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It is difficult to . . . show the involvements of culture with expanding empires, to make observations about art that preserve its unique endow-ments and at the same time map its affiliations . . . Territory and pos-sessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human power is rooted in the earth, which has meant we must think about habi-tation, but it has also meant that people have planned to have more ter-ritory and therefore must do something about its indigenous residents . . . Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is complete-ly free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images, and imaginings.

(Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*)

Introduction: The Postcolonial Spatial Turn[1]

The focus of postcolonial studies has shifted in the last decade or so from a struggle over history, the narratives of winners and losers—as recorded by the winners and resisted by the losers—to a struggle over geography. Power inequities formerly embodied in Manichean conceptualizations (Colonizer/Colonized, Oppressor/Oppressed, Occidental/Oriental, Self/Other, First World/Third World, Center/Margin, Global/Local) are

now interrogated as part of the complex and shifting operations of "spatial economies of power."[2] Discursive approaches, targeting the relational and productive rather than the mutually exclusive and reductive, interrogate issues of meaning and representation, subjectivity and agency, culture and imperialism, identity and power.[3] The world that many of us are today engaged in, whether as actual or armchair travelers, is a world of migrant subjectivities where we struggle with the affiliations and ideologies, the cultural particularities and international connections that map the situatedness of each of us.

In this essay, I explore the production of this postcolonial space first by approaching it from the standpoint of aesthetics. Through a close reading of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, I look at the ways identity is destabilized by what Foucault calls heterotopic spaces—spaces like that of the mirror which force us to think about issues of representation.[4] Next I extend this inquiry by examining postcolonial spatiality from an autobiographical standpoint, exploring some of the ways I, as a middle-class American academic, have constructed, and am constructed by, my experience of having married into a recently sedentarized, Bedouin family in southern Tunisia. In addition to Foucault's trope of the heterotopia, I have used Arjun Appadurai's notion of the *ethnoscape* to describe this production of space, because it specifically challenges the center-periphery model of cross-cultural relations.[5] That is, it encourages us to look at particular sites in the global landscape as environments populated by diverse actors whose situatedness—as workers, or tourists, or capitalists, or teachers, or women, or men, or insiders, or outsiders, etc.—inflect their experience of that space. The ethnoscape provides an uneven terrain in which heterotopic sites are multi-faceted mirrors. Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of this second interrogation has been the discovery that struggles over geography also involve the charting of interior landmarks, and the landmarks that we choose suggest the ways we seek to anchor our own migrant subjectivities. As Said notes, we must think about habitation, and the postcolonial spatial turn is crucial to this process.

The contemporary theoretical emphasis on spatial economies of

power was the result of "a growing skepticism concerning older explana-tory and predictive models" based on time as a privileged medium.[6] These earlier historicized accounts not only reduced complex global rela-tions to uniform, one-dimensional narratives but also simultaneously obscured spatial understandings that might help to reveal the manifold and heterogeneous practices of power as it operates internationally. As Dick Hebdige notes: "Shifts in the political imaginary occur no doubt for all kinds of reasons though an influential figure here must surely be Foucault whose antagonism toward teleological ideas of progress is encapsulated in his substitution of the image of the "network" for mod-els of linear 'development.'"[7] In an interview on "Questions on Geography" (1976), Foucault suggested that discourses foregrounding time have embedded in them individual, autobiographical modes of understanding. Those based on spatial metaphors, however, point to rela-tions between things, and thus to the operations of power:

> Metaphorizing the transformations of discourse in a vocabulary of time necessarily leads to the utilization of the model of individual consciousness with its intrinsic temporality. Endeavoring on the other hand to decipher discourse through the use of spatial, strategic metaphors enables one to grasp precisely the points at which dis-courses are transformed in, through, and on the basis of relations of power.[8]

Since the time of this suggestive interview, postcolonial theory has done much to illuminate the ways that individual consciousnesses are them-selves produced as a matter of relational, spatial conceptualizations.

Of particular interest for this essay is Foucault's challenge to the real-ity/utopia dyad that he destabilizes with his concept of heterotopia. In an early set of lecture notes written in 1967 and published after his death as "Of Other Spaces," Foucault notes that some sites are semiotically sig-nificant because they cause us to reflect upon and turn our attention back toward the other sites to which they are juxtaposed. That is, they have

the "curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to . . . neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (24). These special sites are of two sorts: utopias or heterotopias. Utopias are "sites with no real place . . . [They have] a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of [society]. They present society itself in a perfected form . . . [U]topias are fundamentally unreal spaces" (24). Utopias exist in some future time or in some imagined place. Heterotopias, on the other hand, are found in every culture; they are real (that is, material) places that serve as mirrors of other real (material) sites, destabilizing them. For example, the cemetery, or "city of the dead," is a counter-site to the city of the living within which or next to which it exists. It is a site that forces us to consider the relation between the living and the dead. The relation does not always suggest the same meaning, but it is always meaningful—and often uncomfortable if scrutinized too closely. Likewise, the prison, the madhouse, and the brothel are real places whose relation to normalized social sites—schools, think tanks, or nuclear households—can reflect disconcerting similarities. Thus, in relation to the larger society, heterotopias serve as counter-sites that reflect, contest, and invert other normalized sites in the culture.

Foucault notes that utopias and heterotopias are mirrors of societies in different ways:

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface . . . such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there . . . The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, con-

nected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolute-
ly unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass
through this virtual point which is over there. (24)

The mirror serves as a heterotopia when it focuses our attention on the
ambiguous relationship between what we think of as reality, and repre-
sentation: a site where this dynamic of recognition/misrecognition is
especially pronounced.[9] The destabilizing force of the heterotopia rests in
its ability to foreground the representational foundation upon which we
construct what we commonly think of as reality. It shifts our attention to
the power of representation to manage, manipulate, and distort reality.

   Foucault ends his lecture by noting that heterotopias unfold as the
antipode of all other "real" spaces:

> Either their role is to create a space of illusion that expos-
> es every real space, all the sites inside of which human
> life is partitioned, as still more illusory . . . Or else, on
> the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other,
> another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well
> arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.
> This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion,
> but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies
> have not functioned somewhat in this manner. (27)

I argue that the colonies function as just such heterotopic mirrors of both
illusion and compensation. To the extent that French texts or discourses
displaced North African histories and identities, replacing them with
Franco-centric representations for which North Africa was the stage, the
colony was a heterotopia grounded in illusion. The theoretical benefits to
humanity of the *mission civilisatrice* were constantly being called into
question by the facts of colonization: appropriations of land and repres-
sion of populations. To the extent that the colony offered the possibility
of making up for what was lost at home, the colony was a heterotopia of
compensation. For example, the French expansion of colonial holdings in

Algeria is intimately tied to France's humiliating loss of Alsace and Lorraine to the Germans in 1871. Humiliation at home was to be redeemed by prowess abroad, and between 1871 and 1898, the settler community almost doubled in Algeria (from 119,000 to 200,000). For the 1,183 families who immigrated to Algeria from Alsace-Lorraine in the 1870s, however, this compensation turned out to be an illusion. Essentially factory workers unused to farming, only about a third (387) of the families stayed in the colony.[10]

Obviously, the indigenous inhabitants of colonies and former colonies do not escape from these spatial relations unscathed. This essay addresses how they too are drawn into these productions of space, often in ways that are destructive of their own cultural sites and systems. In the case of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the protagonist Mustapha Sa'eed sees himself as constituted by the mirror of the colonizer's ideology. He is the "native." He inverts relations in this process of identification, making the "native" a mirror held up to reveal the colonizers' mentality. Yet these reciprocal acts of discursive violence do not result in a better grasp of authentic realities in their aftermath. In the case of the ethnoscapes of the struggle over geography in colonial and contemporary Tunisia, the scientific projects and military archives that are the legacy of Western intervention in North Africa have affected the ways in which I perceive my in-laws' history and they perceive mine. My in-laws have experienced Western incursions on their home territory as acts of violence and maldevelopment.[11] What I have learned from researching archives is countered by the family history I have gleaned through oral stories and histories from my in-laws—but not in a direct fashion. That is, I learned my own family's history from genealogies and albums, through pictures of men dressed in military uniforms and women in drawing rooms. My family archives seemed to be about history and biography—a progressive story. The military reports about my in-laws are more about classification and surveillance. They stand in heterotopic relation not only to my in-laws' oral stories, or the normalized story of my own family, but also to the connections between our histories. As will be demonstrated, the ethnoscapes in the latter part of the

essay are palimpsests that seek to capture the shared spaces inflected by subjects who occupy different political and ethnic locations.

Part I. The Houses Mustapha Sa'eed Built: Of Home and Heterotopia

> *We should therefore have to say how we inhabit our vital space,*
> *in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day*
> *after day, in a "corner of the world."*
>
> *For our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said,*
> *it is our first universe, a real cosmos in every sense of the word.*
> (Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*)

In Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the young narrator who has returned to his traditional village on a bend of the Nile expects to engage in the poetics of dwelling that he associates with the comforts of childhood. His longing for rootedness takes on material form when he wakes on the morning after his arrival in the room where he slept as a child:

> I looked through the window at the palm tree standing in the courtyard of our house and I knew that all was still well with life. I looked at its strong straight trunk, at its roots that strike down into the ground, at the green branches hanging down loosely over its top, and I experienced a feeling of assurance. I felt not like a storm-swept feather but like that palm tree, a being with a background, with roots, with a purpose.[12]

This rootedness is disrupted when he finds that a stranger, Mustapha Sa'eed, has established himself there. Like the narrator, Sa'eed embodies an unsettling mixture of local knowledge and occidental ways he picked up living for years in England. He represents the sort of hybridity and even contagion that contact with Western culture brings. His inserting himself into the village forces the narrator to examine his own liminal identity.

This is an examination the narrator wants to avoid: "I forgot [Sa'eed] after that, for I began to renew my relationship with people and things in the village. I was happy in those days, like a child that sees its face in the mirror for the first time" (4). However, Sa'eed does not allow the narrator to maintain this comfortable misrecognition. When the narrator tells Sa'eed that he has just finished a doctorate, having spent "three years delving into the life of an obscure English poet," Sa'eed laughs and tells him: "We have no need of poetry here. It would have been better if you'd studied agriculture, engineering or medicine" (9). The narrator, who is retelling the disturbing life story of Mustapha Sa'eed to other listeners, suddenly becomes self-reflexive: "Look at the way he says "we" and does not include me, though he knows this is my village and that it is he—not I—who is the stranger" (9). This early interaction allows Salih to explore the ways tradition and modernity call each other into question, to illuminate the ways the "other" becomes crucial to a definition of the self, and to explore the continual slippage between the self as subject and as object.

The narrator senses duplicity in Sa'eed; like an image in a mirror, Sa'eed exists in a space of nonbeing. He is a phantom to himself and a mocking double for the narrator. Both are trapped between cultures. Saree Makdisi notes that, while the narrator responds to the conflicted self that is the product of colonial relations by trying to wish the problem away, Sa'eed "does so not by becoming entirely European or entirely Arab, but by becoming both, but never at the same time, in the same place, or with the same people."[15] These contradictions are not only threaded into the conflicting voices and the unstable chronological shifts in the novel that Makdisi points to, but most importantly for this study, in the heterotopic environments of the novel which house these virtual selves that are produced by perpetual performances. The narrator, who has accepted Mustapha Sa'eed's invitation to dine with other village notables at his home, discovers that even in the village, Sa'eed lives a divided life:

> When the conversation fell away and I found myself not
> greatly interested in it, I would look around me as though
> trying to find in the rooms and walls of the house the

answer to the questions revolving in my head. It was,
however, an ordinary house, neither better nor worse than
those of the well-to-do in the village. Like the other hous-
es it was divided into two parts: one for the women and
the other containing the diwan or reception-room, for the
men. To the right of the diwan I saw a rectangular room
of red brick with green windows; its roof was not the nor-
mal flat one but triangular like the back of an ox. (11–12)

Mustapha Sa'eed's mysterious English building houses his worst and
most intimate nightmares. Sa'eed, who participates in village life by
farming and by sharing his knowledge of Western science and law with
the local agricultural committee, reveals a different self when, having
gotten drunk, he suddenly begins to recite "English poetry in a clear
voice and with an impeccable accent" (14). The revelation, akin to speak-
ing in tongues, of this alien poetic dwelling—"his eyes wandering off
into the horizon within himself" (14)—horrifies the narrator: "I tell you
had the ground suddenly split and revealed an afreet[14] standing before
me, his eyes shooting out flames, I would not have been more terrified.
All of a sudden there came to me the ghastly, nightmarish feeling that
we—the men grouped together in that room—were not a reality but
merely some illusion" (14–15). Sa'eed brings the devil of alterity into the
village. Not only can the narrator not go home again, alien forms have
appeared in the village space, a house with a roof "like the back of an ox"
and a farmer who spouts English romantic lyrics both representing only
the beginning of this descent into uncertainty. The narrator confronts
Sa'eed, saying "It's clear you're someone other than the person you claim
to be . . . Wouldn't it be better if you told me the truth?" (15). Sa'eed
responds, "I am this person before you, as known to everyone in the vil-
lage" (16). Convinced that there is something hidden here, the narrator
asks himself: "Should I speak to my father? Should I tell [my childhood
friend] Mahjoub? Perhaps the man had killed someone somewhere and
had fled from prison? Perhaps he—but what secrets are there in this vil-
lage?" (16). The narrator swears he will get to the bottom of Sa'eed's

mysterious past, but in doing so discovers it mirrors his own. Sa'eed is indeed the murderer that the narrator intuits, but in his story rests the figuration of what is to come when the entire village becomes complicit in another murder.

In his quest to unearth Sa'eed's past, the narrator discovers that while Sa'eed was living in London, he regularly seduced "innocent" young English girls, some of whom later committed suicide. Sa'eed seduces one of these girls, the Arabic-speaking Ann Hammond, after a lecture at Oxford he'd given on the poet Abu Nawas: "And so it was with us: she, moved by poetry and drink, feeding me with sweet lies, while I wove for her intricate and terrifying threads of fantasy" (145). She claims to see in his eyes "the shimmer of mirages in hot deserts" and to hear in his voice "the screams of ferocious beasts in the jungles" (145). He sees in the blueness of her eyes "the faraway shoreless seas of the North." His house in London is "a lethal den of lies," deliberately built up "lie upon lie:"

> the sandalwood and incense; the ostrich feathers and ivory and ebony figurines; the paintings and drawings of forests of palm trees along the shores of the Nile, boats with sails like doves' wings, suns setting over the mountains of the Red Sea, camel caravans wending their way along sand dunes on the borders of the Yemen, baobob trees in Kordofan, naked girls from the tribes of the Zandi, the Nuer and the Shuluk, fields of banana and coffee on the Equator, old temples in the district of Nubia; Arabic books with decorated covers written in ornate Kufic script; Persian carpets, pink curtains, large mirrors on the walls, and coloured lights in the corners. (146)

This heterotopia, a space of lies furnished with real artifacts, mirrors the way the English imagination has constructed Africa. As do so many Orientalist harem paintings hanging in museums in England or France, Sa'eed's exotic decor mimics a space that exists only in the colonial mindset. The hodgepodge of African and Oriental artifacts, placed in impossi-

ble juxtaposition, is reminiscent of the heterogeneous exotic landscapes
Flaubert's Emma Bovary adored in her keepsakes albums. They are impos-
sible landscapes made up of images looted—as were so many museum
artifacts—from real places. Not only have these looted symbols been dis-
entangled from the worlds that gave birth to them, they have been
recombined in such a way as to displace the reality of those environments.

This Orientalist masquerade is reversed in Sa'eed's Sudanese
dwelling, a simulacrum that brings real English spaces into question.
Sa'eed's English house in the Sudan is constructed around seemingly
everyday English artifacts: a fireplace, Persian rugs, Victorian chairs, oil
portraits, and a substantial library. It is a heterotopia of the "real" space
of English rooms where everyday "Englishness" is performed and British
civilization archived. Sa'eed's library boasts many Western classics,
including works by scholars of empire like Gibbon and soldiers of empire
like Macaulay and Kipling, as well as scientific works by the psycholo-
gists of empire. He has a copy of *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement
Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* in which Freud constructs
the racial "other" in culturally ethnocentric terms, theorizing non-
Western societies as primitive on an evolutionary scale and immature on
a psychological scale.[15] Sa'eed also owns Octavo Mannoni's *Prospero and
Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*.[16] Like the artifacts in Sa'eed's
Orientalist chamber of lies, the books in his English library hold a mir-
ror up to the West's colonial imagination. Our young narrator asks him-
self in the midst of this room: "What play-acting is this? What does he
mean?" (137). Sa'eed's own scholarly work includes four books: *The
Economics of Colonialism, Colonialism, and Monopoly, The Cross and
Gunpowder*, and *The Rape of Africa*, titles that suggest a highly critical
view of the colonial project, yet Sa'eed's library contains not a single
Arabic book (137). Perhaps the most telling sign of Sa'eed's confusion of
identity is that his *Koran* is an English translation.

The narrator tries to say what kind of space this room embodies by
drawing analogies to similar spaces: "A graveyard. A mausoleum. An
insane idea. A prison. A huge joke. A treasure chamber. 'Open Sesame,
and let's divide up the jewels among the people'" (137-38). Some of these

analogical spaces are what Foucault calls heterotopias of deviation: "those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (25). The hospital, the insane asylum, and the prison are among those heterotopias of deviation Foucault studies. These spaces of deviation play a significant role in Sa'eed's biography, Sa'eed himself commenting that his bedroom, a seductive den of lies, was "like an operating theatre in a hospital" (31). When he is on trial for the murder of his wife, Jean Morris, his defenders claim Sa'eed was acting in a fit of mad passion, that he was "a genius whom circumstances [had] driven to killing" (32). Sa'eed himself longs for death but is put in prison instead: "I was hoping the court would grant me what I had been incapable of accomplishing [suicide]" (68). Sa'eed's room, in fact, leads to a jumbled series of heterotopic analogies. As cemetery or mausoleum, it is a heterotopic space of the dead that mirrors the space of the living in ambiguous ways. As an ironic space, a huge joke, this room signifies the rootlessness of our representations of reality, yet also their power to have real effects. As cross-cultural space full of secrets to be discovered, Sa'eed's chamber is both the locus of truths and a den of lies: on the one hand, his library contains all the wealth of empire, the treasures of Western thought; on the other, it is merely the den of thieves whose bits of looted cultural knowledge will be brought to light when seen from the perspective of non-Western cultures.

Mustapha Sa'eed's rooms, and the displacement of "how we take root" in the colonial context, reveal the less innocent side of the power that Bachelard accords to houses and poems as creative imaginative spaces. In a lecture calculated to seduce his British audience, Sa'eed represents the hedonist poet, Abu Nawas, as "mystical" and "Sufi." He creates a room full of cheap Oriental splendor as the reflection of an English woman's fantasies. In carrying out these heterotopic acts of mirroring, Sa'eed seduces not only Ann Hammond, but himself: "Though I realized I was lying, I felt that somehow I meant what I was saying and that she too, despite her lying, was telling the truth. It was one of those rare moments of ecstasy for which I would sell my whole life; a moment in which, before your very eyes, lies are turned

into truths, history becomes a pimp, and the jester is turned into a sultan" (144). British Orientalists, in eroticizing such a vision of the East, produced the myth of a dangerous exotic masculinity that allows Sa'eed to seduce their daughters and attain the illusion of dominance himself. As a creature of the margin, an orphan from Sudan, and a "Black Englishman" in Britain, Sa'eed is fascinated by the instability of categories. Sa'eed, a person without a home, discovers a home of sorts; he dwells as an exotic self in an exotic land conjured up for him by the British. However, recognizing the discursive violence of the British, and even taking delight in beating them at their own game, does not mean that Sa'eed escapes from this representational hall of mirrors. Instead, when he returns to the Sudan, he builds his own "occidentalist" site that mirrors his ideal of an enlightened British self. Sa'eed builds for us an imagined England juxtaposed to an imagined Orient, both trapped in the violent discursive space of colonial relations.

Salih's novel is not content, however, to let us off this easily from coming to terms with postcolonial space. At novel's end, when the young narrator enters the dark English room that has been closed since Sa'eed's disappearance into the Nile, he has a literal illumination:

> I struck a match. The light exploded on my eyes and out of the darkness there emerged a frowning face with pursed lips that I knew but could not place. I moved toward it with hate in my heart. It was my adversary Mustafa Sa'eed. The face grew a neck, the neck two shoulders and a chest, then a trunk and two legs, and I found myself standing face to face with myself. This is not Mustafa Sa'eed—it's a picture of me frowning at my face from a mirror. (135)

During the course of the novel, readers become aware that the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed are doppelgängers. The narrator, like Sa'eed, is educated in Britain, is occasionally mistaken for Sa'eed's son, and falls in love

with Sa'eed's widow, Hosna Bint Mahmoud, becoming the guardian of
Sa'eed's two sons. Sa'eed and the narrator are mirror images of one another
that reflect the colonial condition as a series of hybrid, alienated subjec-
tivities. This fact is brought to a culmination when the narrator enters
the room with the roof like the back of an ox at the end of the novel. In
the English room, he opens Sa'eed's notebook and reads, "My Life
Story—by Mustafa Sa'eed," but the notebook is empty. In lieu of this
autobiography, the narrator later comes across an unfinished lyric poem
written by Sa'eed:

> *The sighs of the unhappy in the breast do groan*
> *The vicissitudes of Time by silent tears are shown*
> *And love and buried hate the winds away have blown.*
> *Deep Silence has embraced the vestiges of prayer.*
> *Of moans and supplications and cries of woeful care.*
> *And dust and smoke the traveler's path ensnare.*
>
> *Some, souls content, others in dismay.*
> *Brows submissive, others . . .* (152-53)

The narrator scratches out the line and substitutes one written by him-
self: "*Heads humbly bent and faces turned away*" (153). This line echoes the
thoughts the narrator had as he entered the room: "I must begin where
Mustafa Sa'eed left off. Yet he at least made a choice, while I have cho-
sen nothing . . . If only I had told [Hosna bint Mahmoud] the truth [that
I loved her] perhaps she would not have acted as she did. I had lost the
war because I did not know and did not choose . . . Now I am on my own:
there is no escape, no place of refuge, no safeguard . . . Where, then, were
the roots that struck down into times past?" (134). By the end of the
novel, the narrator has come full circle to the idea of lost rootedness, the
illusion of wholeness, the recognition that the village is not without
secrets and lies. In Salih's postcolonial world, then, we experience a dis-
cursive space that suggests none of us can go home again, neither to the
certainties of positivism nor to the routines of tradition.

Part II. Global Vernaculars

> *The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex,*
> *overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot be understood in terms*
> *of existing center-periphery models . . . I propose that an elemen-*
> *tary framework for exploring such disjunctures is to look at the*
> *relationship between five dimensions of global cultural flows that*
> *can be termed (a) ethnoscapes, (b) mediascapes, (c) technoscapes,*
> *(d) financescapes, and (e) ideoscapes. The suffix -scape allows us*
> *to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes . . . {it}*
> *also indicate{s} that these are not objectively given relations that*
> *look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are*
> *deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguis-*
> *tic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-*
> *states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subna-*
> *tional groupings and movements . . . and even intimate face-to-*
> *face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families . . . By*
> *ethnoscape, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the*
> *shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees,*
> *exiles, guest workers . . .*
>
> (Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*)

The dilemmas of perspective and representation embodied in the *ethnoscape* allow us to problematize the ways different groups inhabiting the "same" space may construct and experience it in vastly different ways. We are all shaped by homegrown practices of understanding space at the same time that our lives are increasingly interconnected with the lives of others. The articulation of our particular experiences within international contexts is what I have thought of as being expressed by the global vernacular—shifting local ways of relating to a shared global context. In this section I will look at the production of space in the Chenini-Gabès oasis in Tunisia in the colonial and postcolonial eras. The landscape of Chenini provides a sort of irregular palimpsest with which we can map the spatial practices of the different groups who inhabited this space as well as those who merely passed

through: sedentary oasis dwellers, caravans, nomads, explorers, colonial sol-
diers, government officials, foreign entrepreneurs, migrants headed for
Europe, and European tourists. By the same token, this landscape also sug-
gests porous borders between these spaces and reciprocally constructed sub-
jectivities, as the colonizer and the colonized become the tourist and the
migrant. While many North Africans certainly experience a sense of exile,
deterritorialization, and hybridity imposed upon them by globaliza-
tion,[17] they structure the space of migration through a cultural pattern of
periodic return as well.

This sense of dwelling has its imaginative roots in a kin-based social
structure that locates home not in one geographic place, but rather in that
place where the family is, inside the larger cycle of a seasonal migration. It
is significant in Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, for example, that the
wanderer Sa'eed grew up with no father, no relatives, no brothers or sisters.
His mother, "her face like a mask," was "like a stranger on the road whom
circumstances chanced to bring me." Sa'eed tells the narrator: "I used to
have—you may be surprised—a warm feeling of being free, that there was
not a human being, [my] mother or father, to tie me down as a tent peg to
a particular spot, a particular domain" (19). Many North Africans resemble
the narrator whose migrations remain tied to a particular spot, a particular
domain. Like the narrator, they survive by learning to adjust to the dynam-
ics of a world where peoples are increasingly interrelated by educational
needs, work orbits, and money flows on the one hand, and increasingly
threatened by loss of cultural and political autonomy on the other. A seden-
tary villager, Salih's narrator traces his cultural rootedness to Bedouin cul-
ture when he stops overnight in the desert: "Lying under this beautiful,
compassionate sky, [I] feel that we are all brothers . . . On a night such as
this you feel you are able to rise up to the sky on a rope ladder. This is the
land of poetry and the possible—and my daughter is named Hope" (112-
13). We are not talking about nomadism as a postcolonial trope for a wan-
dering subjectivity, but rather nomadism as a historical experience that has
shaped the cultural subjectivity of a specific group. As a recent development
study by Saverio Krätli has shown, "[Nomadic] societies usually have long
traditions of self-government, with sophisticated institutional structures

and exceptionally high levels of social capital . . . They can be very confident, articulate, and entrepreneurial, have good negotiating and management skills, and show a strong sense of dignity and self-respect."[18] Nomadic groups were seen by the central authorities as inherently anarchic and dissident; they have been represented as being by nature, a "drifting, unskilled under-class."[19] Sedentarization and marginalization were political tools employed by both the French colonizer, and later the urban nationalist governments after independence, to bring this cultural independence under state control. The social and economic marginalization that globalization has brought about in places like Chenini, both through IMF-encouraged, multinational buyouts of local government-owned industries and high unemployment, has forced recent generations to become economic nomads. This new nomadism, however, is superimposed upon older cultural patterns of nomadic self-sufficiency, kin-centeredness, and cyclical return. The production of mental and material space in Chenini reflects these varied ethnoscapes, each expressed in their own global vernaculars.

Ethnoscape I: The Heterotopia of Development

> *Monsieur Debureaux* [sic] *and Castillon de Saint Victor proceeded yesterday to launch their first balloon. Taken by a calm when night fell, it remained until morning near* Ras El Oued. *During the morning, natives from Chenini tried to pull it to the ground, tear it to pieces, and cut the guiderope. They were stopped by the arrival of the aeronauts who managed to relaunch the balloon in a westerly direction. The natives are now wanted fugitives and they will be punished by the administration.*
>
> (Telegram: 15 January 1903, from the French Commissariat in Gabès to the Resident General in Tunis)[20]

The balloon launched by Captaine Edouard Deburaux (Léo Dex) in 1903 was the outcome of arguments presented to the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. concerning the feasibility of crossing the Sahara by balloon from Gabès to Niger in five days.

This larger project never did materialize, but it did provide the seed for Jules Verne's novel *Cinq semaines en ballon* (1863). In turn, novels like Verne's popularized development experiments in the colonies and reinforced the ideologically-charged, hidden assumptions upon which colonial exploitations were based. French colonial scientific projects, such as Dex's, are heterotopic in that they raise questions both about the mix of science and fiction that went into these grand schemes,[21] and about the ethics of the use of colonized space. As Dex's telegram indicates, part of the colonial production of space was the assumption that colonizers had a right to make colonized land into their scientific laboratories. Violation of the space of the local inhabitants, as Franz Fanon argued in the case of Algeria, is a form of colonial violence that involves not only physical but psychological violation:

> Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: "In reality, who am I?"
>
> The defensive attitudes created by this violent bringing together of the colonized man and the colonial system form themselves into a structure that then reveals the colonial personality . . . In Algeria there is not simply the domination but the decision to the letter not to occupy anything less than the sum total of the land. The Algerians, the veiled women, the palm trees, and the camels make up the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence of the French.
>
> Hostile nature, obstinate and fundamentally rebellious, is in fact represented in the colonies by the bush, by mosquitoes, natives, and fever, and colonization is a success when all this indocile nature has finally been tamed. Railways across the bush, the draining of swamps, and a native population which is nonexistent politically and economically are in fact one and the same thing.[22]

The landscape here is an ethnoscape embodying competing constructions of space. Colonial positivist mythologies provided the general ideology of the superiority of European civilization, and under this banner, warring European interests vied with one another. The native populations, on the other hand, obviously did not consider themselves nonentities either politically or economically, nor were they content to allow either the Bey, who ruled from his capital in Tunis, or the French to move freely in their territory. Even before the French invaded Tunisia in 1881 making Tunisia a French "protectorate," the ethnoscape included squabbling French scientists and entrepreneurs, other European powers such as Britain and Italy who vied for hegemony over the local rulers, and those local rulers in the urban North who were interested in keeping the Bedouins under control. The attempts of the French to act on the North African landscape as if it were a wilderness, an open laboratory for French experimentation calling out for colonial interventions, were complicated by the recalcitrance of the locals who refused to simply fade into the landscape. Rather they continually united to oppose the French presence in the south, or they attempted to use that presence for their own local ends. Large colonial projects tended to become heterotopic sites where these situated interests clashed.

Perhaps the most astonishing heterotopic project was Captain François Elié Roudaire's effort, supported by Ferdinand de Lesseps (of Suez Canal fame) and Saharan explorer Henri Duveyrier, to create an "Inland Sea" by flooding lowlands in the Sahara. A necklace of oases, familiarly referred to as the "baraka belt," follows the northern edge of the desert from Gabès all the way into Morocco. In addition, a chain of dry salt lakes, or *chotts*, also extends west across the middle of Tunisia from Gabès on the eastern Mediterranean coast into eastern Algeria. Roudaire and Lesseps calculated that by blasting a channel just north of Gabès, they could flood these *chotts*. Had Roudaire had his way, this region (and the oases around it) would have been submerged beneath a man-made lake the size of Lake Geneva. Along the northern and southern shores would have been French-run plantations, shipping industries, and military complexes. The actual project never took place, but it pro-

vided the narrative for Jules Verne's *L'Invasion de la mer* (1905). The projects presented to the French scientific community had all the compensatory promise of being sites where nature would be perfectly engineered, yet they mirrored a reality where categories mix, fact is subverted by its dependence on fictions, and the marginalized refuse to fade into the background but rather contribute to a messy and ill-constructed ethnoscape.

Roudaire, with the backing of the French government and the French geographical societies, led two expeditions into the region to assess the feasibility of creating an inland sea where the *chotts* were.[23] The record of the follow-up hearings on the project held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contains 546 pages of details about the project, including geological surveys, testimony about environmental impact, engineering calculations, impact on military capabilities, and maps.[24] As the details of one map appended to the official report show, the area to be flooded by the inland sea would have surrounded the major date growing oases of Tozeur and Nefta in Tunisia and submerged much of the territory around El Oued in Algeria. This project would have ruined the intensive agriculture around which the cultures of these oases had developed over centuries. The inland sea would, it was argued, put the French in control of these dissident areas where there were continual uprisings. By flooding the sands into which nomadic groups disappeared, the French could eliminate their escape route. In addition, by inundating the oasis towns, they would eliminate places considered hotbeds of religious maraboutic influence.[25] The inland sea, General Favé testified, would undercut the way the nomads fought, because it would allow the French to attack from behind: "we know that [nomadic fighters] leave far to their rear all that they hold most precious, that is their old, their wives, their children, their herds, just about everything they possess; the loss of what is called the *Smala* is the worst thing that can happen to a nomadic people."[26]

Roudaire argued that the *chotts* are what remains of the Lake of Triton mentioned in antiquity, which dried up at the beginning of the Christian era. He used references he had found in texts by Herodotus, Homer, Pindar, Scylas, and Pomponius Melas to argue that the Lake of Triton at one time connected the *chotts* to the Mediterranean through a river, now

gone, near Gabès. He maintained that there were no remnants of shells or marine life evident because they were covered by sand. He claimed that old anchors, rumored to have been there, had been removed by the local inhabitants. Roudaire, making some leaps of the imagination, attached the place-names used in older texts to contemporary towns and landmarks to support his contention that the desert was once a sea. Opposing this idea, Auguste Pomel, a noted French geologist who was Roudaire's contemporary, argued that the bedrock along the coast of Gabès precluded the idea that there had ever been a passage there or an inland sea. He testified that the mixture of science and mythology associated with the ill-founded and grandiose idea that the "inland sea" would restore the ancient "Lake of Triton" rather resembled the work of a well-known novelist.[27]

Backers such as Lesseps defended against these attacks on Roudaire's project by pointing out that, in the case of the Suez Canal, faulty surveying indicating that the land was below sea-level had blocked the canal for years, and arguments that the climate would be damaged and the bitter lakes inundated with salt had been proven wrong. Lesseps allied himself with Roudaire not only on a theoretical level, but on a material one as well. Lesseps, whose father had been French consul in Tunis decades earlier, used his Tunisian connections to obtain a land concession in the name of the Compagnie Concessionaire (his own name, however, appears as owner of this property on a map housed in the Archives Diplomatiques in Nantes). Lesseps, or his company, was accorded the farmland on either side of the proposed canal to be excavated at Oued Mellah above Gabès that would feed water from the Mediterranean to the Inland Sea.[28]

Official records speak of a Colonel Joseph Allegro, whose father was an Italian consular agent for the Tunisian Bey in Algeria and whose mother was Arab. Allegro was in Tunisia in 1881 to police the Bedouins to make sure they did not join the Algerians in uprisings against the French.[29] He was eventually given command of the entire Gabès region, considered important for its caravan trade and port. The Inland Sea project was still being debated at the time, and having Allegro as governor

of the region meant that Lesseps and others could expect policies to favor their interests. Lesseps, who received concessions to buy land cheaply, planned to build a port, and drill artesian wells on the land on either side of the Inland Sea canal. He counted on Allegro to recruit local labor and facilitate these commercial projects. Mining and agricultural projects were envisioned as well.[30] Although Lesseps continued to vigorously defend the project, the Inland Sea scheme was finally squelched in the mid-1880s when Roudaire died suddenly. Even today, the local inhabitants refer to this nineteenth-century concession land as "Lesseebs." Its red-tiled buildings, a farmhouse and factory, are heterotopic landmarks: once symbols of French colonial modernization schemes, the deserted and crumbling structures stand as emblems of a failed imperial project.[31]

Ethnoscape II: The Heterotopia of the Military Archive

The French government sent 30,000 troops into Tunisia in April of 1881 and, after some minor resistance from the northern tribes and none from the Bey's army, signed the Treaty of Bardo in May, turning Tunisia into a French protectorate.[32] Insurrections continued further south, however. By December 1881, French troops had gained control over the Aradh, a central plain of the south around Gabès. The rebels then moved beyond the *chotts* and into the chain of oases along northern rim of the Sahara, joining up with the powerful confederations of tribes who inhabited the area. By June 1883 when the Treaty of La Marsa was signed, completing the Bardo process and making Tunisia an official French protectorate, these southern territories were still only marginally controlled by the French forces which sent isolated columns into these areas they defined as given over to anarchy and pillage.[33] Advisors and interpreters with experience working with tribal administrations accompanied the army. The job of this *Service des Renseignements* (called *Service des Affaires Indigènes* after 1900) was to acquaint themselves with tribal leaders to assess their attitudes "toward the French government," "to assess the loyalty of the chiefs to the Bey," and to "collect data on economic, geographic, and demographic conditions."[34] Having divided Tunisia into administrative districts called *cercles*, they carried out these tasks from the early 1880s

until 1914. By the late 1880s, fully three-fifths of the officers in the service were assigned to the Gabès region where the nomads had never really accepted government control. Virtually no Europeans were settled in the region due to climatic conditions, so there was little chance of "civilian-military conflict over the treatment of settlers."[35] Considering this space on a practical level, French forces were interested in policing the Tunisian-Tripolitanian border and in diverting the caravan trade between sub-Saharan Africa and the Mediterranean from Tripoli to Tunisian ports.

The French *Service des Renseignements* created a meticulously compiled military archive, now housed at the *Archives Diplomatiques* in Nantes. The ethnographic reports are not as uniform as the scientific tables of naturalists which, in Foucault's words, "squared and spatialized" knowledge by removing the object studied from the ecological system of which it was part.[36] Reading the reports on the Hazem to find out about the tribe of which I was now a member by marriage, I learned much more about the mental landscape of the French administration of the period than about family history. From the time they were established in Algeria in 1844, part of the mission of the *Bureaux Arabes* was to collect information about the indigenous "other." As Perkins points out, monthly reports expected of the sub-bureau officers were routinely formatted.[37] The officers were often instructed by their superiors in colonial administrations not to mix their own political assessments into the reports. Thus the requirement to report on a monthly basis according to a preset formula, and the concomitant instructions not to express opinions or meddle in official decision-making, often led to misleading reports: "one serious problem was lack of enthusiasm on the part of the officers writing the reports, [it being considered] a bothersome and unprofitable way to spend their time."[38] The result was that the same reports were resubmitted without change, other than having the old date scratched out and replaced with a current one. Decisions about colonial administration often were handed down from as far away as Tunis or Paris based on this information, so however erroneous, self-serving, or mistaken the reports, they could lead to real effects.

The heterotopia of the military archive bases its ethnographic reports

on two modes of research: the scholarly repository of knowledge about the culture and the local observation of nomadic groups. Feeling that those soldier-scholars assigned to the *Bureaux Arabes* ought to have some minimal training to carry out these tasks, the French administration decided in 1853 that the *Bureaux Arabes* ought to have on hand some basic texts if possible, such as Herodotus (c.490 - c.425 BCE), Tacitus (c.56 AD - c. 120 AD), and Sallust (c.86 BCE - c.35 BCE). French policy dealing with contemporary inhabitants was buttressed in the minds of some colonialists by so-called hereditary claims to the land made on the basis of their prior occupation by "nos ancêtres, les Romains."[39] The *Bureaux Arabes* were also encouraged to collect reference works by indigenous scholars such as Ibn Khaldun and Leo Africanus.[40]

While this is an epistemological improvement over the geographies of alien scholars writing a millennium earlier, a scholar-traveler such as Ibn Khaldun was, nonetheless, distinctly urban in his perspective. Having once been attacked and robbed by nomads, Ibn Khaldun does include passages in his *Muqqadimah* (Introduction) that have created an urban myth about nomads that is still very current. City-dweller Fatima Mernissi reflects this urban perspective in her memoir *Dreams of Trespass*:

> [Ibn Khaldun] identified city peoples as the positive poles of Muslim culture, and peripheral peoples, such as peasants and nomads, as the negative, destructive ones. This perception of urban centers as birthplaces of ideas, culture, and wealth, and rural populations as unproductive, rebellious, and undisciplined has infiltrated all Arab visions of development up until our own day. Even today in Morocco, the epithet *'aroubi*, that is, a person of rural origin, is still a commonly heard insult."[41]

The *Muqqadimah* itself is more critical of city-life and more generous toward Bedouin traits than Mernissi suggests. Ibn Khaldun writes:

> Sedentary people are much concerned with all kinds of

> pleasures. They are accustomed to luxury and success in worldly occupations and to indulgence in worldly desires. Therefore, their souls are colored with all kinds of blameworthy and evil qualities . . . Bedouins may be as concerned with worldly affairs as [sedentary people are]. However . . . they are closer to the first natural state and more remote from . . . evil habits . . . Sedentary life constitutes the last stage of civilization and the point where it begins to decay. It also constitutes the last stage of evil and of remoteness from goodness. It has thus become clear that Bedouins are closer to being good than sedentary people.[12]

This same problematic—that of observers assigning inverse cultural value to groups opposed to their own—must have also affected the nine-teenth-century officers who were trying to use the *Muqaddimah* to inter-pret the nomads whom they were observing. The divine scheme within which Ibn Khaldun places Bedouin culture is the inverse of the evolu-tionary scale upon which positivist histories were constructed.

In writing ethnographic reports on the Bedouin tribes, the officers of the *Service des Renseignements* then had at least three mental maps shaping their observations: first, the telescoped time that made them the direct heirs of the Romans; next, the evolutionary time that made the nomads their "contemporary ancestors;" and finally, the military report format set out in a circular issued in 1883. The report begins with a chronolo-gy that reflected the French military interests: that is, the history of tribe X before the French occupation, the behavior of tribe X after 1881, etc. These histories are based on local oral history, but "the facts," we are assured, "have been stripped of their superstitious envelopes and of [O]riental amplification."[13] The historical genealogies include family trees, but only the males have names. Thus, I found that the descendants of Si Mohamed el Midassi (caliph of the Hazem in 1887) had seven chil-dren: Ali, Mahmed, and five girls. In the genealogies, women are routinely erased as people with names and reduced to gendered numbers. The next

chapters are descriptive: overview of the tribal administrative, judicial, and religious organization; a list of notables such as tribal heads or influential religious leaders; observations about diverse personages; reports on topography, agriculture, commerce, and industry. The final double page of the report form is for statistics in which all the countable elements are plugged into a uniform chart: human population (males, females, and children); warriors; tents and huts; houses; ethnic origin (Kabyles, Arabs, and Berbers); numbers of horses, mules, camels, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys; amount of land cultivated. The final column is for general observations. Generally, this last column was empty.

Looking up the clan I now belong to, the Kouatna, I try to read these numbers: they are the largest group, with about twice as many females as males (100 males, 210 females, 175 children), they have 60 tents and no houses; 17 warriors are mentioned as opposed to 2 or 3 for other similarly sized groups; they have 19 horses (as opposed to 1 to 3 for other groups), and a great many camels, sheep, goats, and donkeys, but no cultivated land. What does this mean? They look completely nomadic. Why did they have so many warriors? Did this have anything to do with the imbalance between men and women in the population? Or was the imbalance explained by polygamy? Why are they the only clan that does not allow the practice of bride price? Why did they need so many caravan animals? Were they traders? Raiders? Smugglers? The Hazem did not have mosques, zaouias (religious retreats), or Qur'anic schools but did belong to Sufi brotherhoods. Brief notes by the officer who wrote the report add some hints. Si Mohamed el Midassi was listed as conscientious and devoted, honest, straightforward, but a fanatic about political and religious independence. These reports were written for the purpose of filling in the blanks to assess how a given tribe may or may not be a threat to French power. In the process, the classification of traits leads to the classification and ordering of ethnic groups, and as colonizers, the French have the power to spread out on a grid and scrutinize the other, the nomads. As a Western reader of the reports, I found myself implicated in looking at them largely from the perspective of those who wrote them—not because I agreed with the content, but because I shared in

scrutinizing it. The only sign of life was Si Mohamed el Midassi. As Michel de Certeau notes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*: "Something essential is at work in . . . everyday *historicity*, which cannot be dissociated from the existence of the subjects who are the agents and authors . . . Indeed, like [a] God, who "communicates only with cadavers," our "[scientific] knowledge seems to consider and tolerate in a social body only inert objects."[44] To see the particulars of the lives of these unknown in-laws, displayed and evaluated according to colonial military categories, was to participate in a form of violence as individual relatives were turned into ethnographic types, and visible everyday facts became clues to invisible positivist value systems upon which they were being inscribed as impoverished, or primitive. Si Mohammed el Midassi remained an agent, concretely ambiguous, an unknown man with a name.

Ethnoscape III: The Tourist and the Migrant

On the bluff above *Ras el Oued* there is a large parking lot where the tour buses stop to unload masses of French, British, and German tourists for a panoramic view of Chenini, a rare marine oasis of a quarter million palm trees just north of the Sahara. The tourists would have already seen the Roman dam and aqueduct as their buses drove through Chenini on the way to the lookout point. This parking lot marks the border between where my husband's family lived prior to the 1959 flood that drove them out of the gardens in the ravine, and the street along the top of the bluff where we live now. The grove begins in a deep ravine, *Ras el Oued* (head of the wadi/dry riverbed), and follows the wadi's course, continually fanning out as it takes the shape of a delta where it meets the Mediterranean. While Gabès, known in antiquity as Tacape, had the reputation of having always been a sort of administrative center (for the Phoenicians it was the end of the caravan route in their trade with the Numidians, for the Carthaginians it became a port, for the Romans a colony, for the French a military outpost), it's never been much of a tourist attraction—except for Chenini with its extensive gardens, described by al-Tidjani in 1306 as "a true earthly paradise."[45] My hus-

band's family arrived with the second wave of invading Arabs, the Banu Hilal in the 11th century. While urban historians such as Ibn Khaldun described them as a plague of locusts, others note "the Hilalis caused no damage to either the town [of Gabès]—which was then surrounded by a strong wall—or to the oasis, although it was undefended."[46] This restraint contrasted with the actions of those besiegers, working for central powers, such as Yahya ben Ghaniya who in 1195 "laid waste to the oasis where, it is claimed, he left only one palm-tree standing to mark the spot," Abu Zakariyya under whose hand "its palm-grove was laid waste" in 1286, and Abu'l 'Abbas who "had its date palms cut down" in 1387.[47]

Today from the parking lot you can see beyond the ravine out onto the desert plains to the west where the smoke stacks of the cement plant (now owned by a Portuguese multinational) mark the horizon at Khanzeria, on the road toward the *chotts*. The waterless plain in between has now become a garbage dump where burns take place at night and the winds that once carried Léo Dex's balloon bring the smell of smoke when they shift at night. From the parking lot at *Ras el Oued*, the place where my husband was born is still visible on the opposite side of the ravine where the family settled once they became sedentarized.[48] This home was a cave hollowed out in the side of a ravine and a sort of platform upon which was built a room of *toub* (mud), a house architects call a "horizontal subterranean dwelling" or "cave with terrace and *ghorfa* addition."[49] About 400 yards away, dug deep into the base of the ravine wall is another sort of subterranean dwelling made by the forces of civilization: an entire warren of German bunkers from WWII. *Ras el Oued* is only about 30 miles north of the historic Mareth line, and the family remembers its being occupied at different times by various armies—German, Italian, French, British, American—fighting a war in their gardens, a war in which Tunisians had no stake. On the night of my husband's birth in 1952, so the story goes, French bullets were slamming into the wall of the *ghorfa* on the terrace as the French military attempted to root out dissidents from the rebellious South.

At the foot of the bluff just below the observation point, tourists can look down at the roofs of the Chela Club, a failed hotel with an empty

swimming pool and a bar that draws the few local drinkers and strand-
ed tourists when it is open. Family pictures from the sixties show the
children zooming down a rock formation that became a slide when the
irrigation canals were opened and emptied into a large natural pool in
the middle of the gardens my husband's family owned. Pictures of this
natural slide and pool are on the postcards sold in local tourist shops.
They were exactly where the empty cement hotel pool is today, the real
space now a heterotopia of the garden it once was, eternalized in tourist
brochures. There are other heterotopias operating here, invisible to the
tourist gaze. When Bourguiba's central government was in its state-run
socialist experimental phase, owners were forced to sell the gardens at a
tenth of their worth. When the socialist experiment later failed, the hotel
consortium acquired the gardens at convenient prices. Thus, the hotel
might be seen as a heterotopia created by officials of the nation-state,
who were as interested in controlling the peoples of the South as the mil-
itary authorities of the Bey and the French had been. A later sign of this
centralized control are the smoke stacks of the Chemical Group, a com-
plex of phosphate processing plants marking the horizon over the
Mediterranean. They stand on the spot where Jules Verne's novel *La Mer
Intérieure* opens. The chemical plants are working a less visible destruction
as they drain the water table for use in processing phosphates. Chenini,
which used to have 250 natural springs, now has none and is pumping
water for irrigation.

Loss of the gardens, because of a combination of tourism and indus-
try, led to a return to nomadism for many in the oasis—a new kind of
wandering. Younger members of local families migrated to France and
started sending back remittances so that their families could survive.
This new form of nomadism, despite all of its hardships, is permeated by
the mental space of older forms of migration. With two sons sending
back remittances from migrant work in France, my in-laws built their
houses, which sweep down from the bluff along the ravine's edge follow-
ing the curve of a wide street. Our house in Chenini is a typical Arab one;
its rooms surround a large black and white tiled courtyard and gardens.
Three families live around the courtyard, but two are often away in Tunis

or the U.S. Other houses in the extended family reflect migrations as well. One brother built a French style villa with surrounding gardens and walls—an architectural space that is the inverse of the Arab house. Another's Arab house and orchard are currently rented out to caretakers. The man who inherited it won't use it until he retires and returns from France where he has been working for 30 years. All the relatives who migrated to France still send remittances home each month, still send their children to spend the summer, still own space and are building in the oasis. Chenini is a place where emigrating, moving away, does not mean staying away, and the material architecture of the house, its empty space and rebars up on the roof for future use, reflect the idea of temporary migration rather than emigration.

The global vernacular of Chenini is also linked to and expressed in poetic form. In nomadic tradition, where oral poetry is a primary art form, the *douar* (circle of tents) represents this poetic space. The architecture of the traditional Arab house, with its rooms bordering a central communal courtyard, mirrors this poetic social space. As Algerian rebel Emir Abd al-Qadir explained in an elegy to desert life, beauty manifests itself in spaces that echo one another, in plays on words: the *beyt ech chi'r* (stanza/room of poetry) and the *beyt ech cha'ar* (a tent/room of hair).[50] Abd al-Qadir understood his *smala* with its tents as a community that echoed a larger natural, cosmic space: "we pitch our tents in circular groups; / The earth is covered with them, as is the firmament with stars."[51] Abd al-Qadir wrote in other poems that the desert is a place of salubrity: "Ages have told of the salubrity of the Sahara. / All disease and sickness dwell only beneath the roof of cities. / In the Sahara, whoever is not reaped by the sword sees days without number; / Our old men are the most aged of all men."[52] And in the desert, God has provided "camels that can, in the space of one sun, transport us from the land of injustice to the land of freedom."[53] In comparison, as Ibn Khaldun also pointed out, the city is not the end point of evolution but the beginning of decay. Abd al-Qadir notes that city dwellers often live in unacceptable conditions, both in their mental and physical space; they dwell in a deleterious production of space: "You camp always in the same place, in the

midst of offal and eaten by lice. Your profession is that of a domestic; working all the time . . . your land is the land of crimes . . . plague, disease, and rulers, who make you into slaves and let you be consumed by the government."[54] These productions of space contrasting the rural with the urban, and the local oasis culture with the metropolitan space of colonialism and postcolonial migration, are reflected still today in the local oasis poetry.

The oases of southern Tunisia are the birthplace of poets, and oral poetry is often played over loud speakers during festivals. A poetry reading I attended in a neighboring town drew enormous groups of families and had the atmosphere of anticipation and excitement a rock concert would have in the U.S. Poetry is memorized, improvised, and circulated by men, women, and children. One popular form is the *Bedouin-Beldi* debate, a poem in which a girl from the country verbally spars with a girl from the city, traditional knowledge confronts modernization, and the local confronts the global. Typically the *Bedouin-Beldi* debate begins with a framing stanza asking a poet to record the verbal battle: "By Allah, O Poet, pick up your quill and record who provoked the initial ill."[55] Representative of such exchanges is one like this quarrel between Nadia, the Beldiyya from the city, and R'gaia, the Bedouin's daughter:

> Now, R'gaia answered,
> "You violate modesty, you stray from the narrow,
> You parade around the city, like a painted she-camel.
> I am a decent girl, my origins are known, my family are
> Arabs, they protect me at home."
> The Beldiyya said,
> "You sit hidden away in a well-guarded tent,
> To buy clothing for you would be money ill-spent!
> You're like a nag well-broken, time's passed you by, and
> your status is token"
> R'gaia responds:
> "I can pitch a goat-hair tent and I can survive years of
> scarcity

We show our guests hospitality, a Bedouin's tent means
salubrity.
But you contract asthma from damp walls, you waste
your time on doctor's calls . . .
You just ape Europeans in the end, wearing a skirt that
shows all in a wind . . ."
Nadia says,
"I wear fashionable clothes and frequent the souk
My father puts me in charge, lets me help him at work
But others decide for you, you have no say in what you do."
. . .
R'gaia advises . . .
"It would be easy for me to lacerate you, between my
wisdom and my sharp tongue. . .
If I came to the city, I'd learn to survive
I'd pick things up quickly; unlike you, I'd stay alive
When you leave the city, you're a fish out of water,
You wouldn't survive like the Bedouin's daughter.
You wouldn't survive in Bedouin lands,
You can neither adapt nor withstand harsh winds."

The debate typically ends not with a decision about who is the winner,
but rather with a recognition that each must allow the other's perspec-
tive and respect the other's space: "After the quarrel, they rose, made up,
and were friends / Each said to the other: 'I apologize' and left both hearts
at ease." As with their male compatriots who are migrant workers, the
girls are shaped by forces larger than themselves: local customs, cultural
imperialism, structural adjustment, global capitalism. But in their
recognition of a shared space in which they dwell, they shape global
forces as best they can in accordance with their vernacular identities.

Bedouin-Beldi debate is a very local and colloquial form in which
women speakers address global issues from their corner of the world. It
is speech from the margin. The debates address issues such as personal
status, gender roles, sustainable development, and community identity.

Performances of the debates vary: sometimes women poets may recite and improvise at popular poetry festivals or wedding ceremonies; sometimes a single poet, either male or female, reports the debate, as in the poem cited above. The *Bedouin-Beldi* debate opens a performance space that, as ethnoscape, recognizes the instabilities of perspective and representation that define postcolonial subjectivity and the situated and social nature of identity construction. The angle of speech in the poem, if we might call it that, confronts a world that has been defined by patriarchy, colonialism, and masculinist individualism. These are the forces that shape Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, the heterotopic French colonial projects, and their contemporary counterparts in the maldevelopment of Chenini. An ideology of winners and losers is produced in this postcolonial space. While the speakers' critiques of these forces in the *Bedouin-Beldi* debate are clear in the criticisms they fire off at one another, the elements the speakers share—identity as embedded in community, female agency, and mutual recognition—give this speech its transgressive and transformative power.

[1] The term postcolonial in this essay refers to the critical position that involves the reconsideration of colonial history, particularly from the perspective of those who suffered its effects. Emphasizing the contemporary social and cultural impact of colonialism, it foregrounds the spatial overlapping of the colonial period and its aftermath. See Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 4.

[2] Lawrence Grossberg, "The Space of Culture, the Power of Space" in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996), 170.

[3] Ibid., 171.

[4] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskoweic, *Diacritics* (Spring 1986): 22–27. As an editor's footnote in *Diacritics* 16.1 indicates, these notes from a lecture given in March 1967 were published under the title "Des Espaces Autres" by the French journal *Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité* in October 1984. Although not reviewed for publication by the author, thus not part of the official corpus of his work, the manuscript was released into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Foucault's death (22).

[5] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1996).

[6] Dick Hebdige, "Subjects in Space," *New Formations* 11 (1989–90): vi-vii.

[7] Ibid., vii.

[8] Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography," *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mephan, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 69–70. Unless otherwise indicated, as in this case, all translations from the French are my own.

[9] The most cited example of this phenomenon is perhaps Lacan's description of the mirror-stage when an infant, fragmented by realizing its separateness from the world

around it, recognizes with jubilation the unity of its reflection in a mirror. This is also a moment of misrecognition as the child is not that whole, autonomous being reflected in a real mirror, or in the mirror of the gaze of others. Heterotopias are sites that make us painfully aware that our experience of what Lacan calls the Real is always mediated by the Symbolic. Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), 1–7.

[10] Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, *A History of the Maghrib*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 256.

[11] Conventional approaches to development that speak of former colonies as "underdeveloped" or "developing" assume lack as a starting point. They do not embed development in the cultural, social, and ethical values of these societies. Rather, development schemes are tied to the economic and political agendas of the still influential colonial powers. Local interests and needs, as well as polycentric global opportunities, are blocked by this "maldevelopment." Escaping maldevelopment requires both a revision of development schemas on the ground and a decolonization of the mind. See Samir Amin, *Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure* (London: Zed Books, 1990); Raff Carmen, *Autonomous Development: Humanising the Landscape – An Excursion into Radical Thinking and Practice* (London: Zed Books, 1996); Nguigi Wa Thiongo, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986); and Mohamed Cherif Sahli, *Décoloniser l'histoire: l'Algérie accuse le complot contre les peuples africains* (Alger: Entreprise Algérienne de presse, 1986).

[12] Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (Colorado Springs: Three Continents Press, 1984), first ed. Arabic, 1969. For an extended discussion of hybridity in the novel, see Patricia Geesey, "Cultural Hybridity and Contamination in Tayeb Salih's *Mawsin al-hijra ila al-Shamal* (*Season of Migration to the North*)," *Research in African Literatures* 28.3 (Fall 1997): 128-140.

[13] Saree S. Makdisi, "The Empire Renarrated: *Season of Migration to the North* and the Reinvention of the Present" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia UP, 1994), 542.

[14] The *afreet* is "a demon or spirit from the Djinn world, of great strength and cunning; often a snatcher of women." See Inea Bushnaq, *Arab Folktales* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), xxvii.

[15] For a discussion of this process, see: Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (London: Routledge, 1995), 35; and Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983).

[16] Mannoni's book includes, for example, psychoanalytic interpretations of seven dreams recounted by the Malagasy. Projecting his own racial bias into the world of the Malagasy, Mannoni interprets the recurrence of black bulls, black men, and Senegalese soldiers in the dreams of the invaded people he interviewed, as real and ancestral father figures; a gun, in this reading, becomes an obvious phallic symbol. As Frantz Fanon pointed out in a critique of Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban*, ethnopsychiatry conveniently pathologized mental illness as located in the genetic make-up of the colonized individual rather than in pathogenic colonial relations. Fanon points out that Malagasy dreams should be interpreted in relation to their real context—colonial exploitation. Eighty thousand Malagasy, 1 out of every 50 natives on the island, were killed by French forces: "The rifle of the Senegalese soldier is not a penis but a genuine rifle, model Lebel 1916" (83). See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin. White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967). For a more lengthy discussion of the import of Fanon's critique, see David Macey, *Frantz Fanon: A Biography* (New York: Picador, 2000), 188–192.

[17] Their leaving home is not quite defined by the displacement and nostalgia that Edward Said speaks of in "Reflections on Exile" where exile "is the unhealable rift between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000),173. Nor is it synonymous with the trauma of the deterritorialized. See May Joseph, *Nomadic Identities: The Performance of Citizenship* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999), who notes that for young "non-African" citizens of Asian descent expelled suddenly from Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya in the early years of independence for reasons their parents found "unspeakable," the sense of being inexplicably deterritorialized was traumatic: "Asians of my generation found themselves adrift in new countries of domicile, with no explanations for the hasty farewells and abrupt departures, no narrative of return to make the leaving more bearable, faced instead with a recalcitrant silence" (2).

[18] Saverio Krätli, "Education Provision to Nomadic Pastoralists: A Literature Review," IDS Working Paper, 126.

[19] Ibid.

[20] "Télégramme 15 janvier 1903," Protectorat Tunisie, 1ère versement, "Explorateurs," No. 958.1, Archives diplomatique à Nantes.

[21] Verne used explorers and scientists such as Ferdinand de Lesseps and Léo Dex as the protagonists of his science fiction books. Given the telegram Dex sent, indicating the non-cooperation of indigenous groups in this scientific endeavor, we are justified in pointing out that fictions were part and parcel of the scientific projects proposed by the colonial scientists. For example, Dex argued that he could carry out his project by sending an unmanned craft from Gabès to Niger: "If it crashes on the way, it would

have been sighted, in any case by the nomads of the desert, who, because its passage
would be an extraordinary phenomenon in their eyes, would carry the news, which
would allow us at least to have an idea of the course followed by this balloon
and perhaps to find its wreckage as well as the data recorders with which it would be
equipped." "Exposé Sommaire," Protectorat Tunisie, 1ère versement, "Explorateurs,"
No. 958.1, Archives Diplomatique à Nantes.

[22] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York:
Grove, 1963) 250; first ed. French 1961.

[23] In 1874 Roudaire worked his way from Chegga west of the Algerian *chotts*, along
the northern edge of the lakes to the Tunisian border, then back along the southern
edge to Chegga again. Amidst blinding light, burning days, and freezing nights during
which his crew was allowed only four hours sleep, Roudaire took measurements
to determine whether the *chotts* were below sea-level. He presented the findings of his
survey at the 1875 International Congress of Geographic Sciences in Paris to
great acclaim, and was backed by a commission of the French Academy of Sciences.
Another expedition to be launched in 1876 ran into snags when it was noted that
sending a military force into Tunisia, then an independent country, and planning to
flood it might not sit well with the inhabitants of Tunisia. Roudaire managed to
replace French military personnel with Tunisian military personnel, and carried out
the second survey in 1876, returning to become the talk of the town in Paris.

[24] *Commission Supérieure pour l'examen du Project de Mer Intérieure dans le sud de l'Algérie et
de la Tunisie* (1882) Protectorat Tunisie, 1ère versement, "Mer Intérieure
(1881–1885)" No. 1269.

[25] Marabout in the nineteenth-century lexicon of Tunisia and eastern Algeria referred
to men and women devoted to God's adoration and linked to God by saintliness.
See Julia Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial
Encounters. Algeria and Tunisia, 1800–1904* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1994).

[26] "Mer intérieure Africaine" (1882) np. in *Commission Supérieure*. The *smala* is the cir-
cle of tents belonging to a nomadic tribe. Perhaps the most famous example of what a
smala could contain and represent was found in the roving capital of Emir Abd al-
Qadir of Algeria who fought a guerrilla war against the French from 1832 to 1847.
His *smala* was a nomadic group of 30,000 people, protected by 5,000 soldiers who
continually eluded the French military, according to historians Bruno Etienne,
Abdelkader, Isthme des isthmes (Paris: Hachelle. 1994) and Charles André Julien, *Histoire
de l'Algérie contemporaine*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Presses universitaire de France, 1964). Aouli,
Redjala, and Zoummeroff, in their biography *Abd el-Kader* (Paris: Fayard, 1994) say
the *smala* was made up of more than 339 *douars* (tent circles) numbering between
60,000 and 70,000 people. It contained Abd al-Qadir's treasury and his flocks. In it

were the families of his followers, as well as his own family.

[27] *Commission Supérieure* 1882, 53. Belief in this story that the *chotts* were the Lake of Triton was not only embraced by literary travelers such as the Englishman Thomas Shaw but also by explorers such as Henri Duveyrier, and by noted geographers such as James Rennell whose career has been analyzed by Mathew Edney in *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997).

[28] "Projet d'acte de Concession de S. A. le Bey de Tunis," article 7 in *Commission Supérieur.*

[29] André Martel, *Luis-Arnold et Joseph Allegro, Consuls du Bey de Tunis à Bône: A l'arrière-plan des relations franco-maghrebines, 1830–1881* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1967), 9, 193.

[30] Ibid., 196.

[31] Jacques Berque, in his study *French North Africa: The Maghrib Between Two World Wars* (New York: Praeger, 1967), discusses why it was that the vineyard (which the French saw as the symbol of modernization) and the tilled field (which was the image of the wisdom and bounty of the metropolis) had precisely the opposite effect on the dispossessed native farmer for whom the vineyard and its farmhouse were a stigmas on the land: "The most provocative symbol of the colonial epoch in the Maghrib is that of the tiled farmhouse, a cheerful dwelling standing amid vineyards. It aroused the most violent, and violently opposed, reactions from Frenchmen and the people of the Maghrib. The fact that it was surrounded by more significant forces matters little; it implied all the rest. Banks, military camps, factories and schools may have played at least as important a part, but none made so deep an impression on everyone's feelings as this French farmstead, this heraldic emblem on African soil" (35).

[32] La Capitaine Chavanne, *Historique du Service des Affaires Indigènes de Tunisie (1881-1930)* (Tunis: Résidence Générale de France à Tunis, 1931), 7.

[33] Ibid., 8.

[34] Kenneth J. Perkins, *Qaids, Captains, and Colons: French Military Administration in the Colonial Maghrib, 1844–1934* (New York: Africana, 1981), 22.

[35] Ibid., 24.

[36] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 132.

[37] Perkins, 68.

[38] Ibid., 70–71.

[39] This Roman legacy was often referred to by the colonialist writer Louis Bertrand. During the colonial period, schools taught students from the Maghrib about "nos ancêtres, les Gauls." After independence, Tunisian writer Salah Garmadi rejected neo-colonialism by making reference to "nos ancêtres, les Bédouins."

[40] Perkins, 61.

[41] Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994), 69. Talking with Monia Hejaiej, whose *Behind Closed Doors: Women's Oral Narratives in Tunis* (1996) contains several tales whose meanings pivot on the differences between Beldi (urban Tunisian) culture and Bedouin culture, and listening to stories told by my in-laws, I have found that the same general narrative may be told in both places, but the value assigned urban or rural culture shifts according to the context of the storyteller. See Monia Hejaiej, *Behind Closed Doors: Women's Oral Narratives in Tunis* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996), which includes the stories "The Peasant," "Long Live the Beldi," "The Bedouin and the Trousers," and "The Peasant and the Beldi."

[42] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, Vol. 1, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Bollingen Series XLIII, Pantheon, 1958), 255.

[43] "Tribu des Hazems," p. 2 in "Gabès: Notices politiques et ethniques des Caïdats et Khalifats, 1919/1950," Protectorat Tunisie, 1ère versement, "Tunisie -Postes du Sud," No. 450, AD.

[44] Michel Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall (Berkeley : U of California P, 1984), 20-21; first ed. French 1980.

[45] "Kabis," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Ed. Van Donzel, Lewis, and Pellat, vol. IV, 65-66 (1974), 339.

[46] Ibid., 337.

[47] Ibid., 338.

[48] Were we to follow the lead of the officers of the *Bureaux Arabes* and *Service des Renseignements*, judging them according to the pattern set out by Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79) we would discover that "The Cave-dwellers hollow out caverns, which are their dwellings; they live on the flesh of snakes, and they have no voice, but only

make squeaking noises, being entirely devoid of intercourse by speech." Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, Vol. 2, trans. H. Rackham. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1942), 251.

[49] Gideon S. Golany, *Earth-Sheltered Dwelling in Tunisia: Ancient Lessons for Modern Design* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1988) 20, 32.

[50] C. Sonneck, *Chants Arabes du Maghreb*, Paris: Librarie Orientale et Américaine, 1904, p. 218; see also, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Qadir Jaza'iri, *Kitab Tuhfat al-za'ir fi ma'athir al-Amir 'Abd al-Qadir wa-akhbar al-Jaza'ir*, Alexandria, 1903, p. 531.

[51] General Eugène Daumas, *The Horses of the Sahara and the Manners of the Desert with Commentaries by the Emir Abd-el-Kader*, trans. James Hutton (London: Wm H. Allen & Co., 1863), 193; first ed. French 1858.

[52] Ibid., 195.

[53] Eugène Daumas and Ausone de Chancel. *Le Grand Désert ou Itinéraire d'une caravane du Sahara du Pays de Nègres* (Paris: Quintette 1985), 297. Reprinted from *Le Grand Désert ou Itinéraire d'une caravane du Sahara du Pays de Nègres* (Paris: Michel Lèvy Frères, 1856).

[54] Ibid.

[55] Translated from Ali Ardhaoui, *Best Poetic Qasidas* # 2, Side A (audio tape in Tunisian Arabic). I thank Karim Hamdy for collaborating with me on this translation.