock and heavy metal are typically dominated by *either* vocalists or guitarists and sees the guitarist as making a loud claim on subjectivity in a milieu saturated with noise. See his "Subjectivity and Soundscapes, Motorbikes and Music," in *Soundscapes: Essays on Vroom and Moo*, ed. Helmi Järviluoma (Tampere: Department of Folk Tradition, 1994), 48–66.

4. Santana's "Black Magic Woman" was first released on *Abraxas* in 1970.

5. Al Aronowitz, "The Dumb Sound: Pop before the Beatles," *Saturday Evening Post*, August 1963, www.rocksbackpages.com/article.html?ArticleID=3714.

6. *Bewitched* premiered on 17 September 1964 and ran its last show on 1 July 1972. Produced and directed by William Asher, it was made for ABC and starred Elizabeth Montgomery as the witch. A film based on the television show, also titled *Bewitched*, written and directed by Nora Ephron for Columbia Pictures, was released in 2005. It starred Nicole Kidman in the role of Samantha.

7. *I Dream of Jeannie*, starring Barbara Eden as the genie named Jeannie, was NBC's answer to *Bewitched*. It premiered on 18 September 1965, and its last episode aired on 1 September 1970. Produced and written by Sidney Sheldon, *I Dream of Jeannie* gave to the genie role far less autonomy or presence of mind than the character of Samantha had on *Bewitched*.

8. My understanding of witchcraft is deeply indebted to James T. Siegel's recent revisiting of the classical scholarship on witchcraft, and especially that associated with African practices. See his magisterial book, *Naming the Witch* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

9. *The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer, was released by M.C. Productions in 1962. Starring, in addition to Sinatra, Angela Lansbury, Laurence Harvey, and Janet Leigh, it was nominated for two Oscars but won none. It was based on the 1959 novel by Richard Condon. The remake, starring Denzel Washington, Meryl Streep, and Liev Schreiber, was released in 2004 by Paramount.

10. Anthony Lane, "Bewildered," *New Yorker*, 27 June 2005, www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/06/27/050627crci_cinema.

11. Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* reached Broadway in 1957. The text was published in 1952 by the Dramatists Play Service (New York).

12. Claude Lévi-Strauss's discussion of sorcery and psychoanalysis, wherein he analogizes magical healing with induced abreaction, appears in "The Effectiveness of Symbols," in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 186–205.

13. The events at Northern Illinois University (14 February 2008) occurred after the writing of this essay and may, in some ways, seem to demand a different narrative. However, the shootings by Steve Kazmierczak, a graduate student at the university, are rather different from those of Columbine and Virginia Tech in the forms of explanation adduced for them. While they were apparently random and of a mass nature (five died and sixteen were injured), psycho-pharmaceutical withdrawal is widely reported as a causal factor, and Kazmierczak is not classified as a youth in media accounts (he was twenty-seven). In this essay, I am interested in those events for which explanation seems difficult, if not impossible, to generate, especially because of the youth of the perpetrators, and where the influence of popular culture is invoked to fill the gap of inexplicability.

14. Gertrude Stein's remarks on fashion appear in her ethnographically observant memoir, *Paris, France* (1940; London: Liveright, 1994), 11. Her extraordi-

nary observations on music appear in the same text, especially on page 48. Stein's own engagement with musician Virgil Thompson produced an incomparable form of opera, one in which the generic conventions of lyricism in opera were entirely undone.

15. The recent developments in states like Florida, which permits even twelve-year-olds to be tried in court as adults for capital crimes, may be the harbinger of a transformation in this belief.

16. Linkin Park's sound is described as alternative or "nu metal." "In the End" appeared on *Hybrid Theory*, released in 2000 for Warner Brothers. Williams told a psychiatrist that the song "reflected his feelings of depression and hopelessness," but that it did not cause the shootings. The note was signed, "Sorry Dad I love you." See Greg Moran's story, "Teen's Explanation Given in Interviews with Psychiatrist," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 16 August 2002, www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/santana/20020816–9999_1n16psych.html.

17. Seung-Hui Cho's musical predilections are described in the Wikipedia article about him, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cho_Seung_Hui (accessed 17 August 2007). Evan Thomas, "Making of a Massacre," *Newsweek*, 20 April 2007, www.newsweek.com/id/35172, also refers to Cho's fascination with the lyrics of "Shine." "Shine," by Collective Soul, was released on *Hints, Allegations and Things Left Unsaid* (Atlantic, 1994). It won recognition from Billboard for top rock track of the year.

18. Guns 'n' Roses released "Mr. Brownstone" on the 1987 album *Appetite for Destruction* (Geffen).

19. Marilyn Manson, it will be remembered, chose his name by pairing the first name of a famous celebrity with that of a serial killer. His song "Reflecting God" appeared on the album *Antichrist Superstar* (Nothing I, 1996). "Disposable Teens" was released as a single in 2000 by Interscope.

20. Jeremy Williams's translations of Rammstein's lyrics can be found at herzeleid.com/en/lyrics (accessed 20 August 2007).

21. Joan Didion, *The White Album* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 47.

22. Sam Fisher's statement is quoted by Julian Borger in "Amish Murder School Razed," *Guardian* (UK), 13 October 2006.

23. For an account of the debate about music and school shootings, see James Hebert, "Bad Rap?" *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 10 April 2001, www.signonsandiego.com/news/reports/younglives/20010411–9999_1c10music-co.html.

24. Michael Moore's film *Fahrenheit 9/11* was released in 2004 by Westside Productions. It won the best picture award at Cannes. The song "Fire Water Burn" by the Bloodhound Gang, which appears in the film, was originally released in 1997 on the album *One Fierce Beer Coaster* (Geffen).

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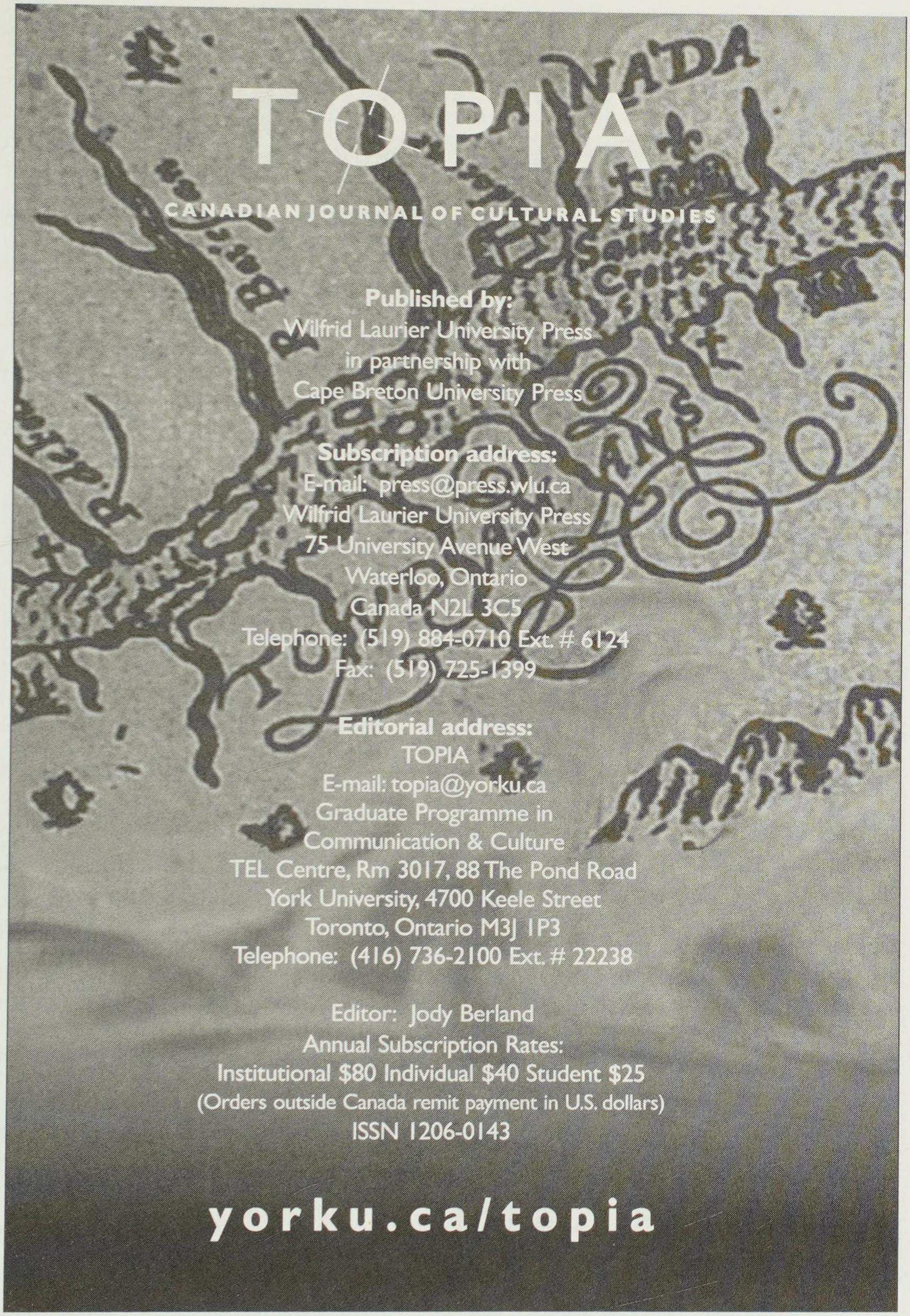
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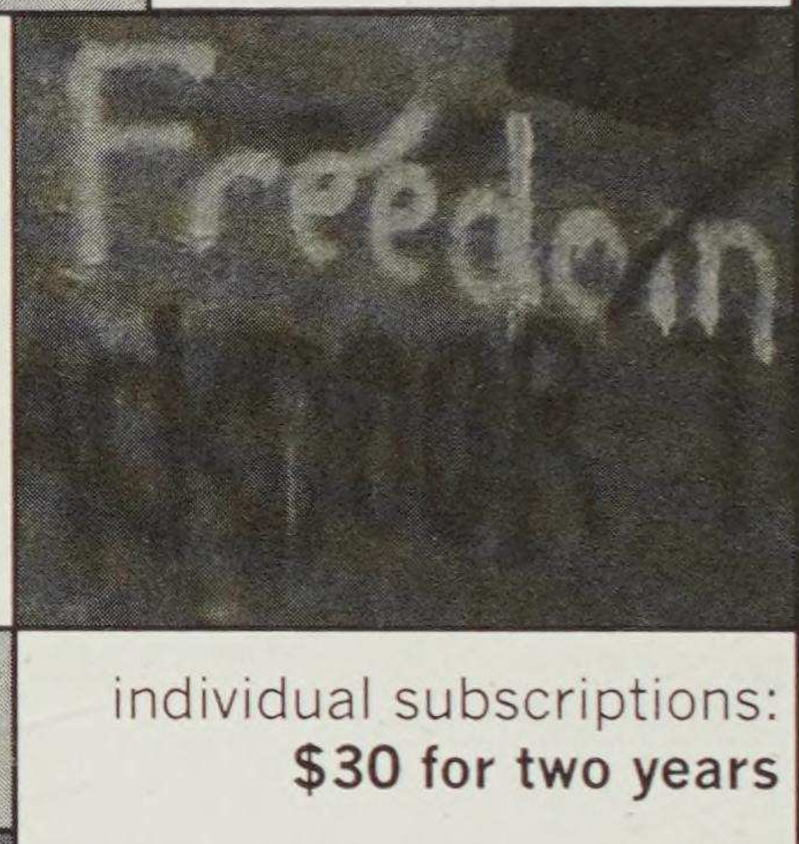
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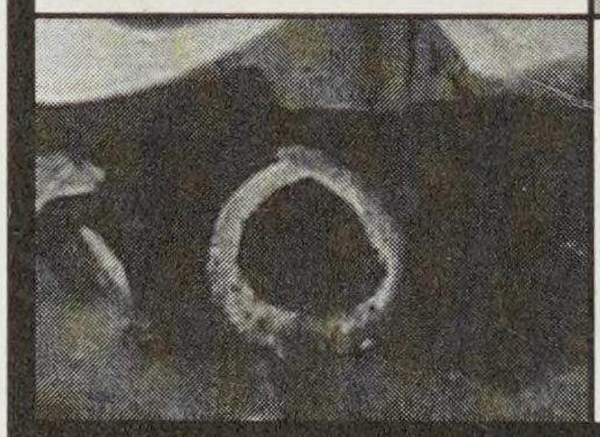
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About the cover art *In 1988 a devastating earthquake destroyed much of Gyumri, the second largest city in Armenia. The Soviet government responded to the disaster by proposing to build a new residential area, Mush, that would help resettle those whose homes had been lost. Construction began immediately in 1989 but was never finished, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the lack of state funds, and conflicting political aims. Artist Vahram Aghasyan describes the incomplete urban project as a "dreadful wilderness of dead buildings . . . a real ghost town." His haunting photographs, taken seventeen years after the earthquake, of empty and deserted apartment buildings and office blocks just ten minutes away from the center of Gyumri suggest not only tragic afterthoughts or abandoned utopian plans, but also, in the artist's own words, a "ghostly specter of Modernism [that] will never completely go away, because it never fully arrived." "Ghost City" is part of a sustained investigation in which Aghasyan turns his focus on various Soviet architectural sites as "ruins" ("a silent reminder of certain truths"), complicating the emergence and social aspects of local modernities.*

Vahram Aghasyan (b. 1974) lives and works in Yerevan, Armenia. He has shown internationally in the Tenth International Istanbul Biennial, the Museum Kiasma in Helsinki, the First Contemporary Art Biennale of Thessaloniki, and the Reina Sofia in Madrid. He recently had a solo exhibition at La Maison Neyrand in Lyon, and completed a residency at Platform Garanti in Istanbul.

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