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# The Arab City: Architecture and Representation

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with CAITLIN BLANCHFIELD

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and Representation

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# The Arab City in Representation

AMALE ANDRAOS

The symposium “Architecture and Representation: The Arab City” was held at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) in November 2014, as a second iteration of an event by the same name that took place in Amman in 2013, with the collaboration of Studio-X director Nora Akawi. The topic was a result of the seminars and studios I held at GSAPP from 2011 to 2014, which all revolved around the question of representation in architecture and urban design, as seen through the lens of the architectural and urban production in the Middle East and North Africa region over the past decade. “Representation” is a multiple term for architects, evoking the act of architectural drawing or the affordances of participation in a society, but perhaps most significantly for these discussions, it is understood as the capacity for buildings to hold *meaning* or to be iconic. The seminars in particular were focused on situating this contemporary conversation and production within a larger historical context, starting with the fall of the Ottoman empire and its division into colonized territories and extending to the rise of the “Gulf cities,” an ascension in which architecture and real estate development played a critical role.<sup>1</sup>

The focus on the “Arab City” came first as a personal interest in reexamining the various constructions of this term historically. Such constructions have spanned the scales of architecture and urbanism, with architecture always carrying the many ideas about the “city,” even in its details. Acknowledging the ludicrousness of reading cities as essentially defined or categorized along ethnic lines, the term “Arab” can nevertheless connote unique aspirations and evoke particular images, rendering the city specifically other to “Islamic” or “Arab-Islamic,” as the latter’s two adjectives are decoupled to uncover a history that is today too often forgotten, or even erased.<sup>2</sup> Those aspirations were awakened in a hopeful moment during the events of the Arab Spring and its “retaking of the public square.”<sup>3</sup> They seem to have continued to live and grow, if not in the realities of the “Arab Street” (now sadly bloodier and more repressive than ever), then in the minds and work of a new generation of highly engaged architects, historians, and scholars. With many of them joining the symposium, the conversation was charged not only with great intensity and a sense of urgency but also with a feeling of irreverent optimism in the continued power of the ideas embodied by a secular, transnational, progressive, and intellectual “Arab” that attempted to articulate modernity, and indeed politics, on its own terms.



Robot jockey racing a camel in Kuwait.

The second reason for taking the Arab City as a focus was to probe under-examined issues raised by the notion of “global practice” in architecture today. The term has been generating hype for over a decade now, yet the discussion surrounding it has been stymied by its inevitable clichés.<sup>4</sup> Over and over the terms to be negotiated have been reduced to the assumed opposition between “local” and “global,” with architecture bestowed the role of bridging “tradition” and “modernity,” even as it further conceals the very modernity of “tradition” as a construction and an effect of modernity itself.<sup>5</sup> These contradictions have given us many of the most notable icons of the twenty-first century, on the one hand, often conceived as built metaphors, with the power of brand.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, they have provided a new kind of socially motivated architecture that brings together local craft, labor, and materials with imported western technology, and where words such as “authenticity” and “heritage” are embraced unselfconsciously as architects talk earnestly about expressing cultural specificity and difference.<sup>7</sup> In both instances, otherness is usually enshrined in sound bite motifs, easily digested by our virtual, twenty-four-hour infoscape of architecture-as-image.

In many ways, what contemporary global practice ushered back is the question of architecture as symbolic form, engaged in representation rather than limited to performance. This return has succeeded despite the heated debates of architectural postmodernism, which ran from the pleasures of signs and symbols reintroduced by Venturi, Scott Brown to the disarticulated and voided architectural bodies and processes of the Museum of Modern Art’s 1988 deconstructivist show, to the more recent debates around affect or procedure.<sup>8</sup> As representation came back largely in the form of branding—a strategy imported from graphic and product design—it enabled the expediency required to serve the speed and scales of global practice and global capitalization, as well as the production of architectural icons.<sup>9</sup> Yet the encounter of those representations with the realities of local contexts has not always been pleasant, inviting us to consider the impossibility that architecture could ever exist outside of either context or content and to engage instead in a more critical reading of the content and contexts being produced.<sup>10</sup> When we continue to hear of identity building through architecture, whether for a corporate client, an institution, a city, or a state, what are the meanings produced?<sup>11</sup> What identities are being constructed, and how can that knowledge allow us (architects) some margins in which to resist?

There is probably no context more pregnant for this investigation than that of the Arab City, as site of imagination and projection, in a region at once feared and exoticized. The Arab City has witnessed simultaneously, and not coincidentally, the devastation of its old centers and the rise of new ones. The old centers—Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo—represent a long, rich,

and complex dialogue with, struggle over, and embrace of modernity, not only through art, literature, poetry, and intellectual and political thought, but also through the architecture and urban experiments launched during the last stretch of the Ottoman rule.<sup>12</sup> What the new centers offer is a seeming blank slate—“no context,” as many architects might say.<sup>13</sup> This seeming contextual void is fast-tracking from tradition to modernity as it gives rise to new urban centers of great power and influence. This is the typical narrative: Only recently inhabited by fishermen and Bedouins roaming the desert and living in tents, these instant cities today boast the financial skyscrapers, luxury lifestyles, and cultural centers of the post-industrial city, led by visionary rulers who are single-handedly lifting their citizens and cities toward the future while respecting the traditional and religious values of the past. This harmonious coming together is set in contrast to the narrative of politicized Islam and the violent clash of civilizations we are said to be experiencing, even as it is intimately connected to it.<sup>14</sup> For even as we move beyond the narrative of an East/West civilizational divide, we are nevertheless witnessing a struggle for regional power through the rise of these new cities. On one side is a progressive attempt to engage modernity; on the other, a conservative pull to modernize without democracy. And in this struggle, ethnicity, tradition, and religious identity are set as the foundation for new transnational formations, however moderate or extreme they may be.

Standing as the skillful diplomat is the architect, weaving together “tradition” and “modernity” in a mashup of signifiers for both. Among the most notable and successful examples of the past decade are the twin proposals of Foster + Partners’ Masdar in Abu Dhabi and OMA’s new eco-city for Ras-El-Khaimah, both of which were designed to echo the traditional medina, with its high-density, low-rise built form that so inspired Alison Smithson’s 1974 manifesto for the mat building.<sup>15</sup> Masdar in particular presents a sophisticated language of traditional Islamic architectural motifs-turned-high-tech devices for green energy performance, such as the use of the *mashrabiya* to screen the sky and as part of building façades, a strategy also embraced in Jean Nouvel’s Abu Dhabi Louvre and in I. M. Pei’s Islamic Museum in Qatar.<sup>16</sup> Other strategies involve layering calligraphy onto the bold forms of contemporary expression, such as for the new Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies designed by Ali Mangera and Ada Yvars Bravo.<sup>17</sup> Finally, there are the proliferation of architectural metaphors referring to traditional life in the desert and on the ocean, exemplified by buildings such as Burj Al Arab (a building in the form of a sail), Zaha Hadid’s Dubai Opera House (“the gentle winding form evokes images of mountains or sand dunes”), Morphosis’s King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (“the new KAPSARC master plan is rooted in the historical model of the oasis village”), OMA’s Jeddah International Airport proposal (“both the main terminal and

Royal pavilion with their crescent-like shape enclose an internal oasis that can accommodate different forms of use”), and Nouvel’s National Museum of Qatar, which “crystallizes” the Qatari identity, in “a building that, like a desert rose, appears to grow out of the ground and be one with it.”<sup>18</sup>

In many ways, this approach is not dissimilar to that of camel racing, which has regained popularity among young Emiratis. Anthropologist Sulayman Khalaf traces the genealogy of this sport and its significant revival starting in the mid-1990s, demonstrating how it was reinvented, expanded, and promoted by the United Arab Emirates’ ruling family and President Shaikh Zayed as a means to construct the Emirati identity as stable and continuous in the face of significant transformation of its society.<sup>19</sup> The camels signify tradition and the historical Bedouin lifestyle, but they are driven by highly developed robot-jockeys, which embody the Emirates’ embrace of modern technology and progress. This bringing together of camels and robots demonstrates the ruling family’s visionary approach to developing its city-state, with a commitment to reconciling traditional lifestyle and values with the modern, technologically driven western world. This bridging of tradition and modernity enacts a kind of harmony as it produces a unique, highly specific cultural experience that reinforces the strength and preservation of local identity in the face of global homogenization.

This last point, that of the construction of identity, becomes the most interesting, for it is a particular identity that is being constructed, one that is not only stable but also exclusive and exclusionary. The Emirati identity is here narrowly defined as stemming from the pure lineage of Bedouins, the only original inhabitants of the *watan* (homeland), staged as bearers of the “authentic” culture of this land and place, at the exclusion of many of the other populations and cultures that in fact rendered the historical populations of the Gulf States much more hybrid over time.<sup>20</sup> This narrative also serves as a political and cultural performance meant to reassure the Emirati nationals, to whom the newly created population in which they have become a minority is alarming. Set against the reality of a highly diverse people—from young western expats, to Arab refugees, to Southeast Asian construction workers—is the representation of authentic cultural heritage that groups all non-Emirati together as a never-to-be-integrated “other.”

While enlisting cultural heritage to construct an exclusive, and purportedly authentic, identity is one way the UAE’s ruling family has engaged in statecraft, another is the seemingly opposite: as a narrative of a nation-state engaged in a kind of “reverse Orientalism,” as anthropologist Ahmad Kanna has brilliantly argued in *Dubai: The City as Corporation*.<sup>21</sup> Building on Edward Said’s theory of Orientalism as an essentialist reduction of a people depicted as frozen in static religious beliefs and cultural practices, Kanna renders Dubai and the Gulf

States as equally and miraculously suspended outside of history or politics, but this time as hypermodern states driven by futuristic and visionary development purveyed by urbanists and starchitects.<sup>22</sup> In this narrative, Dubai becomes the fantastically glittery city-as-spectacle, emerging from the desert as the twenty-first-century incarnation of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, which inspired Frank Lloyd Wright’s vision for Baghdad in the middle of the last century.<sup>23</sup> As the old centers of Arab struggles for modernity make way for the new centers of global entrepreneurial neoliberalism, Dubai asserts the promise of a new future that constitutes a radical break from “Arab traditions and pathologies.”<sup>24</sup>

Set against the representations of authentic and original culture as embodied by the Bedouin lifestyle and the imaging of futuristic hypermodern cities is “the real,” whether the desert, the crumbling modernist old town, the new shopping malls, or the relentlessly generic housing and commercial buildings of the prebranded neighborhoods.<sup>25</sup> Deemed inauthentic and uninspiring for architects, this banal reality ushers in the typical question of “how do you build in a place with no context?”<sup>26</sup> Inviting context to become a fantasy that brings together the golden age of a mythical Islamic empire with the promise of new technological utopias. Naturally, this narrative is made to resonate with another, that of a mythical historical golden age of Islam, now a reconstituted archive that groups together, undifferentiated in space or time, the traditional medinas of Fez and Aleppo, the lush palaces of Andalucía, the golden buildings of the caliphate of Baghdad, or the domes and pixelated refracting surfaces of Sinan’s mosques.<sup>27</sup> This construction of a mythical context, at once nostalgic and futuristic, produces a powerful narrative: Islam is not against progress because it was once the driver of progress. What we are witnessing is in fact a new Islamic renaissance, that of an emerging society at once deeply religious and conscious of belonging to a broad “Islamic nation”—a concept that has possibly never been as complex or charged as today—and at the cutting edge of a visionary, global, urbanized future.

The most undeniably successful (and quite beautiful) architectural embodiment of this narrative is, Ateliers Jean Nouvel’s Louvre Abu Dhabi. Situated on Saadiyat Island, the building takes inspiration from the organic patterns of the traditional medinas to create a landscape of building-scaled rooms, whose nonhierarchical relationships are made legible by a shallow dome with a diameter close to that of the Louvre’s Cours Carrée in Paris. As a layering of fractal three-dimensional patterns, the dome filters light to create microenvironments of dreamy mist, echoing at once rays of sunlight trickling through the palms of an oasis and the refraction of light produced by the ornate surfaces of mosques. As with many of Nouvel’s projects, architecture is dematerialized, blending with the scenarios and atmospheres of its context both real and imagined. Nouvel, a self-declared contextual architect, is a no kitsch designer, his sophisticated

knowledge rendering him an orientalist of the highest caliber.<sup>28</sup> Such has been Nouvel's reputation since his Institut du Monde Arabe, where the mechanical façade of sun-sensitive lenses is a technological interpretation of the Islamic geometric pattern that calibrates light to render vision as both optics *and* experience in a multilayered and complex configuration.<sup>29</sup>

So what, then, is the problem if these constructions are able to produce exemplary architecture? A first problem is that this montage of signs and symbols usually leads to reductive meanings and experiences, the essentializing of an entire society, which, as Said's thesis demonstrated, was not only offensive in its representations but also instrumental in advancing the colonial project.<sup>30</sup> The construction of cultural specificity is all too often reduced to a simplistic identity, defined in opposition to, and at the exclusion of, others (a difficulty inherent in architecture's reductiveness). A second and possibly larger problem lies with a tendency toward a type of pan-Islamism. While art historians like Oleg Grabar have thoughtfully probed the boundaries of Islamic art (and its continued influence), others still believe that if particular architectural features were developed during the technological advancement that took place in sixteenth-century Istanbul under the genius of the architect Sinan, it is equally contextual to use them in the desert of Qatar or Abu Dhabi because they belong to a unified history of Islamic architecture. Regardless of place and time, politics or economics, material advancements and technologies, Islamic architecture is constructed as the principal unifier that extends from the lands of Syria to Iraq—a form of cultural displacement that strangely makes possible the conception of a romanticized, cohesive Islamic people, nation, or empire. At its most dystopic, this is the same mythical Islamic empire claimed by (and marked by the horrific violence of) ISIS, where an overgeneralized idea of Islamic culture is used to legitimize the brutal murder of innocent others as well as the destruction of any symbol of ancient architectural hybridity or contaminated progressive modernity.

This kind of essentialized identity should in fact be seen as the construction of a particular archive, which at once renders if not impossible then at least quite difficult the possibility of uncovering and reconstituting any alternatives. The endless focus on the expression of Islamic culture in all its forms—whether scholarly, in popular culture, or in architecture, and even cities—has produced powerful and all-encompassing noise that has rendered invisible the knowing and uncovering of another past, that of the endlessly rich and varied intellectual, political, literary, and artistic dreams and discourses that attempted to build a modern, progressive (and secular) Arab nation. It is those two visions—and histories—that collided again for a brief hopeful moment in the streets of Cairo, inflamed by a youthful and disenfranchised population whose memory and appropriation of Nasserian slogans was not coincidental—though neither was its violent silencing by the Muslim Brotherhood's singular Islamic vision.<sup>31</sup>

This alternative history has driven many of the intellectual, political, and artistic practices that have emerged from the region in the past two decades, and that have questioned "identity" as an interpretive lens. A seminal recent account is that of historian and political economist Georges Corm in his *Pensée et politique dans le monde arabe*. Starting from his disappointment with the Arab Spring's denouement, Corm brilliantly traces the evolution of Islamic and Arab intellectual and political thought in its encounter with modernity from 1850 to today. Looking to early religious reformists such as Sheikh Tantawi and, later, Taha Hussein, both emerging from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and early Arab secular thinkers such as Yassin El-Hafez, Mahdi 'Amel, the poet Adonis, the economist Samir Amin, and the feminist poet May Ziade, to name but a few, Corm generates an archive that counteracts the dominant "Jihad vs. McWorld" narrative that is fueling much scholarly research on, and architectural rhetoric in, the region today.<sup>32</sup> Faced with such a long and complex account of modernist progressive thought, one can only wonder why this line of critical engagement with an Arabic modernity could not constitute an alternative archive from which to construct new architectural possibilities in the face of the conservative social and political structures we are most often invited to serve.

Institutions such as the Arab Image Foundation (AIF) and the Arab Center for Architecture, both based in Beirut, are engaged in this same project in historical memory and Arab modernity, at times secular and at times stemming from religious reforming forces.<sup>33</sup> Founded in 1997, the AIF houses a unique collection of over 600,000 photographs taken between 1850 and 1950—precisely the same time frame of Georges Corm's account of the *Nahda*, or Arab Renaissance—by professional, amateur, and anonymous photographers. The images encompass a wide range of subjects, genres, and styles that capture everyday life during an age of transformation, progressive thinking, and optimism about the future of Arab nations. While the AIF's stated mission is to shed light on the practice of photography in the region over that century, it acknowledges that "inevitably, the research projects raise questions about how images are used or their relationship to notions such as identity, history, and memory." With powerful collections such as Akram Zaatari's "The Vehicle," which splices through family albums "the infiltration of modernity into the Arab world through the representation of the vehicle"; or "Arts et Couleurs," which depicts "a time of economic growth, hula hoop parties, beehive hairdos and the Beatles"; or the Rafik Chadirji collection, which documents Baghdad's ebullient intellectual and artistic renaissance in the 1950s, the AIF presents modernity in its multifaceted and complex layers, in contrast to the common narrative of a region stuck in time and mindless conflict.<sup>34</sup> For architecture, the Chadirji collection is particularly important, as it documents a time when Iraqi architects, poets, and writers were welcoming modernist ideas and styles, hybridizing them not with

Islamic references but rather with a playful mix of Babylonian ancestry and contemporary critical discourse.<sup>35</sup> This was a time that brought the talents of architects such as Mohammed Makiya and Hisham Munir together with Walter Gropius, Josep Lluís Sert, and Marcello d'Olivo.<sup>36</sup> Even Hassan Fathy, whose language has come to embody the quintessential regionalist architecture, never referenced Islamic motifs in his seminal 1958 New Gournia project but rather freely wove together abstract modernist forms with pharaonic imagery.

This embrace of modernity helped Arab nations shed the shackles of colonialism and build new, independent institutions.<sup>37</sup> The writing of certain architects, urban theorists, and scholars resists the notion that modernity was experienced as an imposition, arguing instead that it adopted a unique form (architectural and otherwise) in every city it took root in.<sup>38</sup> This narrative is one that the Arab Center for Architecture is painstakingly documenting as a collection of buildings and projects whose traces are recorded through photography, drawing, and texts. Gradually, these valuable documents are becoming available in an online archive, as well as a collection of original drawings at the center in Beirut. As with the Arab Image Foundation, the archive collapses the distinctions between generic structures and exquisite buildings, private houses and public monuments, and makes palpable the many-layered complexities of the modernist project in the region. Like the AIF, the archive also carefully traces authorship, documenting collaborations between local and international architects as well as temporary and permanent residents of the region. CETA, a collaborative of French and Lebanese architects and engineers (J. Aractingi, J. N. Conan, J. Nassar, P. Neema), for example, was responsible for the design of the perfectly proportioned *Electricité du Liban* building (1965–72) in Beirut.<sup>39</sup> Today, many of these jewel-like buildings have been destroyed by either conflict or development, fallen in complete disrepair or “pimped up,” hidden behind Orientalizing arches and a depressing pastiche of the architectural tropes commonly used to signify identity.

In fact, to visit the old centers of Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, or Baghdad is to see disproved the notion of an “authentic” culture brutally displaced by its encounter with modernity. To this day these cities embrace modernism with little doubt. Instead, it is with the rise of the new centers of oil economies that the supposed weaving together of “tradition” and “modernity” developed. Critical regionalism in the Middle East can be traced alongside the rise of socially conservative states, gaining significant traction in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the emerging oil economies of the Arabian Peninsula built new centers of regional power.<sup>40</sup> To implement this new mandate, Saudi Arabia turned to new and fruitful collaborations with Japanese architects, whose respect for tradition, consciousness of cultural specificity, and commitment to creating a specific national identity through architecture rendered them a desirable partner in

the construction of a conservative rather than progressive form of modernism. From the elegant lines of the Dahrán airport designed by Minoru Yamazaki (1961) to the numerous state buildings of Kenzō Tange, places like the Royal State Palace in Jeddah (1980–83) or Alkhairā, the King Faisal Foundation (1976–84) in Riyadh, this new architecture borrows oriental, Bedouin, or “Islamic” motifs—patterned surfaces, arched openings, courtyards, medina-like cityscapes, tent-inspired structures—to demonstrate origin stories and authenticity with modern statehood.

Following these early collaborations, the new alliances with American oil and construction companies such as Aramco and Bechtel led to increased commissions for American corporate firms. Their architectural language further coupled conservative social and political values with modern technologies. Today, this narrative can be read across buildings such as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill’s National Commercial Bank of Jeddah (1977–84), which boldly weaved together modernist abstraction with Orientalized patterns and courtyards; the firm’s Abdul Azziz International Airport in Jeddah, also known as the Hajj Terminal (1982); and HOK’s King Saud University (1984), as well as King Khaled International Airport (1975–84) in Riyadh, designed in collaboration with Bechtel.<sup>41</sup> This representation of tradition and modernity—and it is always a *representation* of synthesis rather than an actual mediation of past and future—was not limited to the architecture but also manifest in urban planning: from Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis’s plan for Riyadh (1971) to Georges Candillis’s plans for Dahrán and Al Khobar (1974) developed for Aramco, in which modernist approaches to zoning and a focus on infrastructure in plan were combined in section with particular privacy concerns, leading to strict guidelines that controlled views, height, and setbacks.<sup>42</sup>

At the same time, ironically, local forms of settlement were replaced by suburban-style gated communities. In the 1930s Aramco introduced the compound typology as a gated community or “company town” for its employees, attracting middle-class Americans to spend a few years in the desert of Arabia with a vision of suburban comfort. These detached homes and surrounding yards inverted the local courtyard housing typology which connected rooms and houses around extended kinship and tribal relationships. As Aramco built suburban-style compounds for its Arab staff—segregated from its American employees yet with the same trappings of consumerist lifestyle—the company struggled to define family boundaries, turn women into a labor force, and attract occupants through its home ownership program (seen by Arab women in particular as socially isolating).<sup>43</sup> Today, as the Gulf States’ sprawling luxury gated communities are built alongside invisible camps for imported labor, one is reminded of the oil company’s original experiments to promote an American brand of modernity through the single-family home and its consumerist lifestyle.

It is this narrative of conflicting modernities, of forgotten cultural heritage, and of political, social, economic, and technological transformation that the Bahrain Pavilion of the Fourteenth Venice Architecture Biennale so powerfully told. Designed as a rotunda of shelves, the pavilion staged a library filled with thousands of copies of the same book. An archive of seminal architectural buildings from the Middle East and North Africa region built between 1914 and 2014, the book stood as a manifesto for the region's ability not only to "absorb modernity," as Biennale curator Rem Koolhaas's polemical invitation suggested, but to find in the generic and abstract nature of the modernist architectural language and within the universal qualities of its social ambitions, highly specific and various forms of invention and adaptation.<sup>44</sup> As visitors flipped through books while seated around a large circular table, the white dome above displayed an endlessly multiplied identical image: a man dressed in white and absorbed in what seemed a trancelike prayer—an assumption visitors inevitably made as a result of his speaking in Arabic. The speaker was in fact simply reciting the names of the nations from which the buildings had been selected.

The pavilion's scenography presented the long-standing opposition between an Arab progressive and modernist nationalism—as represented by the collected buildings and the map on the table—and an Islamic conservative nationalism as suggested by the speaker's incantation above, even as it undermined the simplicity of this binary narrative. The pavilion's sponsor, Bahrain, supported the vision of Lebanese architects Bernard Khoury and George Arbid, who modeled the multiple, varied, and complex Arab modernity asserted within the pages of the book itself.

This desire to resist single narratives, reveal other histories, and produce multiple meanings has motivated architects working in the region, and in Lebanon in particular, where much of this debate played out during the civil war and throughout the reconstruction of downtown Beirut.<sup>45</sup> The Solidere project, named after the private company that led the reconstruction and continues to oversee the development of the heart of the Lebanese capital, embodied not only the transition from the old centers of power and influence to the new ones in the Gulf but also the reshaping of an Arab secular nationalism to the predominant narrative of religious and embattled identities.

Founded in 1994 by Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, a self-made man who had risen to fortune and power working as Prince Fahd's personal contractor in Saudi Arabia, Solidere soon became a model for the region and beyond, inspiring new development structures from Mecca to Mumbai.<sup>46</sup> Despite the attacks on its procedures—from the use of eminent domain to the pressure to forfeit property rights to the redrawing of property lines to allow larger parcels to be developed—within a few years Solidere had produced significantly more destruction than fifteen years of war.<sup>47</sup> This destruction represented nothing less

than a political editing of history, demolishing certain buildings while restoring and recasting the significance of others. With the goal of reviving Beirut as a tourist destination and the "Paris of the Middle East," Solidere turned the buzzing, tightknit, and messy fabric of downtown—with its street vendors, layered histories, and secular modern fabric—into a city of icons, where mosques, churches, and a single temple have been excavated and preserved as ruins while the active cityscape around was wiped out.<sup>48</sup> Transformed into freestanding objects, these religious buildings became at once monuments and meaningless clichés standing in for religious pluralism and gutted of the real life and endless daily transactions that shaped them.<sup>49</sup> Using as its alibi the preservation of memory, Solidere constructed a fiction instead: that of religious pluralism as the only possible foundation of Lebanese identity. As religious icons punctuate shopping streets with alternating Haussmanian and Ottoman flavors, downtown Beirut is today a successful tourist destination for wealthy Gulf and Saudi nationals. Emptied of local population, it becomes a ghost town the minute those countries declare its grounds unsafe for their citizens to travel to.

It is this complex and contingent understanding of the Arab City that makes clear the impossibility of architecture to exist outside of its own context. Yet this context is not the monolithic set of formal devices that have come to represent the Arab City in so much contemporary architecture. Rather, it is a multilayered, messy, and multiple history that brings together the opposites we inevitably continue to construct—the secular and the religious, tradition and modernity, the local and the global. Examples such as the reconstruction of downtown Beirut or the Louvre Abu Dhabi tell a larger story of contemporary global architectural and urban production. They are a testimony both to architects' powerlessness in the face of development forces and to architecture's power in continuing to embody concepts, produce content, and shape its context, as Bernard Tschumi once said.<sup>50</sup> And yet, at a time of wrenching violence, unbearable displacement, and devastating conflict across the Middle East, it seems important for architects to contribute a greater understanding to the historical, social, political, cultural, and economical complexities at hand, taking responsibility to articulate and engage both the real and its representation in more complex and incisive ways. The concepts we enlist, the contexts we shape, and the content we produce matter. As a site at once imaginary and real, the Arab City sits at the intersection of much of what is at stake today for architects and for architecture. To engage in its complexity is to acknowledge the renewed urgency of historical knowledge while also embracing the responsibility to project much needed alternate futures.

1 On “Gulf Cities” see Rem Koolhaas/AMO’s exhibition on the Gulf at the Tenth Venice Architecture Biennale, in 2006, which presented “an overview of urban developments in the Persian Gulf and the combined impact of these developments on the region and beyond,” <http://oma.eu/news/amo-exhibition-on-the-gulf-at-venice-architecture-biennale>.

On process of capitalization, see Timothy Mitchell’s keynote for “Architecture and Representation: The Arab City,” Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York, November 21, 2014, included in this volume as “The Capital City,” page 258. See also Omar Jabary Salamanca and Nasser Abourahme, “City Talks: Timothy Mitchell on the Materialities of Political Economy and Colonial History,” *Jadaliyya*, November 17, 2015, [www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23182/city-talks-timothy-mitchell-on-the-materialities-o](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/23182/city-talks-timothy-mitchell-on-the-materialities-o).

2 On the deconstruction of the the terms “traditional,” “Islamic,” and “cities,” see Janet Abu-Lughod’s scholarship. In particular, see Janet Abu-Lughod, “The Islamic City—Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1987): 155–76, and “What Is Islamic about a City? Some Comparative Reflections,” in *Urbanism in Islam: The Proceedings of the International Conference on Urbanism in Islam*, volume 1 (Tokyo: Middle Eastern Culture Center, 1989), 193–217. See also André Raymond, “Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Autumn 1994): 3–18.

On erased histories see Nicolai Ouroussoff in conversation with Jorge Otero Pailos, Daniel Bertrand Monk, Laurie Rush, and Ian B. Straughn during the “Culture and Heritage after Palmyra” panel discussion, Columbia Low Memorial Library Rotunda, New York, October 29, 2015. See also Nasser Rabbat, “They Shoot Historians Don’t They?,” *ArtForum*, vol. 54, no. 3 (November 2015).

3 On the relationship between the mosque and the square, see Nasser Rabbat, “The Arab Revolution Takes Back Public Space,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Autumn 2012): 198–208.

4 A Google search for “global practice in architecture” yields 146,000,000 entries. Among the recent conversations, one can

note the “AIA Entrepreneur Summit 2015: Global Practice,” the 2013 AIANY presidential theme “Global City/Global Practice,” and the ACSA 2014 Annual Meeting “Globalizing Architecture / Flows and Disruptions.” One of the most interesting critical approaches to contemporary global practice has revolved around the questions raised by the project “Who Builds Your Architecture?” led by professors Mabel Wilson and Kadambari Baxi.

5 For a critique of the constructed opposition of “tradition vs. modernity,” situating tradition as an effect of modernity, see Timothy Mitchell, “The Stage of Modernity,” in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Timothy Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1–34.

6 Examples of such metaphors: the Beijing stadium by Herzog and deMeuron as a bird’s nest; BIG’s REN Building, which takes the form of Chinese character for “person”; or the Taipei 101 tower by C. Y. Lee Architects, in the form of stacked vernacular pagodas. For more on branding, see Robert E. Somol, “12 Reasons to Get Back in Shape,” in *Content*, ed. Rem Koolhaas (Cologne: Taschen, 2004).

7 See David Adjaye on the Aishti Foundation in Beirut, “with its aluminum tubular structure applied to the building as an exoskeleton, the distinctive red façade envelops the edifice in a scrim of multiple layers and patterns, reminiscent of the perforated woodwork typical of traditional arabic architecture.” Philip Stevens, “First Images of David Adjaye’s Completed Aishti Foundation Revealed,” *Designboom*, October 30, 2015, [www.designboom.com/architecture/david-adjaye-aishti-foundation-beirut-lebanon-tony-salam-10-30-2015](http://www.designboom.com/architecture/david-adjaye-aishti-foundation-beirut-lebanon-tony-salam-10-30-2015). See also the mission of the Aga Khan Architecture Award, which while promoting the important work of preservation and preserving heritage works to move beyond the criteria of Islamic identity. And see also Michael Juul Holm and Mette Marie Kallehauge, eds., *Arab Contemporary: Architecture & Identity* (Humblebaek: Louisiana Museum of Art, 2014).

8 See interview with Ali Mangera in this volume (page 198) on supergraphic calligraphy being reminiscent of Venturi, Scott Brown. And see, for example, the recent lecture by Farshid Moussavi on “affect” in Wood Auditorium, Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York, November 16, 2015, and the “Postmodern Procedures,” sym-

posium organized by Sylvia Lavin, Princeton University School of Architecture, December 4–5, 2015. See also Jeffrey Kipnis, *A Question of Qualities: Essays in Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013).

9 On branding see Somol, “12 Reasons to Get Back in Shape.” This is also the legacy of the work of Rem Koolhaas and OMA/AMO where the question of “identity” and “brand”—starting with the Universal Headquarter building—began to take shape. See also “The Other Architect” exhibition at the Centre for Canadian Architecture curated by Giovanna Borasi, October 2015–April 2016. On capitalization, see note 1.

10 Viewers’ expectation of meaning have led to interpretations of Zaha Hadid’s Qatar stadium as a vulva or OMA’s CCTV Headquarters in Beijing as the silhouette of man sitting on toilet.

For such a critical reading on architecture and its contexts, see Reinhold Martin, “Financial Imaginaries,” in *Mediators: Aesthetics, Politics, and the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

11 See BIG’s design for Two World Trade Center for 21st Century Fox and News Corp. “And what a radical idea: to produce an architecturally ambitious skyscraper whose shape actually expresses the needs of the building’s tenant.” Paul Goldberger, “How 2 World Trade Center Was Redesigned Exactly for Rupert Murdoch’s Media Empire,” *Vanity Fair*, June 10, 2014.

12 The Ottoman empire was called “the sick man of Europe” and is often described as lagging, a characterization that also served as a justification for its dismantling and the subsequent colonization of its former territory. In fact, industrialization was already starting under Ottoman rule, such as with the construction of the German–Turkish railway connecting Baghdad to Europe, which brought new materials and techniques like steel-frame construction to the empire.

13 See interview with Hala Wardé in this volume, page 190. See also Ahmed Kanna, *Dubai: City as Corporation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), in which he quotes Frank Gehry regarding Saadiyat Island: “It is like a clean slate in a country full of resources...it’s an opportunity for the world of art and culture that is not anywhere else because you’re building a desert enclave without the contextual constraints of a city,” 89.

14 See Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy* (New York: Verso, 2011).

15 “Masdar City combines state-of-the-art technologies with the planning principals [sic] of traditional Arab settlements to create a desert community that aims to be carbon neutral and zero waste” (“Masdar Development,” [www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/masdar-development](http://www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/masdar-development)).

“Mat Building: How to Recognize and Read It,” *Architectural Design*, vol. 44, no. 9 (1974): 573.

16 “The perforations for light and shade are based on the patterns found in the traditional architecture of Islam.” “Masdar Institute/Foster + Partners,” *Archdaily*, November 23, 2010, [www.archdaily.com/91228/masdar-institute-foster-partners](http://www.archdaily.com/91228/masdar-institute-foster-partners). See also Laurie Balbo “Modern Mashrabiya is Arab Architecture Made in the Shade,” *Greenprophet*, June 25, 2010, [www.greenprophet.com/2014/06/modern-mashrabiya-is-arab-architecture-made-in-the-shade](http://www.greenprophet.com/2014/06/modern-mashrabiya-is-arab-architecture-made-in-the-shade).

17 “Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Officially Opens New Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies Building,” March 20, 2015, [www.qf.org.qa/news/qfis-building-opening](http://www.qf.org.qa/news/qfis-building-opening).

18 “Dubai Opera House by Zaha Hadid,” *Dezeen*, June 6, 2008, [www.dezeen.com/2008/06/06/dubai-opera-house-by-zaha-hadid](http://www.dezeen.com/2008/06/06/dubai-opera-house-by-zaha-hadid).

“King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center,” <http://morphopedia.com/projects/king-abdullah-petroleum-studies-and-rese>.

“Jeddah International Airport,” <http://oma.eu/projects/jeddah-international-airport>. For a convincing snapshot of recent clichés, as of 2013, see A. J. Armatel, “Hey Middle East: Enough with the Regional Architectural Clichés, Already,” *CityLab*, August 16, 2013, [www.citylab.com/design/2013/08/hey-middle-east-enough-architectural-cliches-already/6573/](http://www.citylab.com/design/2013/08/hey-middle-east-enough-architectural-cliches-already/6573/). See also Holm and Kallehauge, *Arab Contemporary*.

“Jean Nouvel’s design manifests both the active, dynamic aspect of the museum’s program and its crystallization of the Qatari identity in a building that, like a desert rose, appears to grow out of the ground and be one with it” “National Museum of Qatar by Jean Nouvel,” *Dezeen*, March 24, 2010, [www.dezeen.com/2010/03/24/national-museum-of-qatar-by-jean-nouvel](http://www.dezeen.com/2010/03/24/national-museum-of-qatar-by-jean-nouvel).

19 Sulayman Khalaf, “Camel Racing in the Gulf: Notes on the Evolution of a Traditional Cultural Sport,” *Anthropos* 94 (1999): 85–106.

20 Like many port cities in the Gulf, Dubai has been home to a mix of African, Arab, Persian, and South Asian cultures since the early nineteenth century, when the region came under British control. Kanna, *Dubai: City as Corporation*, 10–11. See also the transformation of Bastakieh, “cleaned” from its Persian roots.

21 See “Theorizing Statecraft and Social Change in Arab Oil Producing Countries,” in *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory, Popular Culture*, ed. Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991), 1–35.

22 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968).

Brian Ackley, “Permanent Vacation: Making Someplace out of Non-Place,” *Bidoun* 4, <http://bidoun.org/articles/permanent-vacation>.

Kanna, *Dubai: City as Corporation*; see especially the chapter “‘Going South’ with the Starchitects: Urbanist Ideology in the Emirati City.”

23 Magnus Bernhardsson, “Modernizing the Past in 1950s Baghdad,” in *Modernism and the Middle East, Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 88.

24 See Thomas Friedman on the Arab World: “The problem is much deeper—we’re dealing with a civilization that is still highly tribalized and is struggling with modernity. Dubaians are building a future based on butter not guns, private property not caprice, services more than oil, and globally competitive companies, not terror networks. Dubai is about nurturing Arab dignity through success not suicide. As a result, its people want to embrace the future, not blow it up.” “Dubai and Dunces,” *New York Times*, March 15, 2006.

25 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1–34. See also Yasser Elsheshtawy’s essay in this volume, page 56.

26 Kanna, *Dubai: City as Corporation*, 1–42, 77–194.

27 See note 3.

28 Jean Nouvel, *Louisiana Manifesto* (Humblebaek: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2008).

See the rehabilitation of Orientalism post-Said in the work of Georges Corm, among others.

29 On vision and knowledge, as opposed to optics, as a way of seeing, see Hans Belting, *Florence and Baghdad: Renaissance Art and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

30 Said, *Orientalism*.

31 Georges Corm describes the return to favor of the Nasserian thought during the Arab Spring during which the main reforming party, “nasseriste uni” of Hamdeen Sabahi, openly aligned itself with the Nasserian political thought. Portraits of Nasser were also visible during demonstrations. Georges Corm, *Pensée et politique dans le monde arabe* (Paris: Découverte, 2015), 178.

32 Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001).

33 Arab nationalism was not only anti-imperialist but often Marxist in its critique, socialist in its ambitions, and nonaligned, thus threatening to the West.

34 “The Vehicle: Picturing Moments of Transition in a Modernizing Society,” Arab Image Foundation (1999), [www.fai.org.lb/projectDetails.aspx?Id=19&ParentCatId=2](http://www.fai.org.lb/projectDetails.aspx?Id=19&ParentCatId=2); “Arts et couleurs” Arab Image Foundation, (2004), [www.fai.org.lb/projectDetails.aspx?Id=14&ParentCatId=2](http://www.fai.org.lb/projectDetails.aspx?Id=14&ParentCatId=2).

35 In the fall of 2013, Iraqi architect Hisham Munir came to speak to my students as part of the “Arab Cities in Evolution” seminar at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, sharing stories about the time he spent with architects such as Rafik Chadrji and Mohamed Makiya in the ebullient Baghdad of the 1950s.

36 Munir collaborated with several European architects and became close friends with Marcello d’Olivo, with whom he collaborated on the Unkown Soldier Monument in Baghdad.

37 “Traditional” and vernacular styles had been indexed, codified, and then hijacked toward a more assimilative form of occupation, as brilliantly described in Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 53–84.

38 See Jad Tabet, “From Colonial Style to Regional Revivalism: Modern Architecture in Lebanon and the Problem of Cultural Identity,” in *Projecting Beirut*, ed. Hashim Sarkis and Peter Rowe (New York: Prestel, 1998), 83–105.

39 See George Arbid’s presentation at the “Architecture and Representation: The Arab City,” Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York, November 21, 2014.

40 This narrative of a “return” to concerns about regional identity starting in the mid-1960s and expressed through architecture can be traced in Gwendolyn Wright, “Global Ambition and Local Knowledge,” in *Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century*. Some, however, approach the idea as if “Islamization” of this regional identity were a natural evolution. See, e.g., Hasan Uddin-Khan, introduction to *World Architecture, 1900-2000: A Critical Mosaic*, Volume 5: Middle East, ed. Kenneth Frampton and Hasan-Uddin Khan (New York: Springer, 2000).

41 See the US pavilion (*OfficeUS*) at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale.

42 Saleh al-Hathloul, *The Arab-Muslim City: Tradition, Continuity, and Change in the Physical Environment* (Riyadh: Dar Al Sahan, 1996), esp. 195–235.

43 Nathan Citino, “Suburbia and Modernization: Community Building and America’s Post-World War II Encounter with the Arab Middle East,” *Arab Studies Journal* 13–14 (Fall 2005–Spring 2006): 39–64.

44 This narrative transpired across all of the pavilions.

45 Architects working in the region include Bernard Khoury, Hashim Sarkis, and L.E.F.T, among others.

46 Solidere was exported as the public-private company Millennium to lead the redevelopment (and destruction of much of the settlement fabric) in Mecca. Solidere also employed UAE-based companies such as Emaar Properties to develop heavily in downtown Beirut. Emaar can be found now across India.

47 See Samir Kassir, *Histoire de Beyrouth* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), especially 630–40.

48 “The plan proposes to demolish 80 percent of the town center and increase the density fourfold. Effectively, a fatal blow has been dealt to the memory of this very ancient city, one better suited for oil-rich Arab countries, with a wealth of new buildings, perhaps, but a dearth of architectural traditions. In a city such as Beirut, which has more than two thousand years of history, the idea of memory must not be belittled. To pretend to protect this memory by preserving a few monuments while obliterating the context onto which they were inscribed can only diminish their real nature. They will be like desecrated tombs, witnesses to the death of the city.” Assem Salam, “The Role of Government in Shaping the Built Environment,” in *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*, ed. Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (New York: Prestel, 1998), 132.

49 See Nada Moumtaz, “The Knotted Politics of Value: Beirut’s Islamic Charitable Endowments between Islam and Capital,” unpublished manuscript.

50 Bernard Tschumi, *Event-Cities 3: Concept vs. Context vs. Content* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

# The Case of the Traveler: Claims for a Post-Identitarian Representation

NORA AKAWI

Amale Andraos's invitation to work on cocurating a conversation on "Architecture and Representation: The Arab City" presented a tremendous opportunity. In the first iteration of the conference at the Columbia Global Center Amman in 2013, we began the conversation with colleagues from Jerusalem, Dubai, Beirut, Cairo, and Amman. There, discussions on the work of Yasser Elsheshtawy, Bernard Khoury, Senan Abdelqader, and others presented many possibilities for further exploration, particularly on questions on representation and identity, citizenship, participation, and conflict. The 2014 conference, which convened in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation's Wood Auditorium on November 21, was an intensive encounter of historical studies and future imaginations for Arab cities from across the campus and the world. The works presented were authored by, and discussed with, a group working in diverse forms of architectural and spatial practice (designers, historians, artists, educators) and of different generations: from the authors who have set the tone for the dominant architectural discourse on Arab cities today to the emerging voices working to build on, or even challenge, such terms. Beyond these differences, however, the participants in the auditorium shared a collective sense of urgency: a coupling of frustrations and aspirations that seemed to make this encounter more than important, relevant, and timely; rather, it was necessary. Here too was a shared reckoning of, and stake in, "the situation" in our cities, which Adrian Lahoud illuminates in his contribution to this volume, and the possibility for this common interest to produce, in solidarity, alternative futures for the Arab street.<sup>1</sup> Hovering in the room was the weight of the violence with which both destruction and construction are being performed in Arab cities, by local, foreign, and occupying political and corporate powers, causing immeasurable displacement and the loss of lives, livelihoods, histories, cultures, and environments.

Despite the many attempts to undermine its transformative effect, the year 2011 represents a turning point in Arab history. Although met with repressive violence by regimes in power, the uprisings across the region carried with them an alternative imaginary of how people and resources should be organized in the world. But the nonviolent protests and demands for dignity, freedom, and social justice were drowned in a bloody orchestration of violence. A united political struggle against oppression and the nature of ruling powers was replaced by

chaos, in most cases deliberately choreographed by regimes facing their own collapse (like the infiltration of the *baltajiah* [hooligans] in Egypt, performing state violence in civil disguise) and maintained or exacerbated by others interested in this violence and insecurity.

The revolutionary movement had yet to reach a maturity from which alternative structures of governance could be proposed. Instead, the orchestration of chaos that followed the uprisings has set a stage for counterrevolution. On the one hand, nondemocratic, oppressive regimes are gaining or maintaining popularity with their slogans of security and stability. On the other hand, on the ruins of the weakened state structures—ones built upon a colonial past and artificially drawn borders—Arab states are left with a version of sovereignty that's particularly thin and permeable to external forces. In this context, the region becomes the battlefield of proxy wars over control and resources, uprooting millions of people and leaving them displaced in the search for temporary shelter and security. Underneath this field of deafening violence lies a parallel silence of international consensus over stable flows of money, oil, arms, and power. And across the paths traveled by war-torn populations remains a static global understanding of human rights that renders entire groups of refugees invisible once they cross the borders, as artificial or porous as those borders may be.

With all the opposing opinions and theories on what's actually shaping the future of the Arab City, there seems to be one point of agreement: we're entering an era of historical transformation, leaving a generation in a state of terrifying uncertainty. Practicing and teaching architecture in this context becomes more challenging and important than ever. In the 2011 uprisings, this same generation embarked on a collective project toward democratic change and a just reorganization of governance. It is an ongoing project within which architecture, in its various forms of practice, can reclaim agency. Representational tools in architecture can be activated, as many ideas presented at the conference demonstrate, to make visible overlooked injustice, make heard silenced narratives, make sense of ungraspable scales of infrastructure, and, perhaps, even make imaginable the spatial conditions of social justice. As Felicity Scott's contribution to this volume suggests, we want to ask how architecture can be a medium or practice that "widens the field of social and political struggles" and makes available its disciplinary tools and forms of knowledge to "bring new material to the table."<sup>2</sup>

In this context, this publication gathers the many efforts—particularly those demonstrating that, as Laura Kurgan reminds us, representation is always an active task—made by architects (through their practice, research, or teaching), to propose new imaginaries for this shared space, in a new organization of governance where marginalized communities can begin to take part in shaping their environments.<sup>3</sup>

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The political community is a community of interruptions, fractures, irregular and local... It is a community of worlds in community that are intervals of subjectification: intervals constructed between identities, between spaces and places. Political being-together is a being-between: between identities, between worlds.

—Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*

For Jacques Rancière, democracy can only exist where a community is defined through a sphere of appearance of a people, a political community. He clarifies that "appearance" is not to be understood in the sense of "illusion opposed to the real" but as an act that modifies the regime of the visible, introducing the visible into the field of experience, splitting reality to reconfigure it as double. This political community cannot be formed only by those who represent, or are considered part of, the state or society. Rather, it is composed of those "floating subjects" that deregulate and derail all authoritarian attempts at representations of places and identities.<sup>4</sup> So democracy can be practiced only when those who are not represented appear and challenge the image of society. The space of appearance where people emerge is the very place of dispute—not disputes between parties that constitute the state but disputes initiated by the nonrepresented subject, which Reinhold Martin refers to as struggles for "the right to representation."<sup>5</sup> It is the struggle for *la part des sans-part*, the claim of the share of those who are deprived of a share in the common good, excluded from recognition, dignity, rights, property, security, speech, decision making.

This insurrectional moment, according to Étienne Balibar,

Manifests the essential *incompleteness* of the "people" as a body politic... This instable and problematic character of the civic community has been long concealed or, better said, it has been displaced because of the strong degree of identification of *the notions of citizenship and nationality*...the constitutive equation of the modern republican state, which derives its apparently eternal and indisputable character from the permanent strengthening of this state, but also, as we know, from many mythical, or imaginary, or cultural justifications.<sup>6</sup>

The understanding of democracy as a regime of *collective life*, as consensus on a static, united, and whole national *character* or *identity*, is the repression of politics and of democracy altogether.

Felicity Scott warns us of the dangerously common expectation of architecture to participate in the definition and production of this identity in nation-building. In the context of recently decolonized or still-colonized societies in the Arab world, she invites us to “rethink architecture’s role as always facilitating stabilization or unification, particularly vis-à-vis national identity,” and to understand architecture as a potentially “powerful marker of ambivalences, discontinuities, and instabilities.” We are urged to “think of a type of postnationalist figuration of architecture, a paradigm that refuses to collapse into, or even actively contest assumptions informing exclusivist notions like an Egyptian architecture, a Jordanian architecture, a Lebanese architecture, and so on.”<sup>7</sup>

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In the same way that Scott warns us of the dangers that come when architecture is expected to produce exclusivist identities, Edward Said warns us about the pact universities make with the state or with national identity. He writes that academic freedom is at risk whenever discourse in the university must “worship the altar of national identity and thereby denigrate or diminish others.”<sup>8</sup> In “Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler,” a lecture he delivered at the University of Cape Town in South Africa in 1991, Said addresses the still very pressing question of academic freedom—the privileges but also the social and political responsibilities of civic institutions like the university, as well as the dangers of the relationship between the university and national identity.

Said elaborates on the notion of academic freedom in regard to the university’s relationship to national identity, particularly in postcolonial states in the Arab world, where universities become nationalist political institutions. Having achieved independence after anticolonial struggles, the first changes to be made were in the area of education, which went through a process of “Arabization.” For instance, national independence in Algeria meant that for the first time, youth would be educated in Arabic and learn about Algerian culture and history, which were previously either excluded or given an inferior status in a curriculum that reflected the “superiority of French civilization.”<sup>9</sup> But this also meant that the national universities were conceived as extensions of the new national security state, with a mandate of shaping national identity, of dictating what is to be included in that identity or excluded from it, what should and shouldn’t be taught. So whereas Arab students’ education had been encroached upon previously by the colonial intervention of foreign ideas and norms, in the state-building process they were to be “remade in the image of the ruling party.”<sup>10</sup> This had devastating consequences for the Arab university. Academics were encouraged to conform rather than excel, and the general result was that

“timidity, a studious lack of imagination, and careful conservatism came to rule intellectual practice.... [Nationalism] in the university has come to represent not freedom but accommodation, not brilliance and daring but caution and fear, not the advancement of knowledge but self-preservation.”<sup>11</sup>

In the larger debate on academic freedom, on the one hand we are faced with the argument that the university is to be exempt from the practicalities of the everyday world. On the other hand there is the view that directly inserts the academy into that world: the university is meant to be engaged, intellectually and politically, with political and social change and to be responsive to abuses of power. In this view, the university must not only be critical of but also overtly align itself in opposition to oppressive power regimes. The myth of the university as impermeable to the world outside, of course, no longer stands. Said reminds us that “so much of the knowledge produced by Europe about Africa, or about India and the Middle East, originally derived from the need for imperial control,” and “even geology and biology were implicated, along with geography and ethnography, in the imperial scramble of Africa.” He mentions both the concealed and the public instrumentalization of the American academy by the government and military during the Vietnam War, where academics and researchers were developing studies on counterinsurgency or “lethal research” for the State Department, the CIA, and the Pentagon.

More recently, according to an article in the *Nation*, the Technion—the Israeli Institute of Technology—was involved in developing remote-control capabilities for the Caterpillar D9R, “Black Thunder” armored bulldozer.<sup>12</sup> Referring to these unmanned bulldozers, an Israel Defense Forces officer said that the newly improved machine “performed remarkably during operation Cast Lead,” the invasion and massive destruction of Gaza in 2008–2009.<sup>13</sup> At the time of Said’s lecture in Cape Town, in 1991, Palestinian universities and schools were closed by the Israeli military, which had kept the major universities in Palestine shut since the beginning of 1988. Today, learning institutions continue to be targeted by Israel from both the air and the ground. Examples include the raiding of Al-Quds University campus by Israeli forces on November 17, 2015, when rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas canisters were fired at students.<sup>14</sup> The University of Illinois professor Steven Salaita, who had joined the American Indian Studies program with a tenured offer, was recently fired on account of his statements on social media criticizing Israel’s conduct of military operations in Gaza.<sup>15</sup> Also, the systematic prosecution of politically active students in Birzeit University by Israel and of Kurdish and Turkish “Academics for Peace” in Turkey for having signed the statement “We Will Not Be Part of This Crime” testifies to the direct involvement of universities with the political realities outside.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the increasing view of the university as simply an arm of the government, which reflects only the interests of corporations and establishment power, Edward Said gives an account of a “new worldliness in [the academy] that denied it the relative aloofness that it once seemed entitled to.” On the contrary, it called for the university to become the place where students would be educated as reformers. He continues: “*relevance* was the new watchword.”<sup>17</sup>

Political repression, the lack of democratic rights, and the absence of a free press have never been good for academic freedom. They are in fact disastrous for academic and intellectual practice. “To make the practice of intellectual discourse dependent on conformity to a predetermined political ideology,” or predetermined canon of learning, Western or other, Said argues, “is to nullify intellect altogether.” Academic freedom is the freedom to be critical, the rejection of any kind of homely comfort:

The world we live in is made up of numerous identities interacting, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes antithetically. Not to deal with that whole is not to have academic freedom. We cannot make our claim as seekers after justice if we advocate knowledge only of and about ourselves. Our model for academic freedom should therefore be the migrant or the traveler: for if, in the real world outside the academy, we must be ourselves and only ourselves, inside the academy we should be able to discover and travel among other selves, other identities, other varieties of the human adventure.

He suggests that we consider academic freedom as an invitation to give up on identity, in the hope of understanding or assuming more than one. “We must always view the academy as a place to voyage in, owning none of it but at home everywhere in it.”<sup>18</sup>

According to Said, there are two ways of inhabiting academic and cultural space in the university. The first is the academic professional who is there in order to reign: the king or the potentate who surveys everything with detachment and authority. This entails dictating what should and should not be taught, what should or should not be included, defining disciplinary boundaries, reinforcing existing canons. The second is based on the figure of the migrant, “considerably more mobile, more playful, although no less serious. The image of the traveler depends not on power but on motion, on a willingness to go into different masks and rhetorics.... Most of all, and most unlike the potentate who must guard only one place and defend its frontiers, the traveler crosses over, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions, all the time.”<sup>19</sup>

1 See Adrian Lahoud, “Fallen Cities: Architecture and Reconstruction,” in this volume, page 102.

2 Felicity Scott, “Architecture and Nation-Building,” in this volume, page 139.

3 Laura Kurgan, “Architecture and Representing,” in this volume, page 230.

4 Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 100.

5 Reinhold Martin, “Remarks on the Production of Representation,” in this volume, page 182.

6 Étienne Balibar, “Antinomies of Citizenship,” *Journal of Romance Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 4.

7 Scott, “Architecture and Nation-Building,” 140.

8 Edward Said, “Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler,” *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 396.

9 Said, “Identity, Authority, and Freedom,” 392.

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17 Said, “Identity, Authority, and Freedom,” 398, emphasis added.

18 Said, “Identity, Authority, and Freedom,” 403.

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For the Love of Cities and Books:  
Janet Abu-Lughod (1928–2013)

LILA ABU-LUGHOD

Janet Abu-Lughod, my late mother, would have loved to be at a conference on architecture and the representation of Arab cities, and she would have loved to see the discussions that followed it in this publication. She loved cities, and Arab cities held a special place for her. We all belong to intellectual lineages. We hope that we will be remembered by those who come after. Many of us believe that books carry our legacies. Her books on Cairo and Rabat are part of her legacy. But so is her personal library, which now is housed in Amman, at Columbia University's Global Center, where new generations will have access to the books she learned from and loved.

My mother loved architecture. It was a family joke to mimic her enthusiasm about Islamic art and architecture by exclaiming, after a trip we took across North Africa in 1969, "Look at that beautiful doorway!" Yet she had little patience for "representation," except to critique Orientalist representations of "the Islamic city," whose *isnad* (chain of authority) she traced back to an article published in 1928 by William Marçais titled "L'islamisme et la vie urbaine" and whose continuing influence she feared in the misguided efforts of contemporary Arab planners to recreate "Islamic cities" by edict.<sup>1</sup> Later, her deep knowledge of the histories of Arab cities would make her question Eurocentric representations of the world's networks.<sup>2</sup> Cities were, for her, for living in, and people made cities over time within social, legal, and political contexts. That is what interested her, as well as the comparisons to be made among urban forms and functions.

In this essay, I draw from an unpublished intellectual memoir my mother wrote when in her seventies to offer some insight into how she came to work on Arab cities and what she studied about them. She traced her interest in cities to her early concerns with prejudice and poverty and her opposition to racial segregation in US cities, starting with the place she grew up, Newark, New Jersey. When she moved to Chicago as a young college student, she was horrified by the white ghetto she found herself in (Hyde Park) and remembers picketing all-white skating rinks. "Like many other young idealists eventually drawn into sociology—a field I had never even heard of when I set out for the University of Chicago in 1945, just barely turned seventeen and decidedly wet behind the ears—I wanted to fight injustice."

She explained her next move, into urban planning, as follows. She met a young man at a dance and politely asked him what he was doing. He told her about a new program being established at the university. It was 1948. The new program was in planning.

This appealed to me because it was then believed that social pathologies were “caused” by bad housing environments (ah, innocence!). What better way to solve the problems of the world than by putting knowledge to use in action. I soon transferred from sociology to planning, filled with the hubris (and unrealistic hopes) of having found my *métier*. Our three-year program of study focused on two issues: first, planning housing, cities, and even river basins in the United States; and second (to me a complete revelation), planning economic development for “backward” nations. This latter was as exotic as anthropology, but I remember feeling very uncomfortable about our presumptuousness... In our small collaborative workshops we laid out ambitious research projects and, in God-like fashion, translated our values into “solutions,” independent of economic constraints, the realities of political implementation, and (I am ashamed to say) the participation and guidance of those being planned for!

Fairly quickly she became disillusioned. She realized she had taken a wrong turn.

City planners at best were “servants” of politicians and beholden to real estate interests and financiers; the “public good” I thought planning could achieve was not uppermost on their minds. This became clear when as director of research for the American Society of Planning Officials I read racialized zoning ordinances and recognized that the chief purpose of planning was to segregate people by class and to “protect” and enhance returns on investment. It was also becoming clearer that the good intentions of housing reformers who should have known better were likely to end in disaster.

It was around then that she met and married my father, a Palestinian refugee from Jaffa, an Arab city much beloved by its inhabitants. Coincidentally, one of her planning projects for “exotic” locations had been a water project for Palestine, so she was not unfamiliar with the place. A few years later, after he

finished his undergraduate degree and then his PhD at Princeton, she moved to Egypt with him and her two small children—my sister and myself. It was 1957. He had been offered a job with UNESCO. A city kid, she couldn’t stand living at the rural development center in Sirs al-Layyan, where he worked. So she moved us to Cairo and began to teach urban sociology at the American University in Cairo.

Few personal-cum-academic experiences were more profound! Virtually nothing I assumed I knew about cities (with Chicago the Ur prototype) had much relevance to the crowded, bustling, and to me, baffling metropolis of Cairo, whose physical, social, and cultural patterns had been laid down successively over its one thousand years of existence. How could I use the city as a “laboratory,” as I had been taught to do, when I had little of the language, almost no historical background, and kept getting lost? I needed so much! I had to give myself crash courses in history (discovering my affinity to a field I had never studied). I had to gain as much language immersion as I had time for... And I had to make sense of its spatial and social patterns, so different from cities I had known... The best part, however, was explorations with an intrepid band of bright, bilingual, upper-middle-class girls who had innocently signed up for my course in urban sociology. Since their protected lives made them as ignorant as I about large areas of the city, we learned together—wandering around on foot, driving through areas such as the unique City of the Dead that they had never seen, observing housing and street life—and talking to people.

Her four years in Egypt were utterly transformative.

Even after our return to the States in 1961, I continued to study and write until my book on *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* was finally finished in 1967. [This was her PhD thesis, written while she had, by this time, four children.] It was not published until 1971.<sup>3</sup> I am deeply gratified that this book, now a “collector’s item,” is still considered the definitive study of that city. (At least, when I return to Cairo, I am greeted enthusiastically by many Egyptians who are unaware that I ever wrote anything before or after!)

Her interest in Arab cities broadened:

Ever since completing my book on Cairo, I had considered comparing Cairo to other cities in the Arab world, especially those in North Africa that had been transformed under French colonial rule.... The Europeanized quarters of Cairo had been planned even before British colonial rule. No legal attempts to separate European settlers from “natives” were imposed, although class differences served to “sift and sort.” The situation was quite different in Algeria, Tunisia, and especially in the cities of the French “zone” of Morocco, where planned apartheid achieved its most remarkable “success.” Although my original too ambitious plan had been to compare Algiers, Tunis, and Rabat, the book I eventually wrote dealt with “urban apartheid” in Morocco.<sup>4</sup> I uncovered the full depth of French racism and was able to trace how law (and force) succeeded in constructing and maintaining radical segregation between “natives” and colonial settlers, thereby assuring the full exploitation of Moroccan labor and resources. I still think that this is the best book I ever wrote, although French scholars hated it.

Of her next major project, *Before European Hegemony*, she wrote:

Ever since my self-taught courses on world history when researching Cairo, I had become increasingly annoyed by Max Weber’s dismissal of Islam and, in general, and with the self-congratulatory narratives about the “Rise of the West” written by Western historians, which took the superiority of Western culture for granted. I knew that China and Egypt, inter alia, had long been innovators in culture, literature, and technology, and that long-distance trade had connected those two centers of power with one another and with a large number of intermediary points—long before the West “rose.” Furthermore, I had been reading urban histories over the years, just out of curiosity, and was struck with the fact that many of these places had important connections to one another. In addition, in my various travels I had casually visited many museums in Europe and Asia and had noticed that, regardless of where I went, many of the most beautiful objects I saw had been made between 900 and 1300 A.D., a time when Europe was still in shadow. I kept hoping I could find a book that described and explained the world in this period. I never expected to have to write it.

By the time she finished *Before European Hegemony*, she had moved to New York, having taught for almost twenty years at Northwestern University. For the next couple of decades, she would turn her gaze back to the United States. She embarked on major comparative studies of America’s global cities—New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Her final book was a comparative study of race riots in these three cities, returning her in the end to the interests that had driven her since high school in Newark: the injustices of racism and racial segregation.<sup>5</sup> But she never lost her love of Cairo, returning there when she could and keeping up with the literature.

In the last year of her life, when she was mostly housebound, I hired a graduate student to go to my mother’s apartment and catalogue her library. She had agreed with my idea, enthusiastically endorsed by Safwan Masri, then director of the newly opened Columbia Global Center in Amman, that it would be wonderful to donate her books to the center. I had just visited and noticed that they had no books in their reading room. And I discovered that they were developing an urban studies and architecture focus, through the GSAPP’s Studio-X and its director, Nora Akawi. But when it came down to it, my mother was reluctant to part with her books. “Not now,” she said.

Still, I thought maybe my mother would enjoy the process of seeing her books taken off the shelves, one by one, for cataloguing. We went bookcase by bookcase. The volumes were arranged in terms of subject areas related to her shifting interests and projects. In the living room were the books she had worked on most recently. Books about American cities—particularly New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Berenice Abbott’s black-and-white photographs of New York. Books of maps. Encyclopedias. Books on globalization. Books on race relations. Books on housing policy and gentrification. These were related to her first New York-based research—a collective study with her graduate students at the New School of the Lower East Side, *From Urban Village to East Village*.<sup>6</sup> Tucked in among these were a couple of precious shelves of books by her students and colleagues, personally inscribed to her.

In the front hallway were art books, mostly of Islamic art and architecture—those doorways (and carpets, mosques, and engraved metal urns) she had so admired. In the entrance to her apartment were books about medieval cities and trade networks. Her thirteenth-century world. Her bedroom held the oldest of them all. Here were the books about Cairo, Tunis, Baghdad, Damascus, and other Arab cities. Planning documents. Government statistical abstracts. Magazines from UNESCO, UN Habitat, and the Aga Khan Foundation, for which she had once served as a juror. She had given away many books to students when she retired and lost her office at the New School. These were in anthropology, psychology, and general sociology. And she had given me her very old

books about Egypt—like Winifred Blackman’s, *The Fellāhīn of Upper Egypt*.<sup>7</sup> There was no room for these in her apartment.

The final bookcase, crowding her bed, held her own publications and offprints and the books of family and family friends, from my first (*Veiled Sentiments*), to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (dedicated to her and my father), to my father’s, including the groundbreaking volume in which her famous article on “The Demographic Transformation of Palestine” appeared: *The Transformation of Palestine*.<sup>8</sup> When he moved back to Palestine in 1992, my father had taken all the books in Arabic they had collected from the Cairo booksellers in the late 1950s and ’60s. He donated these, along with the rest of his academic library (and the bookshelves!), to the Birzeit University Library.<sup>9</sup>

I had secretly hoped that the library would trigger memories and that my mother would be inspired to talk about her books and her life as we catalogued. Mostly she didn’t feel like it. But one day when I came by for a visit, I found her sitting with a very old book on the dining table that now doubled as her desk. She touched the beige cloth cover of this large volume with loving care. She turned the pages slowly to show me, her eyes alive. Carefully she opened up the delicate fold-out maps. I could see her handwritten notes penciled in the margins. She was clearly moved by seeing this book again.

I then remembered. When David Sims, a Cairo-based urban planner, had asked her to write a foreword to his book, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control*, she had been excited.<sup>10</sup> It was, I believe, the last academic writing she did. She loved his social-spatial approach, was impressed with the maps and statistics, and endorsed his political-economic analysis of the city’s growth. It was use, function, and change in cities that interested her. She had an abiding interest in politics and finance that she had first explored as a budding urban planner, and these were the themes of David Sims’s book.

She had been shocked, though, that he had not cited one work that she considered crucial. It was the only real flaw, she believed, in his well-researched work. She told him so. I now recognized that this old book she was so fondly showing me was the book she had scolded him for not citing. It was Marcel Clerget’s dissertation, *Le Caire: étude de géographie urbaine et d’histoire économique*.<sup>11</sup> She saw herself in a lineage that went back to Clerget. She saw David as carrying forward this lineage. My mother respected history. Not just the histories of Arab cities and those who have built them—from architects to planners to ordinary people—but also the histories of those who have tried to understand and write about them.

Our family is proud that Janet Abu-Lughod’s library has now found an excellent home in Amman, a city she visited many times as it was where her much-loved mother-in-law lived. Columbia’s Global Center will ensure that these treasures are made available to students and researchers in the region. I

had wanted to be able to donate Clerget’s *Le Caire* to the library as well. But this time, it is I who find myself not quite ready to let go. I can’t forget the look of love in my mother’s eyes as she showed me this book about Cairo.

But I did find a few more special books and pamphlets for the library. They include some original offprints of the work of André Raymond and some works by Nezar AlSayyad, a younger Egyptian colleague of whom she was fond. These are two scholars who are very much part of that family who have been drawn to study Cairo. And we are contributing a copy of her own book, long out of print, that has become what she called “a collector’s item”: *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious*. May the city have many more years and emerge victorious. And may those who have studied and loved this great Arab city live on through it.

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2 Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

3 Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

4 Janet Abu-Lughod, *Rabat: Urban Apartheid in Morocco* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

5 Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

6 Janet Abu-Lughod et al., *From Urban Village to East Village* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

7 Winifred Blackman, *The Fellāhīn of Upper Egypt, Their Religious, Social and Industrial Life To-day with Special Reference to Survivals from Ancient Times* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1927).

8 Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978); Janet L. Abu-Lughod, “The Demographic Transformation of Palestine,” in *The Transformation of Palestine*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1971).

9 For an analysis of his library, mostly political science and Arab studies, especially the Palestine conflict, see Rashad Twam, “Ibrahim Abu-Lughod’s Personal Library” (in Arabic) in *Ibrahim Abu-Lughod and the Engaged Intellectual: Resurrecting a Model* (Birzeit: Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies, Birzeit University, 2011), 22–29, <http://ialis.birzeit.edu/userfiles/Ibrahim-Abu-Lughod-and-the-Engaged-Intellectual-Resurrecting-a-Model.pdf>.

10 David Sims, *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

11 Marcel Clerget, *Le Caire: étude de géographie urbaine et d’histoire économique* (Cairo: Imprimerie E. & R. Schindler, 1934).



Northern edge of the Rachid Karamé Fair and Exposition entry plaza, showing rows of unadorned flagpoles. The plaza datum directs visitors toward an inclined ramp and the entry pavilion.

# Fallen Cities: Architecture and Reconstruction

ADRIAN LAHOUD

*The nature of contemporary power is architectural and impersonal, not personal and representative*

—The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*

## THE SITUATION

In Arabic conversations, “the situation” (الوضع) is used to indicate prevailing political, social, and economic uncertainty.<sup>1</sup> Those who use the phrase rarely specify what situation they are referring to. *Has there only ever been one situation?* The multiplicity implied in its nonspecificity binds one speaker to another in an implied assumption that is both intimate and collective. A former Baathist, Phalangist, Communist, or Pan-Arab Nationalist no longer. Not yet a martyr. Just a shared hesitation to speak the language of parties, names, and events. In their place, an empty term that stands for all possible parties, all possible names, and all possible events: “the situation.” Like an incantation, if you repeat it enough times, a million tiny acts of solidarity will add up to a collective perception. Curiously, this affective precision is secured by the complete absence of content in the statement. “The situation” can literally refer to anything. Its task however is not to convey information but rather to forge agreement that the predicament is so self-evident as to require no further explanation—“it’s bad,” “we” are “in it,” “together.”

This “we” is its work. Perhaps nothing forges solidarity like a shared sense of malaise. Perhaps it all depends on whether this shared sense is exhausted by its capture *as malaise*. In any case, whatever it lacks in specifics the term more than makes up for in scope. Indeed, the seeming inescapability of the situation colors every question and every judgment on the Arab city. Like the “Arab street,” a foreign policy term now used as shorthand to describe popular Arab sentiment, the “Arab city” appears perpetually aggrieved and inflamed. Undoubtedly, the fact that Arab identity, Arab cities, and Arab streets are constituted as certain kinds of problems, ones that command public interest, invite debate, and are worthy of discussion, cannot be separated from the multifarious geopolitical investments in the region. After all it is *Arab* identity, not some other identity,

that is at stake here, and not only for Arabs, since the question has for some time merited discussions of a broader and certainly more pernicious nature within colonial states with respect to their former empires. The streets and cities of other communities are mainly matters of interest for those communities, as well as those whose job it is to be interested in such things; they are simply not burdened in the same way or by the same fears. To enter into this particular debate then, even as a strenuous critic, risks accepting its frame and reactivating the habit of posing questions according to these terms.

How to proceed then? One might take “the situation” and the commonality of its use in everyday speech as a sign of caution and equivocation, a reluctance to betray positions or enter into public dispute out of fear of recrimination. But why insist on seeing this expression as a lack rather than an act of everyday resistance? Its compulsive repetition is evidence of an attempt to suspend representation long enough to allow mutual sympathies to form. If the statement is not framed as lack, failure, or disavowal—and the suggestive ambiguities it offers are pursued—then another entry point into questions about the Arab city can become possible. This other entry point would not presuppose either of the two terms that guard its entrance, either “Arab” or “city,” let alone the colonial legacies that mark the significance of their conjunction beyond the Arab world. So instead of starting with its refusal to specify, let us try to start with its function, which is to forge a collective sentiment. These sentiments, as articulated through the countless expressions of popular sovereignty that have been heard in the last few years suggest a nuanced understanding and sensitivity to the relations between implicit and explicit registers, as well as to the tension between affect and its capture through systems of representation.

After all, the implicit affective solidarity produced by

الحالة / الوضع al-wad'a [the situation]

can suddenly crystallize into a perfectly explicit revolutionary demand:

‘شعب al sha'ab [the people]

يريد yurīd [want to]

إسقاط isqāt [bring down]

النظام an-nizām [the regime].

I would like to examine the way that new collective sentiments are expressed, formed, and made explicit within contexts of social transformation. Architecture has a fundamental role to play in these processes, and the examples cited above provide new insights into how we might understand the political function of architecture. Beyond an attention to the intrinsic precarity of these

utterances is their urgent need to acquire a life beyond their performance in everyday conversation, to take forms that survive moments of “popular jubilation,” as Jonathan Littell recently put it.<sup>2</sup> When the chorus of voices falls silent, it is urgent to seize possession of all the passions of resistance, the investments, the sympathies, and the sentiments, and to finally discover what structures best secure their fate. It’s a question of desire: how to produce it, how to satisfy the demands that flow from it, how to secure this satisfaction into the future?

Architecture has a fundamental role to play because it is able to contribute something essential to the durability of new social diagrams—an impersonal form. By stating that “the nature of contemporary power is architectural and impersonal, not personal and representative,” the Invisible Committee point to something that is growing clearer in leftist thought—the need for a constructive political architectural project.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that personality has nothing to do with politics, or that we are done with the significance of the face, or manners of speech, or charismatic leaders, but rather to indicate the way that contemporary forms of power cannot be understood without a serious examination of our imbrication in material and technical worlds and the subtle yet persistent solicitations these worlds make on life.

To make this proposition more concrete, I want to draw on a moment in Lebanese history that was as unlikely as it was decisive. Commissioned by a proto-state, named after a *zaim*, (leader) designed by a part-time communist and full-time Carioca, the Rachid Karame Fair and Exposition project in Lebanon by Oscar Niemeyer is an object lesson in architecture and the problem of nation building. The project depended on the model of the state that gave birth to it, one that conceived of the nation as something plastic, one that reserved the right to intervene in that plasticity in order to shape it. But already by the 1970s, when an aggressive return to laissez-faire markets and the civil war interrupted the nascent movement toward a social welfare state, Lebanon’s political leadership was no longer willing or able to secure the conditions in which the project was supposed to operate.

For many, the sense that individual projects fail to produce social transformation is troubling, if familiar. Maybe because it mirrors the secret presupposition that individual works effect social transformation in the first place. At the very least, it raises the question of architecture’s contribution to social transformation. In the case of the project in Tripoli, the failure to build a new Lebanese state, legitimate institutions, and a workable idea of citizenship makes broader questions regarding the instrumentality of architecture and its contingency within social movements more explicit rather than less. Still, this judgment of failure can only be made from the perspective of the 1960s Nahda, or renaissance, and its commitment to socialist, nationalistic, and pan-Arab programs.<sup>4</sup> A contrary position could be taken, that the inability to take a monolithic form

in a country without a hegemon was what lent Lebanon its peculiar ability to endlessly absorb regional pressures: not quite a state in any real sense, not even a peace—more a permanent, uneasy truce.

In either case, nation building is an impossible burden for a work of architecture to carry when extracted from the political, financial, and institutional context that commissioned it, lent it sense, and struggled to sustain it. More useful than any appeal to Arab-ness, then, is to examine the concrete processes of experimentation in which social diagrams are produced and how the instruments of modernity are taken up and modified, reactivating and mobilizing archaic structures like feudalism. By social diagram, I refer to implicit norms and explicit spatial and institutional forms that work together to produce, stabilize, and secure specific relations of power, including the production of national identity. In doing so, a more consistent, if transversal, genealogy can be cut through different claims for social change regardless of their periodization or their supposed regional or linguistic commonality. By way of Niemeyer's intervention in Tripoli, I propose that the diagram is what secures the operation of the work. It is what sustains the drive for transformation, what allows it to persist.

Finally, I suggest that this work sets out to manufacture a certain kind of subject. The era of nation-building projects was directed toward an imagined subject to come, one whose natural affinity to family and community had to be reoriented toward the promise of citizenship and national belonging. In this process, one kind of collective sentiment had to be replaced by another: familial, communal bonds would need to dissolve and national ones would need to emerge to take their place. However, there was a challenge. The nation did not exist. It would need to be invented. In the case of Lebanon, the reformist nature of this project meant that this transformation would take on an inherently pedagogical nature. The state would draw heavily on urban, infrastructural, and architectural projects to dissolve filiations at a communal scale in order to better establish it at the scale of the state. Exactly how this was supposed to be accomplished is a matter of importance not only because the era was such a crucial juncture in Lebanese history, one that belies the catastrophic upheaval soon to follow, but also because it raises questions of a broader disciplinary nature.

#### THE DOME IN THE PARK

Returning to social transformation via this refrain, “the situation” requires that we distinguish between two different aspects: an interpretation that signifies some lack on one side (the inability to specify) and a direct intervention in the field of subjectivity between the speakers on the other (implying a common perception). One could say that architecture is still far too indebted to the



Dome for experimental theater and music.



Interior of the theater dome

first at the complete expense of the latter. In order to explain this and justify why it is relevant to a discussion on architecture, a digression through theory is necessary, primarily to differentiate between a signifying and a-signifying signs. This distinction, which comes from the work of Félix Guattari, refers to those signs or aspects of signs that exist prior to their formalization as meaning. Guattari uses the concept to break the dominance of structuralist linguistics and psychoanalysis on our understanding of the unconscious. With respect to the statement “the situation,” it *works* to mobilize certain kinds of passions prior to the allocation of positions or the articulation of identities. In fact we could say these substrata of affect become a kind of raw material for the subsequent

formalization of linguistic statements. The difference is crucial: the absence of the referent with respect to the meaning of “the situation” *produces* the conditions under which a new referent (solidarity) can emerge. The condition that is being produced by the statement is nothing less than a small but precise intervention in the formation of subjectivity itself. The concept of the a-signifying sign invites us to attend to processes of subjective transformation that exist prior to or alongside understanding—that is to say prior to or alongside of the recognition of meaning in signs.

Acknowledging both the operational and semantic character of signs through this spoken example offers a way of thinking about architecture, especially the idea that “intelligibility” should be the dominant mode of reception. Consider the example of the dome, a paradigmatic element within Christian and Islamic architectural traditions. It’s an enduring form whose resistance to transformation makes it particularly qualified to reflect the immutability of sacred and profane images of the cosmos. Think not only of churches and mosques but also of observatories and planetariums. Responding to historians Rudolf Wittkower and Heinrich Wolfflin—who argued that dome of central-plan church was the ideal embodiment of Renaissance thought—the architectural critic Robin Evans suggests that, within the Christian tradition, these structures and the frescoes painted on their inside were evidence of nothing less than an architectural and artistic struggle to reconcile contradictory theological concepts of heaven and earth.<sup>5</sup> After all, the heavens were composed of orbiting celestial bodies arranged in concentric spheres around the earth, yet all power—including divine power—radiated out from a central point. The dispute, as Evans puts it, was between envelopment and emanation. Each position embodied distinct and sometimes antagonistic social, theological, and political claims about the location of God with respect to man. According to Evans, the achievements of Brunelleschi or Raphael lay in their ability to literally give form to the contours of this dispute by bringing these differences into proximity and holding them in a space of coexistence. Somewhat perversely, when it comes to domes, the very recalcitrance of their geometries has only encouraged rather than limited this kind of interpretation and speculation. For Wittkower and Wolfflin the dome embodied perfection while for Evans it embodied dispute. Yet all agreed that the dome must be interpreted. What was at stake was never signification as such, only what was signified.

Indeed Wittkower, Wolfflin and Evans might well be justified in framing this problem in terms of codings and decodings of meaning insofar as such framing describes how the work was often reasoned by its authors and received by its audiences. The legacy of this question and its hold over contemporary accounts of architecture is of more concern. The issue of Arab identity and its architectural representation is a case in point, since it is still posed in terms of tropes and

their representational adequacy. So the debate around domes or even the problem of appropriate and inappropriate orders now persists with *meshrabiyeh*, geometric tiling, pointed arches, and vaulting are deployed to signify “Islam” or “Arabness” along a spectrum ranging from very subtle and discreet (good) to vulgar and kitschy (bad). Consider the Lebanese Pavilion in the Rachid Karame Fair and Exposition site: a square-plan, open auditorium framed by a colonnade using a pointed arch. Most will recognize that this particular form refers to Ottoman traditions, of which there are many examples in the area. Some will not grasp the allusion, however, since the sign’s legibility is dependent on the observer’s prior knowledge. I happen to like the arches; others will find them unadorned, and most will probably pay them little attention. In any case, the form is supposed to signify cultural belonging and history.<sup>6</sup>

Architecture works on us and through us regardless of whether we “get” it, regardless of its intelligibility, and regardless of our capacity to appreciate its tropes or derive pleasure from their modification. This is an important political point; at stake is nothing less than a claim about what architecture does outside of architectural discourse—what it does to nonarchitects. Buildings are primarily nondiscursive objects even if they are always ensnared in discourses of every kind. This is why the concept of the diagram is so relevant here. It allows us to place the nondiscursive, a-signifying aspects of architecture into relation with the discursive, signifying aspects—architecture’s instrumentality is always bound to the nonarchitectural. Diagrams are not manifested literally as specific tropes, or even as systems of organization. Neither the *pilotis*, the free plan, the New York frame, or the *Dom-ino* are diagrammatic in and of themselves, nor can they be ever considered in purely architectural terms, whatever that might mean. They only act on the social body as intended when they are secured by a constellation of cultural attitudes, laws, customs, regulations, and other requirements. The discursive and nondiscursive elements work together within any diagram. The panopticon would simply be a damp, round building with a tower in the middle without the transformation of penal codes, prison reform movements, the judiciary, and a police force. The modern domestic unit would just be an odd way of strategically segregating and bringing together bodies without the “charitable” incentives of philanthropic organizations, the regular assessments of housing inspectors, or instruction manuals for poor families. Do prisoners or members of a nuclear family need to *recognize* these histories in the disposition of rooms and arrangement of functions? Will the disposition of rooms and arrangement of functions cease to act on their habits, pattern their socialization, or structure their gender roles if these histories are unintelligible? In other words, absent an *understanding* of its sociopolitical motive, will the prison cease to shape them as certain kinds of human subjects?

To answer this, consider another dome. In the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, in the park-like Rachid Karame Fair and Exposition site, there is a dome that wears its dereliction a little better than the buildings around it. Some 62 meters wide, its slightly squat, not quite hemispherical shape gives little away. Only the acoustics and the sunken orchestra pit inside betray its uniqueness. The dome was supposed to be a venue for experimental theater and music, a program that makes it possible to calibrate the precise distance between the present situation in Lebanon and the past situation in Lebanon.

Back when it was still called the Syrian army and not yet “the regime,” thousands of soldiers were stationed in temporary barracks alongside the dome. These days, because of the situation, only the especially curious venture in. A one-hour drive from Tripoli will take you to the top of the Lebanese ranges, where you can look out to what used to be Syria and listen to the sounds of shelling from the Qalamoun Mountains across the Bekaa Valley. From either vantage point, the sense of resignation is hard to shake. Nevertheless, these lost modernities deserve closer scrutiny. If a system of subjectification was built into the fair and exposition, it is worth asking exactly what kind of techniques would be addressed to the bodies and characters of those meant to populate the project? What was specific about architecture’s contribution to the project of nation building during this period? Is it possible to account for the imagined instrumentality of the project without relying exclusively on a semantic interpretation of its tropes?

#### TECHNOLOGIES OF NATIONHOOD

The exposition type played a critical role within nation-building projects throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, exemplifying concepts of citizenship and cultural belonging. The Rachid Karame Fair and Exposition site draws on this history, especially its appropriation during the postcolonial era. Surrounded by a four-lane road and nestled in the elbow of a freeway connecting Tripoli to Beirut, the 1.1 kilometer long elliptical site might pass for the world’s largest roundabout were it not for the occasionally beguiling structure poking past the canopy of trees. The exposition and fair facilities occupy maybe one-third of the site, with the rest set aside as an imagined parkland for the metropolis that never materialized around it. The 750 meter long expo hall is the most dominant element. To its east lie pavilions set in gardens, most of which were intended for some form of ongoing cultural production.

Commissioned in 1962, the project depended on the brief appearance of something resembling a social welfare state, in which large-scale public works were seen as integral to perceptions of political legitimacy and therefore to

nation building. By the 1970s, however, pan-Arabism, which first came to prominence with Nasser’s regime in Egypt and Gaddafi’s proposal for a Federation of Arab Republics, was on the decline. This indicated a regional shift away from secular and socialist principles toward sectarian political alignments. Military defeats and economic stagnation contributed to widespread discontent in the Arabic-speaking world. In Lebanon, the contraction of the state, the withdrawal of government from social services, and an inability to implement electoral reforms or build stable institutions coincided with the extreme regional destabilizations occurring as a result of the conflict between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), now operating from Lebanese bases.

Most exposition histories focus on the organization of the exhibitions and the strategies used to order, represent, and juxtapose different cultures. At times, scholars will turn to the technical innovations used in the construction of the exposition hall or within the exhibits themselves. Niemeyer’s proposal for Tripoli is different from the prototypical world’s fair or international exposition in that it combines an exhibition hall with buildings dedicated to cultural production within a landscaped urban complex that was intended to be used as a model for structuring the growth of a city. These four elements—the exposition hall, the cultural pavilions, the park, and the urban plan—should be understood as complementary components within a nationalistic, pedagogical project.

There are two main forms of movement through the site corresponding to the linear organization of the exposition hall and the placement of the pavilions. Niemeyer constructed a series of ramps and elevated vantage points that encourage visitors to continually withdraw from the mass and survey the crowd before returning back down to the ground. Here, the crowd could see itself seeing and being seen. Outside of protests and demonstrations, organized public gatherings of this scale were unprecedented, and the effect of finding oneself caught in this reciprocal spectacle would have been quite powerful. Being shaped here was not just architecture; that architecture forged an audience that could, in the vastness of its own spectacle, become self-aware.

As Lebanon urbanized during the colonial period, *asabiyyah* (an Arabic term referring to social cohesion within a community group) and feudal familial ties that had traditionally structured sectarian belonging persisted in response to a highly competitive capitalist environment and the insecurity such an environment produced. Old networks of patronage remained important in the absence of a legitimate state able to insure the poor against the difficulties of urban life. In Lebanon, metropolitan anonymity did not dissolve feudal or familial bonds; it re-territorialized them and made them stronger. For a brief decade between the mid-1950s and 1960s, however, a concerted attempt was made to dissolve these links in order to establish them on new and different terms. The project in Tripoli is part of this history. Its organization manifests an attempt

to orchestrate a set of affects and feelings of belonging that, when inscribed in dominant narratives of nationhood, would become untethered from their communal histories.

One can see the project as a machine designed to produce new relationships between the crowd and the individual, and therefore the nation—a mass orchestration of affect. However, the surplus of affect produced by the spectacle of the crowd that Niemeyer orchestrated through the ramps and vantage points would as yet remain undifferentiated, little more than a mass gripped by various existential intensities and feelings. This unformed set of affects therefore had to be captured and assigned a proper location within the social order. The crowd recently decoded must be recoded, classified, and naturalized within a national narrative. The exposition hall and the display of “characteristic” elements from the various nations assembled would inform the normalization and stabilization of a new Lebanese identity. Visitors would learn to distinguish themselves as citizens by acquiring new rules of public conduct, especially the consumption and appreciation of cultural artifacts.

Ordering the world into an image, as Timothy Mitchell puts it in his description of the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889, produces two effects: first, a representation of national difference and, second, the extension of a colonial system of representation into the world itself.<sup>7</sup> In Tripoli, the mass public organization of the crowd and the relation of the individual’s vantage point within it draw on the typological history of the international exposition and its curatorial organization. Through arranging encounters with artifacts, the fairground would have attempted to recode this undifferentiated population in order to define Lebanon’s newly won place among other nations. In addition to exposition planning and exhibition design, Niemeyer introduces a third element: the pavilions for cultural production and performance. These pavilions locate the citizen in a position of imagined ownership over the products of cultural activity.

We might imagine the components of the fair working together to achieve the following ends: The subjects’ communal bonds are confronted by something new—an *orderly* mass public spectacle, in which the subject undulates into and out of the mass producing a charge of affect that is not yet formalized. The consumption of the artifacts within the exhibition positions them in the world through a national narrative, until finally they are led to see themselves as the imagined producers of this national narrative. This is what the architectural machine accomplishes within the social diagram. The first component of the machine operates using a-signifying signs. The ramps and changes in height are not symbols to be interpreted; they intervene directly in the subjective field. Only later do the elements collaborate to produce signs whose meaning must be read. However, the precondition of meaning in the

sign is the visceral charge produced within the subject. This representation of nationhood can only operate insofar as it can recode and formalize this substratum of affects and passions the spatial qualities of the project produce. However, this a-signification was only the architectural aspect of the diagram. The larger pedagogical ambition depended on more than the designs buildings have on human nature. They depended on a state that was willing to see itself as the architect of this national narrative, one in which these kinds of large-scale infrastructure projects were secured and oriented to specific ends through forms of cultural administration, curatorial strategies, exhibition programs, and the media. The weakness of the state meant that the pedagogical diagram and its technologies of nationhood did not stabilize before the onset of civil war in 1975.

#### AFTER THE REGIMES

*Those who refuse to wean themselves off an enthusiasm for politics  
project insurrections without end, powers constituent but never consti-  
tuted, interruptions that are never the prelude to less abject continuities.*

—The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*

Of the many outcomes of “the situation,” perhaps the most accepted is the conflation of destruction and reconstruction. Revenue from luxury apartments will shower down upon those who broker peace. In war, land speculation makes a joke of military calculus. Soon enough, the rhetoric of imminent futures promised in renderings of a new Aleppo or a new Damascus will double, albeit in an architectural register, the present legacy of violence through systematic destitution and dispossession. Before these images of cities to come have acquired their final touches, however, the future they depict will have been engineered into existence through land expropriation and models of real estate speculation, through promissory notes based on calculations of future revenue according to reliable standards and estimates of return. Untethered from the realities of existing land tenures, undisciplined labor markets, and unpredictable steel prices, they will reach purely speculative heights. Like the images of many urban futures, those destined for the “Arab world” will need to become standardized before they can be bankable—the recent images from a design for a city of seven million people between the Suez Canal and the shores of the Nile being a case in point. Like a bushel of wheat or a barrel of oil, the urban future has become a standard measure. Its consistency, its ubiquity, and its reliability are what allow it to circulate. It is not surprising that promised cities act like commodities: in one sense, that is increasingly what

they are. The future has to learn how to flow. Its promise has to become liquid before it can become solid. As with grain and oil, too many inconsistencies leads to friction.



Rendering of masterplan for Capital Cairo, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 2015.

Despite the inherent conservatism of real estate markets and the dispiriting reliability of these propositions, their colonization of imaginations is far from complete. There is no lack of discontent toward—or critique of—these propositions within architectural discourse, and certainly no lack of emotional investment in alternative futures for Arab cities and Arab streets. In Aleppo, in Amman, in Beirut, in Cairo, in Damascus, in Gaza, and in Jerusalem, there are the most startling signs of political experimentation, social movements, activism, and institution building. There are, in other words, signs of survival, resistance, and invention to be found everywhere. From experimental coalitions on human and natural rights in Lebanon to proposals for democratic federalism in Southeastern Anatolia, from feminist movements in Kurdish communities to autonomous neighborhood assemblies in beleaguered Syrian cities, we see brave and vital attempts to reimagine social ties and forms of political organization. But without access to the equivalent of what Timothy Mitchell describes as the future’s “engineering works,” it is difficult to imagine how these precious experiments of alternative social orders can be sustained.<sup>8</sup> Discontent, critique, and desire alone will not be enough to turn aspirations into reality, because the various systems of calculation and capitalization that drive real estate development have a particular kind of durability.

The aversion toward “social engineering” within architecture or urban design has not resulted in societies that lack “engineering,” let alone societies that are more perfectly ordered. On the contrary, the result is simply societies whose *order* and *engineering* have been dictated by those who have access to the future’s infrastructure, leaving the rest condemned to precarity. The persistence

and dominance of these conditions is often described as “neoliberalism,” but this term fails to capture the specificity or diversity of the many socioeconomic diagrams that it is said to encompass. Moreover, it misses the fact that it is precisely these different socioeconomic structures that normalize processes of subjectification. The stability of the links forged between foreign capital, real estate speculation, and the domestic unit, for instance, works to ensure the reproduction of social and political power in urban space. The elements that compose these diagrams—their links, their ability to persist in time, repeat in space, and shape forms of subjectivity—cannot be reduced to matters of representation and interpretation. Financial calculation, debt, and living and working arrangements secure their own reproduction because they appear as sets of norms, material constraints, and habits that function regardless of the meanings or interpretations that critics assign to them.

Perhaps the people that were supposed to inhabit the fair site in Tripoli ended up materializing fifty years later in the streets and squares of other cities? These crowds, recently gathered and too quickly dispersed by brutal counter-revolutions, insist that we question assumptions about the durability and stabilization of new social orders. The contingency of architecture with respect to these orders suggests a more careful examination of histories of subjectification as a pedagogical project. Such an inquiry would not simply entail escaping from signification but rather describing the feelings, codings, and structures in which signifying and a-signifying elements cooperate within a political project. The institutionalization of social movements might be one place to start, and architecture’s impersonal form might have much to contribute. After all, when regimes are brought down and after the people have expressed their demands, new kinds of structures to support new habits of life are needed if legacies of social transformation are to be kept alive.



Dome for experimental theater and music, and Lebanese National Pavilion.

1 Important parts of this essay evolved as a response to Timothy Mitchell's keynote address at "Architecture and Representation: The Arab City," Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, New York, November 21, 2014, included in this volume as "The Capital City" (page 270), and as a result of an ongoing conversation with Nora Akawi, beginning in Palestine on March 20, 2015, on the function and understanding on "the situation."

2 Jonathan Littell, *Syrian Notebooks: Inside the Homs Uprising*, January 16–February 2, 2012 (New York: Verso, 2015).

3 The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e); Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 83.

4 The exemplary account of this period and its regional effect is Samir Kassir, *Being Arab* (London: Verso, 2006).

5 Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* (New York: Norton, 1971); Heinrich Wölfflin, *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance* (1899; repr., New York: Phaidon, 1952); Robin Evans, *The Projective Cast: Architecture and Its Three Geometries* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

6 Writing a decade after Evans, Jeff Kipnis makes the following comment regarding Villa Savoye, "It works for me and on me, but I can understand why others just see a nice looking house" ("Re-originating Diagrams," in *Peter Eisenman: Feints*, ed. Silvio Cassarà [Milan: Skira, 2006], 194). The comment comes in the context of an attempt to explain the role of the diagram in architecture and its potential political instrumentality. Yet in every example cited in the text, from D. H. Lawrence's appreciation of Cézanne's apples to the author's own appreciation of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, intelligibility is tied to recognition, especially the recognition of signs. As he suggests, "only some are sensitive to architectural effects in the full political dimension" (194). The cultivation of "sensitivity" notwithstanding, and regardless of whether one reads this as a claim for prior acculturation or just personal taste, these signs are always things that are conveyed through formal tropes, in this case Le Corbusier's five points. Architecture may or may not have specificity as a medium as Kipnis claims, but the model for how the medium works is stubbornly linguistic.

7 Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36.

8 Mitchell, "Capitalization and Representation," 270.