1 Spaces Both Radical and Revolutionary: The Intersectional Masjid

The masjid is composed of a set of representative frameworks that reflect its sociopolitical identity back to itself and to others.

1.1 Introduction

Masjids are intersectional precisely because the individuals who create them are intersectional, maintaining any number of complex identities that together generate the unique character of a person and position them as members of multiple communities or groups simultaneously. Yet with this simultaneous membership also comes the possibility of simultaneous oppressions stemming from bias and discrimination against one or more of an individual's identities. The fact that masjids are brought into being by the performative ritual action of an individual means that such spaces naturally respond to the lived reality of this individual by maintaining potentially infinite variations in form, space, and place, all fundamentally attuned to an individual's unique condition and their subsequent position within the space of society.

The term "intersectionality" was first coined by jurist and critical race theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 as an approach to human identity and experience that recognizes that individuals are composed of multiple identities that are not mutually exclusive. The combination of overlapping, combining, and intersecting identities that compose an individual in turn has the possibility of producing diverse, highly unique experiences of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and oppression. Thus, various modes of oppression, whether they be racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc., are not experienced as singular disenfranchising units, but as a broader interactive system of subjugation.[1] Intersectionality is

[1] In her landmark article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Crenshaw notes with regard to the experience of black women: "Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both

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also an evolutionary condition in that as social systems change and shift, new intersections of inclusion/exclusion/oppression are created. Along these lines, intersectionality as a mode of approach has also been broadened to focus on issues of gender and sexuality, which will be explored later in this chapter.

Theories such as intersectionality also maintain an interesting space within conversations of globalization, not only in terms of the modes through which individuals are constructing identities across various borders and boundaries but also how "social lives are constructed, not only in single countries, but in transnational spaces ... [or] ... tangible geographic spaces that exist across multiple nation-states *and* virtual spaces" (Purkayastha 2012, 56). Broad-based networks have led to the movement of goods, images, and ideas across space, enabling "many groups to create lives that extend far beyond the boundaries of single nation-states," settling in multiple sites around the globe as "transnational villagers ... engaging in politics in 'homelands'" (Purkayastha 2012, 56). Likewise, the growth of the digital realm has not only enabled the emergence of "cyber migrants" who utilize technology to "work" in the "global north" while being physically based in the "global south" but has also enabled a different type of existence through the physical elision of the "consequences of gendering, racialization, class, and other social hierarchies to which they are subjected in their tangible lives" (Purkayastha 2012, 56). Yet just as modes of living in the contemporary period have evolved in some ways to counteract established institutions of intersectional oppression, this has also led to the revamping of established institutions toward generating new sociopolitical forms of control and oppression as well as new modes of disenfranchisement that in some cases find form in the spatial environment.

With regard to situating masjids in contemporary Islamic Africa within this discussion, it is important to revisit the fact that being Muslim also exists as a component of one's intersectional identity, functioning within a larger Venn diagram of realities within an individual where religion in conjunction with ethnicity, culture, race, sexuality, gender, caste, and socioeconomic status all intermingle in unique, unpredictable, and somewhat uncontrollable ways. Within various Afro-Islamic societies, a broad spectrum of stakeholders have contributed to the meaning and messaging of masjid space over time as a site that has come to act as a mode of spatializing and thus legitimizing a group identity. Masjid space in the contemporary period is becoming both a key apparatus and a signifier of

are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender" (Crenshaw 1989, 140).

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these various conversations, negotiations, and oppressions as a sociopolitical construct, informed largely by the histories and narratives that inform its particular context.

Toward exploring this topic, this chapter focuses on three case studies, two in South Africa and one in Mali, that illustrate the modes through which masjid space has been utilized to generate feelings of belonging and exile as a response to conditions of intersectional existence. In South Africa, masjid spaces have emerged as mechanisms with which to push back against institutional biases and discrimination that have enabled the spatial exclusion of women and LGBT+ members of the South African Muslim community from participation in mosque-based spiritual performances. In contrast, recently in Mali, masjid spaces (and specifically their destruction) have been deployed as tools of trauma toward disempowering Islamic identity, specifically Timbuktu's largely Sufi identity, through the transformation of the landscape into a spatial martyr. In each case, the masjid does not exist as a stand-alone space, but is an active representation of intersectional being, operationalized as a mechanism toward establishing and actively inserting identity and agenda onto the spatial environment.

1.2 Women in the Masjid: Gender Equity and Cape Town's Open Mosque

This story thus begins in South Africa with the Open Mosque, a masjid located in the suburb of Wynberg right outside of Cape Town, South Africa (Figure 1.1a and 1.1b). Housed in a repurposed autobody shop, the Open Mosque opened in 2014 and frames itself as a space "for all Progressive, Open-Minded, and Forward-Looking Muslims." The Open Mosque exists under the direction of Imam Taj Hargey, who has a PhD in religious studies from Oxford and became a highly controversial figure in Great Britain for his "Ban the Burqa" campaign in 2014.[2] Importantly, though, Hargey and by extension the Open Mosque has taken an aggressive stance on what it perceives to be the general condition of Islam in South Africa: a defunct religion based on "mindless rituals, superstitious legends, cultural mythology and a **blatant sexist contamination** of the **pristine faith** ... [based not on] ... Islam's supreme text but from suspect subsidiary sources" (bold face part of the original quote). It also targets growing Wahabist "distortions" of the Qur'an as being the

[2] Hargey has strong opinions concerning the practice of veiling, calling it a cultural rather than a religious practice. In a rather colorful comparison, Hargey notes: "If I want to put a bone through my nose – I have a right ... but then do I have a right to say a bone through my nose is an Islamic thing?" (Seemungal 2015).

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(a)

(b)

Figure 1.1 a and b Exterior and interior views of the Open Mosque, Wynberg, Cape Town, South Africa, 2018. Images by the author.

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primary instigators for "growing Muslim alienation to and disaffection with contemporary religion." Along these lines, the Open Mosque also singles out various South African Islamic institutions like the Muslim Judiciary Council as instigators of this condition, specifically as a "**self-appointed**, **un-accountable** and **non-transparent body** of often poorly trained clergy" who offer "no **recognized haven** for progressive or **thinking Muslims** fed-up with a 'fairy-tale' faith or non-Qur'anic dogmas" (Open Mosque n.d.). In another move of ideological positioning, the mosque identifies "reason and logic" rather than "blind belief and robotic ritualism" as the path forward for Islam in South Africa.[3]

The Open Mosque offers an alternative space of Islamic practice through a forward path that, ironically, has its basis in historical Islamic practice, and much of this is represented through the spatial apparatus of the structure. The structure of the masjid, for example, "heeds the **original format** of the first house of prayer" by maintaining no gendered entrances and having no visual or physical barriers or partitions to separate the sexes. Along these lines, the mosque congregation holds that "sexual equality and gender parity is an unequivocal Qur'anic ordinance and that women's intrinsic rights are not subordinate to those of their male counterparts" (Open Mosque n.d.). Thus, there are no visual or structural divisions within the prayer hall itself, which is an open, square room that maintains a full 360-degree view of one's surroundings (and coinhabiters). The prayer hall and the study space are also not separate, but occupy side-by-side unpartitioned spaces, which gestures not only toward a general idea of transparency between worship and education but also the intimate connection between intellect and spiritual practice, an interpretation that stands as one of the foundations of the Open Mosque. The open plan of this structure also represents a spatialization of the mosque's theological position in that the Open Mosque is not affiliated with any specific school of Islamic thought and focuses on individual empowerment through a steady rotation of secular experts and religious specialists who act as sequential "Imams" and "ensure that the congregation benefit[s] from deliberate cross-pollination" (Open Mosque n.d.). As a side note, the fact that the Open Mosque is located in a repurposed autobody shop not only reflects the somewhat stark approach the congregation takes to Islamic practice and belief but also denies the necessity of

[3] I experienced the activistic ideology of Open Mosque members in my first inquiry. Upon asking if I could visit and whether I should dress a certain way, I was informed that I would be welcome to "witness liberal and progressive Islam in action" and that matters such as dress code were "merely the manufactured whims of a patriarchal clergy" and that the Open Mosque "has nothing to hide" (personal communication, Jamila Abrahams, 9/14/2017).

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a purpose-built iconography-riddled structure which has traditionally been deployed to proclaim Islam in a landmark fashion. Indeed, the Open Mosque harkens to a "stripped bare" version of masjid space, characterized by a deemphasis of the space itself and a primacy placed on the structure as a functional container for the educated body engaged in a process of spiritual growth and enlightenment.

The sanctuary itself, with its lime-green walls and fluorescent lighting, underscores this progressive, content-oriented focus, as does the presence and calligraphic style of the *Shahada*, or the Islamic declaration that there is no God but God and that the Prophet Muhammad is his messenger, which is displayed along the mosque walls in a continuous banner (Figure 1.2). Unlike more traditional calligraphic styles that often represent the *Shahada* with flourish to the point of illegibility in aesthetic script styles ranging from *Kufic* to *Naskh*, *Thuluth*, etc., the *Shahada* displayed in the Open Mosque is done so using a highly modernistic, almost calligram-esque style that is organized in a continuous panel around the room in vacillating colors. Although the use of calligraphic panels is traditional within the decorative program of many historical and contemporary mosque spaces, they are rarely deployed as a singular unit. Rather, they are part and parcel of a larger aesthetic program in which textual elements are combined and

Figure 1.2 Detail of the *Shahada*, Open Mosque, Wynberg, Cape Town, South Africa, 2018. Image by the author.

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manipulated into a variety of dizzying, often ambiguous combinations. The display of the *Shahada* in the Open Mosque is in stark style and, as the only decorative element in the room, pushes back against historically ornament-heavy interior programs in a way that emphasizes rather than obscures the message of the *Shahada* through its visual clarity, its singular presence, and its legibility, in turn underscoring the role of the space as functional and spiritual rather than an exercise in aesthetic experience. In many ways, the structure of the Open Mosque is the spatial equivalent of its mission statement: the masjid does not privilege useless ritualistic, fetishistic elements and instead aims to return to the fundamental elements of the faith as expressed in the Qur'an, in which both verses of the *Shahada* are found in Surahs 37:35 and 48:29, respectively. It is also in this way that the interior program emphasizes the supremacy of the Qur'an over complementary texts like the hadith as the sole source of Islamic guidance.

As one of the only gender-neutral masjid spaces in South Africa and the continent more broadly, the Open Mosque maintains an identity deeply embedded in both spiritual performance as well as sociopolitical messaging, a reality that is also reflective of the historical context of South Africa more broadly, whose historical narrative surrounding the politics of Islam, gender, and space is entrenched within a larger conversation concerning the relationship between space, history, and national identity in the pre-Apartheid, Apartheid, and now post-Apartheid period.

Islam arrived in South Africa only six years after the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oostindische Campagnie) established a supply depot on the South African coast in 1652. The first Muslims to arrive in this colony did so from Southeast Asia and were composed of Amboyans ("Amboya" being an Indonesia island) and Mardyckers (free men, loosely translated) who were brought over to help defend the depot against indigenous San and Khoi groups along the coast. Eventually, additional Muslim populations were brought to the region as an enslaved workforce, the Dutch having pegged the indigenous San and Khoi peoples as being "unreliable" and subsequently decimating their numbers in short order. Additional non-Muslim enslaved individuals were also delivered from Angola and present-day Benin (Loimeier 2013, 249).

Among these early Muslims was ʻAbdallāh Qād ī ʻAbd al-Salām, a.k.a. Tuan Guru ("Master Teacher"), a Moluccan religious scholar sent to the Cape in 1780 for conspiring with the British against the Dutch, who would subsequently become known as the father of South African Islam. He would be imam at the first mosque in the Cape Province, the Auwal Masjid, which would be the first of a steady stream of masjid spaces to branch off in its wake over the next few centuries.

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The Apartheid regime, however, would effectively curtail the rights, movements, associations, and access to spaces, spiritual and others, of nonwhite South Africans across the country, many Muslim communities included. Launched in 1948 under the direction of the newly elected National Party, Apartheid would also provide the impetus for Muslim communities to begin organizing and developing a more activist identity.[4] In 1961, Muslims in the Cape created the *Call of Islam*, an organization whose goal was to fight the oppression of Apartheid through the lens of Islamic ideology, declaring the political system *haram* or forbidden. The group was first led by Imam Abdullah Haroon, who died in police custody in 1969 and "became a renowned martyr for the anti-apartheid cause" (Sonn 1994, 15). Ten years later, the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) emerged, followed by spinoff movements like the Women's Islamic Movement and the Islamic Da'wah Movement, and it was during this period that many young Muslims also began participating in political demonstrations and underground antigovernment groups like the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) (Matthee 2008, 92); in fact, a handful of Muslim leaders such as Yusuf Dadoo, Ahmed Timol, Ismail Cachalia, and Fathima Meer became noted anti-Apartheid activist figures at this time (Khan 2017). Although the first Call to Islam eventually became defunct, it was revived in the mid-1980s by former members of some of the previous groups, the MYM and the United Democratic Front specifically, and has remained at the "forefront of Islamic social justice movements" (Sonn 1994, 15).

Yet this is not to say that the politicized identity that Muslim communities developed both before and during Apartheid was unified. Numerous cleavages occurred within this population, particularly with regard to politics, Islamic philosophy, race, ethnicity, and cultural identity. One particularly contentious issue was that of gender equality and inclusion, particularly with regard to the presence of women within the masjid space of the mosque. Numerous Muslim activist groups in the Apartheid and immediate post-Apartheid period have taken up this issue. Two aforementioned Muslim groups – the Muslim Youth Movement (established in 1970) and the Call of Islam, established thirteen years later

[4] It should be noted that this activist identity was also present before Apartheid. In the Cape Province during the period of the Dutch East India company (1602–1799), for example, the Muslim community at the time was actively engaged in creating a culture of resistance to both the company and the Dutch Reformed Church as a survival tactic to preserve their emergent identity. Muslim ritual practice and prayer in many ways became a mode of establishing "zones of freedom in a realm of legal, political and social oppression," largely because such activities were restricted. This also led to the creation of secret spaces of prayer or *langers* (prayer rooms), which came to act as the community's emergent masjids before the establishment of dedicated mosque spaces was approved (Loimeier 2013, 251).

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in 1983 – positioned women as active members within these respective organizations and pushed for women's rights and equality within the parameters of Islamic practice (Hoel 2013a, 83). Indeed, by the 1990s, the feminist discourse within South African Islamic circles had become more confident. The Muslim Youth Movement established a "Gender Desk" in 1993 manned by noted activist Shamima Shaikh, who acted as the National Coordinator and promoted a broader Gender Equality Campaign (Jeenah 2001, 11). The MYM was also behind the notable "women in mosques" campaign, which advocated for women's right to use the space and for the mosques themselves to provide the necessary facilities for them to do so. Yet this movement in particular drew overwhelming criticism from the ʻulama or Islamic religious scholarly group, who felt such a move represented a stark deviation from Qur'an proscription (Jeenah 2001, 13–14) in addition to representing a general challenge to the body of scholars themselves as the foremost interpreters of Qur'anic law.

It should be noted as well that such conversations are not and have never been specific to South Africa or Africa more generally. The history of separating women and men in Islamic religious space is both common and has taken many different forms. One of the first spatial tools deployed to this end was the *hijab*, which was originally an architectural partition and only later came to refer to a head covering that women wear.[5] Indeed, *hijab* as it was first conceived was a broad concept intimately connected to principles of modesty (*haya* in Arabic) and was first mentioned in the Qur'an as a type of barrier or screen, which gave the wives of the Prophet protection against those looking to slander them as in Qur'an Surah 33:53, which states "and when ye ask (the Prophet's wives) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen (*hijab*): that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs." The verses dealing with these architectural forms were also crafted during a time when slander and gossip were serious concerns, gaining particular prominence during the time of Muhammed when the Prophet's wife Aisha was accused and found innocent of adultery (BBC 2009). *Hijab* thus came to refer to a curtain or screen placed between men and women within a space that allowed them to converse without having to dress appropriately, although this practice was more common historically.

[5] A woman's head covering more appropriately called a *khimaar,* which is a piece of cloth (sometimes two) which covers the hair, ears, and neck while outside the home. In the contemporary period, the *hijab* as an element of one's personal appearance has taken on numerous additional realities as a fashion accessory, a statement of identity, a tool of empowerment, and even as a vehicle of activism.

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Although practices in South Africa vary across congregations, many communities have tended to favor an outright ban on the presence of women within the space of the mosque. In the contemporary period, some mosques have adopted more progressive views that have allowed women space in the form of separate entrances and rooms for ritual ablution, and spaces for prayer that run the gamut from balconies and mezzanines to basements and even backyards (Hoel 2013b). Yet due to the secondary and largely undignified nature of many of these additive spaces, mosques in South Africa largely continue to perform in accordance with dominant ideologies in Islam and some might say even broader South African society, which not only favors traditionalist views of women in Islam but also actively implements and reinforces the dominant gender power hierarchies of society. Thus, mosque spaces in South Africa have both historically and in the contemporary period been shaped by and continue to shape "the progress of gender domination" (Taleb 2005, 13).

Such entrenched beliefs with regard to women, and the active control of female presence and movement within Islamic physical and social space, have been vigorously defended through the use of Qur'anic verses such as Qur'an Surah 2:228, which states "Women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree over them." Likewise, Qur'an Surah 4:34 states: "Men are in charge of women," and Qur'an Surah 33:33 commands: "And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of ignorance" (Jeenah 2001, 9). Such verses have historically been interpreted to mean that women were not only of sub-par intellect and spirituality, but that they were inherently untrustworthy due to their tendency to gossip and their penchant for self-decoration (Jeenah 2001, 9). This is despite the fact that there are noted instances in the Qur'an when the Prophet not only advises men not to prevent women from attending prayers at the mosque, but also commands them to attend certain communal prayers such as that during the Eid. In addition, the prayer space of the Prophet himself included both men and women. Despite these elements, the presence of women within the spiritual space of the mosque is often positioned not only as a distraction, but also as inherently problematic in that their presence could potentially "desacralize or defile" space, regardless of the fact that mosque space as a space "set apart" is not endowed with a spirituality that would make such acts concerning (Hoel 2013b).

Specifically, it has been articulated that gender separation is a necessary contingent of a spiritually "pure" space. Unlike non-Islamic religious spaces that derive their spiritual capital from empowered relics/artifacts or geographic location/symbolism (as in the Christian tradition), the

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presence of sanitized bodies engaged in the committed performance of prayer generates the spiritual resonance of a masjid space; indeed, it is what gives the space its masjid identity and separates it from surrounded spaces. Yet the sanitized bodies that have historically been privileged with producing this spiritual space are historically gendered male and thus a hegemonic relationship has developed over time and space that equates the male body with the construction and configuration of spiritual space. The female body, in contrast, has innate sexual characteristics that must be either concealed or purged from the space in order for it to function appropriately and, in this case, the "body" is defined in multiple ways. The Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa indicated that a woman's voice is, in fact, part of her *'awrah* (literally translated as "nakedness") and thus constitutes a part of her "person" that should be publicly concealed. This element has been equated to a specific verse in the Qur'an in which Allah "appeals to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad to guard their speech in public so as not to stir desire in men" (Hoel 2013b). Thus, the voice of a woman should not only be *not* heard, but it should "be precluded from public consumption" and not address men within the sacred space of the masjid (Hoel 2013b). Interestingly, similar arguments arose with the establishment of *Radio Islam* in 1997, which allowed female speakers to participate on air. Even with the absence of a physical body, the "auditory" or vocal body of a woman was powerful enough to be considered an almost physical presence through the creation of a feminine sensescape (Hoel 2013b).

The notion of *'awrah* extends (obviously) to women's bodies and constitutes one of the main objections to the presence of women in the mosque. Women's bodies as constructs of desire have been regulated in numerous ways through the application of boundary-producing constructs ranging from the application of behavioral protocols as well as spatial divisions in the domestic space, public space, and masjid space. Based on this, "the need to conceal female corporeality," particularly in the masjid, "becomes essential, and in effect reinscribes the mosque spaces as normatively male" (Hoel 2013b). Along these lines, the presence of female congregants in a sacred (read male) space has thus been seen as detrimental and unsanctioned, largely due to the fact that this display of *'awrah* creates a sexualized space in which "a woman's modesty ... becomes compromised ... [through her contribution] ... to the sexualization of the mosque space" (Hoel 2013b). This also singles out women as "the primary repository of modesty" who, through their presence in the mosque, fall from this position of grace to become "hypersexualized objects of desire," which distract and dissuade men from being able to fulfill their roles as the

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producers and sanctifiers of sacred space (Hoel 2013b). Such responses seem to reduce male congregants to "pubescent voyeurs incapable of moral responsibility and spiritual dedication" (Hoel 2013b) and reduce female congregants to a physical body and a source of *fitnah* (corruption) that poses risk to men's spiritual condition. It also underscores the patriarchal implication that ritualized female bodies are incapable of producing masjid space.

Because these bodies do not function appropriately within the space of the masjid, the masjid supposedly ceases to function appropriately as well. The presence of women "introduce[s] impurity into the mosque" through their "female corporeality and imminence" (Hoel 2013b). More broadly, it also reflects on the masjid space as a microcosm of social relationships and society, produced by human activity and, once again, reflective and responsive to the desires of the dominant social unit. As such, views on women in mosques in the contemporary period tend to stem from social views of women in general in relation to their relationship with men, which range from views that women are naturally inferior to men, to the idea that men and women are "separate but equal" in a kind of "complementary" relationship, and lastly, that there is no disparity between men and women in terms of their inherent value or their general worth (Jeenah 2001, 8). The masjid has become a contested and discursive space in this arena as both a symbol of liberation/radicalism, and innovation/modernization, but at the same time an oppressive and disenfranchising space of exclusion, which continues to function as such in many contexts throughout South Africa, even in areas as progressive as Cape Town.

Yet a growth of female voices in the past few decades has begun to push back against these male hegemonic Islamic discourses in South Africa from a variety of perspectives, ranging from rereading the scripture from feminist perspectives to actively pushing for a presence in mosque space. Beginning largely in the early 1990s, feminist rereadings of Qur'anic verse have aimed to demonstrate that the equity exists between men and women in the Qur'an as faithful Muslims rather than women existing as unequal partners with men intended as the primary recipients of the word of God. One such rereading reads as follows:

> Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto God, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before God], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember God unceasingly: for

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them has God readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward. (Qur'an Surah 33:35; in Jeenah 2001, 1)

In addition, the Qur'an itself does not weigh in on female presence in mosque space with regard to a "specific spatial formula" for the masjid (Kahera 2008, 121). As Kahera points out, the term "masjid" is largely equated with the idea of "spatial sanctity" (Qur'an Surah 72:18) and orientation within the landscape (Qur'an Surah 2:149–150). In terms of the question of male/female interaction, the Qur'an encourages all of the *ummah* to perform *salat* (prayer), and because the Qur'an does not differentiate in this manner with regard to gender, anyone wishing to pray in a public masjid space must simply "be in a state of ceremonial purity and wear proper attire" (Kahera 2008, 134).[6] One can also glean interpretations regarding women in mosque spaces from the organization of the Prophet's home itself, which became a model after which most if not all mosque spaces are constructed and which had no dedicated space for prayer set aside for the women of his household or his female followers, which seems to indicate that partitioning was not considered until later periods.[7]

Yet one of the primary elements pushing these current rereadings has been the development of a nascent vision of South African Islamic feminism in which female scholars are increasingly taking up the task of defining its platform through explorations of how these two terms – "Islamic" and "feminism" – come together more broadly for all Muslim women in South Africa as an intersectional space.

Emergent additional reimaginings of contemporary feminism are increasingly making known the fact that so-called "feminist experience" has historically only ever been considered through the lens of white,

[6] There is also the fact that the hadiths, which are supposed recordings of the Prophet's words and deeds during his life, often contradict each other with regard to women's participation in the prayer space of the masjid. One hadith indicates that the primary place for women's prayer is in the "innermost part of her home" in an argument against female participation in a public masjid space and another recounts the Prophet saying: "Do not prevent God's female servants from [going to] God's mosque" (Ali and Leaman 2008, 84; in Hoel 2013b).

[7] Theologian Ibn Hazm (d. 456/1064) actually pins this shift in opinion on Abu Hanifa (d. 149/767) and Malik, who put forth the opinion that women would be better off praying in the privacy of the home, regardless of the fact that the mosque of the Prophet was a cogendered space (Kahera 2008, 122; 129) and that women were active participants in the public sphere of life. Importantly (albeit perhaps obviously) Akel Kahera also points out that most sources regarding rulings on female participation in masjid spaces are written by men and thus "are presented with a male-oriented vision" (Kahera 2008, 131), which is also a vision that fundamentally sexualizes the woman's body through its visibility and thus requires regulation so that the "spiritual balance" of men, those responsible for catalyzing and maintaining the purity of the sacred within the space, is not disrupted (Hoel 2013b).

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Western womanhood, which in some ways stands as an equivalent to masculinity in that the experience of it as "human" fundamentally identifies and excludes "others" (Hoel 2013a, 74–75). As scholars like bell hooks have pointed out, historical conceptualizations of feminism have ignored or disregarding diversity in the female experience related to race, class, religion, and a number of other qualities (hooks 1984). Likewise scholars like Chandra Mohanty note that Western feminist writings that *do* attempt to approach the experience of "Third World women" often "colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing/re-presenting a composite, singular 'third world woman'" (Mohanty 1991).[8]

This creates an inappropriate homogenization of women that fails to recognize the unique, again intersectional, circumstances of their particular experience. This has especially been the case in parsing Muslim female experience, largely because of the grand, standing narratives that position Muslim women as the passive, disenfranchised victims of a universal, immovable patriarchal religion. Such a discussion is also inevitably inflected by, to quote Sa'diyya Shaikh, "a history of larger civilization polemics between the Islamic world and the West" (Shaikh 2003, 148). These discussions, in conjunction with international and largely conflicting concerns of female veiling (mark of oppression vs. mark of liberation vs. mark of religious identity), female excision, child/arranged marriages, honor killings, etc., have effectively "othered" Muslim women and cast them as impotent, agency-less characters within a larger oppressive socio-religious system (Hoel 2013a, 79). Not only does this point to the need for a more complex approach to the experience of Muslim women, but also the need for a repositioning of the narrative itself toward giving women the recognition they deserve as equally nuanced actors within their own diverse political, social, cultural, and religious realms of experience.

Such discussions have also come to rest on the problem of the mosque or masjid as the most tangible, physically present component of female disenfranchisement within South African Muslim space. Hoel cites Rita Gross who not only notes that women's religious lives are marked by "patterns of exclusion and participation," but that these patterns are often made most visible through the element of absence, whether it is absence from positions of leadership or absence from sacred spaces altogether (Gross 1977, 15; in Hoel 2013a, 76). Of the current existing mosques built both during and after Apartheid in South Africa, 75 percent are for

[8] The irony of the fact that I, as a white Western woman, am writing on a scholar who criticizes white Western feminist scholars for colonizing the "third world woman" experience is not lost on me.

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males only (Matthee 2008, 122), with most of the mosques that allow women inside being located in the Western Cape. Because of the precedent set by this mosque tradition in South Africa, shock waves are felt even more broadly when the mosque as a spatial genre becomes a space of contestation.

The Open Mosque has experienced a great deal of pushback over the short period of its existence in terms of negative publicity but also actual physical acts of violence. In 2014, the Open Mosque was the target of three separate arson attacks, with members from area mosques weighing in heavily (and negatively) on its existence and message. Some members of the nearby Gatesville mosque, where women are separated by a barrier and pray from a balcony at the back of the mosque, have had rather choice things to say about the Open Mosque's imam. "Hargey's teaching and his philosophy is totally at variance with Islamic philosophy. Completely at variance," says Amien Gamza, a member of this congregation. Others have called him a "heretic" and an "imposter" (Seemungal 2015). Maulana Ebrahim Bham, a senior member of the Johannesburg-based Council of Muslim Theologians, when asked about his opinion regarding the Open Mosque, commented rather ambiguously "The Qur'an tells us to do whatever the Prophet tells you to and whatever the Prophet prohibits you from, then stay away from it" (Ismail 2015). Yet Bham also challenged the idea of an Open Mosque more generally in that, in his view, all mosques were in essence "open mosques." "I do not know of any mosque in South Africa where people stand at the gates of the mosque and say you have committed such and such sin, you are not allowed to enter. I have never seen it happen, it has never happened," Bham has said (Ismail 2015). Along these lines, Sa'diyya Shaikh comments wryly: "I like the fact that we've started conversations about this . . . I like the fact that people are falling over themselves to claim openness when in reality there are a number of mosques that simply don't have spaces for women" (Seemungal 2015). Hargey is not one to suffer silently and has fought back vehemently. "They have very little grounds theologically or otherwise to condemn this mosque," he has said, "what they are doing is scraping the bottom of the barrel" (Seemungal 2015).

The unique composition of those that attend the Open Mosque also reflects this approach. If one attends Qur'anic study on any given Tuesday evening, one will find a collection of men and women of different ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, and even faiths (there is often an atheist or two in attendance) who have gathered to gain insight into a variety of issues ranging from learning more about the Qur'an and the faith, to engaging with an open faith-based community. The Open

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Mosque has also become a haven for interfaith couples who have had difficulty finding acceptance in more traditional Islamic congregations; Dr. Hargey has officiated numerous interfaith marriages at the Open Mosque in the past few years.[9] There are also older couples, some of whom say that, for the first time in their spiritual lives, they feel a pull toward the faith because of the approach taken by the Open Mosque. Others strongly bond with the idea of equality between genders. One noted: "I come to this mosque every week because this is the only mosque that I know of where there's equality in the genders, where females sit and can actually view the sermon from the front and we're considered equals to men" (Seemungal 2015). There are also a sprinkling of Evangelical Christians who come to learn more about Islam and the Qur'an, one of whom Dr. Hargey even commissioned to decorate the interior of the mosque space.

Hargey is interested in expanding his masjid physically as well as socially. Plans for the future physical space of the Open Mosque include a central location that will act as a "hub for all inquiring Muslims." This future facility will be technologically sophisticated and will represent an architectural combination of "East and West," an admittedly vague conceptualization but aimed at creating a multivalent, multi-use complex that not only contains a masjid space, but also educational and community spaces that can accommodate social programs, including adult education, computer literacy, youth programs, a crèche, and possibly a Qur'anic school. Beyond this physical space, the Open Mosque also maintains an active online presence, utilizing multiple media landscapes in the form of Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, and "strategic adverts in the press and also the Internet" (Open Mosque n.d.) as a method of reaching out to like-minded members and establishing a virtual presence. In this way, the Open Mosque not only seeks to establish an intersectional community but also one deeply embedded in contemporary transnational dialogues made available via the extension of physical spaces like the Open Mosque into virtual space, a topic that will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Hargey's vision for the Open Mosque is one that has become increasingly popular around the world, with somewhat adjacent

[9] One recently married couple I spoke with came to the Open Mosque because the wife Sarah (pseudonym) who was a Christian had been pressured by her fiance's family to convert to Islam. She and her fiancé almost broke up because of it due to the fact that Sarah felt as if she was being forced into the faith and that little by little her own identity as being stripped away by the requirements of being part of a Muslim family. "Soon," she said, "I feared there would be nothing of me left." The Open Mosque, however, provided them with an alternate path. I would also note that her young husband chose not to speak once during this narrative.

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congregations appearing on smaller scales in Canada, the United States, and France. There are even successful examples emerging on the African continent as well, with numerous "women's mosque" groups emerging in areas like the Sudan which have experienced growing success in having women's space prioritized in contemporary mosque-building projects (Nageeb 2007). Hussein Rashid, professor of religious studies at Hofstra University (Long Island) notes:

> When we look at these new centers coming up, I think we have to see it – not as a trend .... But really it's a pattern of Muslims are now reimagining what these spaces could be like more largely. And so it's important because it's not the transformation of the tradition but it is the adaptation of the tradition. (Seemungal 2015)

Yet even though the Open Mosque has an open-door policy to all, its mission and value statement tend to focus heavily on gender equality and the position of women. In fact, the Open Mosque makes a point of crafting this distinction in the following statement: "We are a gender-equity institution where men and women are on par and equal in conformity with the Holy Qur'an's clear directives. Note: Gender-equal in this context does not refer to sexual orientation, it merely reinforces the fact that there is no sexist discrimination or traditional male chauvinism in our place of worship" (Open Mosque n.d.). The statement continues: "If anyone seeks to falsely portray the Open Mosque other than what we actually are by defaming, libeling and smearing us or to label us wrongly as gay or homosexual, we will institute legal proceedings against them and seek maximum punitive damages for such baseless accusations" (Open Mosque n.d.). Hargey himself does not endorse homosexuality as a practice, as he does not believe this is what the Qur'an teaches, although he notes that he does not have the right to cast judgment. "It is not our business to decide who enters this mosque or not and the Koran is very specific that judgement belongs to God alone, so if the homosexual or the lesbian comes in known to me or unknown to me, we don't have the right to exclude them from this gathering" (Seemungal 2015).

Yet this also raises the question of whether or not contemporary masjids should not only act as spaces of contestation and equity, but also spaces of safety, particularly for other groups "othered" by Islamic ideology. This is particularly relevant when considering the LGBT+ community in South Africa and the next case study of this chapter, the LGBT+-oriented Al-Fitre Foundation. Issues of sexuality in South Africa and on the continent more broadly have a history as equally fraught as those of racism and gender inequality.

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1.3 Muslims on the Margins: Spatializing LGBT+ Rights at the Al-Fitre Foundation

As Ashley Currier notes, the "homosexuality-is-un-African discourse [has long] functioned as a specter in national and continental sociopolitical imaginaries" (Currier 2012, 122). Components of this discourse include the assertion that same-sex sexuality does not exist in Africa and that "there were no African lesbians or gay men" (Epprecht 2004; in Currier 2012, 121), or that it was a factor of Western "gay imperialism" (Barnard 2004, 7; in Currier 2012, 122). This discourse has become so historically embedded that even in the contemporary period in South Africa, LGBT+ rights get little support, with a 1995 survey revealing that only 38 percent of South Africans supported LGBT+ rights and that a full 41 percent believed that homosexuality was "un-African" (Reid and Dirsuweit 2002; in Currier 2012, 185). In fact, "homosexuals" as an undifferentiated metonymic group in South Africa was ranked as the "third most hated group in the country" after a far-right movement called the Afrikaner Resistance Movement (Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging or AWB), and the anti-ANC Inkatha Freedom Party, an opposition party that had created a great deal of unrest during the 1994 democratic transition (Gibson and Gouws 2003, 18–19; 49–50; in Currier 2012, 186).

As such, LGBT+ Muslim affirmational groups like the Al-Fitre Foundation, founded by Imam Muhsin Hendricks, have become increasingly important in not only affirming the legitimacy of a Muslim LGBT+ identity but also providing a safe space for spiritual performance in which one can comfortably inhabit this identity as an LGBT+ Muslim. Founded in 1998, the Al-Fitre Foundation is located in Wynberg, a suburb of Cape Town, down the road from the Open Mosque in a repurposed industrial area. Hendricks categorized Al-Fitra as a foundation rather than a congregation, possibly for reasons relating to the fundamental meanings of both "Al-Fitra" and "foundation." Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle notes that the Arabic term "*fitra*" refers to an individual's "essential nature" and is deployed in the context of the Qur'an to "describe how God created all things, distinct in their individuality yet making up a harmonious whole" (Kugle 2014, 25). Qur'an Surah 30:30 says "So set your face towards the moral obligation in a true way, according to the essential nature granted by God, upon which God fashioned people, for there is no changing the creation of God!" (Kugle 2014, 25). From the perspective of nonheteronormative Muslims, this verse provides proof that Allah has given each individual a singular nature that is not only inherent but fundamentally harmonious with the path to righteousness. This perhaps makes the term "foundation" as opposed to

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"congregation" appropriate in that in addition to denoting an organization, the term "foundation" also references the load-bearing component of a structure or the underlying basis/principle of an idea.

Originally housed in Hendrick's garage as a "safe space for queer Muslims" to perform their spiritual identity (Pellot 2016), the Al-Fitre Foundation is now located in a walled complex with a handful of other businesses, a low profile that has enabled the foundation to perhaps avoid some of the more violent responses that have afflicted the Open Mosque thus far. Yet like the Open Mosque, the innocuous exterior appearance of Al-Fitre – that of a repurposed autobody shop akin to that of the Open Mosque – belies the environment that lies within: a humble space, yet one that is both affirmational and activistic in its design. On the first floor, immediately to the right of the entrance, is Al-Fitre's masjid space, also known as the People's Mosque (Masjidul Umam), whose humble aesthetic nonetheless utilizes a mosque spatial "toolkit" that generates a feeling of familiarity and comfort for those in attendance as well as enabling a type of psychological access to a spiritual space that has been denied to many whose sexuality is out in the open (Figure 1.3). Light green walls and industrial/track lighting are softened not only by

Figure 1.3 The People's Mosque (Masjidul Umam), Wynberg, Cape Town, South Africa, 2018.
Image by the author.

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multicolored prayer mats but also pink pillows lined up along each side of the wall as an invitation to not only sit within the space but also move around within it as an active participant. A simple but beautiful *mihrab* niche occupies one corner of the room, next to which is positioned a small *minbar*. Stylized framed verses from the Qur'an also decorate the walls sparingly but with decorative flourish.

Simple in design, aesthetic, and execution, the masjid nonetheless deploys these "trappings of Islamic identity" very strategically toward becoming more than just an emblem of Islamic identity; through them, the masjid becomes an affective environment that allows individuals to inhabit a specific sense of self, which in turn has the potential to transform one's sense of "established" mosque space from that of an oppressive, potentially intimidating site to a welcoming, nurturing space. Indeed, such is the point of the Masjidul Umam. Imam Hendricks notes that the inspiration for this masjid in fact came from a conversation he had with one of his congregants, who had been sitting in on a Friday sermon focused on homosexuality at a different mosque. This particular congregant noted that the sermon made him feel as if the ground in front of him was going to open up and he was going to fall in and disappear. This clued Hendricks into the fact that space is a key element to the success of Al-Fitre as a:

> forum where people can just feel that they can be their own people, because they can't be themselves outside. You need a place where you can be gay and you can be a Muslim at the same time . . . to build your self-esteem and to know that you belong somewhere, that you have a place in Islam and a place in this world. (Kugle 2014, 30)[10]

Along these lines, many of the practices that endow a space with spiritual identity are practiced at Al-Fitre but in accordance with the identity of its congregation. For example, Professor Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle relates how he attended a *dhikre*, which is a devotional practice that involves repeated rhythmic repetitions of the name of God or specific verses from the Qur'an, with Al-Fitre congregants. The Qur'an Surah recited was that of 8:62, which reads "If they intend to deceive you, surely God is sufficient for you – the One who strengthened you with divine aid along with the believers, and united their hearts." Following this Surah, congregants chanted the following: "O Prophet, God is sufficient for you and those believers who follow you" repetitively as a way for the meaning of the idea – "God is sufficient for

[10] This is particularly important for some of the congregants, who have been the victims of unspeakable violence. For example, one congregant – a local art teacher who remains unidentified – sought out the Inner Circle not only for spiritual nourishment but also for counseling after being the victim of a traumatic "corrective ritual" conducted by a traditional medical practitioner in Cape Town (AFP 2016).

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us" – to become more firmly spiritually engrained. Such Surahs, however, have added meaning in the context of Al-Fitre in that they not only affirm the Muslim faith and in many ways create a spiritual space through their manifestation, but they also provide spiritual fortitude for members of the congregation who have suffered oppression, violence, and disenfranchisement due to their sexual or gender identity. Thus these ceremonial elements not only transform the site into a masjid space, but also an affirmative and intersectional sanctuary that promotes feelings of belonging not only to one's faith but also to one's community (Kugle 2014, 53).

Such affirmational space is also accomplished in the Al-Fitre masjid by putting its purpose as a platform of spirituality, identity, and community on display. One of the most powerful elements of this somewhat modest masjid space is the fact that, first and foremost, the masjid is a working space, "working" moving beyond elements of spiritual performativity to include the social work of LGBT+ Muslim rights and safety. Indeed, one side of the room is devoted to spiritual acts while the other side contains an easel with paper, a small sideboard for coffee and water, and a whiteboard overlaying the entire far side of the wall, covered with notes (Figure 1.4). A projector hangs from the ceiling facing this wall,

Figure 1.4 Work space adjacent to prayer space, the People's Mosque (Masjidul Umam), Wynberg, Cape Town, South Africa, 2018. Image by the author.

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which also indicates it can be used for presentation-oriented purposes, and a set of speakers standing to the side undoubtedly supplement this function. In addition to prayer, the space is also used for *madrasa* classes on Tuesday (usually taught by members of the congregation or LGBT+ imams who are able to teach the Qur'an in a sensitive way), as well as various seminars and retreats during which members engage in multiple types of group work. The space is also used for Al-Fitre's annual retreat, a seven-day event in Cape Town that brings together queer Muslim activists from different organizations across the globe, many of whom come from largely intolerant societies. Al-Fitre and Hendricks create a temporary spiritual "safe space" for these figures to discuss spiritual and social matters, as well as modes of collaborative activism.[11] For many attendees, the retreat itself is a form of emotional therapy as well, not only due to its location in Hendricks' organization but also (ironically) due to its location in Cape Town and in South Africa more generally. South Africa is considered to be one of the more tolerant countries, not only on the continent but also across the globe, a characteristic which has drawn international Muslims to the country not only from other areas in Africa but even from spaces like the United Kingdom and Europe, where many Muslims are the victims of government suspicion and repressive surveillance on the one hand and growing conservative Islamic doctrines on the other (Tayob 2011, 23). Aissa Amazigh, who attended the annual retreat in 2016, notes "Once the plane landed in Cape Town, I just relaxed .... The spiritual context here is just so liberating" (Pellot 2016). This is precisely the type of spatial atmosphere that Hendricks hopes to craft, seeing the annual meeting as a "refuge for those who feel ostracized by LGBT+ communities because of their Muslim faith and shunned by Muslim communities because of their sexual orientation or gender identities" (Pellot 2016). In fact, Hendricks describes the "beautiful space" of the retreat as a space created through a combination of physical environment, social relationships, and politically liberal society (Pellot 2016). Having a physical space for both the retreat and for members of the organization more broadly is key because, in many cases, the spiritual space of the masjid as an open equitable space is something that has been either physically, spiritually, or psychological denied to them for most of their lives, either as a result of rejection or being forced to exist within an unsafe congregational space. In fact, the intensity of the connection that people develop for the space of the retreat is such that many attendees

[11] One individual who attended this annual retreat runs a support program in Tanzania for queer youth and asked not to be named for fear of reprisals in a country where homosexual acts can yield a life imprisonment sentence (Pellot 2016).

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often experience "withdrawal symptoms and [even] separation anxiety" when they prepare to return to their home contexts at the conclusion of the retreat (Pellot 2016). The psychological power of these spaces is such that it affects people in a powerful sociospiritual way.[12]

Thus, all major events at the foundation occur in the masjid space, which is located on the ground floor, with the offices upstairs. This buttresses the identity of this space as a space of purpose, while also giving architectural form to the idea of the Muslim *ummah* or community of God which "transcends boundaries, frontiers, nationalities, citizenships, linguistic differences and all other form of cultural, political, economic or social differences" (Taleb 2005, 5). Through these avenues of organization and performance, Al-Fitre's masjid becomes the spatialization of a desired identity and a desired reality, made "real" through the creation of a collective space that acts as a platform on which individuals can construct a contemporary Islamic vision of themselves.

This space and how it is utilized in this context reveal the importance of space in the construction and affirmation of marginalized identities, particularly those of the LGBT+ community in South Africa. Such spaces have been key components in crafting strategic visibilities/invisibilities with regard to creating communal identities and generating empowerment and security for the LGBT+ population in the face of contemporary hardships. Such spaces in South Africa have taken many forms, ranging from proclamative spaces of resistance and empowerment to hidden, innocuous spaces designed to shelter, protect, and in many cases hide. The Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), a black lesbian organization located in Johannesburg, set up their office in the Women's Gaol section of the Old Fort in 2005, which was recently renamed Constitution Hill and was at one point a prison for both men and women during the Apartheid era. The Constitutional Court of South

[12] Despite the intersectional strength of spaces like the Inner Circle, there are still groups within the Muslim queer community who feel disenfranchised for other reasons, and gender continues to play a large role in this aspect. Because women in Islam have traditionally been spatially marginalized in spiritual spaces like the mosque, in addition to public spaces outside the home and private spaces within the home, the fact that many queer "safe" spaces in South Africa are still largely dominated by gay men, some of whom still adopt fairly patriarchal attitudes to women, is doubly disenfranchising. This has led activists like Midi Achmat to craft additional safe spaces for this particular subgroup of the Muslim queer population through the creation of virtual space in the form of a Facebook page entitled Unveiling the Hijab. Achmat is no longer a practicing Muslim and has been estranged from her family for many years; yet she completed her honors thesis on the queer Muslim community and the particular challenges they face with regard to the multiple traumas and aggressions they must contend with on numerous fronts, ranging from being a Muslim and a woman to being part of the queer community, among others (Collison 2017).

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Africa, the equivalent of the United States' Supreme Court, and an Apartheid museum are also housed within this complex. "The Old Fort," notes Ashley Currier, "has been reimagined as a place in which all South Africans can seek legal redress for injustice" (Currier 2012, 2) and the symbolic presence of a black women's lesbian organization in this space is not only purposeful, but highly strategic in terms of its location and visibility. In an interview with Currier, Nomsa, a black lesbian and FEW member, noted, "Women used to be locked up here; now women are coming out and saying, 'We're free, and we're speaking our minds,' in the same place that people were locked up" (Currier 2012, 2).

Sites such as the FEW office represent the spatialization of an agenda of empowerment, deriving power from the symbolic capital of its historical location. It also stands as a space of resistance, providing a counter to the site's history of oppressive power relationships and underscoring this history as a way to highlight its own resistance/empowerment agenda. As such, the location and implications of space provide, according to Taleb:

> a sense of where one is in the world – a sense gained from the experiences of history, geography, culture, self and imagination – mapped through the simultaneously spatial and temporal interconnections between people, but also the political definition of the grounds on which struggles are the be fought. (Taleb 2005, 82)

Yet not all spaces are so proclamative. Spaces of invisibility also remain relevant and necessary, particularly with regard to establishing a site where one can comfortably exist in the "skin" of one's sexual and intersectional identity. Some organizations like FEW and the Triangle Project, based in Cape Town, have opened up satellite offices in various area townships to facilitate the provision of services to the surrounding community on a more accessible and also potentially less visible scale. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be working; many of the satellite offices are visited infrequently, if at all, due to the fact that many individuals fear their sexual status will become public knowledge within their community if they are seen. In fact, many members have reported being harassed on the streets outside of these offices because of their association with them (Currier 2012, 193).

Organizations have also attempted to mediate these elements through physical and psychological infrastructures of security. "Visibility routines" have been developed in which activists surveil problematic spaces and subsequently "defin[e] who could access organizations" (Currier 2012, 19). This creates a sense of security for individuals using these spaces, which subsequently become "sanctuaries" for comfortable and unsurveilled

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socialization and a space that caters to the "psychological needs of insecure and harassed gays and lesbians" (Palmberg 1999, 267; in Currier 2012, 19). Along these lines, these spaces also empower members "to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue" (Evans and Boyte 1992, 17; in Currier 2012, 19–20). Part of the inherent security of these spaces, of course, is their controlled access, which allows them to function as sites of invisibility when viewed from the exterior and sanctioned visibility within the interior (Currier 2012, 20). Such boundaries and "territorializations" are also formed and reformed over time to accommodate shifting needs, populations, and politics.

But perhaps underscoring this conversation more fully is the fundamental relationship that space maintains with and between bodies, an interaction fundamental to the establishment of meaningful place. Likewise, it is also space which acts as a lens through which bodies are read in an approved manner. As Judith Butler notes: "Although we struggle for rights over our own bodies, the very bodies for which we struggle are not quite ever only our own. The body has its invariably public dimension; constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine" (Butler 2004, 21; in Currier 2012, 182). One such example of this are Moffies, a nonheteronormative "subculture" or "local variant of gayness" within Cape Town. Composed of "Coloured" men who are defined by their effeminate mannerisms, Moffies are appreciated primarily for their "entertainment value," which is on display during events like Carnival where "social codes are reversed and participants act out personas considered unacceptable in 'conventional' society" (Iziko Museums 2017). This has made Moffies an acknowledged and somewhat tolerated segment of the LGBT+ population, and people have lined up to watch and be entertained by them during Carnival since the 1940s. Taking inspiration from cultural figures such as Carmen Miranda, Moffies cross-dress and "perform their personas as cross-dressers with humor and self-parody . . . an example of the subversive nature of Carnival" (Iziko Museums 2017). Interestingly, however, this seems to imply that Moffies are only accepted in society when they fashion their identities as a comedic enterprise to be performed and subsequently interpreted as a form of entertainment for others. Much of the stigma against nonheterosexuality stems from historically embedded social views of the dominance of masculinity, a dominance that has not only cast women but also effeminate men like Moffies and others who do not meet prescripted societal gender and sexual roles as nonnormative (Hendricks 2010, 34). In this way, the body becomes a construct within public spaces, built up and interpreted through the gaze of an audience that interrogates it through the lens of the social

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space that it occupies, which is all very much in line with theories in social and feminist fields that equate the viewed with the powerless and the viewer with dominance. The nonnormative status of many LGBT+ communities in South Africa like Moffies often gives them a "hypervisibility" or "a condition in which visible traits become interpreted as excessive in ways that attract the derision and gaze of a privileged group" (Currier 2012, 6). In some cases, this requires such bodies to use hidden spaces to escape those who would apply such unsanctioned readings and surveillance to their form and identity. Within hidden spaces, sanctioned social constructions and readings of the body can occur through the implementation of a controlled visibility that moves against the visual deconstruction of one's body into a single sexualized being; instead, this visibility promotes a more intersectional interpretation of the body not just as a body but a comprehensive individual.[13]

Along these lines, space and constructions of visibility/invisibility with regard to the body are also strategically deployed in the public arena, as with the offices of FEW, who combine bodies and space to create a powerful, highly symbolic, public statement. Thus, as Gordon notes: "Visibility is a 'complex system of permissions and prohibitions, of presence and absence'" (Gordon 2008, 15; emphasis removed, in Currier 2012, 6), a narrative that has a deep history in South Africa not only in terms of the contemporary conditions that are currently confronting the country's LGBT+ community, but the history that informs them.

Historically, heteronormativity in South Africa has been largely institutionalized and privileged as normative, with alternate forms of sexuality largely viewed as deviant and even politically dissident (Currier 2012, 176). This is despite the fact that South Africa is currently the only country on the continent to allow same-sex marriage, with Cape Town acting as the "continent's playground for queer expression" despite various acts of violence that have been directed toward the South African LGBT+ community both within the city and around the country (Pellot 2016). These intolerant attitudes and the deeply entrenched sense of political homophobia that they have created were potentially introduced during the colonial period by Christian missionaries and then later European scientists who, as part of their program to ensure racial purity, "prescribed that people should have sex with individuals of the opposite gender but of the same race and class" (McClintock 1995; in Currier 2012, 27). Anne McClintock notes that "boundaries were felt to be dangerously permeable and demanding

[13] Ashley Currier relates how, during her observation of an antiviolence workshop, she was asked to refrain from observing groups sharing personal narratives of violence and physical abuse because her physical presence might in effect generate a closed, self-protective atmosphere (Currier 2012, 193).

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continual purification, so that sexuality, in particular women's sexuality, was cordoned off as the central transmitter of racial and hence cultural contagion" (McClintock 1995, 47; in Currier 2012, 28). Since then, political homophobia has been adopted by political leaders on the continent to "overcome colonial emasculation and to mark a new pathway to national, cultural, and racial authenticity" (Currier 2012, 176).

Such heteronormative ideologies would be present in the Apartheid era as well, during which sexuality was strictly regulated and actively policed. Anti-sodomy laws were set in place targeting gay men, whom policy makers thought of as an "alien threat to the Afrikaner domain of masculinity" (Jones 2008, 403; in Currier 2012, 29), and "'low key surveillance' of gay areas" began in the 1940s (Botha and Cameron 1997, 21; in Currier 2012, 29). Yet ironically no action was taken to prevent sexual activity between white women; Bacchetta notes that sex between women was not prohibited because "it [was] not imagined to exist" (Bacchetta 2002, 951; in Currier 2012, 29). To quote Currier, "their homosexuality was not acknowledged and remained invisible" (Currier 2012, 29). Nonwhite homosexuality, however, was dealt with in largely arbitrary inconsistent ways, largely because most of the anti-homosexuality policies were aimed at the white population and this was revealed via the presence of "some quietly sanctioned black men's same-sex sexual practices" which were practiced in the context of marginal spaces like single-sex housing hostels in townships and near mining operations, and condoned largely because Apartheid officials believed they "limit[ed] the possibility of sexual activity with white women" (Tucker 2009, 110; in Currier 2012, 29–30). That being said, however, black men "were three to four times more likely to be convicted than whites" of homosexual crimes, with black men being almost "ten times more likely to be prosecuted for sodomy" than white men between the 1970s and 1980s (Botha and Cameron 1997, 16; 18; in Currier 2012, 29). This in many ways highlights the importance of space and strategies of visibility/invisibility with regard to identity and acknowledging one's sexuality in a highly oppressive violent environment and how space can function in such climates as platforms of oppression and exclusion.

Yet such spaces also worked in opposite ways as well. With the passing of the Sexual Offenses Act in 1957, "private gatherings of two or more gay men" were prohibited, which effectively criminalized gay restaurants and clubs and created an underground spatial networks of "bars, social spaces, [and] 'health clubs'" (Reddy 1998, 69; Gevisser 1995; in Currier 2012, 30). As Currier notes, "These cultural spaces also acted as 'indigenous' free spaces that nurtured the formation of sexual subjectivities that would serve as the basis for mobilizable lesbian and gay collective identities" (Polletta 1999, 10–11; in Currier 2012, 30). These spaces thus existed as spatial

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niches of controlled and carefully guarded visibility within an oppressive administrative and social landscape whose survival depended on a strict control over who was allowed access and who wasn't. In this way, according to Currier, "gender and sexual minorities found ways to control their public visibility by retreating into safe spaces" (Currier 2012, 16).

Although the white gay and lesbian community would burst into public consciousness at various intervals during the last few decades of Apartheid, most notably in 1968 when they proposed the Homosexual Law Reform Fund in opposition to a newly strengthened Sexual Offenses Act (Currier 2012, 31), the LGBT+ community kept out of the limelight, with the nonwhite gay and lesbian community being all but invisible. Even in the 1980s, when momentum behind anti-Apartheid movements began to pick up steam, organizations associated with the gay and lesbian community remained apolitical, even with Western organizations pushing these groups to become interracial and oppose Apartheid (Currier 2012, 34). Eventually, in 1986, the Rand Gay Organization (RGO) was formed as a black-led gay and lesbian organization, followed by the Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO) organization, also formed in 1986, which began taking an active role in Apartheid resistance through the view that "gay rights [were] human rights" (Nicol 2005, 72; in Currier 2012, 35).

Once it became clear that the days of Apartheid were numbered, this organization and others like it began to push the ANC to take a positive stance on gay and lesbian rights through their inclusion in the constitution. The ANC, seeing this as a positive strategy to continue their anti-oppression agenda, agreed, although this move did little to eliminate the pervasive homophobia that in many ways has continued to define South African culture, even within the ANC itself (Currier 2012, 35–36). This was also the era when HIV/AIDS had become a major concern within the LGBT+ community and was variously politicized/racialized in South Africa, first as a "white" disease framed as such in order to ingratiate the country into the global sphere as a "fellow sufferer" within this "world" crisis, then as a "migrant" disease brought by those coming in from other African countries, and then as a "black" disease emerging from the townships and moving to affect (white) heterosexuals elsewhere (Currier 2012, 37).

Eventually various organizations in South Africa merged to create the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality in 1994, a largely male-dominated organization tasked with ensuring that the protections established by the new constitution concerning gay and lesbian rights were safeguarded. It is also important to point out that other equally legitimate categories of sexual self-identification, including queerness, bisexuality, transgender, intersex, and the like, were either not recognized or acknowledged at this point, although they were in many ways unceremoniously

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folded into the conversation as peripheral nondescript elements. Even now, although there has been some discussion/advocacy with regard to transgender individuals in the post-Apartheid period, it has largely been irregular and inconsistent. Likewise, public policy with regard to social and political protections for members of these communities has been spotty. In 1992, legislation was passed that no longer allowed the state "to change the legal documents [transgender persons] need to function in society" (Swarr 2003, 65; in Currier 2012, 41). Eventually, a decade later, another piece of legislation was passed called the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act 49, which allowed individuals identifying as both transgender and intersex to "apply for legal adjustment of [their] sex description without genital surgery" (Klein 2008, 5; in Currier 2012, 41–42).

In the contemporary period, the LGBT+ community at large still faces a number of obstacles in society ranging from anti-lesbian violence[14] to rampant poverty to widespread crime to continued racial and ethnic divisions within society. Regarding the safeguarding of LGBT+ rights and the criminalization of hate speech against these groups,[15] little has been done to enforce these policies at the community level. Brutal attacks against individuals due to "homophobic and transphobic" attitudes have not only created a community that lives in constant fear of violence but have also increased the odds of many in the community of contracting HIV/AIDS (Currier 2012, 16–17).[16] In addition, there is also a strong sense of pessimism among some members of this community about the progression of LGBT+ rights moving forward. During the 1994 Johannesburg Lesbian and Gay Pride March, South African author and journalist Mark Gevisser interviewed a black South African drag queen regarding her opinions about "her new empowerment" associated with the election of Nelson Mandela and the ANC's passage of the country's new constitution in which specific protections were outlined for individuals of all races, genders, religions, and sexual orientations. "My darling," she replied, "it means sweet

[14] Ashley Currier notes that utilizing the phrase "antilesbian violence" as opposed to "corrective rape" is important in that it encompasses all forms of violence against women because of their sexual identity and differentiates its specific motives from those that define the broader fields of gender-based violence (Anguita 2011; in Currier 2012, 189).

[15] Antigay hate speech was made illegal in South Africa in 2000 when the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act was passed (Currier 2012, 190).

[16] In her work *Thinking Through Lesbian Rape*, Zanele Muholi interviewed forty-seven self-identified lesbians in terms of their experience with violence. She found that twenty of the forty-seven had been raped because of their sexual identity, with seventeen experiencing physical assault, eight experiencing physical abuse, four experiencing attempted rape, and two experiencing kidnapping. Over half of them knew their attackers, yet only a fourth of these attacks were reported because they feared being victimized further (Currier 2012, 190–191).

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motherfucking nothing at all. You can rape me, rob me, what am I going to do when you attack me? Wave the constitution in your face? I'm just a nobody black queen" (Gevisser 2000, 136; in Currier 2012, 17).

LGBT+ Muslims in South Africa also have the added burden of existing in a largely ambiguous spiritual and ideological space. In many Muslim communities, not only in South Africa but around the globe, homosexuality is interpreted as a sin and, under Shari'a law in more conservative areas, it is a sin punishable by death (Hendricks 2010, 31). This judgment is often defended by citing interpretations of various verses in both the Qur'an and the hadith that seem to condemn same-sex relationships. There is general agreement among Sunni and Shi'a scholars that "homosexuality is an adulterous act for which *Hadd* punishment applies," *Hadd* referring to a disciplinary genre that applies to specific crimes – theft, consumption of alcohol, fornication, and apostasy – and are said to be the "claims of God" (Hendricks 2010, 33; 49). Many scholars also address the issue on historical grounds, claiming without foundation or substantiation that homosexuality was nonexistent during the time of the Prophet and that it is a corrupting contemporary influence that has been imported from the West (Hendricks 2010, 33).

Such judgments have led many nonheteronormative Muslims to experience abuse and rejection at the hands of family, friends, and the religious community and subsequently turn to various self-destructive behaviors including drug abuse, unsafe sexual practices, and self-harm /suicide in response (Hendricks 2010, 32). As previously mentioned, after the end of Apartheid, protections were put in place for the gay and lesbian community; however, it seemed that only the "white and prosperous" were positioned to take advantage of these, while the nonwhite majority and religious minorities such as Muslims were left in the shadows to "emerge" for themselves, saddled with additional prejudices and socioeconomic disenfranchisement. It was this situation that would lead to gay and lesbian nonwhite Muslims turning to alternate and/or "secular" institutions (churches, social clubs, etc.) for support, and it was during this period that Imam Hendricks would become active in his ministry. Imam Hendricks,[17] who identifies as a nonheterosexual Muslim man,[18] has achieved compatibility between his faith and his sexual identity,

[17] While there is a slowly growing movement toward the creation of other inclusive congregations such as that of Ludovic Mohammed Zahed, who founded the first inclusive mosque congregation in Europe (Paris) and married his partner in South Africa, it is a very slow-moving process.

[18] Mushin himself notes that he "doesn't really identify as gay." "I'm a multiplicity of complexities and a vast ocean of possibilities," he says. "God created me, but he ain't finished with me yet" (Pellot 2016).

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a state of being that he wishes to share with others, which was one of his primary motivations for both starting the Al-Fitre Foundation and becoming an activist (Kugle 2014, 23). Yet before becoming the imam of the People's Mosque (a career choice perhaps unsurprising considering that the funding for his *madrasa* training in Pakistan came from the aforementioned Call of Islam, which again was a branch of the Muslim Youth Movement (Kugle 2014, 24), Hendricks began an informal support group to keep nonheteronormative Muslims within the fold of the faith (Kugle 2014, 29). Hendricks and a small group of colleagues first created Gay Muslim Outreach, which eventually evolved into the Al-Fitra Foundation. At its formation this group was predominately social in nature, an identity that would in fact lead to its ultimate demise. The more dedicated members of the group would eventually join others in Cape Town to craft a group known as the Inner Circle, which would later become the Al-Fitre Foundation, whose focus would be on "developing an Islamic spirituality for gay and lesbian Muslims through structured discussion of the Qur'an but balanced with more informal social gatherings" (Kugle 2014, 30).[19]

Hendricks crafted the foundation as a "spiritual tool[s] towards personal development" (Kugle 2014, 32), a motivation arising from his own experience of rejection and expulsion from the Claremont Mosque, which "judged his being an openly gay Muslim to be too risky" (Kugle 2014, 34). After the release of the 2007 documentary *A Jihad for Love*, which focused on the difficulties of being a queer Muslim and in which Hendricks appeared, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) issued a *fatwa* for Hendricks, casting him "out of the fold of Islam" and characterizing his work as "propaganda." Yet it has been Hendricks in the context of Al-Fitre, among others, who has paved the way for alternative viewpoints and interpretations of the Qur'an that challenge the idea that nonheteronormative sexuality is forbidden. Along these lines, Hendricks has noted that the poetic nature of Qur'anic verse and the inconsistencies and contradictions that exist within collections of hadith create multiple possible interpretations with regard to Islamic views on same-sex or alternative sexual relationships (Hendricks 2010, 32–33). Indeed, this is one of the reasons that Qur'anic and hadith ideologies have remained relevant in the contemporary period in the sense that they allow for "human development, ... diversity within humanity ... [and] ... social and spiritual growth (Hendricks 2010, 32). Likewise, there

[19] Language and terminology for Hendricks is also something of a problem with regard to the group that the Inner Circle is meant to support. Labels like "gay" and "homosexual" are not only sociopolitically powerful but also potentially divisive, according to Hendricks, who has settled on the term "queer" as an umbrella term for the identity of the Inner Circle congregation (Pellot 2016).

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are in fact a number of arguments to be made against the idea that non-heterosexuality is condemned by the most holy book of Islam. Kecia Ali notes that marriage between those of the same sex has no basis in the Qur'an, but instead stems from legal and cultural views of marriage as a social institution (Hendricks 2010, 32). There are also issues with using the hadiths as an authoritative source for moral guidance in this manner, largely due to the fact that these documents, supposed recordings of the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammed, were not compiled until many years after his death. Indeed, the creation of these recordings was not sanctioned by the Prophet, who himself forbad their creation. Yet by the second century following his death, many of his lived experiences were being strategically manipulated and distorted, and Caliph Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz permitted their inscription as a mode of standardization (Hendricks 2010, 32–33). Within this collection exist many of the same contradictions and distortions that had plagued this body of work in its oral form. It is also primarily from the hadith that people derive most of their arguments against nonheterosexuality.

It would also seem that, while such viewpoints are by no means the norm among South African Muslim communities, there are a handful of individuals who have come to terms with their existence. Ebrahim Desai, the *mufti* or Islamic legal expert who is the head of a Muslim seminary outside of Pietermaritzburg, notes that while he does not condone sexuality from a religious basis, its protection in the South African constitution must be respected (Tayob 2011, 20). The Open Mosque's Taj Hargey, while also not condoning nonhetero-based sexual identity, nonetheless notes "who am I to judge?" But Hendricks' readings of the Qur'an are key to his ministry and the success of Al-Fitre more broadly in that they help the foundation's members understand that it is possible to be both gay and Muslim and that one should not have to live a dual life as a public Muslim on the one hand and a private nonheteronormative individual on the other. Hendricks defends this position through specific interpretations of the Qur'an, which, he says, are often where interpretive mistakes are made (Kugle 2014, 31). He points to the fact that different interpretations of the Qur'an inevitably arise due to its interpretation through the lenses of multiple cultures, peoples, and experiences, a factor which also ironically allows the Qur'an to maintain relevance in the contemporary period through its ability to be crafted to fit into multiple social, cultural, and political contexts (Hendricks 2010, 33). Hendricks also stresses the fact that the Qur'an first and foremost stresses equality among peoples. Surah 2:179 of the Qur'an, for example, states: "In the Law of Equality there is the saving of life to you, o you men of understanding; that you may restrain yourselves." Likewise, Qur'an Surah 5:8 states: "O ye who

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believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear God. For God is well-acquainted with all that ye do."

Supporting his readings and interpretations of the faith is the mosque space of Al-Fitre itself, which again actively underscores the fact that the masjid as a space and the mosque as an institution do not just function as spaces of prayer and specifically religious activity, but can be and often are deployed for numerous political, social, and cultural activities and purposes toward making it a collectively representative ideological construct. As previously noted, the importance of this element is not only that space itself represents a distinct religious identity, but an identity that is intersectional in nature and therefore the potential target of multiple simultaneous oppressions. Thus, space becomes a mode of establishing and affirming the structural and ideological parameters of the group not only by acting as a space of gathering, but also as a space with its own established hierarchies of value and belonging that in turn connect and protect individuals along the lines of a shared lifeway.

Hendricks' vision of the future of the foundation is largely philosophical in nature: he hopes to reveal that Islam is not an intolerant religion. In fact, his goal is to push back against Islam as a traditionally patriarchal institution through a "care-frontational" approach, one oriented around generating dialogue and advocacy.[20] Likewise, Hendricks has little interest in building "satellite" spaces or expanding into other areas, although he hopes to grow his congregation not only in terms of gaining LGBT+ members but also gaining straight allies who come in support and unity. Hendricks notes that currently half of his congregation falls into that category. Hendricks aims to make the Al-Fitre mosque a safe spiritual masjid space, particularly for those who have had previous traumatic experiences within the religious institution by transforming the space into not only a space of religion but also a space of activism that occupies multiple different affirmational spaces. To this end, Al-Fitre is also involved in creating additional satellite "safe" sites where individuals can visit and receive counseling with "unprecedented anonymity" (Kugle 2014, 22). Such spaces are fundamentally transformative in the sense that they provide an active environment in which to attain "spiritual

[20] This differs in some ways from the approach taken by Dr. Hargey at the Open Mosque, which ironically is located only a couple hundred feet away. At one point, there was talk of a potential alliance between the two congregations and Hargey even came to the organization as a guest speaker and ally. Yet his views on homosexuality created tension between the two organizations, as did the fact that Hargey himself is a somewhat confrontational figure, which goes against the approach favored by Hendricks.

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growth . . . [by] . . . stripping away the accumulated layers of 'false self' . . . in order to free the 'true self' that had long been buried but through which they can sincerely turn to God" (Kugle 2014, 26).

Along these lines, spaces like Al-Fitre, and the Open Mosque as well, have the potential to encourage a rethinking about how various spaces and histories in the country relate to the citizens they signify, and how such forms are due for an intersectional reimagining that takes into consideration South Africa's diverse cultural and religious landscape and the various ideologies that have been structurally rendered over time to make such identities manifest. At the core of this discussion is the belief that not only do spaces and histories speak to the mechanics of lived reality, but that individuals living in this reality have multiple identities and narratives that coexist within shared spaces and contexts. Thus space as "a form and a set of practices through which social meanings are communicated and visions of the social world are sustained" needs to be reconsidered as a lens through which to also consider the evolving ambiguous social parameters of a nation currently in a state of flux (Jones 2011, 29).

Masjid spaces like the Open Mosque and the Inner Circle carry "a powerful potential to touch, draw upon and assimilate shared need, and in [their] cultural gestures, to give structure and form to aspirations" (Ahrends 1996, 72). How values are attached to space becomes, like the identities of their inhabitants, fluid and everchanging, with the spaces themselves becoming intersectional in their ability to produce and be the product of multiple identities and realities, challenging orthodoxies in form, function, and meaning with regard to the masjid. In doing so, these structures become structures of action, affirming bonds through visibility/invisibility and acceptance/inclusion in a way that has shaped South African society from the seventeenth century on into the present day. Taleb rightly notes that identity and geographic location are intimately entwined elements in one's identity: "knowing oneself is an exercise in mapping where one stands," she says (Taleb 2005, 54). In doing so, the individual in many ways also becomes a spatialized construct that is only "momentarily complete." Like the aforementioned spaces, the individual "is always partially constituted by the forces that oppose it . . . [and] . . . always contingent on surviving the contradictions that it subsumes" (Taleb 2005, 54).

As Adam Nathanial Furman notes, built form should represent the process by which "a fragmenting society and a diffuse urban realm is given new symbolic anchors that neither ignore the deep veins of difference, nor impose an arbitrary uniformity, but celebrate the constant tensions, debates and engagement that keep any one aspect of society from

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eclipsing the others" (Furman 2017). Indeed, some would argue that ambiguity in identity that South African Islam has been navigating for the past two decades represents the ideal opportunity to reconstruct one's identity both conceptually and architecturally. "In crisis," Furman notes, "lies the greatest opportunity for reinvention" (Furman 2017). Thus, it might be that masjid spaces like the Open Mosque and the Inner Circle are necessary to loosen the suffocating hold of traditional sociospiritual and architectural/spatial regimes by reflecting back – in stark fashion – the problematic politics of existence that define both South African Muslim lived reality in the contemporary period and those of the global *ummah*. In doing so, such spaces forcibly and often times uncomfortably provoke necessary discussions and confrontations not only with the traumatic elements of South Africa's past but also the continuity of these elements in the present.

1.4 Masjid as Martyr: Iconoclasm and Timbuktu's Traumatized Spiritual Landscape

Yet, zooming out, these spaces of the Open Mosque and the Inner Circle are fundamentally defined by their reality as emergent spaces of responsiveness and empowerment that represent the changing face of Islamic identity in southern Africa. Masjid space, however, also has the potential to be both politicized and even potentially weaponized when catalyzed by situations that threaten active hegemonies (Matthee 2008, 42). In such situations, space is just as able to be used as an oppressive device as an affirmational one, installing systems of oppression and disenfranchisement that actively disempower one group in favor of another. In such situations, space can even function as a tool of trauma and ideological aggression, targeting multiple communities and identities at once as part of a broader exercise of sometimes asymmetric warfare. Through the violence committed against these structures, a similar type of violence is symbolically inflicted on the community, and thus through this connection spiritual spaces become apparatuses of trauma.

Such was the case in northern Mali in 2012[21] when a military coup deposed then-president Amadou Toumani Touré and opened the door for a revolutionary group known as the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) to seize control of the northern parts of

[21] The following writing on Timbuktu first appeared in "Timbuktu in Terror: Architecture and Iconoclasm in Contemporary Africa," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 6 (1) (March 2017): 97–120, https://doi.org/10.1386/ijia.6.1.97_1. The author wishes to thank the editors and reviewers at IJIA for their invaluable feedback and contributions to this work.

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the country.[22] Composed of various members of an ethno-cultural group known as the Tuareg or Kel Tamasheq, MNLA was joined two months later by fellow Tuareg members of Ansar Dine, a militant Islamist group endorsed and funded by North Africa's Al-Qaeda cell, who together with the MNLA formed a coalition that declared the northern part of Mali an Islamic state.[23] The group then proceeded to impose a highly conservative form of Islamic governance known as Shari'a law on the region and perpetrated numerous devastating and highly publicized acts of violence upon the architectural landscape in and around Timbuktu in the name of that doctrine (Tharoor 2012). Numerous mosques, tombs, shrines, and other structures of historical, cultural, and religious significance were damaged, vandalized, and/or despoiled during their occupation, and the intensity of the destruction was such that, less than a month after it was formed, the MNLA dissolved its merger with Ansar Dine, stating "[We] accepted the idea of an Islamic State but it should have been written that we will practice a moderate and tolerant Islam, with no mention of Shari'a" (McGregor 2012). Ansar Dine continued their program of violence in northern Mali for the next nine months, until French and Malian troops were able to force the militants out of most of the major areas in and around Timbuktu in early 2013.

The ferocity and targeted nature of these attacks, however, seemed to signal something specific about the architectural environment of Timbuktu, particularly the spiritual structures, whose purposeful destruction and desecration seemed to signify that they were occupying roles beyond that of mere casualties of war in the fight for Islamic orthodoxy, or convenient structural canvases on which Ansar Dine could paint its militant message. In fact, the careful selection and choreographed destruction of Timbuktu's built environment allowed Ansar Dine to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously. It allowed Ansar Dine to engage in a campaign of radical self-fashioning, constructing a purposefully public image of militancy on par with similar globally recognized iconoclastic brands like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. But it also allowed the group to perpetrate numerous ideologically based traumatic acts upon the landscape of Timbuktu at once, desecrating the area's historical Sufist identity of which most of Timbuktu's spiritual spaces were a part, while also making a strong disavowal of these sites as national and international heritage

[22] The MNLA, founded in 2011, is composed of ethnic Tuaregs, some of whom served in the Libyan army under Muammar Qaddafi. Its aim is the secession of the Azawad region, long framed as a Tuareg homeland, from the control of the Malian government and the establishment of an independent Tuareg state in the northern regions of the country.

[23] Ansar Dine is also connected to the group MUJWA, or the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa.

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spaces, an identity that some across the global Islamicate have come to view as pseudo-idolatrous. Along these lines, the performative sophistication of the destruction of these sites by Ansar Dine also seems to catalyze a different kind of space, what one might call a "counter-masjid" or even an "anti-masjid," in the sense that these acts of ritualized violence created sites of ruin rather than spirituality, erasing space rather than generating it through a performative spiritualism aimed at destruction rather than creation. Put another way, these acts had the effect of transforming masjid space in Timbuktu from a venerated vehicle of identity into an apparatus of trauma, using languages of extremist violence and a highly performative iconoclastic technique to do so.

Yet the success of Ansar Dine's campaign was fundamentally dependent on Timbuktu's intersectional identity as both a Sufist spiritual territory and a celebrated national and international heritage site. For over half a millennium, Timbuktu was a hub of multiple international networks of political, economic, and spiritual influence, achieving particular fame in the medieval period as a center for scholarship on Sufism, despite its inauspicious beginning as a small seasonal settlement in 1100 CE for nomadic peoples to graze their cattle. Timbuktu would eventually become a centralized location of the powerful Malian polity (thirteenth–fifteenth centuries) followed by the later Songhai polity (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries),[24] whose collective wealth and emphasis on Islamic cultural and economic modes would allow the area's reputation as the center of a vast intellectual, spiritual, and mercantile network to spread from Africa into the Middle East. This process was helped by notables such as Malian *Mansa* (king) Kanku Musa (c. 1280–c. 1337), who undertook a pilgrimage to Mecca in the early fourteenth century and spent so much gold along the way that he single-handedly influenced the global economy. Eventually Timbuktu would also become a major center of Sufi learning and spirituality that drew scholars and clerics from around the Islamic world to collaborate at the city's increasingly well-known educational institutions. Timbuktu's Islamic schools, or *madrasa*s, were numerous, supported by the development of libraries, both public and private, as well as an active book-making culture. Timbuktu's established university system was also among one of the most renowned in the Islamicate, composed of three primary institutions: the Sankoré (c. 1400), the Djinguere Ber (c. 1327), and the Sidi Yahya (c. 1440) schools, which attracted learned men such as famed

[24] I use "polity" in this case rather than "kingdom" or "empire" because the latter two terms are somewhat problematic in that they imply a centralized system of rule, a top-down form of governance that may not have been the case with regard to the sociopolitical structure at the time.

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Figure 1.5 Sankoré Masjid, Timbuktu, Mali. Image by Lazare Eloundou Assomo. UNESCO World Heritage Site, listed as Timbuktu, CC BY-SA 3.0-igo.

Timbuktu scholar Ahmed Baba, known for his treatises on slavery and spiritual practice, to gather and exchange ideas (Dyke 2005) (Figure 1.5).[25]

Timbuktu's reputation as a site of Islamic power and learning was also buttressed by its architectural landscape and the spiritual cartography it generated through the organization of mosques, mausolea and, in particular, shrines into a type of charged topography. The construct of the tomb/shrine constituted one of the more direct expressions of the architectural humanism, or the connection between space and body, that lay at the heart of Timbuktu's urban ecology. Most tombs in Timbuktu are constructed in symbolically similar ways. Smaller tombs tend to be marked by a stone, which indicates the presence of the saint's body, as well as a terracotta pot indicating the location of the head. In addition, the head is positioned toward the Ka'ba in Mecca, as is traditional Islamic

[25] For additional history, see Labelle Prussin, *Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), and Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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practice (de Jorio 2016, 118). Larger tombs or mausoleums often maintain a similar symbolic architectural language that often pulls from languages of domestic architecture to create a multi-tiered spiritual space. In fact, the tomb of Muslim scholar Cheick Sidi Mahmoud (1498–1548) was actually the original entrance vestibule into his domestic space and was transformed into his tomb at his death (de Jorio 2016, 118). Many of the shrines of the more venerated saints are visited daily, and this is because the saints play such an active role in the spiritual life of the community (de Jorio 2016, 118–120), their proximity conveying added protection and blessing, and further protecting the city from exterior threats. Because of this, numerous cemeteries have arisen next to the tombs of these saints largely because "proximity to a saint is believed to protect the deceased 'from the dangers of the afterworld'" (Becker 2009, 429; in de Jorio 2016, 119). Saints are also buried under Timbuktu's three primary Friday mosques – the Djinger Ber, Sankoré, and Sidi Yahya – and it is said that individuals visit these mosques when they have specific predicament and need intervention (de Jorio 2016, 120).[26] Thus, the architectural landscape of Timbuktu functions as an interconnected, mutually dependent ecological system in which spirituality has saturated every structure to generate a type of religious habitat and subsequently making the entire city a type of masjid environment (see Apotsos 2016a).

Regarding this masjid environment, at Timbuktu's height as an international spiritual society, its architectural landscape translated incoming influences and identities into a *métissage* of structural and spiritual forms whose weighty, monumental, earth-based construction merged Islamic structural genres like the mosque with Maghrebian styles seen in the aforementioned *ksar*, whose surface decoration and monumental, fortress-like appearance not only enabled its original inhabitants in the Sahara oases to defend against desert raiders, but also created a psychological sense of permanence, stability, and immovability.[27] Likewise, the earth-based styles of the Niger Bend, whose unique emphasis on structural pillars and pinnacles made manifest meaningful and powerful statements about the area's diverse spiritual and cultural

[26] Rosa de Jorio's field research notes that those with issues "related to the conquest of power" are pointed to the Djingarey Ber Mosque, while others having relationship issues should go to the Sankoré Mosque. Others who are concerned with finances should pray at the Sidi Yahya Mosque (de Jorio 2016, 120).

[27] A *ksar* is a pre-Islamic domestic compound typically located around oasis areas along trade routes in northern Africa. Multiple families live together within these large complexes, which have high, thick walls and corner towers to protect against nomadic raiders. These forms are thought to have influenced architectural developments south of the Sahara.

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legacy, maintained a natural synergy with these incoming styles (to be addressed further in Chapter 3).

It is also this spiritual charge and the symbolic capital that accompanied it that ensured the continued survival of this environment into the contemporary period as well, not only as a spiritual space but also a space of historical and religious heritage. Timbuktu's history as a center for not only the production of Sufi spiritual space but also the subsequent dispersal of Islamic thought and identity throughout the Sahara and Sahelian regions has allowed international heritage organizations like UNESCO to claim it as an emblem of the Islamic "golden age under Songhai occupation (ca. 1468–1591)" (de Jorio 2016, 117). This project has been helped by the presence of numerous architectural artifacts that have been renovated and in some cases reimagined for a contemporary heritage tourism project. Timbuktu's heritage project was given new energy by President Amadou Toumani Touré who, following in the footsteps of his predecessor Alpha Oumar Konaré,[28] made Timbuktu's revitalization "a government priority" due to his "personal attachment to the religious patrimony of the city" and as part of his larger project of generating a sense of national identity and unity (de Jorio 2016, 121).

Yet Timbuktu's new reality as a World Heritage Site also meant that many of Timbuktu's great architectural institutions and events were no longer just spiritually oriented, but were also to assume the additional role of articulating local history to a broader public. Thus, the identities of its masjid spaces as vessels of ancestral presence and repositories of memory came to share conceptual space in the contemporary period with their new function as global heritage sites.[29] Importantly, this dual identity would become a keystone in Ansar Dine's destructive campaign, which framed Timbuktu not only as a site whose historical practices and belief systems could be interpreted as heretical by more orthodox Islamic sects, but also as a space that smacked of "Western" ambition and idolatrous behavior. As such, Timbuktu had much to offer Ansar Dine as an intersectional space that could be ideologically assaulted from multiple perspectives.

Another important, indeed principle, component in Ansar Dine's campaign, however, was the participation of one of the region's largest marginalized groups, the ethnic Tuareg. As a group, the Tuareg had historically been disenfranchised by the Malian government, whose

[28] For more information on Konare's heritage projects, see Mary Jo Arnoldi, "Bamako, Mali: Monuments and Modernity in the Urban Imagination," *Africa Today*, 54 (2), Visual Experience in Urban Africa (Winter, 2007): 3–24.

[29] This has generated a number of problems relating to heritage tourism and its treatment as a type of developmental model for the region. See Apotsos 2016a.

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systematic neglect of Tuareg political, social, and economic matters has buttressed Tuareg views of the state as a corrupt, highly nepotistic entity.[30] This belies the fact, however, that Mali has long been a nation divided geopolitically between a perceived north and south, a division first created during the colonial period when the French imposed arbitrary geographic boundaries that alienated the Tuareg as a historically nomadic group and denied the legitimacy of traditional Tuareg clan-based political and cultural practices (Khan 2014). Ansar Dine's arrival in northern Mali offered the Tuareg an opportunity, to quote Dario Gamboni, for "radical measures of self-reestablishment," the chance to make a strong statement against this systemic cycle of neglect and marginalization (Gamboni 2011, 129). Indeed, in doing so, Ansar Dine followed a common script of "jihad-minded groups" such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabab in playing on the political, economic, social, and ethnic disenfranchisement of various groups by promising "a better allocation of resources and an end to discrimination and marginalization" (Loimeier 2016, 298). In addition, many regions vulnerable to such groups are generally geographically isolated with little governmental control and security, giving such movements "the chance to act as alternative sources of authority and security" (Loimeier 2016, 294), which has allowed extremist groups around the world to accomplish similar iconoclastic projects to a highly transformative end.

With regard to Ansar Dine's presence in Timbuktu, over the nine months of their occupation, the extremists leveled monuments and structures around the city in an unrelenting wave of destruction as a mode of both establishing ownership over this space as well as legitimizing themselves as an ideological authority using the interpretive lens of the Shari'a.[31] Through this lens, the selection of sites for destruction was not only deliberate but communicative, largely because violence, according to Riches, is "highly appropriate *both* for practical (instrumental) *and* for symbolic (expressive) purposes: as a means of transforming the social environment (instrumental purpose), and dramatizing the importance of key social ideas (expressive purpose)" (Riches 1986, 11; in van der Hoorn 2009, 24). It was the relationship between the spiritual and its human

[30] The feeling appears to be mutual. Tuaregs have an extraordinarily negative reputation among those living in the southern areas of the country due to their historic enslavement and mistreatment of "black" Malians (Tuareg are typically thought to be light-skinned and Arab in appearance, a largely incorrect but nonetheless pervasive belief).

[31] Increasingly, this approach to lived reality has fallen under the rubric of "fundamentalism," which not only applies the teachings of the Qur'an quite literally to any and all aspects of life, but also reflects the tendency to perceive an imagined Islamic past as being "purer" or more "spiritually authentic" than that of the contemporary period, which is often associated with Western influence and global imperialism (Leichtman 2015, 146).

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community that underscored the particular choices being made as well toward generating an anti-masjid space (van der Hoorn 2009, 26).

Ansar Dine demolished more than sixteen mausoleums designated as both World Heritage Sites and key spiritual markers, while also inflicting significant damage to numerous other funerary areas, religious sites, and cemeteries (Figure 1.6). Tombs embedded in the exterior surface of the Sidi Yahya mosque, thought to have been built contemporaneously with the Sankoré during the Songhai Empire, were vandalized in conjunction with many neighboring tombs that were either booby-trapped with mine devices or despoiled with feces (ANCBS 2014, 5). Yet the fact that these tombs were not destroyed is also an important strategic element in that

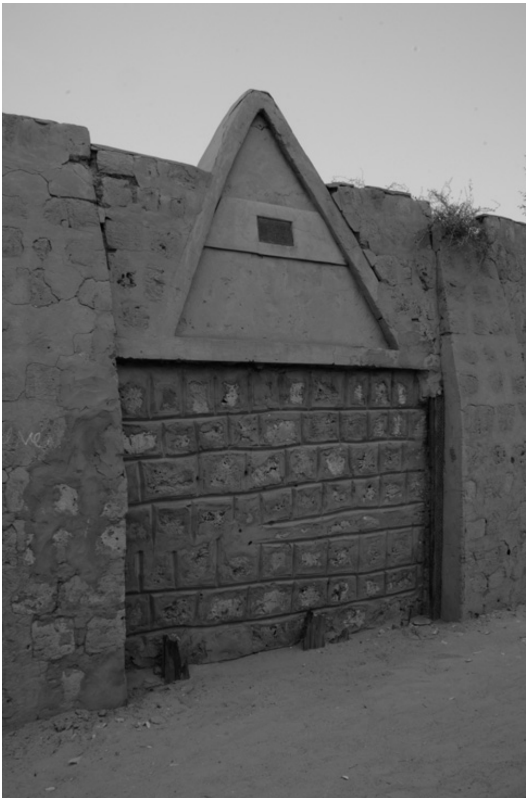

Figure 1.6 The sacred gate of the Sidi Yahya Mosque, Timbuktu, Mali, after Ansar Dine destroyed its wooden entrance, 2012.
Image courtesy of MINUSMA/Sophie Ravier.

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their defacement as opposed to demolition "make[s] [them] a token of the violence [they were] subjected to and of the infamy of anything with which [they were] associated" (Gamboni 1997, 19).

In fact, none of Timbuktu's mosques were razed. However, their annual plastering maintenance was prohibited due to the fact that it was accompanied by various ceremonies[32] that occupiers deemed "un-Islamic" (de Jorio 2016, 125). This was another strategic decision on the part of Ansar Dine in that Qur'anic tenets prohibit the destruction of a mosque, yet there are precedents for eliding this proscription, particularly within this region of Mali. One example is that of the Great Mosque in Djenne (addressed in Chapter 3), which in the eighteenth century was targeted by jihadist Sekou Amadou, ruler of the Massina Empire, who classified the building as a profane structure and a symbol of heresy due to its assumed expression of religious pluralism. As a way of circumventing the aforementioned Qur'anic tenets against mosque destruction, Amadou plugged the gutters of the earthen structure before the rainy season began and subsequently allowed it to "melt," not only finding a loophole in Islamic doctrine but also potentially framing it as an act of God itself. Ansar Dine's approach to these mosques, while not complete acts of destruction, were nonetheless intended to deconstruct the sanctity of the landscape by erasing structures through environmental attrition and preventing the transformative rituals that kept them solvent both physically and spiritually from taking place. In other words, these were not physically obliterative gestures, but spiritually obliterative ones that reached their crescendo with the dismantling of an ancient door located at the site of the Sidi Yahya mosque, which was said to open only at the end of days. The destruction of this door, but not the mosque on which it was located, again reflects Ansar Dine's strategy of psychological manipulation through the active and controlled transformation of Timbuktu's spiritual environment.

In addition to these spiritual sites, however, any "innovative" sites or sites that departed from "the conditions under which Islam was practiced in the seventh century" (O'Dell 2013, 510; in de Jorio 2016, 127) were also targeted, which included non-Sufi spaces like the Catholic church of Timbuktu, which was completely destroyed and its large wooden icon of the Virgin Mary defaced quite literally as she lay on the church altar. Other nonreligious sites were also damaged, including the El Farouk Monument at the entrance of the city and the Flame of Peace or Flamme de la Paix monument, which had been erected at the end of

[32] Such ceremonies occur in many other parts of Mali with regard to maintaining earth-based religious structures.

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the second Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s (ANCBS 2014, 5). In doing so, Ansar Dine effectively reimagined Timbuktu's past by not only renovating ideas of the city's spiritual being through the erasure of important spiritual sites, but also attempted to renarrate Timbuktu's sociopolitical history through the censure of sites that not only spoke to Timbuktu as a space of political revolution but also cultural and spiritual tolerance.

Perhaps one of the most notable destructions, however, was that of thousands of historical manuscripts, some more than four hundred years old, that were destroyed at the Institute Ahmed Baba, Timbuktu's premiere library and research center on Sufi scholarship. Many manuscripts were despoiled where they were found, others were burned, and more would have undoubtedly succumbed to this fate had not a number of them been locked in the institute's vault. Many more manuscripts were saved through the ingenious smuggling activities of a handful of the conservators and their families (Rihouay 2014)

Beyond the instrumentalist objective of this destruction, however, the expressive processes or rituals through which these obliterative acts were undertaken are also key to understanding the creation of anti-masjid space. As van der Hoorn notes, "Architectural deaths have a great potential to fascinate people and have often been accompanied by a range of rituals." Quoting Neil Harris, she notes that "The death of particular buildings has, within the past hundred years or so, been invested with a new and elaborate set of rituals, reflecting the values of societies that are simultaneously energetic reshapers of their physical environments and elegiac about the settings and structures they are efficiently reducing to rubble" (Harris 1999, 134; in van der Hoorn 2009, 20). Regarding Timbuktu, eyewitness accounts report the presence of a well-oiled choreography of violence (Figure 1.7) that characterized these acts, typically beginning with the dramatic entrance of a militant-laden truck caravan flying the black flags of the organization with the *Shahada* or Islamic creed inscribed in white upon them. Chanting "*Allahu Akbar*" or "God is Great," these militants would then disembark and surround the targeted site with their trucks, blocking onlookers from interfering with the destruction itself but maintaining clear avenues of visibility so that onlookers would become involuntary participants in the action as well. Then, using shovels and pickaxes, the militants would proceed to systematically dismantle the targeted structure, continuing to cry "*Allahu Akbar*"over and over again until the job was done, at which point they would revel in a type of militant ecstasy. After this reaffirmation of faith, the militants would leave the site in much the same way that they had come, in a cloud of dust and sand, with their message indelibly etched in the rubble left behind.

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Figure 1.7 Members of Ansar Dine, Timbuktu, Mali, 2012.
Image by Magharebia. flickr, CC BY 2.0.

In these acts perpetrated by Ansar Dine, destruction was a key function not only as an act of piety but also as, to quote van der Hoorn, an "expression and acquisition of power" gained through "the conspicuous waste of goods" (Conor 1992, 75; in van der Hoorn 2009, 39), in this case, the built environment. This is of course in direct opposition to the notion of ruin where "the works of man . . . were gradually reappropriated by nature"; destroyed buildings in contrast exist as "mere waste" (van der Hoorn 2009, 28). But importantly, the theatrical arrivals, the systematic or formulaic dismantlings, and the subsequent celebratory festivities that characterized these events point to the presence of a script, even a ritual, of destruction whose dramatic enactment reemphasizes the strategic nature of the spiritual built landscape in this drama (van der Hoorn 2009, 50). Indeed, the "symbolic potency" of these acts was directly related to the "symbolic properties" of the building (van der Hoorn 2009, 28) in which the purposeful destruction of buildings often acts as an equivalent to a type of sacrifice in that the aim is to "get rid of an impure status or to reach a superior one . . . [through the eradication of] . . . three-dimensional representatives of a dark period in history, to remove the stain on their collective identity, get rid of the burden of corruption, and attain a new, 'clean,' status" (van der Hoorn 2009, 50). Along these lines, due to the absolute union between "signifier" and

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"signified" in such cases, "people hardly perceive the difference between the object and what it embodies" (van der Hoorn 2009, 29).

It was in this way that these sites came to function as anti-masjids or counter-masjids, active disavowals and reversals of the spiritually performative actions that bring masjid space into being. In addition, such rituals targeted the particular nature of Timbuktu's masjid environment as an image of society, whose living human component had an important role to play in this drama, not only as makers of masjid space but as potential tools in its destruction. It is interesting to think that these targeted dismantlings would have failed in their purpose had there not been an audience there to witness it, the audience being a necessary element not only for their witnessing but also for the psychic pain they contributed to the event as coerced witnesses to these attacks. During the destruction of one of the mausoleums, one anonymous person reported: "There are many of us watching them destroy the mausoleum. It hurts but we can't do anything. These madmen are armed, we can't do anything but they will be cursed for this for sure" (Thomassen 2012).

Other testaments of vulnerability and disenfranchisement support the general feeling of helplessness that many of these acts of destruction evoked within the populace. Local journalist Yeya Tandina, speaking to Reuters via telephone, reported: "They are armed and have surrounded the sites with pick-up trucks. The population is just looking on helplessly" (Ewing 2012). As van der Hoorn notes, "Martyred edifices, typically, fell prey to their executioners while bystanders did not, or could not, do anything but witness" (van der Hoorn 2009, 175). Additional physical and psychological torture was also inflicted on the human population itself during this period, most of which was committed under the aegis of Shari'a law. As detailed in a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2012, crimes against humanity occurring under Ansar Dine included "summary executions, rape, torture, the recruitment of child soldiers, violations of freedom of expression and of right to information and violations of the right to education and health" (AFP 2012). These attacks began within the first few weeks of Ansar Dine's presence in northern Mali, and like those committed against the architectural environment, they were notable for their very public, very performative dimensions. The UN reported the stoning of a young couple who were accused of having children out of wedlock. The couple were tied together, buried up to their necks in a pit, and then stoned to death in front of a crowd of over 300 people who had been gathered specifically for this purpose. Likewise, ten cases of amputations occurred in the region during Ansar Dine's incursion, three of which were in Timbuktu, and most were public events. One individual, Al Hader Ag

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Al Mahmoud, detailed the account of his amputation as happening in the public square where militants had rounded up people for the event. Sexual violence, typically inflicted as a result of violations of dress code or inappropriate public behavior, was rampant and highly visible during this period. The assaults, which targeted women and female adolescents alike, often occurred in homes and in the presence of relatives as a method of demoralization and psychic torture (AFP 2012, 10–11).

Within this context, the line between human and architectural iconoclasm begins to blur as the symbolic dimensions and the public trauma associated with these "punishments" generated a powerful type of collective horror. Both masjid and the human body became synonymous as canvases for Ansar Dine's art of war, their destruction made all the more potent by the social and spiritual connection between humanity and architecture that had long existed within the landscape of Timbuktu. Through Ansar Dine's supplementation of architectural iconoclasm with similar fragmentary acts against the human body, the group attacked multiple landscapes and identities in Timbuktu at once, simultaneously altering and transforming these environs into "appropriate" social entities through intersectional violence. One of the strategies for accomplishing this was through a systematic program of rebranding. When Ansar Dine entered Timbuktu in 2012, one of their first iconoclastic acts was to vandalize, *but not destroy*, a shelter that marked the entrance to the town, on which was originally written "Timbuktu: City of 333 Saints." The militants promptly scratched out the "333" and replaced it with a 0, erasing most of the word "saint" in the process. They then proceeded to construct and plant signboards proclaiming various Salafist slogans like conquering flags along the major roads that connected Timbuktu to the rest of the world. One of the larger signs posted on a major road leading to Timbuktu's small airport read "Timbuktu: The Gateway to the Application of Shari'a law, welcome" (Rihouay 2014). These written markers represent attempts by Ansar Dine to quite literally paper over established identities and entrench more acceptable ones in their place, thereby reassigning the sociospiritual landscape of Timbuktu a new, more suitable Salafist identity.[33] The human counterpart to this act involved the institution of strict dress codes on the population at large. Females

[33] Salafism takes a very literal approach to Islam that is highly orthodox and supports jihad against perceived "enemies of Islam." Also known as Wahhabism, it is thought that this particular school of Islamic thought began in the eighteenth century on the Arabian Peninsula with Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Abdelwahhab. Some explanations for its growth in North Africa in the contemporary period point to the wave of uprisings leading up to and following the Arab Spring, which created a vacuum that many "hard-liners" from Saudi Arabia and other Arabic states have attempted to fill.

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over the age of five were forced to cover their bodies from head to toe, and the institution of dress codes for men of all ages required them to roll their trousers up to their ankles (AFP 2012, 13). This rebranding of human and architectural form marked a process of "overwriting" Timbuktu by stamping bodies and the surrounding landscape with new, more ideologically conservative identities.

Yet this merging of human and architectural bodies into a collective anti-masjid landscape in Timbuktu would result in a type of dual martyrdom that would eventually generate a posthumous power, underscoring the point that "destruction is less an end-point . . . than the beginning of a process of meaning-making" (Mancini, Bresnahan, and Schwenkel 2014, 3). These "casualties," marked as they are by violence and trauma, "refuse[d] to let historical narratives of completion stand. Memories of the war are deeply encoded in them, marked literally and figuratively in their flesh . . .. The wound gives evidence of the act of injuring" (Sturken 1991, 132–133; in van der Hoorn 2009, 160). Such ideas also underscore Bruno Latour's conceptualization of "iconoclash" in that every image broken is also in fact an image made, and even acts aimed at "removal, negation or obliteration" are ultimately productive and generative in creating new spaces, images, and ideas imprinted within the memory and message of the act (McClanan and Johnson 2005, 3). Indeed, the "afterlife" of such bodies can take two forms: the first where "attempts can be made to clear the edifice of its impure status," and the second in which "efforts can be made to grant the edifice superior status" in the form of rehabilitation, replacement, reconstitution, or even reframing in a more optimistic manner (van der Hoorn 2009, 166).

Yet an important element in the "afterlife" of a body is the word "life." Ansar Dine's actions fundamentally transformed Timbuktu's masjid spaces, architectural and human alike, into spaces and bodies "set apart" or separated from one another; yet in singling them out for this unique type of attention, destructive as it may have been, these spaces became sites defined by a type of reverent anti-attention, conveying ambiguousness to the nature and power of the destroyed object that make it unclear "whether the object consists of 'mere stones' or has a power of its own." Latour also points out that "[N]o one knows whether those idols can be smashed without any consequences . . . or whether they have to be destroyed because they are so *powerful,* so ominous" (Latour 2002, 21; in van der Hoorn 2009, 30). In such cases, the materiality of the structure and the body becomes supercharged, almost alive, and thus the lack of regard for the "remains" of them make them a source of deep unease (van der Hoorn 2009, 34). In this way, the "killing" of the masjid structures in Timbuktu specifically,

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paradoxically reconferred liveliness on them as well by giving them an "excess of meaning" (Buchli 2015, 168).

This excess subsequently bled into the spatial voids left behind by Ansar Dine, and over time became new localities of identity and reverence, their meaning deriving from their reality as indexes of absence and loss to become recharged with a newfound sense of religiocultural relevance. The last of the demolitions took place only three months before a combined force of French and Malian troops retook Timbuktu and routed Ansar Dine's remaining forces from the area in April 2013. Following this, rebuilding began, with Ansar Dine's destructions conceptually refashioned in the Timbuktu mental landscape as the latest contributions to the cultural and structural narrative of city. Through such physical and metaphorical evolutions, the destroyed sites of Timbuktu have come to embody yet additional identities to those already established, identities that now reflect a timely globalized "radical" element that puts Timbuktu in dialogue with many other areas of the world that have experienced similar atrocities. The choice to reconstruct rather than memorialize or commemorate also speaks to the new roles that these forms now occupy. In addition to acting as functional spiritual and historical spaces, they also now stand as a new material landscape representing a new post-Ansar Dine sociopolitical reality and thus are "more related to the present than to the past" (van der Hoorn 2009, 172; 180). Along these lines, Robert Bevan has noted: "Rebuilding can be as symbolic as the destruction that necessitates it . . .. What were once unintentional monuments – the places of worship, libraries and foundation of everyday life – by their rebuilding can become new, intentional monuments to the events that caused their destruction" (Bevan 2006, 176; in van der Hoorn 2009, 172). In fact, rebuilding can sometimes promote unintentional symbolic realities. On the one hand, it potentially cements a structure's martyred status by preserving the structure in stasis in a perfect preconflict authentic utopian state. Contributing to this in Timbuktu's case is the reconstruction process itself, which has used traditional methods and, importantly, earthen materials to reconstitute these edifices. In reaffirming this material link with Timbuktu's architectural heritage (rather than rebuilding in cement or another material that is more physically permanent) and even using materials left at the foundation site, these reconstructions are also in the process of becoming/creating new reliquaries not only out of the bodies entombed within but out of the structures themselves. In addition, as van der Hoorn notes, "When relics originate from a martyr this is seen to increase their power – and thus also the power of those who possess, touch or worship them" (van der Hoorn 2009, 183).

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Yet reconstruction also has the potential to make "previous transformations [destructive and otherwise] undone" and actually denies the existence of various scars and destructive elements that would give the building its martyred status in the first place (van der Hoorn 2009, 177; 179). Through this process, reconstruction as a process of remembering in some ways also promotes active forgetting in that it seems to "heal wounds by creating an impression of completeness" and that it remains somehow "untouched" (van der Hoorn 2009, 180; 189). These areas are in the process of becoming new sites of spiritual identity and renovated repositories of memory. From this perspective, it becomes apparent that identity can never be created or destroyed; it can only be transformed into new iterations through generative and degenerative histories that both layer a site and allow it to accrue additional physical, conceptual, and symbolic patinas.

Lastly, there have also been various conversations and conflicts with regard to the reconstruction of the mausolea and the vision of the heritage stakeholders versus the vision of the community in terms of the role that these structures should play moving into the future (de Jorio 2016, 117). This is in specific reference to these structures acting as contemporary spiritual sites of saint veneration versus commemorative secular sites of historical memory (de Jorio 2016, 132). Interestingly, this seems to reflect changing views with regard to how one should appropriately interpret these spaces. Rosa de Jorio even notes that some of Timbuktu's religious leaders who were adamant defenders of Sufi devotional traditions regarding these structures have, post-conflict, been far more restrained in their support (de Jorio 2016, 133). Thus it begs the question as to whether this architectural incursion not only changed the fundamental nature of these sites as masjid but also now how they function and signify for the broader community. Yet the spiritual malleability of these sites also reveals the inherent flexibility and adaptive nature of Islamic spiritual and spatial codes as, to quote Naomi Davidson, "an ensemble of precedents and general principles, interpreted by different and mutable narratives in diverse contexts" (Davidson 2012, 39).

1.5 Conclusion

Increasingly, shifting contexts and conditions are crafting secondary and even tertiary identities for spiritual sites as masjids, monuments, memorials, commodities, and increasingly battlefields. This is largely a result of the fact that culture (and I would argue the modern condition), according to Humphrey, is not just a condition that helps underscore and clarify how one connects to a spiritual object or structure; it is also a social

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element that remains unfixed and recreated continuously through interaction with one's material environment. Thus, to quote van der Hoorn, "Rather than *symbolizing* something unambiguously, buildings *embody* a number of things successively and simultaneously" (van der Hoorn 2009, 18). As such, buildings, or perhaps spaces, are by their very nature both intersectional and, I would argue, radical in their ability to generate or advocate for a type of essential change. The masjid environments within this chapter have functioned as structures, symbols, environments, and methods of being in the world. In addition, the masjid in each case is not only being utilized as a site of spiritual capital and efficacy but also as a means to a particular end, which in some ways reduces its power as an independent agent and rechannels it toward a new function as a support mechanism for particular agendas. However, the masjid also acts as a type of sociospatial battlefield for intersectional conditions of being, a space of action and agency not only through the conditions of its production but through its destruction as well, each speaking to the value systems, social dynamics, and political disruptions present in society in which masjid space can either participate or attempt to counteract. The masjid thus becomes an ally/advocate/accomplice through the generation of change or the reinscription of normativity based on intersectional modes of existence, deployed as a mode through which Islam renovates, rehabilitates, or reconstitutes worldviews using spiritual space in its constructed or destructed form as a vehicle. As such, the masjid becomes the ultimate affirmation of intersectional identity, according power and authenticity to those who inhabit the space.

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