Transnational Landscapes and Postmodern Poetics

Transnational Landscapes and Postmodern Poetics:

Mapping Culture, Literature, and Politics

Edited by

Samira Mechri and Asma Hichri

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Transnational Landscapes and Postmodern Poetics:
Mapping Culture, Literature, and Politics

Edited by Samira Mechri and Asma Hichri

"*I am in total fusion with the world, in sympathetic affinity with the earth, losing my id in the heart of the cosmos... I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.*"
—Frantz Fanon

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III: Literary Routes: Geographies of Existence and Resistance

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks must go to the contributors: without their genuine work and creative genius this project would not have been possible.

Infinite gratitude must be expressed to the Cambridge Scholars team whose patience, assistance, agility and professionalism have brought this endeavour to light.

On a personal plane, the editors would like to thank their dear family members for their sustained belief in their creativity and their constant support and encouragement. Samira dedicates her work on this volume to her mother. Asma expresses love and gratitude to her mother and dedicates this work to the spirit of her father.

INTRODUCTION

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle… The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space… of simultaneity… of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.
>
> Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces"

Approaching space and place epistemologically is no easy task, and the proliferation of definitions, texts and cognitive mappings of these concepts only attests to their elusiveness. The discussion of space and place indisputably relates to the field of geography. However, geography is by definition not only cultural, social and anthropological; it is also dependent on human perception, cognition and apprehension of the universe. Indeed, it would be limiting to situate the geographical imagination within culture and society, ignoring its cognitive, psychological, emotional, philosophical, political, and literary manifestations. Rather than defining space and place, however, this study aims at deciphering our constantly evolving construal of these concepts as well as the way space has come to shape our cognitive mapping not only of the actual world around us, but also of our social, ideological, historical, philosophical, psychic, spiritual and textual realities.

Throughout the past decades, geographers, historians, sociologists, literary critics, and anthropologists established the duality of space and place by conceiving of them as two polar opposites. Moreover, they tended to vest place with all the meanings that space "failed" to encompass. In a modern era still characterized by the relative preponderance of metanarratives, place was still the locus of meaning, and to many, it was synonymous with home/land, nation, and territory, as well as the values and promises these could entail. As Steven Flusty argues, "geography has been," since its inception, deeply ingrained "in Enlightenment-cum-modernist notions of truth as objective and transparently representable."[1] Moreover, place seemed to derive much of its essence from its connectedness to time. Since history and geography are two interdependent fields, and "all geography is

historical geography, and all history is geographical history,"[2] it was taken on trust that the qualities of place, and its primacy over indefinite space inhere in its ability to bear the marks of time and history. In literary criticism, the "intrinsic connectedness" of space/place and time has previously been asserted by Mikhail Bakhtin in his articulation of the concept of the chronotope:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.[3]

Deconstructing the diachronic and chronotopic envisioning of place thus amounts to challenging "traditional dualisms—such as mind–body, global–local, culture–nature, self–Other—that structure conventional knowledge,"[4] a tendency that has characterized postmodern thinking. In the new postmodern aesthetic, "history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle" gives way to "space," to synchrony, to the here and now, to "simultaneity" and "juxtaposition."[5]

In order to approach the concepts of space and place from a geocritical perspective, it seems vital to explore their literal definitions as well as the different qualities historians, sociologists and geographers ascribed to them. Literally, space denotes "a continuous area which is unoccupied as well as the dimensions of height, depth and width within which all things exist and move."[6] Space might also refer to an interval of time, a significance that highlights its connectedness to time, which Bakhtin seems to allude to in his definition of the chronotope. Place, however, refers to a particular position or point in space, a location.[7] In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre rightly argues that "the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area."[8] Geocritic Robert Tally confirms this idea pointing out that "space was understood either as a plenum that was full of matter, as in the theory of a classical atomist like Lucretius … or a vacuum that could be completely empty, which was a view Sir Isaac Newton would embrace."[9] In the past, philosophers, physicists and theorists of place and space often assigned meaning and essence to place, relegating space to a secondary, yet indefinite position. Place is emotional, spiritual, affective, and human: space is dull emptiness, a void, a vacuum, or a shape that can be geometrically measured. For the most part, as Tally expounds, space

was still viewed "as static, empty, and mere background to historical and temporal events."[10]

In his discussion of the symbolism of land and territory from a historico-religious perspective, theologian Walter Brueggemann provides an enlightening definition of place, which ascribes to it stronger valences, thereby reasserting its primacy over space:

> Place is a space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity… place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made… Place is indeed a protest against the unpromising pursuit of space. It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom.[11]

In Brueggemann's duality, space is ahistorical, unpromising. It is synonymous with detachment, escape, and "undefined freedom," while place recalls roots, origins and thus has ontological and historical meanings. It is worth noting that the values assigned to place are deeply anchored in time and history, since the significance of a particular place is acquired through the existence of individuals who establish their "identity across generations" and who assign relevance to place through their interaction with it. The nature of place is thus rather covenantal: the gifts and promises of place are the vows its people have "exchanged" with it and the collective memory and identity they have established through commitment to it.

It is worth noting that Brueggemann's definition betrays an obsession with time and history. His historical mapping of place through the reference to "historical meanings" and "events" that are "remembered" and that ensure "continuity and identity across generations" strongly echoes Harvey's definition of territory and of the dialectics of time and space it entails:

> In fact, the history of "territory" as a concept provides a beautiful illustration of how absolute, relative, and relational conceptions of space and time get dialectically integrated in particular ways through material social practices (border and boundary building), representations (cartographic practices), and lived meanings (affective loyalties to the territorial unit of the nation-state).[12]

A similar argument is advanced by Mark Augé who rather conceives of space and place as polar opposites. Augé posits the hypothesis that if

place is inherently "relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place."[13] In this context, Augé argues that "supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which … are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position."[14] And herein lies the paradox. For if non-places have no material or "anthropological" existence and if they can never exist "in pure form;" for "places reconstitute themselves in [them]; relations are restored and resumed in [them],"[15] then it would be reductive and even simplistic to conceive of space as a non-place. Moreover, if one accepts that non-place is non-relational and thoroughly ahistorical, then how can one claim that relations are restored in it or that it can be promoted to the status of realms of memory? The crucial problem with Augé's argument is that he resorts to solving the duality of space and place through establishing a sharper duality. In fact, place and non-place further reinforce the schism traditional geography and ethnography have established between place as "the calm centre of established values" and space as "a haunting presence,"[16] an abstraction or a mere site of transience.

Moreover, by being compared to Pierre Nora's "realms" or "sites of memory," Augé's non-place curiously assumes the qualities of what Michel De Certeau calls a "practiced place," a space "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it," as it "occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it."[17] In this context, it is important to recall Pierre Nora's definition of realms of memory. "A *lieu de mémoire*," Nora claims, "is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[18] Nora's places of memory are "*lieux*—places, sites, causes—in three senses—material, symbolic and functional."[19] In this definition, it is important to note Nora's use of the word "site." If memory spaces represent one way in which the human mind can encapsulate time and memory, then they also invite a reflection on the spatialisation of time and memory. Significantly, Nora's realms of memory correspond with De Certeau's definition of places, these "fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories are held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolisations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body."[20] Nonetheless, realms of memory reflect no more on space than on our evolving perception of time, memory and history in a changing world where a tradition of memory is lost and where history self-reflexively

turns upon itself.[21] As Jonathan Boyarin argues, realms of memory are the "mnemonic schemes by which people were taught to 'fix' memories in imaginary spaces and thus enable themselves to recall them more easily."[22] Memory spaces represent only one example of how the mind can map the world geocritically. But while this mechanism looks retrospectively at our symbolic representations of the past, it would be more significant to consider our spatial mapping of our emotional, political, and literary present as well the new tendencies in cultural and human geographies that enhanced this spatial turn.

Starting from the 1980s, and more particularly with the writings of Michel de Certeau, Michel Foucault, and Henri Lefebvre, critical geographies began to establish themselves as new paradigms of cultural studies, providing new insights into notions of place, space and territory. With the emergence of novel theoretical landscapes, such as postmodernism, postpostmodernism, and postcolonialism, critics have given primacy to the concept of space in an attempt to eschew the "despatializing historicism" of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, which "occluded, devalued, and de-politicized space."[23] In Edward Soja's terms, "a distinctively postmodern and critical human geography" vigorously began to reassert "the interpretive significance of space in the historically privileged confines of contemporary critical thought."[24]

In Henri Lefebvre's spatialized Marxism, for instance, space is imbricated with modes of production and thus becomes a product of social forces: "Every society—and hence every mode of production … produces a space, its own space."[25] Rather than conceiving of space as an "empty abstraction" or as "the passive locus of social relations," Lefebvre is "concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and Utopias."[26] To mention symbols and utopias in this debate on space certainly recalls the affective *genius loci* Brueggemann ascribes to place. It is worth noting, however, that Lefebvre assigns these meanings to space, inferring that it produces these relationships through reiterative social practice. Moreover, to Lefebvre space is neither affective, emotional nor covenantal. To the question "Is space a social relationship," he provides the following answer: "Certainly—but one which is inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land) and also closely bound up with the forces of production."[27] Elsewhere, Lefebvre emphasizes the political nature of space:

Space is not a *scientific object* removed [*détourné*] from ideology or politics; it has always been political and strategic. If space has an air of

neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be
"purely" formal, the essence of rational abstraction, it is precisely because
this space has already been occupied and planned, already the focus of past
strategies, of which we cannot always find traces. Space has been
fashioned and molded from historical and natural elements, but in a
political way. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally
populated with ideologies. There is an ideology of space. Why? Because
space, which seems homogeneous, which appears given as a whole in its
objectivity, in its pure form, such as we determine it, is a social product.[28]

He also argues that space is a product of the state and its institutions, thus
establishing it as another Ideological State Apparatus. Indeed, "the state
and each of its constituent institutions *call for* spaces—but spaces which
they can then organize according to their specific requirements,"[29] spaces
not only fashioned through ideological interpellation, but also functioning
through ideological interpellation of their subjects.

In the 1990s, prominent researchers in human, cultural, and political
geographies built on Lefebvre's theory of space. Marxist geographer David
Harvey, for instance, defines all space as inherently "relative space," i.e.
space already rooted in time and history, "processes and motion," which
"mandates an important shift of language from absolute space and absolute
time to the hyphenated concept of relative space-time."[30] Human geographer
Tim Cresswell provides a rather different conception of spatial practices.
In arguing that "places are never finished" and that they are "the result of
processes and practices," Cresswell insinuates that place is a product of
spatial practice and negotiation: "places need to be studied in terms of the
'dominant institutional projects', the individual biographies of people
negotiating a place and the way in which a sense of place is developed
though the interaction of structure and agency."[31] It is worth noting that in
defying essentialist constructions of place, Cresswell implicitly apprehends
place much in the same way postmodernists conceive of space. For
Cresswell, place "needs to be understood as an embodied relationship with
the world" since "places are constructed by people doing things and in this
sense are never 'finished' but are constantly being performed."[32] As such,
he conceptualizes "place as open and hybrid - a product of … routes rather
than roots," thereby "call[ing] into question the whole history of place as a
center of meaning" and a marker of stability, rootedness and an authentic
sense of identity.[33]

Of crucial importance in this debate, however, is French philosopher
Michel Foucault's theory of the dialectics of time and space and the
entanglement of space with ideology and power. In one if his interviews,

Foucault comments on the traditional dualism of time and space in the following terms:

> If one started to talk in terms of space that meant one was hostile to time. It meant, as the fools say, that one "denied history," that one was a "technocrat." They didn't understand that to trace the forms of implantation, delimitation and demarcation of objects, the modes of tabulation, the organization of domains meant the throwing into relief of processes—historical ones, needless to say—of power. The spatializing decription [sic] of discursive realities gives on to the analysis of related effects of power.[34]

Foucault's unruly venture into the debate on space and place is backed up by his powerful arguments against historicism and the phenomenological spatialisations of human life that characterized traditional geography. Eschewing dominant teleological views of time and space, and supplanting them with the dialectics of space and power, Foucault's mapping of processes of order(ing), discipline, normative behavior and misbehavior, carceral spaces, and heterogeneous spaces certainly brings space to the fore, revealing that "the anxiety of [the postmodern] era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time."[35]

Relying on Foucault's theory of heterotopias and what he refers to as Lefebvre's "trialectics of spatiality, spatial thinking and the spatial imagination," postmodern political geographer Edward Soja creates the concept of thirdspace, which he defines as

> an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality–historicality–sociality.[36]

Thirdspace, however, "is portrayed as multi-sided and contradictory, oppressive and liberating, passionate and routine, knowable and unknowable. It is a space of radical openness, a site of resistance and struggle, a space of multiplicitous representations," which "can be mapped but never fully captured in conventional cartographies; it can be creatively imagined but obtains meaning only when practiced and fully lived."[37]

The interface between Soja's thirdspace, Foucault's heterotopia and Lefebvre's trialectics becomes clear. However, in arguing that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space… of simultaneity… of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" Foucault not only anticipates postmodern cultural geography's concern with heterotopic spaces, but also draws attention to the interface

between postmodernism and postcolonialism. Foucault's envisioning of this era's heterochronic and heterotopic break with absolute time and space emphasizes the effects of postcolonialism in an era where traditional spatial or territorial limits were constantly redrawn. In this context, Boyarin points out that Foucault's reference to "the near and far," "the side-by-side," and "the dispersed" reminds the reader of "those living with us on the planet; that they are 'distant' from us does not make them 'fixed, dead, immobile,' as the lingering discourses of primitivism, racism, and Orientalism would have us believe."[38] In substituting imperial geography with a geography of difference, Foucault already implicitly undermines the "us vs. them" *weltanschauung* that pervaded colonial thought. In fact, in imperial thought, space is mapped onto time, since spatial displacement, or the condition of existing in the "wrong" place for "other peoples" is conceived of as an anachronism. Dispersal as such denotes the anachronistic and diasporic existence of those whose ethnic or racial traits defy European standards of normalcy. In challenging such norms, they not only live in the wrong place, but their primitivism and savagery situates them in anachronistic time that has become "fixed, dead, and immobile." In this discussion, Foucault's concern with the heterotopic and the dispersed reveals how space synchronically bears its own social, historical, political and even textual and intertextual practices.

Flusty confirms this new orientation by acknowledging the role of postmodernism and its denigration of grand narratives of history and continuity in rethinking the dialectics of time and space. "In repositioning historical truth as fragmentary narratives produced and imposed in the present," Flusty explains, "postmodernism subverts Hegelian notions of space as a residual product of idealised historical time," thereby instilling a new dialectics of time and space and a new geography of space as a site of differential histories simultaneously "arrayed in space."[39] This "differential" literary and cultural politics of space thus seeks to destabilise and deterritorialize the plausible facts, truths, and established dualisms that confine spatial thinking within the realm of a particular place. Indeed, postmodern mapping rather values fluid, multiperspectivist and open-ended ways of approaching the complex net of spatial relations where space is no longer seen as "a stable or inert category but rather as complex, heterogeneous practice"[40] and where "human space" is much similar to "a garden of forking paths" or "a rhizome."[41]

Signalling the "spatial turn" of the century, the geocritical notion of space, along with such related concepts as mapping, border, spatiality, routes, contact zones, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, have provided new and fresh avenues for literary criticism and cultural studies.

Spatial practices, spatial semantics, critical geographies, or geocriticism, indeed reveal that writing is yet another imaginative topography. Such practices, however, are not restricted to the literary or critical arenas. Radical developments in transnational politics, the media, and satellite communications, and the internet also significantly revolutionized the way we apprehend space and place. In this context, Saskia Sassen points out how new patterns of "cross-border cooperation and conflict, such as global business networks, the new cosmopolitanism, non-governmental organizations, diasporic networks, and spaces such as global cities and transboundary public spheres" have led to a "rescaling" of space and of the notion of territory in relation to the nation-state.[42] Other global events and political crises that plagued the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have also triggered this constant rescaling of space. The September 11 attacks, the War on Iraq, tsunamis and global warming, the "uprisings" dubbed The Arab Spring, the War on Terror and ISIS, and the Refugee Crisis have all become "shared metaphors"[43] of global space.

In this vein, Benedict Anderson's trope of "Imagined Communities" is quite significant to elaborate on symbolic transnational spaces. Anderson's concept of the *Ummah*, which translates as "the nation," but which also bears religious connotations, is a curious case in point. For Anderson, the borderless *Ummah* "stretches from Morocco to the Sulu Archipelago" involving an immense community which is "imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script,"[44] rather than through an identifiable and scalable space or territory. He explains this in the following:

> If Maguindanao met Berbers in Mecca, knowing nothing of each other's languages, incapable of communicating orally, they nonetheless understood each other's ideographs, *because* the sacred texts they shared existed only in classical Arabic. In this sense, written Arabic functioned like Chinese characters to create a community out of signs, not sounds.[45]

The Muslim *Ummah*, like other large communities, thinks of itself as "cosmically central" through the medium of Arabic and "a superterrestrial," super-spatial power.[46] However, taking into consideration today's current political conjuncture, some extremist Islamist groups in different parts of the world have converted the theological and symbolic concept of the *Ummah* into a material and political one, an "Islamic State" or *Khilafah* that stretches from Morocco to Bukhara, ISIS being only its starting point.

In this volume, scholars from different academic fields express their views on this controversial cognitive mapping of human life and contest

new spaces for critical, cultural, and philosophical expression. The chapters of this volume venture into a geocritical discussion of postmodern and postcolonial notions of border, territory, identity, embodied geographies, gendered spaces, and spaces of resistance. Comprising theoretical and critical contributions in the fields of culture, history, politics, literature, and philosophy, this engaging work invites postmodern readers to think geocritically about the significance of concepts that inform the spatiality of human life.

In the first chapter, entitled "Ukraine, a Territory in a Newly Post-Colonial Space," Marilisa Lorusso reflects on the ongoing mechanisms of imperialism and colonialism in post-Soviet Ukraine. Tracing such mechanisms at a time when Russia has lost its territorial hegemony over former Soviet nations, Lorusso argues that Russia has never taken on board the idea that its relation to post-soviet states must be based on equal sovereignty and statehood. Lorusso notes that the case of Ukraine is even more intricate, since its distinct identity has always been shaken by colonial rule, which brought to Ukrainians "negative self-images" that they "internalised over time." Ukrainians were indeed convinced that "the metropolitan power is superior in language, culture, achievements and in other areas," a perception that marred their sense of belonging and their national pride.[47]

Through scrutinising Ukraine's colonial history and highlighting new nationalist tendencies and conflicts in the region, Lorusso maintains that decolonisation in Ukraine is a complex process, rarely not traumatic. She also points out a crisis of nationalism among Ukrainians due to the difficult transition from a divided loyalty to an articulated and unitary national consciousness, highlighting the need for a Ukrainian collective memory and heritage to homogenize a thoroughly diverse populace at a time when territorial boundaries are redrawn. Lorusso concludes that such obstacles to Ukrainian unity prove the Russian conquest to be a quite unique case of colonialism in terms of territorial continuity in that it is definitely hard to recognize—perhaps for some Russians themselves—the internal borders and the dividing lines between the homeland and the conquered territories. In fact, the case of Ukraine is representative of the extent to which the notion of territory in the colonial and postcolonial contexts can be reified. That Russia still cannot relinquish its hegemonic grasp over some nation-states already demonstrates that the sovereignty of the Soviet territory "commonly works precisely through the tendency to take power and meaning and their relationship to be simply self-evident and rather non-problematic,"[48] thereby reifying colonial states "as a set of

fixed units of [its] sovereign space," thoroughly dehistoricized and decontextualized.[49]

In her paper, "Politics of the Dispersed, the Jewish Diaspora prior to 1948," Yosra Amraoui explores the different mechanisms and stratagems whereby the Jewish community created, legitimated, and sustained a strong national identity and sense of belonging to their present territorial space despite their exilic existence. Amraoui points out how the Jews maintain strong community ties and a sense of identity through recollecting common traumatic experiences such as the holocaust, and connecting them to a specific spatial framework, namely the two world wars. To corroborate their cognitive and mnemonic mapping of territorial space, the Jews, as Amraoui maintains, resort to reviving moments of an allegedly glorious ancient past—such as the occupation of Canaan, the promised land—which non-Zionist historians claim, attest to their barbarity. The paper also examines the way the Jewish identity based its continuity primarily on Judaism, thereby highlighting the fact that the focus on religiosity also favored the creation of a territory for the Jews.

Through exploring such ideological, religious, political, geographic and mnemonic practices, the paper further elicits the way the Jews' appropriation of land in the past is used to legitimize ownership of territorial space in the present. Israeli, or Jewish geopolitics, since the religious legitimacy of Israeli identity always comes to the fore, indeed recalls the above-mentioned definition of place provided by Brueggemann. In fact, the Jews' pursuit and construction of a strong national identity is not based on a pursuit of space as much as it is a pursuit of place. "Whereas pursuit of space may be a flight from history," Brueggemann argues, the Jews' "yearning for a place is a decision to enter history with an identifiable people in an identifiable pilgrimage;"[50] hence the multiple narratives of Jewish wandering and return to the Promised Land that characterized Zionist historiography. Such stratagems, whether they be cognitive, political, historiographic, or spatial, allowed the Jews not only to create an identity but also to appropriate, legitimize and write a Jewish territory, a practice inherent in the etymology of the word geography. As Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Gerard Toal maintain in their discussion of geopolitics, or the relationship between geographical forms and political structures, geography signifies "a geo-graphing, a form of '[re]writing the earth' that necessarily involves culture, discourse and power/knowledge," a spatial politics widely practiced by the Jewish community to resist dispersal and gain legitimacy.[51]

In "Alienation in Old Places, Creation of New Spaces: the Role of Digital Media in Socializing, Learning and Protest in Tunisia," Karim

Hamdy underlines the role of young Tunisian activists not only in toppling the Tunisian totalitarian Ben Ali regime in January 2011, but also in revolutionizing the strategies of protest and the spirit of rebellion. By displacing the revolution from the political arena to the virtual world of the internet, tech-savvy Tunisian youth moved beyond the alienation and fear characterizing "old places," i.e. familiar meeting spaces to which the government was extending its panoptical gaze, to create their own venues for transgressive political thinking and expression. In this chapter, Hamdy also highlights the role of digital media in triggering and transforming the notion of political activism, countering the mass of online censorship that the agonizing government launched on the digital media in the last months of 2010, and kindling the flame of protest throughout the country. Citing famous Tunisian blogger Slim Amamou's use of foursquare social network to tell the world where the police had taken him, Hamdy points out the government's failure to control unseen and uncontainable spaces of transgression fashioned by angry youth. In his reflection on place as a tool of resistance, Tim Cresswell argues that spatial transgression operates through anachorism, i.e. spatial displacement.[52] Through online activism, Tunisian youth have in fact displaced resistance from the public to the virtual sphere, a transgression that the government's old and anachronistic strategies could not grasp or handle.

In "Between Religious Sacralization and Political Desacralization: Remapping the *Masjid* in the Wake of the Tunisian Revolution," Fatima Radhouani explores the changing role of the religious space of the Masjid amidst the political turmoil and strife that characterized post-revolutionary Tunisia. The article is a reflection on the changing Tunisian geopolitical landscape as well as the ascending religious radicalism and competition for religious-cum-political authority that the Tunisian mosque has witnessed. The paper starts with a detailed survey of the mosque's orthodox functions and its significance in Muslims' spiritual and social lives. The role of the *masjidian* institution is highlighted through a geocritical reading of this holy space which brings to the fore its specific spatial arrangement and the way its architectural features corroborate its sacred character. Radhouani also points out how, in the times of Prophet Muhammad, the mosque has come to symbolize governmental authority and sovereignty, which probably represents the very reason why this religious institution has been exploited for political purposes in post-revolutionary Tunisia. Rather than maintaining its significance as a place of worship and religious instruction, the mosque has been divested of its sacred character and involved in Salafists' "ideological struggle" to "shape a new Islamic identity after half a century of state-imposed secularism."[53]

Through her analysis of the different stages of this struggle and the mosque's oscillation between pious and secular purposes, Radhouani highlights the fact that religious space is never neutral. Tracing the displacement of political struggle from the public square to the mosque's central court and pulpit, this study ultimately reveals that the Tunisian *masjid* is, to use Lefebvre's spatial dialectics, "not removed [*détourné*] from ideology or politics;" as "it has always been political and strategic."[54]

In "Islmamism, Islamophobia and Shrinking Spaces in the Age of Inhumanity," Haideh Moghissi draws on Eric Hobsbawn's depiction of the Short Twentieth Century as the "age of extremes"[55] to demonstrate how the Twenty First Century turns to be an age of "barbarity" and chaos.[56] Adopting a socio-political approach, Moghissi maps a current international situation marked by catastrophes, from civil wars to devastation of states in the wake of the Arab "Revolutions," from atrocities committed by ISIS to massive flight of refugees to different destinations, and from the corruption of authoritarian regimes to the rip off of wretched peoples in the context of a global economy. Referring to the aftermath of 9/11 and the War on Terror launched by George W. Bush, Moghissi examines the situation of "subaltern groups," Muslims living in the West who have been stigmatised and demonised because of their religious affiliation. Moghissi argues that these "subordinated social groups" living in diaspora need a "subaltern counter public," a "discursive" space where they can fashion and "circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs"[57] against the persecuting and accusing media, political, and public discourses prevailing in the West. Here she gives the examples of how Muslim communities in the USA, Canada, the UK and other European countries have been a target of investigation, detention, deportation and striking violation of human rights, which puts into question the celebrated national narratives of western democracies about human rights, and respect for civil liberties.

Elaborating on the issue of ethics and international relations, Moghissi pinpoints that the meddling of Western powers with Middle Eastern and North African affairs in the name of democratisation and the propagation of peace has caused the emergence of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda, Lashkar-e Islam, ISIS, Alshabab, and Buko Haram. Moghissi also takes on board the issue of foreign fighters, which has affected both Western and Muslim countries. She discusses the main causes that have led to the radicalization of Muslim youth in the Arab world and the West. Drawing on a sociological research she conducted in Canada, Moghissi argues that the alienation and sense of frustration that has led to the rise of Islamism as the mightiest force in the MENA region cannot be explained only in

socio-economic terms. Researchers need to look to other political and psychological factors that may assist in better understanding the appeal of the long distance nationalism of Muslims. Space has been shrinking for young people who felt upset by the intervention of western powers in different parts of the Muslim world: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, not to mention the atrocities committed by the Israelis in Gaza. The young people who move away from their parents' peaceful homes in Canada, France, Sweden and other European countries, and end up in the Middle East, North African and South Asian battlegrounds are in search of a space to raise their voices through religious ideology, an "ideology of resistance." Moghissi ends her article with an ethical note. The criticism of stereotypical images of Islam and Muslims does not require refraining from denouncing the inhumane and despicable violence committed in the region and beyond in the name of defending cultural authenticity or religious values.

The chapter titled "'Travelling Cultures:' Towards an Anthropological Reading of Travel, Space and Culture in Paul Bowles's *Their Hands Are Green and Their Hands are Blue*" discusses Paul Bowles's intricate relationship and life-long experience with Moroccan space as well as his peculiar rendering of this Oriental space with its cultural and ethnographic specificities. Adopting a cultural studies approach, the study explores Bowles's aesthetic, psychological, and ideological rendering of the Moroccan city while also underlining his specific practical and pragmatic apprehension of this space from the perspective of the traveller-cum-composer-cum-ethnographer. Dwelling on Bowles's early ethnographic encounter with Moroccan space, more specifically the city of Tangier, the study reveals how Bowles's literary "geo-graphing"[58] of this setting creates an imagined topography of the land, where the kingdom of the senses can enjoy and appropriate this space, its tales, its flavour, and its fragrances. Later in his life, Bowles's fascination with Moroccan culture develops into a quest for collecting and marketing Moroccan folklore and popular music, an ethnomusicological tendency that betrays his pragmatic and individualistic longing for the possession and "appropriation" of the "Other" and his heritage. Beyond Bowles's Orientalist rendering of Moroccan space and his heavy ethnotyping[59] of Moroccan folklore and Moroccan people, however, the study ultimately reveals that Bowles's life-long pilgrimage in Morocco has paradoxically cast him as an "expatriate *manqué*,"[60] an alienated and decentred subject. Abhorring his home country and unable to integrate in a culture that had always charmed him, Bowles always remained an "invisible spectator"[61] of Moroccan

culture, and a permanent exile who transforms intense psychic states into intricate literary landscapes.

In her chapter, "Transnational Spaces, Metanarratives, and Identities on the Move in Maxine Hong Kingston's *I Love a Broad Margin to My Life*," Sihem Arfaoui adopts a postmodern and transnational reading of Maxine Hong Kingston's poetry memoir *Broad Margin*, which traces her journeys across geographical, discursive, cultural and literary spaces while revealing the poet's persistent concern with metanarratives and moving identities. Arfaoui's postmodernist reading of Kingston's memoir also invites a reflection on traditional notions of home and nation that move beyond static formulations and conceptions, revealing, as Bruce P. Janz argues, that "home cannot be rendered as either a nostalgic source or an eschatological or utopian finality" and that the postmodern subject is a *homo viator*.[62] Drawing on Gille Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theory of deterritorialization, Arfaoui underlines the imagery of fluidity Kingston's verse emphasizes, as well as the poet's mapping of different routes and itineraries for her characters.

Kingston's transnational envisioning of a broad margin that accounts for her "transmigrant"[63] narrators and characters' transgeneric crossings as well as their spatial and mental movements invites a rethinking of the role of identity and narrative as the basic premises of autobiographical writing. Rather than binding identity to a specific spatial location or a specific literary genre, her re-visioning of life writing in a transnational context "posits identity as a process of multiplicity informed by multiple nodes and roots of different cultural encounters that the present still interlaces together."[64] This reading of identity, Arfaoui concludes, allows Kingston's readers and reviewers to construe the "fluid experiences" of her pilgrim characters "in ways that challenge our previous conflation" of both narratological and "geographic space[s]" with "social identity,"[65] thereby thoroughly destabilizing conventional migrant narratives and rethinking identity politics in terms of flux and mobility rather than rootedness and stability.

In her paper, "The Art of Juxtaposition: Arab American Writing and Cultural Code-Switching," Laura Rice discusses the challenges of writing in a transnational context for Arab American writers. In a hybrid postmodern literary space, Rice points out how the Arab American writer becomes a translator who merges his native culture with American culture, who thinks in Arabic and writes in English. Rice notes how these challenges exhibit themselves on three distinct but interconnected levels: cultural identity, language, and literary practice. Focusing on the work of Libyan-American poet Khaled Mattawa, Rice notes how, despite their

struggle for positioning within mainstream American culture, Arab American writers were able to create a space for literary and cultural expression. To achieve this aim, they have developed a highly effective poetics of juxtaposition which, placing one cultural identity next to another, one language next to another, one literary practice next to another, opens an expressive space of unexpected connections and disruptions.

Through this cultural and literary poetics, Arab American writers have not only earned their position within mainstream American literature, but have also created a thirdspace, which is, in Soja's geocritical terms, "multi-sided and contradictory, oppressive and liberating, passionate and routine, knowable and unknowable." It is multisided, since these writers create a discursive arena that embraces the multicultural, the dialogic, and the multi-ethnic. It is also "oppressive and liberating," since they negotiate and challenge the space of the West as a centre through bringing in "a new centre."[66] Indeed, these writings operate in a space "where *il y a toujours l'Autre*,"[67] i.e. that other world, those other people, and that other culture. In this space, "the value of human life that authors affirm through their compassionate attention to particular people and events" serves to oppose "those whose actions express a contempt for life equal to their capacity to destroy it."[68] Arab American writers thus write in a liminal space that cannot be "captured in conventional cartographies," but can only "be creatively imagined… and fully lived." Arab American writers thus negotiate their identity in "a space of radical openness, a site of resistance and struggle, a space of multiplicitous representations" and juxtapositions. Through a conscious blend of genres, discourses, historical images, literary and non-literary voices, their poetry maps "other" geographies "where ties can be severed and also where new ties can be forged."[69] Torn between the frustration felt at being marginalized by the majority, and the danger of internalizing their own marginalization, they create spaces that reveal how our own humanity depends so much on our ability to identify with and embrace the other.

The chapter titled "On Bedouins, Veils and the Western Imagination: Spatialising Gender and Haremising Home in Nadine Gordimer's *The Pickup*" is a geocritical reflection on Gordimer's 2002 novel *The Pickup* which eschews the (post)colonial framework within which critics have confined it. The analysis dwells on Gordimer's ambivalence between thorough debunking of Orientalist stereotypes through her envisioning of a romantic relationship between two lovers from disparate cultures, namely illegal Arab immigrant Ibrahim and South African aristocrat Julie, and reinscription of the same stereotypes through her Orientalist rendering of Ibrahim's native country and family. This chapter highlights Gordimer's

heavy stereotyping of the Orient, namely though her portrayal of Oriental women and the Oriental landscape. To a great extent, Gordimer's representation of the Orient betrays her equation of Arab women with silence, backwardness, and ignorance, thereby dismissing more relevant features of the Oriental identity and producing a disparaging picture of Arab women who act as foils to Western women.

Such a negative portrayal is also evidenced at the spatial level, namely in the containment of Arab women's potential and achievements within the home, an envisioned "harem" that has always pricked the Western imagination. Gordimer's imagined female community is thus constructed as powerless, silent, and utterly dominated by an excessive Arab patriarchy. Gordimer's representation of Oriental women as a "haremised"[70] community, rather than destabilizing Orientalist myths, paradoxically revalidates them. It is worth noting that the *topos* of the *harem* extends well beyond spatial boundaries as it becomes visible in representations of women outside domestic space. Pointing out Gordimer's recurrent reference to Arab women who are denied visibility under their black veils, the analysis not only draws attention to her "haremisation" of Arab women through her protagonist's patronising gaze, but also points out how this vision robs the veil of its religious and cultural symbolism, equating it with invisibility, enclosure and exoticism. Here Gordimer's perspective is informed by the trialectics of *harem* (home), *hijab* (veil), and desert, which not only fixes Arab womanhood to a pre-historic state, but also divests the Oriental world of its cultural, religious and socio-historical complexities. Gordimer's romancing of the Orient is finally embodied in her depiction of the oriental desert as anachronistic, existing outside of time and space and thus subject to her character's fantasies. As the Orient's aesthetic, cultural and geographical markers get completely wiped out, Gordimer's narrative ultimately reveals how the dynamics of "[pseudo]-realist mystification go hand-in-hand with those of Orientalist mystification."[71]

Notes

[1] Steven Flusty, "Postmodernism," in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts,* eds. David Atkinson et al. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 169.
[2] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 135.
[3] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 84.

[4] David Atkinson et al., "Editors' Preface: On Cultural and Critical Geographies," in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts,* eds. David Atkinson et al. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), xv.

[5] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," in *Diacritics* 16 (Spring 1986): 22.

[6] *Oxford Dictionaries,* s.v. "space," accessed January 22, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/space.

[7] *Oxford Dictionaries,* s.v. "place," accessed January 22, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/place.

[8] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space.* Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 1.

[9] Robert T. Tally Jr., *Spatiality* (London: Routledge, 2013), 28.

[10] Ibid., 33.

[11] Walter Brueggemann. *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 5.

[12] David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, 174.

[13] Mark Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity.* Trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995), 77.

[14] Ibid., 78.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 54.

[17] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 11.

[18] Pierre Nora, "Preface to the English Language Edition," in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.

[19] Ibid., xiv.

[20] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 108.

[21] Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (spring 1989): 11.

[22] Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory," in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace,* ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 12.

[23] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 4.

[24] Ibid., 11.

[25] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 31.

[26] Ibid., 11-12.

[27] Ibid., 85.

[28] Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space World.* Eds. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden. Trans. Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 170-171.

[29] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 85.

[30] Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism*, 135.

[31] Tim Cresswell, *Place, A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 37.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 53

[34] Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 77.

[35] Foucault, Of Other Spaces," 23. Foucault explains the notion of heterogeneous space, which he names the heterotopia, in the following terms: "The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs… is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things … [W]e live inside a set of relations that delineates sites, which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." These opposed sites, which he calls utopias and heterotopias, recall Deleuze's opposition of homogenous or "striated space," i.e. "sedentary space… the space instituted by the State apparatus," to heterogeneous or "smooth space," "an *amorphous*, nonformal space" endowed with a "great power of deterritorialization." Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Brian Massumi (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 474, 477.

[36] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace*: *Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Massachussets: Blackwell, 1996), 10.

[37] Ibid., 276.

[38] Jonathan Boyarin, "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory," 11.

[39] Steven Flusty, "Postmodernism," 171.

[40] Robert Tally, "Geocriticism: Mapping the Spaces of Literature," *L'Esprit Créateur: The International Quarterly of French and Francophone Studies* 49, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 134.

[41] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism, Real and Fictional Spaces* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 139.

[42] Saskia Sassen, "Deciphering the Global," in *Deciphering the Global: Its Scales, Spaces and Subjects*, ed. Saskia Sassen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 6.

[43] Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism*, 12.

[44] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 13.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine State and Nation Building* (London: Routledge, 1998), 151.

[48] David Delaney, *Territory*: *a Short Introduction* (MA, Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 18.

[49] Ibid., 57.

[50] Walter Brueggemann. *The Land*, 5.

[51] Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Gerard Toal, "Geopolitics," in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts,* eds. David Atkinson et al. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 65.

[52] Tim Cresswell, *Place, A Short Introduction,* 103.

[53] Haim Malka, "Tunisia: Confronting Extremism," in *Religious Radicalism after the Arab Uprisings*, ed. Jon B. Alterman (MD, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 111.

[54] Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space World,* 170.

[55] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes*, (London: Abacus, 1995).

[56] Eric Hobsbawm, "Barbarism: a User Guide," *New Left Review*, 206 (July-August 1994): 45.

[57] Nancy Fraser, "Politics, Culture, and the Public Sphere: Toward a Postmodern Conception," in *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*, eds. Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 291.

[58] Gearóid Ó Tuathail and Gerard Toal, "Geopolitics," 65.

[59] Closely associated with ethnocentrism, ethnotyping is defined as "the stereotypical representation of people categorized according to a series of xenotypes, cast in bronze for all time." Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism, Real and Fictional Spaces* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 144.

[60] Steven E. Olsen, "Alien Terrain: Paul Bowles's Filial Landscapes" *Twentieth Century Literature* 32, no. 3/4, (1986): 336.

[61] Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno. *An Invisible Spectator: A Biography of Paul Bowles*. New York: Weidenfeld, 1989.

[62] Bruce B. Janz, "The Territory Is Not the Map: Place, Deleuze and Guattari, and African Philosophy," *Philosophy Today* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 398.

[63] Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc use the term "transmigrants" to refer to immigrants "who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders." Basch et al. *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 8.

[64] Kathy-Ann Tan, "'All the difficult Names of Who We Are:' Transnational Identity Politics in Chang-Rae Lee's and Karen Tei Yamashita's Fiction," in *A Fluid Sense of Self: The Politics of Transnational Identity,* eds. Silvia Schultermandl and Sebnem Toplu (Krotenthallergasse: Lit Verlag, 2010), 113.

[65] Basch et al. *Nations Unbound*, 8.

[66] David Williams, "This Hyphen Called My Spinal Cord: Arab-American Literature at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *World Literature Today* 81, No. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2007): 55.

[67] Soja, *Thirdspace*, 276.

[68] Williams, "This Hyphen," 55.

[69] Soja, *Thirdspace*, 276.

[70] Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism*: *Women, Travel and the Ottoman Harem* (London: Tauris, 2004), 182.

[71] Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper Row, 1989), 37.