

Reclaiming the city: changing urban meaning in Algiers after 1962

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Abstract

This essay argues that urban symbolism and architectural inheritance are crucial and undervalued components of post-colonial discourse. Drawing on the evidence of architectural change, as well as newspaper articles, personal histories, fieldwork, and related sociological research, it takes a wide view of changes to the urban environment of central Algiers after 1962. After briefly discussing the role of urbanism in the French ‘civilizing mission,’ the essay aims to analyze two opposing currents in post-colonial urbanism. First, it relays the extent to which the French built environment of Algiers was capable of encouraging patterns of life for its new inhabitants, and the degree to which that power affects memories of colonial urbanism. Second, it examines the antonymous, parallel quest to reclaim that symbolically heavy territory with icons, symbols and representations of Algerian nationalism, particularly through street names, statues, and public art, a process that both revealed the complexities of the state’s nationalism and provoked its contradictions. Despite the FLN’s best efforts, the city as palimpsest persists. The changes to – and consistencies of – the built environment of Algiers after 1962 testify to the under-appreciated importance of the city as an influential legacy of colonialism.

Keywords

Algiers, environment, post-colonial, symbolism, urbanism

Fifty-one years ago, Algiers was the second-largest city in France. The population was nearly one million, and about one-third of those people were *pièdes-noirs*, Algerians of European descent. *Alger la blanche*, a metropolis carved into the hillside at the point of a half-moon bay, boulevards lined with arcades to shield passersby from the hot Mediterranean sun, evergreen trees trimmed flat on the top, café tables sprawling across the sidewalk, was their home. Today, those people are gone. Fifty years after Algeria won its hard-fought independence from France, there is hardly a man or woman of European heritage to be seen in central Algiers.¹ Most of them – some 300,000

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victorious Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and Muslim Algerians inherited a city built to represent European values just as the Casbah – the original city of Algiers – had evolved to suit Muslim Algerian traditions. In the 20th century, there was no richer cultural confrontation between people and space. How did Algerians transform this highly contested colonial space into the landscape of an independent capital, and to what extent did it transform them? That is the question that drives this essay's line of inquiry.

Nearly every history of Algiers stops at 1962. There have been other books, though precious few, that discuss the physical development of Algiers after the war: Madani Safar-Zitoun's research on population shift, Nassima Dris' exploration of urban movement, and a number of memoirs, especially that of Jean-Jacques Deluz, a *pied-noir* who headed Algiers' City Planning after independence. (Other writers, like David Prochaska and Seth Graebner, have explored the post-colonial city elsewhere in Algeria as a zone of symbolic conflict.) There have been many studies of the conflicts of the Algerian national identity. These include former GPRA President Ferhat Abbas' *L'Indépendance confisquée*, Mohamed Harbi's *Le F.L.N.: Mirage et Réalité*, and Benjamin Stora's *La Gangène et l'Oubli*. None of these considers the urban environment as an imprint of post-independence nationalist simplification, but each might have: the city makes a very good slate on which to read the contradictions of independent Algeria. Until now, the transformation of the city of Algiers after 1962 has been critically overlooked. My methodology in surveying this complex territory is necessarily varied, and this essay weaves a narrative from threads of published research, newspaper reports and personal histories. On the subject of urban symbolism, where there is hardly any previous work, the essay uses the evidence of architectural change, seen through photographs, maps, recollections, and fieldwork in Algiers, as a jumping-off point for an urban exegesis that incorporates sources as diverse as short stories, interviews, and studies of Algerian nationalism.⁵

One of the immediate goals of the FLN, as the new country's sole political party, was the 'reconversion of French colonialism.' In a manifesto published in late 1962 in the *Alger Républicain* newspaper, the party proclaimed, 'The immediate task of the FLN is to liquidate, in all its forms, colonialism as it manifests itself.'⁶ The subject of this essay is the inherent conflict between the ruling party's quest to eradicate colonialism in all its forms and the inheritance of a large colonial city. The FLN attempted to rebrand – change the perceived meaning of an object through surface alterations – the urban environment of Alger-Centre in several ways. The party renamed streets and squares, banishing French heroes in favor of Algeria's own. It erected new statues and commissioned new public art. By inscribing its simplified, anti-colonial doctrine of nationalism on the European city, the FLN hoped to eradicate or at least disguise its colonial character.

After briefly reviewing how the French colonial government used urbanism as a tool of subjugation, this essay will address the transformations of colonial architecture in Algiers as a struggle between post-colonial nationalism and the forms of the European city. The spontaneous, popular repossession of colonial Algiers, from the war of the statues to the occupation of apartments and cafes, was rapid and thorough. The government-sponsored program of urban symbols for the colonial city was more varied in scope and effectiveness. The renaming of streets and squares, for example, was hastily undertaken in 1962, with a keen eye towards the symbolic value of urban labels. In contrast, contradictions plagued the development of statues and public art as the complexities of artistic representation challenged and exposed the FLN's oversimplified narrative of Algerian nationalism. In both cases, the city is a palimpsest: the traces of history shine through even the most determined transformations. Each of the major efforts at appropriating French space remains tangled with colonial meaning, and validates the city as a complex and undervalued document of post-colonial national identity.

Algiers and the mission civilisatrice

'O regrets for Algiers and for its stores

Their traces no longer exist!

Such iniquities committed by the accursed ones!

Al-Qaisariya has been named Plaza

And to think that holy books were sold and bound here.'⁷

– *Algerian song describing the construction of the place des Armes, c. 1830.*

The Berber Muslim Bologhine ibn Ziri founded the modern city of el-Djezair in the year 944. It grew to prominence under Ottoman rule starting in 1516, and in the 17th century was home to a number of pirates who preyed on European shipping operations in the Mediterranean. The city was divided in two. The low town, known as *al-wata* or 'the plain,' was situated on the flatter land near the bay, and comprised government buildings, markets, and mosques – here public life and commercial activities were concentrated, and here resided members of the dominant class, Turkish janissaries and wealthy merchants. The high town, *al-jabal* or 'the mountain,' climbed up the slope of the hillside; it was almost entirely residential and considerably poorer. The two street networks were quite different: irregular, closed off and full of dead-ends in the high town, straighter and more easily navigable in the low town.⁸

The tangled urban form of Algiers had shaped – and been shaped by – centuries of Islamic life. The Algerois house turned inward, with few windows to the street, opening instead around an interior courtyard. The urban form of the Casbah prioritized introverted, domestic life, a firm separation of genders, and a limited, masculine concept of public space.⁹ It would become a symbolically powerful place in colonial relations. The French saw the Casbah as primitive, mysterious and exotic; to them, it was a place that represented Muslim Algerian society as a whole.¹⁰ For the Algerians, what remained of the Casbah became not just an architectural testament to their storied pre-colonial heritage, but later a strategic stronghold for the FLN during the Battle of Algiers. It was a critical element in what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'language of refusal': the places, symbols and actions that made up Algerian cultural resistance to colonialism.¹¹

When French military commanders arrived in 1830, they found the structure of the city of Algiers bewildering and irrational, and the program of urban renewal they began was more sweeping than in any other North African city.¹² The first French urban construction in Algiers was the place des Armes (later place du Gouvernement, now place des Martyrs), a large square on the harbor at the foot of the Casbah. As its former name implies, the plaza was designed to create a sufficiently large space for troop demonstrations following the invasion. But in creating it, military engineers destroyed a large swath of shops, residences, and historic buildings, including the legendary al-Sayyida mosque. An equestrian statue of the Duke of Orleans, who had fought in Algeria, was erected in 1845 to face the Casbah. The plaza affirmed the presence and the power of France at the heart of Algiers.

Many of the first urban projects, like the place des Armes, leveled parts of Algiers' famous low town to make way for wider and more regular streets, and displayed what André Raymond calls 'a remarkable lack of interest for local civilization and culture,' particularly compared to Napoleon's conquest of Egypt some 30 years prior.¹³ Nearly the entirety of *al-wata* was destroyed for French streets, buildings, and, soon afterwards, residents. Only a few pre-colonial structures remained.



Figure 1. The streets of Algiers were designed to recall those of the French cities of the Métropole. Top, the Rue Abane Ramdane in Algiers. (Author's photo, July 2011.) Bottom, the Rue de Rivoli in Paris. (Kopp Corentin, Flickr, Creative Commons.).

This phase of French planning was destructive but short-lived. As Algiers morphed from a simple military outpost into a permanent French settlement and commercial center in the 1840s and 1850s, the opinion of French planners and citizens alike turned against further intervention in the Casbah. (Surely native Algerians would have said the same, if anyone had thought to ask them.) One 1858 report to the governor general of Algeria argued that the French settlers and Muslim Algerians required fundamentally different built environments to correspond to their different cultures, and proposed the construction of a new town, designed for European habitation, alongside the old city.¹⁴ Thereafter, the so-called *ville européenne* would roll along the bay and into the hills, while the Casbah deteriorated in relative isolation.

Intervention in the Casbah, especially as it climbed up the hillside, was difficult and costly. Moreover, many thought that the first French projects had been a mistake (including a young army officer stationed in Algeria named Hubert Lyautey, who would become a famous urban reformer as resident-general of the Moroccan protectorate). In Algiers, though, this tactical change did not evolve out of overwhelming concern for residents. Rather, the cultural and architectural authenticity of the Casbah was considered one of Algiers' central attractions, for tourists as well as local aesthetes.¹⁵ The French began to build their own city, a city whose wide streets, sidewalk cafes, European apartment buildings, and boulevards were designed to recall the cities of France (see Figure 1). As Paul Rabinow writes of French city construction in Algeria, 'urban form and its civilizational consequences reflected each other perfectly.'¹⁶ Colonial Algiers was two cities: one for *pieds-noirs* and one for Muslim Algerians.¹⁷

It would be impossible to catalogue all the associations and meanings that the streets and squares of Algiers had acquired for Algerians – what Pierre Nora has termed the *lieux de mémoire* – by the start of the war in 1954.¹⁸ The events of the next eight years, though, would make all Algerois, whatever their origin, keenly aware of the symbolic importance of urban space. Indeed, Larbi Icheboudène argues that Algiers itself, by virtue of its role in the war, became 'one of the symbols of independence and national space.'¹⁹ Beginning with the Battle of Algiers, city streets that had long functioned as unofficial boundaries between *pied-noir* and Muslim Algerian territory became literal front lines, marked by the *cordon sanitaire*, a network of barbed wire checkpoints around the Casbah manned by French paratroopers, where all those passing from the Casbah to the *ville européenne* (i.e. Muslim Algerians) were stopped and searched. The war had elucidated the spatial power relations of French Algiers. And while the *cordon* reinforced the social segregation of the city, violence and demonstrations turned places like the Milk Bar, the rue d'Isly, and the place du Premier Mai into landmarks of the struggle. When the city 'cut in two,' as sociologist Djaffar Lesbet called colonial-era Algiers, finally became one in July 1962, an outpouring of jubilation and anger greeted the symbolic landmarks of French Algiers.²⁰

Immediate repossession

'There is no colonized man who does not dream at least once a day of putting himself in the place of the colonist.'²¹

– Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, 1961.

The *Service historique* of the French army had alerted the Algerian *départements* as early as 1961 to the danger that might befall French statues in the event of independence. The departments, in turn, had documented several hundred monuments considered at risk, as well as 10 museums whose work could be repatriated.²² But though the *pied-noir* exodus had begun in March 1962 and the vote in favor of independence seemed a mere formality, until Algerians went to the polls, the French army could only wait.

On 3 July 1962, the first day the engineering corps might plausibly have begun gathering monuments from the squares and plazas of Algiers, jubilant crowds of Algerian nationalists had other ideas. To the equestrian statue of Joan of Arc, an anti-colonial hero in her own right, they affixed an FLN flag. The next day a crowd of people circled the statue, improvising frenetic dances, clapping their hands, and shrieking the 'youyous,' the call of the Algerian revolution famously featured in Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers*. Joan of Arc donned the white veil typically worn by Algerian women. Later someone hung a sign around the horse's neck that read 'Hassiba



Figure 2. Just beneath the minaret of the Mosquée de la Pêcherie, the pedestal of the Duke of Orleans lies overgrown but not removed in this postcard from after Independence. (Postcard, *Alger la Grande Mosquée*, Cimcolor Hélios. Printed in France. Purchased in Algiers, July 2011. Author's collection.)

Ben Bouali,' the name of an FLN militant executed by the French in 1957, the only woman to be executed during the war.²³ Did this juxtaposition frame Ben Bouali as the Algerian Joan of Arc or as a new, independent female heroine? Rewriting symbolic space of the colonial city invited direct comparisons, and made it difficult to escape the framework of colonial mythology. (The independence parade that November, which followed the route of the old French parades, provoked a similar question. Was it power through reclamation or blind imitation?) Either way, the suggestion of the sign was clear. The statues that seemed to spring naturally from French urbanism would be theirs to replace.

Not far away, at the place du Gouvernement, the statue of the Duke of Orleans – colonial Algiers' most postcarded landmark – underwent similar treatment. In addition to hoisting the green and white flag, the Duke had the letters FLN scrawled across his horse in white paint.²⁴ In some ways, the equestrian statue was the most powerful symbol of French rule in Algiers. Erected in 1845 after the conquest of Algeria was complete, on the grounds of the destroyed al-Sayyida mosque, the Duke had his back to the al-Djadid Mosque (Mosquée de la Pêcherie) and his face to the Casbah, as if unfrozen from his pedestal he might continue his destructive march into that enclave of Muslim Algerian culture. Because of the Duke's role in the conquest of Algeria, the way he seemed to stand victorious over the mosque, his royal pedigree, and his hundred-year rule at the heart of Algiers, the statue was considered an especially vulnerable monument. (It would not have been the first time a revolutionary crowd had torn down a statue of the Duke of Orleans; his effigy in front of the Louvre in Paris had been felled in 1848.²⁵) The French engineering corps made the Duke a priority. On the night of 4 July, before the statue could endure anything worse, a convoy under the command of Colonel Casso – one of many French military officers overseeing the period of transition – arrived at the plaza. The engineers worked under floodlights. Soldiers kept back the crowds. A crane lifted the statue from its pedestal onto the bed of a truck. The operation began at nine in the evening; two hours later the Duke was on his way to Camp Sirocco, a French military base at the south end of the bay where he awaited repatriation alongside other French icons.²⁶

Nearly every statue of French Algiers was eventually brought to Camp Sirocco. Those that were not removed fared worse: the bust of former Prime Minister Rene Viviani, for example, was torn from his pedestal and decapitated with a pick-axe. His head was fixed to a stake in front of the Air France building.²⁷ Between the hostile reaction of Algerian nationalists towards French monuments and the active repatriation policy of the French army, by the first celebrated anniversary of the revolution, in November 1962, Alger-Centre was missing a crucial element of its French urbanism. Its monumental spaces were without monuments. The pedestals, in most cases, were still there, waiting to be reclaimed by new statues of the heroes of a new country. One of the first postcards of independent Algiers shows the ex-place du Gouvernement, with the boxy, overgrown pedestal of the Duke of Orleans lying in front of the al-Djadid mosque, the casket of French Algeria (see Figure 2).

The other immediate act of symbolic reclamation was the repossession of the apartments, cafes, parks, stores, and streets of Alger-Centre. In *Les Damnés de la terre*, Frantz Fanon's scintillating analysis of colonialism and its consequences, the Martiniquo-Algerian psychiatrist wrote, 'The look that the colonized man has for the city of the colonist is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession: to sit at the table of the colonist, to sleep in his bed, with his wife if possible . . . There is no colonized man who does not dream at least once a day of putting himself in the place of the colonist.'²⁸ When Fanon wrote those words, probably sometime in 1960, the outcome of the revolutionary struggle in Algeria was not clear. By the summer of 1962, though, Fanon's words had taken on a prophetic quality: in cafes, in stores, and in apartments, Muslim Algerians were literally taking the place of *pieds-noirs*.

As the *pied-noir* exodus hastened that spring, local newspapers issued constant pleas to residents of the over-crowded Casbah and the *bidonville* slums not to occupy vacated European-style apartments.²⁹ This was in vain; the phenomenon was widespread. We will never have perfect documentation of how the population transfer occurred, but by 1966, 25 percent of the residents of Algiers lived in a different *arrondissement* than the one they had inhabited in 1962, and probably a good number more had changed apartments.³⁰ In 1954, about 35 percent of Muslim Algerois lived in European-style apartments; by 1966, this figure had climbed to 85 percent.³¹ More than three-quarters of Algerois real estate that existed in 1962 underwent a process of non-market substitution – a great contrast with neighboring Morocco and Tunisia, where property deeds were generally respected.³²

Opportunistic and well-connected families from the Casbah moved into European-style apartments of the center, and their houses were filled by an unending flow of migrants from the countryside who had been displaced by French camps.³³ (Between the 1962 exodus and 1966, the population of Algiers increased by two-thirds.³⁴) FLN operatives, too, were rewarded for their services with spacious *pied-noir* apartments, and returning *pied-noir* occupants were fortunate if they could reclaim their homes.³⁵

The city had changed hands in the most sudden and dramatic fashion, and many areas retained that initial revolutionary diversity. However, though less pronounced than parallel effects in Cairo or Rabat,³⁶ the social hierarchies of the urban design prevailed in central Algiers. After a chaotic period where donkeys lived on balconies and mint was grown in bathtubs, the quality of the neighborhoods and the socio-economic status of their residents reached a corresponding equilibrium. An Algerian bourgeoisie replaced its departing French counterpart; FLN critic Mohamed Harbi writes that 'a process of social segregation' was achieved.³⁷ French visitors shared that opinion. 'There are still two cities in Algiers,' the French journalist Claude Estier wrote in his

1964 portrait of daily life in the independent city, *Pour l'Algérie*. 'The only difference is that now, they are both Algerian.'³⁸

The shift to the urban European environment, at home and in the neighborhood, was particularly challenging for rural arrivals. The Algerian comic Hassan al Hassani parodied this cultural crash course with his character Boubagra, a bumbling peasant trying to navigate the tricky urban landscape with the help of his street-smart cousin Hadhri, who 'decodes the operating manual of the city and its authorized uses.'³⁹ The former inhabitants, hurrying and unsure if they would return, typically abandoned furniture, kitchen supplies and clothes in the apartments, creating scenes of silent confrontation. Djaffar Lesbet, a sociologist who has written extensively about the Casbah, wrote that new residents felt 'at once a desire to appropriate and reject. Each time you got home, you had the impression of intruding in someone else's apartment, the home of a stranger, who, although definitively absent, continued to impose his way of life.'⁴⁰ As a result, the home would sometimes be divided in two sections: the first, 'Arab,' for the rhythms of everyday life, and the second, 'modern,' for houseguests and the demonstration of material wealth.⁴¹ The sociologist Madani Safar-Zitoun even suggests that the new European environment, in the home and on the streets of the colonial city, may have induced the shift from the cumbersome Algerian veil to the Moroccan-style hijab.⁴² Ironically, housing for Muslim Algerians 'in the European manner' had been a frequent goal of colonial governments in 20th century Algeria. It was seen as an instrument of assimilation to the European way of life.⁴³

French public space, which had been nearly as forbidden to Muslim Algerians as the *pied-noir* apartments themselves, was also quickly claimed. The most significant change was the conquest of the cafes, such an important element of *pied-noir* culture. Just two years prior, it would have been 'imprudent,' Estier noted, for a Muslim to sit at one of the Alger-Centre cafes, the erstwhile hang-out of far-right French activists. No longer. 'They are in control here today,' Estier wrote. 'In the evening, in particular, it's difficult to find a place on the terraces . . .'⁴⁴ This new crowd was in the majority at Novelty, Cafeteria and even at the Milk Bar, where the FLN activist Zohra Drif, six years earlier, had set a bomb under a counter.

This provoked a powerful change in the way many Algerois thought about the city. As Algiers slowly declined in the 1970s and '80s, and descended again into chaos during the 1990s, there emerged what Dris calls a 'nostalgia for a past epoch; a myth of idealized urbanity.'⁴⁵ Around the cafés, gardens, cinemas and other inherited elements of the colonial city since fallen into disrepair, the memory of a vaguely defined golden age has coalesced. Often the nostalgia is for the colonial era, racist abuses seemingly forgotten. A recent article from the daily *El Watan*⁴⁶ recalls the Algiers café of the 1950s, 'a cultural hotbed and meeting place for artists . . . our cafes once offered a popular, worldly diversion, which, in the evenings, allowed music-lovers to relax.'⁴⁷ Another piece expresses a similar memory about the *Square Port Said* (ex-Bresson): 'During the colonial period, the orchard welcomed, remembered *ami* Omar, "concerts that the city organized on weekends and holidays." Thinking back to the past, he evokes the pleasant moments brightened by Andalusian musicians like Ahmed Serri.'⁴⁸ There is evidence for the broader existence of this sentiment in the digital world, in the Facebook group 'Alger à une certaine époque,' where over 10,000 fans wax nostalgic, in a mixture of French and Arabic, over vintage photos of Algiers. What's missing from these remembrances is the fact that few Muslim Algerians would have been welcome at the cafes of the central boulevards in the 1950s, and that those music kiosk concerts were a central feature of the *French* social life in Algiers. In this nostalgic vision, it is as if the French had never been in Algiers, as if the culture of public space that the Algerians inherited in 1962 was as Algerian as the earth itself.

Symbolic space

'Our status, for as long as Algerians can remember, has always been provisional, and each time we define it, it becomes vaguer still.'⁴⁹

– Kateb Yacine, *Le Polygone Étoilé*, 1966

After 1962, Algiers ceased to be a hub of urban theory and practice. In the exhaustive *Architecture française Outre-Mer*, Culot and Thiveaud write that after independence,

Urbanism is no longer a priority of the country . . . during the first twenty years of independent Algeria, the architects dispersed in different administrations brought only a feeble participation to construction and to the problems of urbanism.⁵⁰

Jean-Jacques Deluz, who headed City Planning (the *agence du plan*) after independence but was quick to criticize the power structure to which it was beholden, noted that not a single plaza has been built in Algiers since the 1960s. In fact, the amount of green space in and around the capital has declined precipitously since independence, due in part to sprawl but also to the fact that during the 1990s, public gardens and parks were sometimes sold for the construction of villas, perhaps indicating the desperation of government authorities.⁵¹ The biggest new projects, like the monumental arch at Riad el Feth, were built far from the center of the city.

There have been some changes in Alger-Centre. The largest decorative addition to a park in the colonial city since independence is surely the new fountain and steel tree sculpture in the lovely terraced park at Bab el-Oued, a gift to Algiers from the mayor of Marseilles. The colossal Hôtel el Aurassi, whose modernist façade looms over the Blvd. Khemisti, casts a shadow over the center city but hardly interacts with it. In 1985, the city turned the rue Ben M'Hidi into a pedestrian street, joining a global movement to close city centers to cars in places like Paris and Ghent. But the attempt to foster a 'nouvel art de vivre,' complete with café terraces and space to walk, was unsuccessful – people from the neighboring Casbah arrived and turned the promenade into an *espace souk*, cluttering the ground with merchandise. This sort of layered space – a colonial site repurposed with an ancient Algerian tradition – could have been a potent gesture of reclamation, and bore similarities to other efforts in Algiers. (Many of the city's churches, for example, became mosques.) But this frenetic bazaar was deemed unfit for the center of a world capital, and six years later the cars came back.⁵² Even in an attempt to banish the ghost of the French, the city was determined not to have a *souk* clutter a central thoroughfare of colonial urbanism.

There are many reasons why it would have been unreasonable to expect any more dramatic changes to the landscape of Alger-Centre after 1962, like those that had been envisioned by French planners like Le Corbusier and Henri Prost for the North African metropolis, or put into practice when Algiers was a proving ground for experiments in urbanism. For one thing, the new, war-torn nation had more serious challenges than renovating a built environment that its citizens had embraced with open arms. But another problem was one typical of a country emerging from an oppressive colonial regime – a lack of trained professionals. At independence, Algeria had only one trained architect and not a single architecture student.⁵³ The École d'Architecture et des Beaux-Arts, which reopened in 1963, did not graduate its first student until 1968.⁵⁴ The list of historic monuments has scarcely evolved from the state it was in before independence.⁵⁵

The radical programs of the FLN that aimed to dismantle the structure of colonial society, such as nationalization and Arabization, were carried out with efficiency and thoroughness. The built

environment, by contrast, endured, and there was some fondness for it. Abderramane Bouchama, one of the first certified Algerian architects and a nationalist eager to throw off the yoke of colonial culture, acknowledged the strengths of French urban design. In *L'Arceau qui chante*, his 1966 search for pure Algerian forms in architecture, Bouchama grudgingly admitted that the French had occasional architectural success – and then some, with regards to urban design. ‘They succeeded . . . especially on the level of urbanism,’ he wrote, ‘in creating true magnificence.’⁵⁶ For various reasons, then, the only changes to Alger-Centre since 1962 have been symbolic and decorative, rather than structurally significant; modifications to an urban landscape otherwise purely French colonial in form.

That said, Culot and Thiveaud’s dismissive assessment ignores significant Algerian efforts to rebrand public space. The tireless determination to plaque, commemorate and rename is a testament to the FLN’s desire to engage with the city’s symbolic capital. The first great ceremony of independent Algeria was the renaming of the place du Gouvernement to commemorate the eighth anniversary of the revolution. As the largest public space in Algiers, the site of the first French urban renewal project, and the longtime residence of the iconic Duke of Orleans statue, this grand central plaza was a clear choice to begin redefining the significance of colonial space. On 30 October 1962, before a crowd of thousands and ambassadors from Egypt, Syria and Libya, President Ben Bella turned towards a marble stele and unveiled the new plaque, with white letters, in Arabic (for the first time) and French, on a blue background: ‘place des Martyrs.’ The crowd erupted in cheers.⁵⁷

Among the first legislative acts of the provisional municipal government of Algiers in 1962 was the creation of a series of commemorative plaques for martyrs, an attempt to carve the narrative of anti-colonial struggle into the colonial city. Within five years, the city had renamed more than 300 streets, almost all of them after fallen combatants. This path of commemoration – these were not famous FLN commandos or household names – avoided what might have been a contested political process of selection. It came closest to embodying the FLN’s motto ‘Only one hero: the people.’ Indeed, the commemorated identities have since blurred into anonymity.⁵⁸ The toponymic emphasis on the anti-colonial struggle is also striking. For Brahim Atoui, author of *Toponymie et espace en Algérie*, it looms so large that it was ‘as if the beginning of the history of Algeria was 3 July 1830, the date of French colonization.’⁵⁹ The diverse array of groups and parties – such as Messali Hadj’s Algerian Nationalist Movement (MNA) – that had helped secure Algeria’s independence were similarly discounted in the city’s toponymy, as in the official history of the independence movement. The FLN’s effort was designed to emphasize national, historical and cultural unity, and to avoid praising diversity at all costs.⁶⁰

A handful of street names would later express the political alignment of independent Algeria, such as blvd. Che Guevara, rue Patrice Lumumba, or place Salvador Allende. While the FLN hurried to rename the grand boulevards of the *ville coloniale* (eighteen of the capital’s biggest thoroughfares were renamed within four months of independence), when possible, they turned the act of naming into international ceremony. Square Aristide Briand was renamed square Port Said on the occasion of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s first visit to independent Algeria. As with the 1 November 1962 celebration at the place des Martyrs, the day’s ceremony was organized around the renaming. An immense crowd gathered around the onetime French bandstand to watch Nasser and President Ahmed Ben Bella unveil the sign, after which Nasser signed the city’s *livre d’or*.⁶¹ Similarly, three days after the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy, who had vocally supported Algerian self-determination in the Senate, Ben Bella joined American ambassador William Porter to rename a square in El Biar, not far from the American embassy. Between buildings bedecked in Algerian and American flags, the two men pulled off a starry cloth to reveal

‘place Kennedy.’⁶² The city of Algiers had 130 years of valuable symbolic capital to give away, and the FLN did so with strategic authority.

And yet, many of the streets of Alger-Centre, with the exception of a few big boulevards and squares, still go by their colonial-era French names, though the street signs say otherwise. Even some Algerois of the younger generation, many of whom do not speak French, refer to the place du Premier Mai as ‘Shamaneuf,’ from the French *Champ de Manoeuvres* – the term a historical relic even in the 1950s.⁶³ The names had changed, but the places remained the same. Even the most important new name, the place des Martyrs – a square whose christening was the centerpiece of the first celebrated anniversary of the Revolution, the curtain pulled off by the President himself – is haunted to the present day by the popular title *al aoud* or ‘horse,’ though the equestrian statue of the Duke of Orleans has stood in the suburbs of Paris for four decades.⁶⁴

While inscribing its narrative of nationalism in stone allowed a semiotic precision – and a unity of vision – that appealed to the FLN, building on the empty pedestals of Algiers proved far more complex. One of the first big changes to the city after independence, further indicating the FLN’s awareness and intentionality on questions of urban design, was the transport of Fernand Pouillon’s Neptune fountain from the French architect’s 1954 hilltop housing project, Diar el Mahçoul, to an intersection in the Marine Quarter. The unseemly moving job, chronicled by the Algerian writer Said Belanteur in the short story collection *Les Chevaux de Mahçoul*, ripped Neptune from his train of horses – more likely out of carelessness, in Belanteur’s account, than for symbolic reasons.⁶⁵ But the arrival of the Italianate fountain, with its four horses, on the avenue du Premier Novembre in the center city shows that the FLN felt ready, perhaps even obliged, to rebrand monumental spaces stripped by the departing French army.

And yet, this work proceeded very slowly, tied as it was to the paradoxes of post-independence Algerian nationalism.⁶⁶ Algiers, as the seat of the federal government, home of embassies, and site of international sporting and cultural events, was burdened with the selective task of crafting the icons of a mythic, singular national identity in what is in reality a highly diverse country. The power over urban questions in Algiers has not resided with Deluz-run City Planning, nor with the municipal government, but with the state. Icheboudène bemoans this ‘confiscation of the city and of its municipal power, the monopoly of the state on urban questions.’⁶⁷ Like major development projects, symbolic changes (including the transferal of the Neptune fountain) emanated from FLN officials who were – then and now, and even for Deluz – referred to merely as *les responsables*.

Algiers was supposed to represent Algeria,⁶⁸ and Algeria had been very specifically – and simplistically – defined in the FLN National Charter of 1965: ‘Algeria is one nation. The nation is not an assembly of peoples or a mosaic of disparate ethnicities.’⁶⁹ Benjamin Stora has written that ‘this anticolonial history [was] almost as simplified in its conclusions as traditional colonial history,’ comparing the dogmatic efforts of the FLN to those of the French.⁷⁰ But so it was, from Ben Bella’s speech at the inauguration of place des Martyrs, in which the President announced, ‘We will be faithful to Arabism, we will follow Arabism, for we are more Arab than anything else.’ This marked the beginning of a long period of suppression for the Berber minority, which makes up approximately 35 percent of Algeria’s population.⁷¹ Representing the national identity – in symbols as in speeches – required that the FLN sufficiently blur regional, ethnic and political distinctions (i.e. the Berber presence, the colonial history, and the complexities of the Algerian independence movement), to arrive at the FLN narrative of nationalism. The result was a stuttering series of public commemorations. A columnist in *El Watan* observed:



Figure 3. The overwhelming importance of Emir Abdelakder and older figures speaks to the city's need to avoid more recent history in the context of Algerian nationalism. (Author's photo, July 2011.)

Alger does not abound with monuments, frescos, or statues that glorify its thousand-year existence . . . Let's have some fun asking Algerois about their heritage, their history. We would find an anthology of clichés, errors, and confusion where ignorance takes center stage.⁷²

Elsewhere in Algeria (the Berber city of Tizi-Ouzou, the Mozabite enclave of Ghardaia, or Sétif, for example) there is great diversity of urban symbolism, and monuments and statues are used as an affirmation of regional identity and a protest against the cultural suppression of the state. In Algiers, the urban symbolic can be read as a visual manifestation of what Stora, Mohamed Harbi and others see as the radical simplification of FLN-brand nationalism; an embodiment of Larbi Ichhebodène's disturbing claim that 'political hegemony has made Algeria a society without heroes.'⁷³

There is not a single statue of a 20th-century Algerian in Alger-Centre. The oldest standing statue (from 1987, the 25th anniversary of independence) is that of the Emir Abdelkader, who stands in a small, central square on the rue Ben M'Hidi (ex-rue d'Isly). This placement has powerful symmetrical value. In the 1830s, Abdelkader was the leader of the anti-French resistance; he

was ultimately defeated by Marshal Bugeaud and captured by the French. Bugeaud went on to be governor general of Algeria, and his likeness was raised in this spot in 1852.⁷⁴ Abdelkader, even in defeat, was canonized as the founder of modern Algeria. In central Algiers, Abdelkader sits on a horse atop a bronze pedestal, which is decorated with friezes of armed horsemen (see Figure 3). Perched high above the center of the square, the monument is visible from both streets approaching the intersection. While Marshal Bugeaud, like the Duke of Orleans, originally faced the hump of the subjugated Casbah, Abdelkader, scimitar raised high, faces the sea and the port, as if ready to defend, or attack. The statue has become a popular photo spot for tourists and features on the rare postcards one sometimes finds in Algiers. The size and, until recently, singularity of this monument indicate the emphasis that FLN nationalism places on the 'founding story,' in their rebranding of the city. There had already been *two* statues of Abdelkader in Algiers (the current iteration replaced a smaller statue on the same site built in the 1960s) before any other historical figure received the honor.

The other two statues in central Algiers of real Algerians were built afterwards, and each of them honors an even earlier historical figure than Abdelkader. The first statue is of Rais Hamidou, an Algerois corsair who died in 1815 in a skirmish with the US Navy. Sculpted by the Algerian artist Redha Cheikh Bled, it stands in the *parc de Bab el Oued* near Pouillon's transplanted equine fountain, across the street from the Palais des Rais. There exist no surviving representations of Rais Hamidou, so Bled drew his inspiration from 'descriptions made by contemporary observers.'⁷⁵ The second statue is of Bologhine Ibn Ziri, who founded the city of Algiers in 960, and was donated to the city in 1999 to mark the celebration of the millennium. There are likewise no representations of Bologhine, and the sculptor took some liberties – his Bologhine, with a turban and thick beard, looks more like a Turk than the Berber he was. Both of these figures come from a sort of Algerois pre-history, devoid of visual representation, and demonstrate a tendency on the part of the *responsables* towards myth-making and away from the thorny politics of the past two centuries of Algerian history. They represent the fine line of Algerian nationalism toed by the FLN in the capital, in contrast to the more modern, diverse heroes honored elsewhere in Algeria. Larbi Ichheboudène has remarked this problem in the abstract:

When the cultural question arose at the national level, the powers that be did not give it the opportunity to be debated in any depth . . . Thus, the younger generations have no heroes, and do not identify with any of these national heroes, historic or cultural, who feed the imagination or give depth to the historical capital of our country.⁷⁶

In Algiers, the effort to replace French heroes with national heroes reaches far into the past to avoid confronting the complexity of what it means to be Algerian.

The case of the place des Martyrs, that ancient symbol of colonial power, seems indicative of the uncertainty of the spatial reclamation process in Algiers – particularly in contrast to the speed with which the square was renamed. No statue has replaced the Duke of Orleans. Given that its name was a gesture to popular heroism ('only one hero: the people'), the place des Martyrs, this homage to collective sacrifice, could hardly have replaced the Duke with a single Algerian hero. Zeynep Çelik writes that the departure of the statue (and the lack of a replacement) turned the al-Djaidid Mosque (or Mosquée de la Pêcherie) into the unchallenged monument of the square.⁷⁷

But if this symbolic transfer seemed to work on paper, the new square offered no new symbol forceful enough to dispel the old *al aoud* moniker. A number of kiosks have been erected for selling coffee and soda, 'as if to celebrate the victory of the Algerian people over French colonialism,'



Figure 4. Mohamed Issiakhem's piece obscures and protects Landowski and Bigonet's *Monument aux morts*. (Author's photo, July 2011.)

quipped one cynical journalist. 'What a curious manner of expressing our revenge on the statue of the Duke of Orleans on horseback, knocked down the day after independence, to make way for . . . coffee huts.'⁷⁸ More interesting, the boxy minaret of the mosque – supposedly a powerful symbol of independent Algeria – retains its four clocks, affixed by the French in 1850, badges of the colonial era. As in many places around Alger-Centre, the effort of symbolic reclamation was deemed insufficient to change the spirit of the square.

One of the more challenging public spaces to reclaim was the *Monument aux morts* on the blvd. Khemisti. This enormous stone sculpture, by Landowski and Bigonet, was completed in 1930 to mark the hundredth anniversary of the French arrival and commemorate the World War I dead. It stood watch over the Forum and the surrounding buildings, and was flanked by the zigzagged stone carved with the names of soldiers – both *pied-noir* and Muslim Algerian names, since Muslim Algerians fought for France in World War I. This monument was at the heart of French social geography of Algiers, a site for parades and ceremonies as well as the centerpiece of the biggest green space in Alger-Centre. (The esplanade was also home to the statues of Joan of Arc and Rene Viviani.) In July 1962, Landowski's monument was too large to be transported back to France, and in any case, there is no record of it suffering the troubles that befell the statues. For years, the FLN simply decided to leave it in place, though the names of the war dead were chipped off the surrounding walls.

So, for the first decade and a half of independent Algeria, Landowski's monument continued to stand in the great, stepped park at the center of Algiers. It was not until 1978 that the FLN addressed its presence, in preparation for the African Games that July. Berber painter M'hamed Issiakhem, an advisor to the African Games committee, devised an elegant sculptural solution to anchor the Forum. Issiakhem encased the original monument in cement, and crowned it with a pair of fists breaking through chains. Issiakhem's work does not only preserve an artistic masterpiece beneath the cement (see Figure 4), its layers also recall, rather than rewrite, the painful memory of the colonial period. Issiakhem's piece speaks to the deeper political truth of post-colonial identity: the

past, however painful, must be acknowledged as the foundation of certain aspects of contemporary society. It clashes with the FLN's desire to eradicate all vestiges of colonialism.⁷⁹ Art allows a narrative complexity that defies the simplicity of official texts.

A series of ceramics put up on the walls of the city in the years since independence offer quite a different example of politics filtered through the lens of art. Each ceramic panel portrays an idyllic scene of Algerian Algeria – a man in traditional robes, a mosque, a harbor, the Casbah, a country house, etc. There are at least 50 such panels mounted on the walls of the European city. Like the statues, they look back to a simpler, pre-colonial time. Nassima Dris has written that this is 'one of the possible forms of the Algerianization of inherited space: mosaics representing characters in traditional costumes convey the ancestral anchoring of the city.'⁸⁰ But the ceramics send a more complex set of signals, tinged with a selective nostalgia that echoes that of the Facebook group 'Alger à une certaine époque.'

The style of the ceramics, with their emphasis on traditional architecture and dress, owes much to the French Orientalist paintings of the 19th century. Some are facsimile reproductions. Take, for example, a panel on the blvd. Krim Belkacem that depicts a trading scene. A man rides a camel in a street shaded by vaulted arches and lined with goods and robed figures. It is a copy of *Le passage Jenné dans la Casbah d'Alger*, an 1839 painting by the French Orientalist painter Charles-Theodore Frère. Like many French painters of his generation, Frère traveled in Algeria in search of inspiration, and visited several times. He was no objective observer; in fact, he participated in the siege of Constantine.⁸¹ The street depicted in the painting was in the lower half of the Casbah – an area almost entirely destroyed by the French.

The ceramic artisan, in this case, is also located on the blvd. Krim Belkacem. Ali Belazzoug keeps a few books of Orientalist paintings handy in his atelier, and when the city of Algiers gives him a commission for ceramics of the pre-colonial city, he turns to the works of the Orientalists for inspiration.⁸² The Frère painting, like many others in Belazzoug's library of art books, is framed with a pencil-drawn grid to facilitate the transition to ceramic panels (see Figure 5).

This is a sad legacy of colonialism: the only visual record of pre-colonial culture comes from the colonists themselves, some of whom were eager to document and export the exotic even as they destroyed it. Like many Islamic societies, Algiers had little tradition of literal representation. Among the works of Algerian art that precede colonization, there is almost no documentation of urban landscape. (In any case, a caravan in a street of Algiers would likely have been considered a banal, everyday event not worthy of representation.) Surely unbeknownst to the *responsables*, the direct inspiration for these panels comes from French paintings that exist because Algerian nationalists were subjugated by French colonists, allowing French artists to record in safety a society on the brink of permanent change. In an effort to reclaim the French walls with art that imagines an Algeria where the French never arrived, the city unwittingly channels the work of French Orientalists – themselves searching for an exaggerated exoticism to fit a preordained narrative of foreignness. Behind a simple mosaic lies an echo chamber of influences, the many traps of colonial history. A politically charged commission from the FLN filtered through the aesthetic priorities of the artist unknowingly tells a profound story of Algiers.

Conclusion

In the years after independence, two forces clashed in Algiers: the power of people and government to shape the appearance and meaning of place, and the power of place to shape the behavior and customs of people. These tensions demonstrate the real and symbolic power of urban design and



Figure 5. This ceramic of recent vintage on the blvd. Krim Belkacem, top, shows a pre-colonial scene. (Author's photo, July 2011.) It is drawn from Théodore Frère's *Le Passage Jenné dans la Casbah d'Alger*, 1839, bottom. (Marion Vidal-Bué, *Algérie et ses peintres* (Paris: Paris-Méditerranée, 2000), 265.)

architecture, and their crucial and overlooked potential to illustrate and illuminate post-colonial analysis. Changing an urban environment seems like the more straightforward of the two: just as we can look to census figures to determine the population shift in central Algiers, simple comparisons of maps and postcards show how the city's physical appearance has been altered since 1962. The attempt to impress post-colonial symbols on the architecture of Algiers provides a rich record of Algerian nationalism in some of its barest, most confrontational moments, engraved in stone, etched in marble, cast in bronze, frozen in time. But those differences, though flush with FLN-brand nationalism, never escape lingering colonial meaning. Graebner has noted a similar layering with regards to the Algerian city in literature, writing that 'nothing is as slippery as a place invested by multiple and sometimes contradictory histories.'⁸³ Engagement in the forms of a French

colonial landscape both revealed the complexities and provoked the contradictions of Algerian nationalism.

The effect that the culture of French urbanism had on newly arrived Algerians is more complicated still, and a thorough analysis would require the input of a wide range of disciplines: history, architecture, sociology, philosophy, linguistics and economics, at least. On this largely unexplored subject, as on the other, this essay aims to provoke more questions than it answers. There is no doubt that European apartments, cafés, parks, restaurants, cinemas and walking spaces introduced new ways of being to new residents. One could endlessly argue whether the appropriation of the European habitat constituted a conquest of territory or a concession of lifestyle. Did, as Safar-Zitoun has written, the arriving Algerians claim 'the attributes and symbols of technological modernity, the material progress that had constituted the foundation of the power of the colonist'?⁸⁴ Or did these events realize Fanon's fears that Western values would corrupt and undermine efforts for cultural autonomy?

Today, the story of the built environment of Algiers after 1962 grows more complex still. How and when will the city commemorate the violence of the 1990s? How will the growing trickle of globalization be manifest? (The Emir Abdelkader now looks over a Quick, an outpost of the Belgian burger chain.) The first line of the Algiers Metro, a large-scale project that has the power to reinvigorate the colonial city, opened only two years ago after decades of construction. Reviving Alger-Centre as a 'commercial and tourist hub' has also been a priority of the city's growth plans.⁸⁵ How will these developments change the atmosphere of Alger-Centre?

There is an undeniable universality in the desire to reshape surroundings and suddenly, forcefully, inscribe new meaning on a place. Its relevance is particularly striking in colonial contexts, where built environments reflect contrasting cultures. But it speaks more generally to the correlation between space and power, and we may witness parallel efforts today in places like Egypt, as post-Mubarak governments rename hundreds of streets and institutions of the deposed regime, or in Libya, where Qaddafi's successors decide what to do with the compound of the former dictator. The Milk Bar has outlasted the *pieds-noirs*, and the streets of Algiers will outlast the presence of the French language in Algeria. From the jubilant, popular repossession of July 1962 to the reductive manipulations of the FLN, the built environment is a lingering and insidious symbol of power and one of the hardest legacies of colonialism to appropriate and adapt. It is a foe whose battle scars tell the story of 50 years of Algerian history.

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Notes

1. A recent article in *Revue XXI* stated that it is impossible to say exactly how many *pieds-noirs* are still in Algeria, but that it cannot be more than a few thousand. Géraldine Schwartz, 'Les Derniers français d'Algérie', *Revue XXI*, Winter 2011, p. 129.

2. Claude Estier, *Pour l'Algérie* (Paris: Maspero, 1964), p. 16; Jean-Jacques Deluz, *Urbanisme et l'Architecture d'Alger* (Liege: P. Mardaga, 1988), p. 109.
3. Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. by Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 195.
4. Larbi Icheboudène, *Alger* (Alger: Casbah Editions, 2008), p. 345.
5. My visits to archives in France and Algeria yielded few relevant documents on symbolic changes to the built environment of Algiers after 1962, though it is by no means certain that they do not exist.
6. 'Programme de front de liberation nationale adopté à Tripoli en juin 1962 par le CNRA', *Alger Republicain*, 3 September 1962. Author's translation.
7. Alf Andrew Heggoy, *The French Conquest of Algiers, 1830: An Algerian Oral Tradition* (Athens, OH: OUIS, 1986). Quoted in Zeynep Çelik, 'Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections: *Lieux de mémoire* in Algiers', *Third Text*, 13(49), 1999, p. 64.
8. Andre Raymond, 'La région centrale d'Alger en 1830', in Jean-Louis Cohen et al. (eds), *Alger: Paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'imprimeur, 2003), p. 48.
9. Marc Côte, *L'Algérie: espace et société* (Paris: Masson, 1996), p. 21.
10. Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 21.
11. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians*, trans. by Alan Ross (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1962), p. 157.
12. Icheboudène, *Alger*, p. 84.
13. Raymond, 'La Région centrale d'Alger en 1830', p. 55. Author's translation.
14. Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations*, p. 37.
15. Nabila Oulebsir, 'Les Ambiguïtés du régionalisme: le style Néomauresque', in Jean-Louis Cohen et al. (eds), *Alger: Paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'imprimeur, 2003), p. 112.
16. Paul Rabinow, *French Modern* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. 112.
17. There were, of course, a number of Jewish Algerians who had lived in Algiers for centuries when the French arrived. But by 1962, and the period with which this paper is concerned, they had become sufficiently assimilated to French society – and felt so unwelcome among Muslim Algerians – that most left with the *pieds-noirs*.
18. Pierre Nora, 'Between History and Memory: The *Lieux de Mémoire*', *Representations*, Spring 1989, pp. 7–24.
19. Icheboudène, *Alger*, p. 328.
20. The destruction of statues is a tradition that seems to be embedded at the quintessentially French intersection of symbolic urbanism and revolutionary change, and in some ways Algerians were participating in a French ritual even in destroying their statues. The French had done the same in 1789 and 1848, and just 20 years prior had watched the Vichy government melt down over a thousand bronze statues for the Nazi war effort (Kirrily Freeman, *Bronzes to Bullets: Vichy and the Destruction of the French Public Statuary, 1941-1944* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009], p. 6); Djaffar Lesbet, *La Casbah d'Alger: Gestion urbaine et vide social* (Alger: Office des Publications Universitaires, 1985), p. 57.
21. Frantz Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre* (Algiers: Editions ANEP, 2006), p. 13. This edition of Fanon's text includes a preface by the current Algerian president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Author's translation.
22. Alain Amato, *Monuments en exil* (Paris: l'Atlantique, 1979), p. 19.
23. Amato, *Monuments en exil*, p. 220.
24. Amato, *Monuments en exil*, p. 150.
25. Çelik, 'Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections'.
26. Amato, *Monuments en exil*, p. 150.
27. Amato, *Monuments en exil*, p. 56.
28. Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*, p. 13. Author's translation.
29. 'Les occupations irrégulières d'appartements à Alger', *La Dépêche d'Algérie*, 16 March 1962, p. 1; 3 June 1962, p. 1. Author's translation.
30. Madani Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation: Alger, 1962-1992* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996), p. 82.

31. Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation*, p. 89.
32. Madani Safar-Zitoun, 'La Nouvelle politique urbaine Algéroise ou la recherche du lien social perdu', in Mustapha Madi (ed.), *La Ville dans tous ses états*, ed. Mustapha Madi (Alger: Casbah Editions, 1998), p. 117.
33. Estier, *Pour l'Algérie* (Paris: Maspero, 1964), p. 17.
34. Lesbet, *La Casbah d'Alger*, p. 57.
35. Jacques Chouillou, *La Transition Vecue en Algérie en 1962 et 1963* (Aix-en-Provence: Monographie de la centre de documentation historique sur l'Algérie, 2000), p. 12.
36. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, 'Developments in North African Urbanism: The Process of Decolonization', in Brian J.L. Berry (ed.), *Urbanization and Counter-Urbanization* (London: SAGE, 1976), p. 209.
37. Mohamed Harbi, *Le F.L.N.: Mirage et Réalité* (Paris: Editions J.A., 1979), p. 383.
38. Estier, *Pour l'Algérie*, p. 15. Author's translation.
39. Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation*, p. 89. Author's translation.
40. Lesbet, *La Casbah d'Alger*, p. 56. Author's translation.
41. Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation*, p. 90.
42. Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation*, p. 90.
43. Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations*, p. 113.
44. Estier, *Pour l'Algérie*, p. 19.
45. Nassima Dris, *Ville Mouvementée: Espace public, centralisé, mémoire urbaine à Alger* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2002), p. 223.
46. Though *El Watan*, as a French-language newspaper, speaks to a certain segment of society, it should be noted that more than half of the Algerian press is in French (Schwartz, 'Les Derniers français d'Algérie', p. 129).
47. Madhid Tchoubane, 'Un lieu qui entretient la mémoire', *El Watan*, 21 November 2004, p. 9. Author's translation.
48. Madhid Tchoubane, 'Des espaces à protéger', *El Watan*, 14 December 2004, p. 11. Author's translation.
49. Kateb Yacine, *Le Polygone Étoilé* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 133.
50. Maurice Culot and Jean-Marie Thiveaud, *Architecture française Outre-Mer* (Liège: Mardaga, 1992), p. 54. Author's translation.
51. Ahmed Gasmia, 'Opération de recensement des espaces verts', *El Watan*, 15 August 2007.
52. Dris, *Ville Mouvementée*, p. 237.
53. Youcef Kanoun and Salima Taleb-Kanoun, 'Idéologie et identité: projets de prestige après 1962', in Jean-Louis Cohen et al. (eds), *Alger: Paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000* (Paris: Les Éditions de l'imprimeur, 2003).
54. Kanoun and Taleb-Kanoun, 'Idéologie et identité'.
55. Jean-Jacques Deluz, *Alger: Chronique urbaine* (Paris: Editions Bouchène, 2001), p. 59.
56. Abderrahmane Bouchama, *L'Arceau qui chante* (Alger: Editions nationales algériennes, 1966), p. 46.
57. 'Grande Foule pour l'inauguration de la place des martyrs', *Alger Republicain*, 31 October 1962, p. 4.
58. Mohamed B., whose column on urban symbolism in *El Watan* coincided with the 50th anniversary of the revolution, wrote, 'A simple fellow will never manage to know the exact identity of the person whose name the street carries. Is it a martyr of the war of national liberation? Is it a celebrated thinker, or an esteemed scholar? Is it a philosopher, or a writer?' ('Laconisme à outrance', *El Watan*, 20 July 2004. Author's translation.) The answer is almost always martyr, but his point is well taken.
59. Brahim Atoui, *Toponymie et espace en Algérie* (Lille: Atelier National de Reproduction des Thèses, 1996), p. 212. Unfortunately, Atoui deals only in passing with naming within Algiers – he instead focuses on names of towns and natural landmarks, with an eye for Algerian history going back to pre-Roman times. Author's translation.
60. Atoui, *Toponymie et espace en Algérie*, p. 212.
61. 'La plaque du square Port Said découverte', *Alger Republicain*, 2 May 1963, p. 1.
62. No title, *Alger Republicain*, 26 November 1963, p. 2.
63. I lived in Algiers on a winding street in Moustapha-Supérieur, up the hill from Alger-Centre, officially named chemin Capitaine Hocine Slimane. Needless to say, everyone called it by its colonial-era name,

- chemin des Glycines, including police officers, taxi drivers, etc. Even the neighboring government hospital is 'des Glycines.'
64. Çelik, 'Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections', p. 67.
 65. Said Belanteur, *Les Chevaux de Mahçoul* (Alger: Société Nationale des Editions et de Diffusion, 1975), p. 49.
 66. It is worth briefly noting that the predilection against literal representation in Islam seems to have played no role in this process. Between the inherited and built monuments of independent Algiers there are enough lasting examples of representation to imply that the small number of representative symbolic icons in Algiers cannot be attributed to an Islamic tenet. Even the Islamic Cultural Center in Alger-Centre has carvings of two topless females adorning its first floor façade.
 67. Larbi Icheboudène, 'L'intégration citadine', in Mustapha Madi (ed.), *La Ville dans tous ses états* (Alger: Casbah Editions, 1998), p. 13. Author's translation.
 68. People from outside Algiers, when asked what distinguishes the Algerois, sometimes say: they are Algerois, they are 'rois' (kings), we are Algérien and we have 'rien' (nothing). They certainly do not see Algiers as a microcosm of the country as a whole.
 69. Atoui, *Toponymie et espace en Algérie*, p. 212.
 70. Benjamin Stora, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), p. 163.
 71. 'Grande Foule pour l'inauguration de la place des martyrs', *Alger Républicain*, 31 October 1962, p. 4.
 72. Mohamed B., 'Mémoire en friche', *El Watan*, 18 February 2004, p. 8. Author's translation.
 73. Icheboudène, 'L'intégration citadine', p. 13. Author's translation.
 74. Çelik, 'Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections', p. 68.
 75. Albert Devoux, *Le Rais Hamidou* (Alger: Livres Editions, 2010), p. 15. Author's translation.
 76. Icheboudène, 'L'intégration citadine', p. 13. Author's translation.
 77. Çelik, 'Colonial/Postcolonial Intersections', p. 66.
 78. 'La place des Martyrs rétrécit', *El Watan*, 11 December 2001. Author's translation.
 79. One local legend, which I heard in Algiers from a friend of Issiakhem's and have since seen recounted on blogs, is that the FLN initially ordered Issiakhem to destroy Landowski's monument. The artist refused to 'massacre a masterpiece', and developed the current design as an alternative.
 80. Dris, *Ville Mouvementée*, p. 173.
 81. Marion Vidal-Buë, *Algérie et ses peintres* (Paris: Paris-Méditerranée, 2000), p. 265.
 82. Ali Belazzoug. Interview with the author. Personal interview. July 2011, Algiers.
 83. Seth Graebner, *History's Place: Nostalgia and the City in French and Algerian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), p. 318.
 84. Safar-Zitoun, *Stratégies Patrimoniales et urbanisation*, p. 89. Author's translation.
 85. Karim Hadjri and Mohamed Osmani, 'The Spatial Development and Urban Transformation of Colonial and Postcolonial Algiers', in Yasser Elsheshtawy (ed.), *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope in a Globalizing World* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 51.

Author biography

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