



The Historicization and Theorization of Spatial Ruin in Wounded Baghdad

Farah Al-Shamali^{1*}

¹College of Arts, Kuwait University, Kuwait City, Kuwait

<p>Abstract: Be it a consideration of the ruptured spatialities and urban forms of Baghdad in the present or reaching back into a volatile past, the city lives out arresting contradictions that beckon a different kind of understanding. Spatial woundedness carries within it many implications for how that pain is rendered. This is most visible in forms of cultural production that have settled the hurt exacted into a place of innovation. It is a full mutuality between architecture and the destruction that has violently defaced it so much so that a new image of urbanity begins to emerge. Beyond the agony felt by the capital, intellectualizing the spatial wound that has manifested and been given life as it were suggests a pressing need to comprehend this phenomenology. Historicizing and then theorizing what is a poetics of destruction assists in coming to comprehend not simply the features of an urban character necessarily born out of ruin but doing so against an orientalist narrative that seeks to entrench the Baghdadi space in perpetual liminality. The city fights back so that it may have a chance to survive but also creates lasting meaning between the real and unreal.</p> <p>Keywords: Baghdad, space and place, urbanity, poetics of destruction, phenomenology, innovation.</p>	<p>Review Paper</p>
	<p>*Corresponding Author: Farah Al-Shamali College of Arts, Kuwait University, Kuwait City, Kuwait</p>
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The Historicization and Theorization of Spatial Ruin in Wounded Baghdad

“Baghdad, my beloved
 You did not stand shivering in the doorway of the ruined days
 A whole civilization geared to killing
 Has robbed you of your innocence
 Baghdad, you who never submitted to Saddam, the brute
 You have no reason to groan
 At the simple revelation of that iron fist
 Those who busy themselves about your agonizing body
 Those liberators become his henchmen...”
 – Salah Al-Hamdani

1.1. Historical Context

Violence and what it engenders of complete devastation in its path is as old as time itself and, though a bewildering concept that defies explanation, it certainly has intersected and shaped the social organization of space. War has since time immemorial been the nurturing force of said destruction so long as it meets the jus ad bellum threshold. It may register as incredulous to the layman but the art of war is conducted against a code of ethics. Tracing the civilizational past of Iraq leads to

an archeology, hence a legitimization, of violence that is no different. In that vein, as clarified by Zainab Bahrani who theorizes on the customs of war in the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, “war is organized violence” before going on to assert that “as such, war might be viewed in the same way as some other institutions and rituals of civilized people.” So the act of demolition is never not regarded as an aspect of the justness of conflict. She invokes the notion of French philosopher Georges Bataille who finds that “war exists because the taboo on violence in daily life relegates violence to areas of existence confined in space and time and that follow their own rules” (9) hence a causal link is established. There is no shortage of this justified behavior in the rise and fall of the Sumerian, Assyrian, Akkadian and Babylonian civilizations running parallel to historical continuity. To contribute to the expansion of the state, “over the centuries certain city-states came to dominate others...” (Spencer 18) and the Assyrians went farther than just physical control as they “...also used what we would call psychological warfare against their enemies” (26). Recruiting, training and maintaining soldiers as part of the war machine and thus violence that can alter spatiality was a complex in the Ancient Near East associated with the divine. William J. Hamblin

suggests this very thematic in the interplay of war and violence for these early cultures as “for the ancients, war was the means by which the gods restored order through organized violence undertaken in their name by their divinely ordained kings” (12). There was a carefully calculated machinery of representation as regards violence equating it to the fair and noble.

The confinement that Bataille elucidated was the mode of operation of civilizational life and this constant state of war was paradoxically sheltered by conventions that gave it legality so it would go uncontested. Ordered instability did not merely come from within but without as a period of foreign rule coincided with “Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian kingdom” which “...would prove to be the last home-grown government in Mesopotamia for ages to come.” Right up until the establishment of the twentieth century Kingdom of Iraq, “the destiny of the land between the rivers passed into the hands of outsiders” (Spencer 27) and so the normative cycle of transitory violence, that which delivered control from one empire to the next, was established as a pattern. The Arab, and by association, Muslim raiding of Persian towns in 632 A.D. gave Abu Bakr, after the death of Muhammad, the strength to attack the Persian Empire. Five years on, “they defeated the Persian royal army in the famous battle of Qadisiya...the land between the rivers now became a province of the caliphate” (38). Space bowed down to the will of an expansionist campaign setting in motion the beginnings of a diverse population, supported by the Islamic policy of tolerance, but also saw religious communities spatially bound to different regions. According to Ghada Osman, “the Arabs were placed in abandoned lands distant from the cities and villages” (462) founding Kufa, near ancient Babylon, and Basra as two new garrison cities. It marked a clear pacifism in the spatial arrangement as the settlers were not permitted to meddle with the pre-existing characters of townships, “allowing them to utilise the lands not possessed by anyone” (466). The north, for instance, remained largely Assyrian and Christian in disposition. Mesopotamia under Islamic dominion became a multiracial expanse, this reality surviving to this day. It was a continuation of the narrative of conquest yet couched in Islamic law forbidding indiscriminate destruction.

The Abbasid Caliphate took charge by the middle of the eighth century and with it came the founding of the city of Baghdad commissioned by Caliph Al-Mansur, “the greatest and most splendid urban center of the early Middle Ages, the focus of world trade and intellectual life...” (Lassner 170). The spatial history of the capital is a difficult one to map precisely given that it had an almost immediate relationship with destruction. Archeological evidence of the famed Round City is lost and even that of “early inhabitation of the site is scanty at best...rapid urban development, environmental change and repeated invasion have led to the destruction of much of Baghdad’s early architecture” (Van de Ven

50) and there may not be definitive truths but a series of local histories exist cobbled together to each present an image of the city. One such retelling was that of Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, Persian scholar and historian, who indicated what urban planning ideals were then, “the importance of circularity, order and clarity” (52). Al-Mansur happened upon a space carrying the cultural baggage of pre-Islamic times, thus vastly multicultural, and wished to present himself as “successor to the great emperors of the past” (Lassner 179). It would be the attitude that attracted all walks of life to partake in its social renaissance but also invited unwanted attention. Early on, “Baghdad became an attractive location for surrounding foreign powers. Therefore, its history not only witnessed frequent war and domination but also saw the development of a unique variety of various cultures” (Al-Saaidy) with both occurrences being relatively managed alongside one another to the benefit of all.

Regulation, especially, was the main preoccupation for Baghdad in its beginnings as it “...was conceived as a city of controlled spaces and as a new settlement on virgin ground” (Van de Ven 53). This period of time is most characterized by the openness and great opportunity afforded to people far and wide where there had been limitation prior. As a knowledge and recreational center, open spaces were paramount to its daily functioning, it was a site of state-sponsored scholarship and vast orchards spread all across the city. However, urban typologies in the form of increasingly isolated “centers of power” (Spencer 44) developed which were politically inclined and they saw to it that the bejeweled capital would regularly engage in the spatial ritualization of breaking with the figurehead. Internal skirmishes and their weakening of the state finally made the territorial ambitions of the Mongol forces all too simple. In great detail, Justin Marozzi describes how “the population of Baghdad found itself under a terrifying bombardment of rocks, palm trunks and flaming naphtha. The city was filled with thunder and lightning by the striking of stones...the people were killed, both from inside and outside, or were carried away wounded” (141). Beyond modern imaginings that romanticize it, the city after the 1258 invasion would be continuously colonized growing accustomed to different regimes and the sensibilities they brought with them. Change would be the only constant. So the renegotiation of spatial dynamics and their connotations was a mainstay construct. Familiarity of rule was no more after the Abbasid Caliphate fell and the urban center was caught in a complex liminal condition. The account of Berber-Moroccan scholar Ibn Battuta in 1326 when he visited Baghdad solidifies its state almost a century after its ruin. It retained urban dynamism but had been “reduced to nonentity” so much so that an “elegiac mode” was the one he adopted in his recounting. He declares that “the death-announcer has risen to mourn Baghdad” and compares it to “an old woman whose youth has deserted her, and whose beauty has vanished” (Cooperson 99) and

public perception undoubtedly felt the same. The city would no longer revel in a poetic atmosphere and space, similarly, was denied a fixed identity separate from destruction as a transformative force becoming its essence. There was nothing but a harkening back to an age of glory never to return.

During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, there is an unusual period of peace and calm however they “were not the natural order in Baghdad...the city now found itself the focus of rivalry between two far more powerful adversaries: to the west, the Sunni Ottoman Empire of Sultan Selim the Grim; to the east, the emerging Shia Safavid Empire of Shah Ismail” (Marozzi 174). The latter would assume control for some time before the Ottoman Empire captured Baghdad “and for the next 500 years the town served as a minor provincial capital...” (Goodwin 28) emerging as a far-flung administrative division that was largely neglected. But it was nonetheless beginning, at the end of that colonial experiment, to migrate from the medieval to the modern with much of the urban layout today taking shape in this era. Haidar Al-Saaidy highlights it as a “structural evolution” although under imperial hegemony that “led to a reduction in the value of its urban context and historical monuments.” Al-Rasheed Street, one of the main avenues that cuts through the city from north to south, was the “central development” (Al-Saaidy) then and the only major shift in its districts and street patterns. During the Mamluk dynasty ruling for a little over a century before the Ottomans reasserted their sovereignty in 1831, “the city of Baghdad did not witness...a distinct urban activity” instead having to confront the spatial reality of “a decline in the art and craftsmanship of construction compared to previous periods of the monarchy” (Al-Salihi 248). The architectural image was of an eastern capital though on the cusp of spatial transformations. An interesting dynamic within space and its intersection with political reality, a source of frustration no doubt for the public, was forming as a result of allegiance pledged to a faraway occupier. Cultural history flourished in Ottoman Baghdad but memory and ideology did not come from a nationalistic core. Place identity must have sensed this characteristic divide, latching on to an overall foreign imprint on the opening up of spaces, spatializing modernity, allowing for increased mobility and introducing the new still these were attempts at controlling the populace “as they can give space and opportunity to the presentation of difference” (Van de Ven 59). There was unmistakable weariness along spatial lines and what reads like an awakening as the pashalik came out the other end of coloniality thirsting for self-rule.

This would not mean that it would realize autonomy and, what amounts to a seismic departure from past experiences, volatility that struck at the heart of urban life and the destruction that followed it begin to creep from the periphery to the center. At the end of the

First World War, the conquering British claimed primacy in Mesopotamia but their territorial objectives and those of other powers “...had raised nationalist expectations everywhere in the Arab east, and Iraq was not immune to the calls for independence. Britain’s intention to rule over Iraq, whether directly or indirectly, had to be somehow reconciled with the rising tide of demand for self-government” (Allawi 350). For Baghdadis, “11 March 1917 was a sudden, shocking change of cast...overnight topees and ties replaced turbans and fezes” (Marozzi 289) and it was quite an adjustment after growing accustomed to Turkish rule. While nationalist newspapers berated the British, “development in Baghdad accelerated in the twentieth century...Al Rashid Street grew even livelier in front of its arcade” (305). Donald Maxwell, a naval reserve officer and one of many travelers who descended upon Baghdad, had “mixed” experiences of it as “by night he found the city alluring, if not equal to his romantic imagination...by day, however, the sun bludgeoned colour out of this enchanted cityscape to reveal earthier realities” (306). To him and most others, it was still a place of Mesopotamian mud and squalor despite its oriental character. The decades to come were spatially contentious ones as different regimes vying for power edged the city that much closer to violence as normality. That civilizational confinement of old, the notion that destruction can be kept organized, had withered away with the rise of the Baathists in 1968 so much so that their plans for “decentralization” and developing “an internationally-inspired local design” (Van de Ven 60) ran antithetical to the hellfire they would soon unleash on the nation and its people. Violence would begin to be a regular intervention into the urban landscape.

Public space already transformed drastically from the late fifties to the seventies as it was carved out to the liking of oppositional groups with revolutions being the fashion of the day, “reversing the homogenising utopias of open space to divisive heterotopias.” Actions taking place within it were purely for the furthering of disruptive political aims effectively conflating the public with the private. Stepping outside ostensibly meant thrusting oneself into a political position. Architectural critic Nicolai Ouroussof defines this “as a war against the public realm” (Van de Ven 64) and so spatial policy was geared towards the exhibition of authoritarian rule. The performance of identity was thus mediated through this ruthlessness and any other manifestation that did not pour into the propagandistic state was stifled. It became passive and unpopular principles stood in the place of a plurality of voices. This complexity moved onto the battlefield as fascist leader Saddam Hussein led the country into the Iran-Iraq War and Gulf War. Sporadic destruction in the past became abrupt and unapologetic on Baghdad during the latter conflict as this marks the starting point of relentless bombing. Over the following years, “as the country sank into an abyss of endless economic woes and social degradation, brought about by international sanctions,

Saddam Husayn...began elevating tribal identity to the forefront of Iraq's political and ideological concerns" (Dawisha 564). With the Iraq War of 2003, the fabric of society was far too weak to push back the ruinous invasion and Toby Dodge calls to mind French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who remarks that the state appeared as an "ensemble of fields that are the sight of struggles" (113) pointing to the reconfigured relationship of space to continual collapse. Already a war space before this calamitous development, it now teeters on the brink of non-being with rapid fragmentation affecting what little spatial identity is left. The spatialization of the wounded city, after the internalization of trauma, has changed radically. With violence and ruin part of the daily lived experience, it now presents itself as not just physically but psychologically in a different place.

1.2. Theorizing Space in a Poetics of Destruction

The mere suggestion of a critique of space, as made clear by Henri Lefebvre who concedes that it comes out of the blue, "is liable to seem paradoxical or even intellectually outrageous" because it is not a person or a thing. It is neither subject nor object. Many might then wonder how a city as a complex system, generating intersecting phenomena, nonlinear, hierarchical, growing beyond comprehension and giving off an energy that is hard to pin down is accessible. The answer has several times over been that it is not. Even an aspect as crucial as terminology to discuss it rationally within that particular brand of criticism is lacking, "...the reasons for this lack themselves need explaining" (92). But the difficulty to intellectualize should never minimize the significance of urbanistic theory. The city is the space, after all, where much of humanity lives in the modern world and is no less appealing as an aesthetic object than the constructs of art, literature and the like that have earned schools of thought. The claim is true that, comparatively, space appears intangible because that single person or thing is multiplied into a complicated web. Yet part of that complexity is the fact that the different cogs in the machine, be they physical structures or human beings, do not remain separate from one another. When the spatiality that brings the varied elements of a city together "is placed beyond our range of vision in this way, its practical character vanishes and it is transformed in philosophical fashion into a kind of absolute" giving rise to its ethos. This is a breakthrough as far as the understanding of space as every lived experience will pour into a "fetishized abstraction" (93). Even that explanation has a theoretical error though and does not quite account for social presence. In trying to grasp Lefebvorean theory, Stuart Elden furthers this question around how to read urbanity. He knows that space frustrates any attempt at comprehending it precisely due to that heterogeneity and, though tempting, "the phenomena cannot be reduced to a system of signs or a semiology." It is too dogmatic a strategy for the French Marxist philosopher, very reductive to make the experience of space methodological. So much as the thought of doing so would prove to be greatly unfruitful.

There is some reason to be doubtful about any approach to understanding space that restricts itself to semiology because doing that would discount the perspective of experience. This is why Lefebvre moved away from "this systemization." There had to be a holistic look so he brings into focus the analysis of everyday life "situated between structuralism and phenomenology" (148) and in those transitory moments real life happens. Charles Baudelaire, for whom modernity was informed by this ephemeral quality, saw this as being no less than the "fantastic reality of life" (15) and unless artists distilled it into their cultural products they would run the risk of losing whatever originality an abrupt experience can bring. So space is just that, identifying and engaging with the momentary to assess, appreciate and see through to the perpetual. This is why talk of a fetishized abstraction is never quite satisfactory leading to that theoretical error. To Lefebvre, "space is social morphology..." and picturing it "as a frame or container into which nothing can be put unless it is smaller than the recipient" underestimates it. Producing space as a concept and nothing more clearly contradicts and stands in the way of everyday details, taken in by the keen observer, being assembled into "a whole reality" (94). From this comes to life idiomatic meaning, a search for that vague something maybe hidden in a quick interaction or spatial forms and trends repeating themselves across a city. Space in urban life thus contends with the immediacy of the real eventually leading to some semblance of a spirit and not the bareness of the abstract. It does nothing to find meaning in the structure of an urban space.

Yet even looking at space through the lens of production, as Lefebvre has done, does nothing to dismantle the violence intrinsic to the abstract brought on by the capitalist project taking shape in the Iraqi capital as a forever war. This is because the tradition of producing space is always predicated on vicious spatial destruction, "for abstraction's modus operandi is devastation, destruction, even if such destruction may sometimes herald creation." Herald creation it certainly does because ruin retains the full capacity to circle back into construction but he critically and rather sharply warns against that disguising its predilection for brutality. Comparatively, the disruptive and very disordered nature of conflict shows that the manner in which creation by way of destruction operates is from a different hermeneutic. It is firstly essential for the continuation of life, however fragile, when the spatially destructive essence of capitalist production in its neoliberal phase is a belligerent assertion of elite power rather than how it implicitly asserts itself in the Western context. This nuance is, for that part of the world, kept intact however quickly fades away in Baghdadi urban life. In the West, liberal thought relishes in standing against capitalism and its tendencies seeking to demolish it as an economic system in which income is set by free-market forces but does not see how the ideologies come together abroad. Forever war is the neocapitalist activity

par excellence causing them to converge in a highly synergistic relationship and Iraq can hardly be faulted for not noticing the difference. They work in unison, one furthering the other in a causal method. The new interventionism going into the new millennium, playing out like a textbook example in the Iraq War, was such that the globalism of capitalism would go hand in hand with the extension of a liberal-democratic society. They would do nothing of the sort. Instead, the city would be hijacked. To reuse or remodel ruination is to contribute to the reclamation of social space. Secondly, as part of that creative process, violence is rooted in and not kept away from the finished product felt forcefully by the onlooker and stressing that whatever is created problematizes abstraction passing "...for an absence" (Lefebvre 289). Almost immediately, the metaphysical link between subject and object is one of recognition by the former to the latter. The person viewing this piece of work will know that it originated in destruction.

In a nod to Marxist thought, Lefebvre expands and, rather pointedly, spatializes the notion that "the productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property." A way to emerge unharmed from this crisis is "by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces" (Marx and Engels 16) and, once more, the conceptual basis of this point of paradox can be taken further when relocated to the Baghdadi space, that harsh spatial reality that physically destroys and not merely fashions a catastrophe of overproduction with a mind to continue the accumulation of wealth. It is, simply put, that exclusive to the space and spatiality of war is a sense of productive destruction. This is due to the fact that it is "devastated and devastating" (Lefebvre 97) inflicting harm on human bodies and social relations but the ruination is so arrestingly present and obstructive that it pushes forward the conditionality, and necessity for the sake of persistence, of creation. This process speaks the language of the rhythms, patterns and forms of pain not once secluding itself from the debris thus reclaiming social space.

So the function, structure, experiential layers and parameters of a city are complicated enough to even begin to understand it but there is more to the architectural reality of Baghdad going on to affect its character. This has been and is the regularity of destruction. Damage runs deep to the extent that "Iraq has become a theatre for the chaos, for killings and kidnappings" (Otterman 13) and Iraqis of every persuasion will retell the same nightmare, "houses bombed, possessions lost, children kidnapped, lives destroyed" (18). A destroyed place, like a sound and functioning one, has a particular poetics. Frequency here is a prerequisite to a major change that has affected the capital. When a physical phenomenon is so commonplace that it permanently disfigures spatial configurations, it is no longer just what the traumatized public see but what they feel. It is no longer mere politics

because violence that happens enough will in time follow the survivors home as it were and leave an indelible mark on the landscape. Ruin as a state of being does not go away when the bloodied streets are cleaned. As far as the production of space, Lefebvre lamented capitalism colonizing the social sphere so his work sought to comprehend "how it is socially constructed and used" (Elden 105) but the broken city deals with a distinct set of variables. In Baghdadi spatiality, the capitalist project has let out its penchant to destroy. So it has given the capital nothing to make sense of but mounds of ruin. There is little in the way of creation as what dominated is regressive erasure. Therefore, space must find another way to define itself. The consistent ruining of space as a result ceases to stand outside of place-based identity because it now seeps in situating it in a state of negotiation of self. This is, in other words, a recreation of urban character precisely since space has been altered drastically by ruination. There is essentially a phenomenology to destruction then that sees it paradoxically yet expectedly becoming a part of what characterizes a war-torn space. Surely, there is no production of sociality and freedom in such a place, both conditions leading to great tensions even in a thriving urban center, but recurrent desocialization and limitation. Yet the architectural reality now central to the Baghdadi space is at once informed, tested and transformed by destruction that naturally evolves into a force that produces. It is now a force that paradoxically becomes an identity marker. Crossing over into this phenomenological ontology of space warrants looking into what Gaston Bachelard added to it.

He described the poetic image that can come to life through the conscious experience of architecture thus restoring the subjectivity of these immobile structures through the eyes of the human observer. So a building can have an image and come to life. It would imprint on the mind and in the heart of every onlooker. In essence, all barriers would be crossed making way for a transsubjective circumstance. This means that a strong connection exists between the piece of construction and those standing before it as they begin to realize its fullness when in that short-lived instant the image that emanates holds within it a specific reality. It is more than just a plain and inanimate object. Between Lefebvrian and Bachelardian thought is a bit of a gulf with the leap from the physical to metaphysical though requiring belief in the transcendental power of space yet there is a sense of a continuity. These theoretical formulations more than account for spatial practice and spaces of representation that are social and imagined however need to meet in the middle as far as space that is lived. The two French contemporaries, on the other hand, occupy the two extremes on either side of lived space. Edward Soja fills this gap nicely with his proposition of a thirdspace. It fits as an intermediary given its handling of space and spatial awareness from the standpoint of having it simultaneously signify opposing spheres, a concept in which "everything comes

together...subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (57). Clearly furthering what Lefebvre theorized, this is what he calls lived space. It builds on the social factor by giving equal status to history and spatial constructs, what he names a definitive trialectics of human geography.

Just as this thirdspace takes social space and makes it lived, it forms a connection with Bachelard who similarly animates it. Otherwise dead topographies are brought to life. Though in a poetics of destruction, the object that is part of a spatiality of ruin is not merely inanimate. The untouched scene of carnage like those peppering Baghdad is a telling one. The object is brutalized, even bastardized when new elements are added to it rather chaotically because of the surrounding violence, fragmentary and what it has become, not what it was, is what the viewer first lays eyes on. So the standard “poetic imagination” when looking at any misshapen structure causing an emotional response to appear “on the surface of the psyche” (Bachelard i) presents the situation of giving weight to the ordinary within the unforgettable, flipping his notion but remaining true to the aesthetic process and method. The comforts and mysteries of home, a focus of his ontological study, or any modernist piece of architecture is typically the ordinary in this case and inspecting it brings into focus deep-seated longings and memories that are able to create new worlds.

The unforgettable on the other hand, an “urban unplanning” (Izady) of sorts, turns violence done onto streets and buildings into the new normal and for life to move on albeit inextricable from misery, any trace of meaning taken from it is an exercise in self-lamentation surely but it then moves into finding strength through and not in spite of a place of weakness. It must in that pile of wreckage actively look for the ordinary. This is not in the sense that the image of violence will now be registered in the mind by the poetic imagination as what is ordinary. Instead, it is trying to find something that corresponds in that spatial reality to the relative normality of old. Relative of course because Baghdad and indeed Iraq have not had actual peace for some time. Depending on the extent of demolition, these could be any personal effects and indeed those that are communal thus shared. Diaries, dolls, items of clothing, shop signage torn off of entryways, tables, chairs and so on and so forth, allowing for the reliving of “memories of protection” (Bachelard 6). All of these items bear the visible marks of hurt always present but it crucially forms a connection between human memory and the imagination that gives way to life. It is though, in so many words, life after death. So this poetics of destruction lives and breathes the repurposing of pain, a performative process and the main part of it is stressing the impact of the familiar.

Intimate spaces and this philosophy of at-homeness, as conjectured by Bachelard, emerges from within while the spatialities of deconstruction spawned by capitalist-driven wars emerge from without. Everything that is extracted and reutilized from that poetic experience comes from the discomfiting, objectively horrifying and above all visible actuality of what is no longer there. What takes shape in the construction and employment of this dark poetics however is the transformative function that allows it to enjoy the same awakening of spirit when responding to the home he glorifies.

This awakening is shared between both constructed and deconstructed spaces because there is equally a profound release after that phenomenological moment in time, “we feel a poetic power rising naively within us.” In both images that reach into and touch the soul, there are “resonances, sentimental repercussions, reminders of our past” yet one begins and continues seamlessly in the positive using the resonance-reverberation of unscathed nests, corners and drawers that are part of a dreamscape to awaken new depths that are exuberant while the other festers in the negative slowly evolving into a narrative of reclamation. It is a show of power as the person experiencing this disheveled space tries to take back what has been aggressively stripped away. The two psychological actions engaging with poetic imagination lead to a place of poetic creation, “towards the outpourings of the mind and towards the profundities of the soul” (Bachelard xxiii). For the latter, it is reminiscent of the city as oeuvre, that coveted right to it, the notion of the everyday and its vigor and the occupation and recovery of social space that Lefebvre spoke of. When the poet, the artist, even the passerby situates himself in the destroyed space or it is enforced upon him, much like Baghdad where ruin is common, ready to engage in the reverberations of a poetic image, the practices of habitation introduce a “rethinking of architectural imagination” (Stanek xxxiv). Being in this material reality for long enough will in other words allow the subject to live beyond and against the physical pain to access a degree of strength. Thus an awakening, that desired reclamation of space to which Lefebvre himself replies “why not?” to the question “could we refer to such a transformation of the building as an architectural revolution?” (27). From within a space of disintegration arises the anticipated moment taking the geographic to the symbolic.

The poetics of destruction function as fertile ground for opening up the architectural imagination presenting ruin with “relative autonomy” to change and embrace the potentiality of becoming the very tool towards reclamation. It offers it the possibility of a departure from the physical instead of the refrain insisting “there is nothing to be done, nothing to be thought” (Stanek xxxiv). When the spatial energy of ruination corresponds with that of the poetic image and hence human memory, “as soon as you choose to live...despite the danger” even for a moment, “you

effectively put the issue on hold, thus demonstrating the power of thought over the redoubtable forces of death.” It is never the denial of the perils of destruction, “not if you possess a modicum of perseverance” (Lefebvre 4), but the imaginary contributing to a practical transformation not restricted to a limited form. Again, the repurposing of remains or what Robert Smithson empirically labels “ruins in reverse.” That is, the opposite of “romantic ruin” or the idea that buildings “rise as ruins before they are built” (4) so that ruination remains an integral part even when any structure is reentered into the urban landscape as operational. What began as the remnants of a violent action affecting space prompting withdrawal evolves and opens up the possibility of a political, cultural and ideological statement. Its existence in the system and totality of space is precisely to become a visible marker of the trauma incurred and regain control of that hijacked spatiality through the reconditioning of destruction. They turn into something close to what Lefebvre calls “counter-projects” as part of “counter-spaces” (381), the negativity of the demolished space having the necessary dynamism and inspiring the desire for change that contributes to the remaking of it in contrary ways in response to the poetic imagination. The artist taking on this reformulation, whether by page or canvas, must seek to invoke the Bachelardian tradition, “to turn the world upside down using theory, the imaginary, and dream...” (Lefebvre xl), by attending to the different elements that operate as creative heuristics. These elements appear in the physical reality of spatial destruction while carrying rich histories of aesthetic force into the present moment. The greatest strength of the imagination in that instant is its transformative power that is in dialogue with the senses and able to refashion ruin into a narrative of agency. Paying attention to these elements of the spaces of this environment can elicit an emancipatory state. It is a mechanism by which there can be a modicum of order in an otherwise disorderly reality.

This understanding of the wounded city as a constant relation between ruin and its transformation by way of the poetics of destruction, rather than just remaining as a painful reminder of violence, perpetuates the notion of a place of contradictions. Baghdad today lives out an objective truth of retaining this incongruity as part and parcel of spatial character. Be it through the rebuilding of that demolished space or channeling the frustration of that demolition in works of art, everything is created in the image of that paradox. Life and death concomitantly exist in the urban interface. So comes into play the topophilia and topophobia dichotomy of Yi-Fu Tuan that encapsulates the framework of competing human emotions in the capital. Society, as far as the genesis of that connection to begin with, must privilege and attribute value to “the personal, the subjective, the affective and the moral” which has continued to resonate because eventually “the personal becomes political” (Hubbard and Kitchin 430). The truth of environmental perception, for Tuan, corresponds to the primacy of personal experience and self-discovery as the human

element is central to delivering the complexity of the sense of place. It is the human, after all, who conceptualizes and implements changes to space that become a product of their activity and this in a wartime context is underpinned by a quest for reclamation. The affective ties to environments central to topophilia as love of place including “fleeting visual pleasure; the sensual delight of physical contact; the fondness for place because it is familiar, because it is home...” (Tuan 247) remain despite the material conditions of war, even inspiring the repurposing of ruin since the very decision to do so stems from passion, but that pleasure of creation for the sake of devotion to a particular space showcases pain in equal measure. It is raw, bare and decidedly omnipresent. It arises from an unavoidable need to call attention to the hellscape as muse even when it has been reincarnated in the reflection of a love of place. Both the Baghdadi space and the creator interpreting it put forth a dualistic image and the centrality of violence is never made peripheral and easily perceptible in the finished product first attracting and then disturbing the viewer.

Topophilia playing out against the wastes and fragments of war is taken further than a categorically pleasant experience given that it is muddied by the dark shadow of violence that can strike at any moment. Xing Ruan and Paul Hogben describe topophobia, or fear of place, in the modern world as “an architecturally confined interior world” (6) part of a defensive architecture that seeks to protect from the paranoia of said fear. The urban has to possess an unchanged nature which “is necessary” despite it being more notional than physical “for our changing emotions need something permanent to hang on to” (4). Yet in a wartime space, each violent act is an expository one defacing architecture and moving inhabitants into a spatial reality of living with the abject and grotesque. The state, the private citizen, even the foreign investor may frame, roof and plaster over the demolition but every wave of ruin strips away the layers. The deep cuts of ruination are there for all to witness and buildings can scarcely be left alone to assume their new identities. Pain is fresh and ever-changing, quite instantaneous as well so that reactions can barely keep up, that subject and object are in full view of the topophobic. Expectedly, the dichotomous categories that Tuan envisioned are thrust upon the Baghdadi social narrative without one having to be hidden and it is the jarring spectacle of war that enforces this contradiction. So the creator recognizes that intellectualizing ruination is akin to salvaging the city as “the identity of a place derives in large degree from what that place is not” be it an imagined past or the hope for a utopian future. But the identity of a place of terror “...can also be produced by our anxieties and manias” (Janz 192) so that there is no other choice but existing in the transitory. If one accepts it as a pleasant place, it is as a result of the unconditionality of that attachment of course, as it is the motherland, strengthened by the sympathy extended after the death and destruction of war however it persists also due to the reconstructive

beautification of pain plain for all to see. Anyone looking upon a previously ruined structure can express genuine emotion at its resilience and contribution to his sense of belonging yet very clearly glean the ruin that it continues to don. It and the wartime space thus flirt with the conception of the visually contradictory situating it perpetually in a place of recreating itself. The hurt cannot be wished away so it takes on this new purpose. The energy of the city is fed by this versatility in character so that there always exists the potential to read ruin differently.

1.3. Mutuality of Structural Ruin and Devastation

To even begin evoking an understanding of Baghdadi spatiality today translates into reckoning with the dilemma of the wounded space as a physical actuality surely but also how it may extend into a metaphysical one. The spatial wound is the critical starting point, problematized by way of default, and as it is engaged with critically emerges as the solution. What must be done is working to give credence to the latter if only so that the city may survive. The notion being proposed registers the scope of architectural change in the broken city, plain for the person walking through it to observe, although focus as far as what is being argued rests in the conceptualization of a new image of urbanity. The key is to emphasize how ruin and ruination, as object and process respectively, go on to evolve into an inevitable phenomenology. History must first be mined to extract moments in time that have been pivotal as far as the spatiotemporal transformations in Baghdad before a deep analysis follows of key theoretical frameworks that can influence cultural production such as novels, poems and pieces of artwork. These representations do more than construe, modern offerings appearing as more of reinterpretations of interpretations. They attempt to privilege the voice of the city and they are the vessels through which it can speak its truth. This is primarily the doing of spatial destruction. It brings to bear more than enough subject matter and stimulus for the imagination with only the medium to artistically treat it lacking. With each rise and fall, such creators, many of whom regard the capital home, match whatever pain or fleeting pleasure it is experiencing. Furthermore, it speaks all of these complexities back to it. These works of innovation, most prominently fiction, are representative of various periods of the spatial degradation of the city over the course of the twentieth and twenty first centuries. Poetic voices that have solemnly and venerably elegized it cover a wide span of time, mere decades after its founding to the present. As for art, several pieces by Iraqi artists working with everything from mixed media to the photographic image have been embraced the world over. They are all notable pioneers of the modern artistic movement and who integrate ruin innovatively into their finished pieces. The topic of discussion that captivates them, an attempt at fathoming the state of post-war wreckage in the city, is one that is incredibly poignant and assists in communicating an already established phenomenological depth. So along with the words and

sketches crosses over the wrenching sentiment. Prose specifically evolves into and takes on the heightened emotionality of the poetic verse. It is a process that is ornamental in nature preserving the qualities and devices of aesthetic writing and visual presentation. It is further an intensity that is able to sustain its presence when the wounded material is translated onto the page or canvas and is ready to take on another appearance and form of life.

The use of theory should encompass a holistic spatial reading of the Baghdadi space that tackles its social production, poetics and a view of this wounded place as one that provokes contradictory emotions. Correspondingly, these notions are primarily brought forth by thinker and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, philosopher Gaston Bachelard and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. All the while, the three renowned theorists fulfill the essential role of rooting out from the innovations that reinterpret devastation the meaning behind the experience of everyday life. Representational space and representations of it follow. The findings that emerge are such that in the reconciliation between the real and unreal there can be an ideological consideration of what lies in their union. Firstly, there is the pressing need to rethink and retheorize the implications of space as wounded, that it ought not remain physical in a sense. The most intriguing part of such a revelation is not that a poetic rendering of the city is implicated onto it. It is that the complete and full encounter with a wrecked urbanity is at its core doing the implicating as it were. It is, beyond the tangible limitations, inspiring a different kind of energy that motivates towards a potentiality. Novelists, poets and artists alike recognize it fairly quickly. So ruin has the ability to and is the point at which life can start. It is at the heart of the very concept of being. Drifting through and exploring Baghdad as an urban environment in tatters will reveal this by way of an unassuming totality. The wanderer is essentially forced into a system of interaction with the space that corresponds with the blending of life and death. The second conclusion is that destruction is undoubtedly reified thereby assigned meaning, the devastating pain as thing. There is a certain power that comes from claiming the wound. From then on it can be shaped, reshaped, broken down and built back up again. Also when woundedness is passed through a process of reification, there is power still in having one compartmentalize it if he so wishes and return to the crushing agony that has become as normal as drawing breath. There is great tragedy in this image however it cements the truth of spatiality, hurt as a ubiquitous thing that can hence fade in and out of consciousness for the sake of mental sanity. Finally, and stunningly juxtaposed against the previous point around fixity, the city is in a constant state of renegotiation of character with each blow so that even the thing itself changes. As such, it is, though offputtingly, more dynamic than the space that has not been beaten down. The fact remains that no one can have a sustained and inflexible opinion about the capital the moment that

person steps into it. It is broken so the whole is a sum of different pieces that never truly come together but it functions somehow. That impenetrable spirit is not part of its structural materiality.

There is great opportunity to be explored as far as the city of Baghdad as a complex symbol strikingly living out the contradictions and spatialities of an especial urbanity. In every physical form and its intertwining with social interaction, there lies the antagonisms of lived space in the aftermath of complete destruction opening up, in fact legitimizing, the conditions and consequences of a new urbanistic reality. Space that is invested with or coerced into a certain kind of meaning will come to embody it. So there is initially the future exploration of scholarship in and around the epistemological features of the wounded space. It must be regarded as a notion unto itself. As such, a secondary line of study can interpret the structures, constructs and relationships of said spatiality to the extent that they contribute to a distinct metaphysicality. This leads into the next area of research that is an ethnographic and psychological look into the middle ground between life and death. The capital can be mined, be it in abstract or physical terms, to unearth the context of this conception in nature and how people respond to it. Perhaps a main idea within it is the ever-present dialectical tension. Lastly, there is much to be gained and discovered from a series of psychogeographical analyses into the devastated Baghdadi spatial realities and how physical assemblages however they present themselves feed into life in the wake of death. This would shape a wider conceptualization having to do with spatial woundedness or a code and method to comprehend it. Attention has to be paid to this most wounded capital, the findings of such queries surely a benchmark for all other urban centers suffering similar bouts of violent defacement. The ground practically speaks after so much despair was levied against it.

Everything that Baghdad has gone through as a city realizing the politics of woundedness and the atypical spatialization of the wound as a living being points in the direction of a clear poetics. What must be noted, as it experienced and continues to bleed in the wake of the 2003 Iraq War that hollowed it out, is that this transformation is quite naturally the next step because it cannot remain on the peripheries of trauma. In her article on an additional category of social settings, Patricia Aelbrecht suggests that besides the three realms of social life identified as work, home and third places, the informal setting of fourth places can be added since it involves “all activities in-between necessary activities: people-watching, walking, waiting and killing time” (134). One may wonder, however, whether the wounded space can be regarded as an extension of this idea allowing the spatialities of destruction to come together to form fifth places. This is perhaps where intellectual curiosity has to exert far greater effort. The war-torn space does not hand those who inhabit it the same tools

for this is when placeness effectively ends and becomes replaced with that which is antithetical to conventional spatial conditions. Nothing else ought to be expected when death invades life. In any urban center, “building space could transform to be as place...” (Al-Ani 150) yet the very same goes for destroying it so that ruination can also have the capability of creating. Baghdadi spatiality is easily an area today that, while it is an anti-space in the traditional sense, presents an example of how ruin can be absorbed into the process of place-making. Thus it undisputedly challenges the standard trope of what constitutes the physical form and function of a city. Instead of killing time, time itself kills which is evidenced by the scores of people martyred in the twentieth century and well into the current one. Death still looms large in the present. It is vital to underscore, across this duration, the Iran-Iraq War onwards being the beginning of the advent of everyday violence as it frightfully turned into the new normal. The tragic outcomes of these forty odd years coupled with their frequency have meant that the capital could not keep at bay the forming of a culture. Time bringing with it various shades of killings would slowly and forcefully enforce itself as a spatial ethos even though this would violate all known norms.

Except that this city historically, and when events are enriched with contextualist historiography, has never not sustained an erratic association with violence so the layman might be forgiven in thinking that it is living out its dire fate. After all, “just as the societies in Mesopotamia’s past were divided and filled with atrocities, violence, and conflict, Iraq’s present and future seem to be following the same pattern” (Armstrong 11) yet this is too simplistic an answer and an inaccurate one at that. It is burdened with the psychological toll of being the most assaulted urban space though this does not translate into a fixedness of place identity purely born from a volatile past. The important argument to put forth is that spatial character has changed regressing further since September of 1980 until the present day. The fall of Baghdad upon entering the twenty first century would be the peak of the pain of decades that have systematically repurposed the meaning of violence. Western travel journals, memoirs and the like, truly a Middle Eastern conundrum and not merely an Iraqi one, have repeatedly failed to move beyond the exoticization that entices them. Perhaps it is romantic to their “English-bred eyes” to forever imagine that the eastern city “exists more as a relic of the past” (Bell 47) but this is the rhetoric that has had calamitous political consequences. The Baghdadi space has primarily been misrepresented by such accounts, always spoken for when orientalist voices situate it in a liminality it cannot move on from. The practical truth of the matter is very different and it is high time that it shed this falsity tying it to a mythical image. Pieri significantly calls it an effort at masking “the real city, which is never seen for what it is, but fantasized for what it could be in terms of what it was and is no longer...” (1). Spatially speaking, it does

not teeter on an invisible fence, forming spatialities of ruin that find a place in otherwise normal life, as what has happened reads more like complete assimilation. Space has taken on the wound as part of its fabric and it is the job of the aloof flaneur to catch up to this urbanistic truth. People would be foolish to think it was the other way around as the wounded area does not cater to the emotionality of man.

True that in this condition there is something to be desired, a missing urbanism if it can be thought of as such, along the lines of what once was still all of what is visually displayed in the city rests on a genuine and finalized process. It is one whereby ruination has long since engaged with the capital anthropologically altering it into an affective space. When there is near-daily critical engagement with the spatial wound, it will penetrate lived experience because there is in that subject-object association a sociality that extends “beyond an economically deterministic reading of spatiality” (Irving 1). Woundedness most ardently creates. More so than this, it is a patent though outwardly inexplicable part of the spatial whole. This is, bar none, the everyday reality at work especially given that the Baghdadi space must tolerate its markings in a physical sense. This is the case even when it is a pure contradiction. Wherever one looks, there are the urban forms and mannerisms of a disturbing marriage, the arrival at a consolidation, between place and the force of destruction. An undeniable rhythm has formed. It is marked by a formulaic procedure quickly absorbing ruin into the nevertheless kinetic energy of a wounded city. In an anecdotal illustration as she speaks to locals, Loveday Morris reports from one of the most bombed streets in 2016 in the Iraqi capital that “is no stranger to bombs.” It is a sickening revelation that even with this established fact “this shopping street in central Baghdad bears a disproportionate share of their misery” with the neighborhood of Karrada having suffered explosions thrice in that year. But many, to her surprise, “want the street to open again...” and Jaafar Fadel remarks that “it needs to reopen so the wheel of life and death can go on...a while back there was a big one just there. I flew 20 foot through the air” (Morris). This is clearly not a play of opposites. Nor is it, despite the agony of human suffering mourned as it should be, an indication that social life sits somewhere in a boundless middle. A bomb dreadfully goes off, body parts are scattered to and fro, people yet have the will to live however delicately, architecture is violently marred and engendered within spatiality after the conclusion of this terrible episode is a coming together of life and death.

It is a full mutuality between structure and devastation. In this way, the wound can be intellectualized opening up a pathway to an urban identity that is a matter of survival. This is precisely why literature and artwork, these telling pieces of cultural production, are so instrumental in their highlighting of what the capital feels. The writers and artists know as

they treat it in their creations that it is one with the wreckage that has swallowed it whole. Novelist Sinan Antoon signifies this image with his main character Jawad Salim in *The Corpse Washer* whose every waking minute and the early hours that ensnare him in a world of nightmares necessarily amplify a tangled phenomenon. Though he hoped to aesthetically sculpt the many dimensions of life, “he must now contemplate how death shapes daily life and the bodies of Baghdad’s inhabitants” (Al-Omar 217). The poet Sa’di Shirazi after the fall of the city in 1258 lamented it deeply forsaking his very being such that he may join the beloved in death, his ultimate goal wanting to deliver the reality of destruction. As for Hanaa Malallah who is a pioneering artist based in London, the theme running across all of her art, she does not simply enmesh the two but imagines into existence the everyday as springing from the bowels of ruin. The message is painfully clear. To make it, Baghdad must appropriate the pain even donning it so that visual markers pepper its main streets and back alleys. Walls, checkpoints, damaged buildings, piles of debris and many other remnants of violence appear before the onlooker as gritty reminders of a not too distant past. It is difficult for those uninitiated to presume that the space had ever known anything but the stinging pain of great instability.

In this thinking, they would most probably be correct when history is considered. Part of demystifying the sharp descent that took an unmatched utopia to dystopia is to understand that violence has been at its side for thirteen centuries. Many seek to nowadays give credence to “the rise of political Islam and ethno-sectarian politics” (178) like Harith Al-Qarawee does within the larger framework of Iraqi polity. Though exaggerated, it is not completely untrue because the past unearths a carefully and culturally constructed sectarianization of space. The reason why the Iraq War registers as such a departure spatially, save for the Mongol invasion indeed its historical equivalent still far from modern memory, is that violence has migrated from the margin to the center to distressing effect. This fact alone calls for a retheorization of spatial character. People do not live in a city per se, according to Kevin Lynch’s conception on the nature of physical reality, “but inside the mental picture that they had built up of the city” (Khademi-Vidra 10). Now that traditionally latent violence took on a more dominant post-2003 role, space would advance beyond being dressed in the traumatic entirely embodying it psychologically in spite of itself. Herein lies the crux of this disorienting yet legitimate spirit of place, a poetics of destruction. The main point is that this identity is not in the least nominal. It suggests that even within the strictly real, Baghdad lives out the fantastical and imaginary when one takes into account all that has transpired. This poetics has made of the urban space a site of fantasy. Perhaps the only one that has reached the highpoint of absurdist viciousness, it stunningly overlays brick and mortar, tangible architectural forms, with the normative power of the

figurative wound. As a result, it is the arts that are inspired by space as a sort of magic realism never the opposite. Everyday life has crossed over into the unreal so much so that urbanity, simply walking through the dazed streets, is mediated by the poetic imagination. This is far more than just destruction creating in the wounded city given that slipping into this character of great contradiction is how it goes on to survive the physical blow.

Something of a metaphysical persuasion or the power of ruination to create has to desperately emerge where the pile of rubble ends so that the landscape can lean on the possibility of persisting alongside it. It is in Bachelard's famed journey through the poetics of space that he advises that "if we remain at the heart of the image under consideration, we have the impression that, by staying in the motionlessness of its shell, the creature is preparing temporal explosions, not to say whirlwinds, of being" (111). The wound manifested in spatiality, a sensation hung in the air or seen in physical form, has worked its way into the Baghdadi spirit of place suspending it in a now that is the stuff of sheer imagination. Not in the romantic sense or that of actual magic which would be ludicrous but conjoining life and death. Their pitiful confluence in the real world confounds rationality before seeping into architecture to create an atmosphere that is powerfully suggestive. Even when the passerby beholds an imposing structure bearing the scars of war and is locked in that moment of aesthetic force, it is natural that he will receive the same brokenness however it remains a mark of creation. Consequently, there is a constant arrival at and recycling of ruin. What is thus crucial to remember is that woundedness participates in the troubled city towards the continuation of existence albeit from within this vicious loop. Forever infected, it can only ever know its own kind of happiness not what it would normally feel like. The imperative difference between this negative poetics of sorts and what Bachelardian thought posits is that the deeply wounded space, as it is morphed into a place of flights of fancy in the midst of the real, is as key a character as the person when they are both united in that poetic image. It is not uniquely the responsibility of said observer to reach into the recesses of the psyche so that this moment that is independent of causality is achieved since he is helped along by the wound before him.

Established evidence of this particularity are the Iraqi creators who, when seeking to reproduce the insurmountable pain of Baghdad, find that it is handed to them as soon as they engage with it. They can then settle it into a creative space using their artistic sensibilities. They are such substantial conduits because of seeing through to and legitimating the potentiality of physical remains. On the whole, life does not disappear after death attacks it as it is extracted from its jaws except to live on the other end means doing so with a tainted consciousness. Virtually lost in transposition, the city in crisis living out the imaginary sees no use in

understanding the nature of its contradiction, "to delve into the dialectical movement between form and content, between thought and reality" (Lefebvre 19). The poetics of death in life are a paradox certainly suffocating space into a place of non-being, culminating into human experience as ambivalence that Tuan is most intrigued by, yet there is something ignited within the two opposing pulls ever-present and fleeting making it come alive. Investigating that middle ground is a ripe occasion to identify that the dialectical tension does not simply dislocate life and death as separate categories as what is left is the birthing of a new spatial form. To the Baghdadi space, this amounts to the immaterial element of fantasy taken on as the spirit of place immediately tapping into the useability of ruin. The violent moment subsides and the wound is next poetically rendered, reabsorbed into the city itself having learned to privilege the awfully unreal and this begins a hermeneutic process producing meaning.

So much of this coming to fruition is reliant upon the power of the poetic imagination when the layered complexity of the wounded city lets out an energy that implicates a particular phenomenology onto architecture. Often times, it cannot be explained but is most certainly felt. Nothing suffices more in attempting to describe this phenomenon. It just is at the end of the day, this indefinite something that the curious stroller would swear is pulsating in the derelict Baghdadi roads and it charms him. Hence the wound somehow reenergizes space though through the prism of destruction but it lives on nonetheless. Spatial identity does not need to scramble to do away with "the impacts of changes in buildings and places" (Samir 216) instead leaning in to the inevitable so that it essentially colors identification. If Baghdad were a person, following a psychogeographical line of thought to its very extreme, he would epitomize confusion and still defend it so long as he has gone on living. Nothing stops the capital, the phenomenological feeding off of its varied nuances. It is today the urban space nursing the most hurt. True as this may be, it is an urbanity firmly concentrated on the function of employing the fanciful, stimulated by the memory and imagination of its dwellers, towards the construction of the real image. Al-Fadl ibn Naubakht, an eighth-century Persian astrologer, foretold in "the city's horoscope" that it was to be blessed with "long life, fame, grandeur, and the special quality that no Caliph would ever die in it" (Wendell 122) and it is difficult to not think that history had not attempted to prepare a destiny for the city that was purposefully the reverse of his joyful prophecies. A special quality of a different kind even so remains. Just as it always has, in this day and age, this aching spatiality imagines itself anew despite the inhabitants that come and go. In a poetics of destruction, in this current iteration of a character of real-as-imagined space, it is not just recourse to the function of inhabitation that permits it to carry on. It is equally the ruin wounding it beyond reason yet offering the

potentiality of life so that every time it dies painfully it can look onward to rising again.

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