

FUTURES PAST

Nation, Gender, Time in Jawad Salim's *Monument to Freedom*

Contemporary accounts of the Iraqi revolution of 14 July 1958, from across the political-ideological spectrum, report strikingly similar experiences of *déjà vu*. Many sources, both foreign and Iraqi, confirm the recollections of a British observer that “the Revolution, when it came, corresponded so closely to the opinion that had formed before, that everything that happened seemed, in its turn, to be what one had already been taught to expect.”⁽¹⁾ Paradoxically, it was the familiar unfolding of the events as a revolutionary future that many Iraqis had previously imagined—or a “future past,” to borrow Reinhart Koselleck’s phrase⁽²⁾—that enabled them to be so widely experienced as an absolute temporal rupture, the end of one time and the beginning of another.⁽³⁾

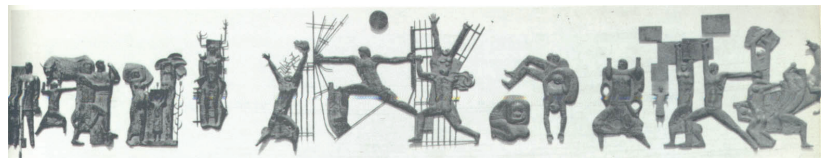


Figure 1: Jawad Salim, *Nusb al-Hurriyya* (1959-62).

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These memories may be worth recalling before looking again at Jawad Salim’s *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, or *Monument to Freedom*,

the huge bronze and limestone sculpture in Baghdad's Liberation Square (see Figure 1). Commissioned by the government of `Abd al-Karim Qasim in 1959 and completed in 1962, shortly after Salim died of a heart attack at age forty-one, today the work is recognized throughout the Arab world as a symbol of both Iraq and the revolutionary era of the 1950s—or as one recent commentator put it, as “a memory of a time and a memory of a place.”⁽⁴⁾ The most common way of viewing the monument is as “a visual narrative of the 1958 revolution...[which is] meant to be ‘read’ like a verse of Arabic poetry, from right to left, from the events leading up to the revolution, to the revolution itself and an ensuing harmony.”⁽⁵⁾ That is, the story starts on the right, with the nation's nomadic past, continues through the uprisings of the monarchical era and the July Revolution, and concludes with a prosperous future. But if we know that the revolution as a dream of the future preceded the events of 14 July 1958, how do we know that *Nusb al-Hurriyya* begins on the right, and not (for example) the left?

In fact, Iraqi art critics writing in Arabic have long recognized the monument's polysemic qualities, the multiple ways in which it can be read, both on the level of each individual figure and on that of its overall structure,

though these analyses have rarely found their way into either English-language scholarship or popular commentary on the work. Shakir Hasan Al Sa`id, in his 1991 book, argues that *Nusb al-Hurriyya* should be seen through multiple intersecting spatial-temporal axes or planes, including a horizontal or consecutive/diachronic plane, a vertical or simultaneous/synchronic plane, and an axial (front/back) plane. Moreover, he writes that even when we remain on the horizontal-diachronic plane, the basis of the conventional right-to-left narrative reading, we find ourselves “from the first moment in front of myth, not historical reality,” and we find the monument's figures in fact moving in multiple directions, such that “we cannot locate a beginning in the work, whether horizontally, vertically, or axially.... the movement of the horse's neck, which proposes a beginning, diverts us in spite of ourselves to the end...”⁽⁶⁾

In this article, engaging especially with Al Sa`id's analysis, I explore ways in which *Nusb al-Hurriyya* can be read both along and against its linear-temporal (or horizontal-diachronic)

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grain to shed light on the complex interplays between conceptions of nation, gender, and time in Iraqi nationalist imaginations of the revolutionary era. As Al Sa`id notes, a central concern of Salim's monument is with "the relationship between the body and history" (*al-`alaqa bayn al-jasad wa-l-tarikh*), and thus, I argue, with the relationship between gender and time.⁽⁷⁾

My interest in the work emerged in the course of a larger project on the interrelation between reforms related to gender and the family and various notions of time in Iraq from the 1930s through the 1950s. As "one of the central modalities through which modernity is imagined and desired,"⁽⁸⁾ gender is linked in complex ways to understandings of and experiences of time. I am especially interested in how discourses of national economic development and modernization after World War II invoked certain conceptions of gender and family—always in the name of the nation's distant future and of the children who embodied it—to undermine political engagement in the present.

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Numerous scholars have explored the emergence of nationalist constructions of "patriotic motherhood" or "feminine domesticity" in the Middle East (as in other parts of the world) from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries. These often relied on counter-constructions of the "backwards" indigenous woman, imagined to be hopelessly "trapped in the past," as a tragic symbol or even primary cause of the nation's present underdevelopment. Increasingly seen as the dominant influence on the physical, psychological, and moral development of children, women—illiterate, superstitious, tied to biological rhythms of time—became objects of sympathy as well as concern for their role in the cyclical reproduction of the past with each generation, the pattern that seemed to block economic development and a national future. The answer, in Iraq and elsewhere, was to provide women with modern educations in feminine domesticity that would prepare them for a particular kind of conjugal and maternal life, one that would effect a decisive break with the nation's past and its diverse, messy, localized traditions and temporalities by reorienting its citizens toward homogeneous time and the limitless future of modernity.

Because nationalists themselves have often aligned patriotic feminine domesticity

with the timeless core of the nation, such constructions have frequently been seen by historians as primarily essentialist and backward-looking, ossifying patriarchal gender relations through the “invention of tradition.”⁽⁹⁾ But I propose that new dimensions of nationalism and gender become available if we look at these discourses as related instead to nationalism’s forward-looking, future-directed sensibilities, its reliance on the modern political imaginary that Lee Edelman has, in a different context, called “reproductive futurism,” reinforced through new concepts of childhood and of generations to come.⁽¹⁰⁾ Biological reproduction is typically associated with notions of cyclical, rather than linear, time, and femininity itself is often imagined as a way of living in cyclical time.⁽¹¹⁾ But reproductive *futurism* is constituted by an interplay between cyclical-biological time and linear-historical time that is both modern and nationalist. For female citizens, as agents of reproduction, this interplay heralds new opportunities but also the consolidation of more formidable pressures. Having been finally freed from the past, the nation’s women were henceforth to be trapped in its future.

In the imaginary of reproductive futurism analyzed by Edelman, the “figure of the child” comes to shape “the logic within which the

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political itself must be thought.” The fantasy of the child’s innocence “imposes an ideological limit on political discourse as such”—who but a monster could stand against this innocence?—while the future the figure of the child embodies, but which no “historical child” is ever allowed to reach, becomes the “perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics.” The political rationality of reproductive futurism, while seemingly based on the valorization of change in its perpetual yearning toward the future, in effect compels a sort of political freezing of the present in the name of a child who never grows up and a future that never arrives. The figure of the child thus enacts “a logic of repetition that fixes identity through identification with the future of the social order.”⁽¹²⁾

A similar reproductive futurist discourse was dominant in Iraq by the 1940s, but there were differences. On the one hand, its powers of moral unassailability were strengthened, at the dawn of the global “age of development” after World War II, by its inevitable imbrication

with the emerging concept of the “developing” nation. As Partha Chatterjee has noted, development was the 20th-century idiom through which all postcolonial states secured their legitimacy.⁽¹³⁾ Like the child’s future, and not unrelated to it, the nation’s development was a politically unquestionable good in revolutionary Iraq, the safeguarding of which could be, and often was, used as a trump card against any inconvenient demand for political change then and there. Edelman argues that in the 20th-century United States, the figure of the child helped create a boundary between acceptable partisan politics and enforced sociopolitical consensus.⁽¹⁴⁾ It seems to have been considerably easier for rulers of what came to be called “developing countries” in this period to declare, with straight faces, that partisan politics *as such* were a “waste of time,” as Qasim and other state officials frequently did in revolutionary-era Iraq.⁽¹⁵⁾

On the other hand, in Iraq, the discourses, practices, and techniques that the concept of “reproductive futurism” gathers together were far less stable and predictable than Edelman seems to suggest in his own use of the term. I attribute this in part to the colonial difference, or, in this period, to the difference that struggles for decolonization made. Iraqi anticolonial imaginings of the future involved yearnings

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for revolutionary temporal rupture that could not be contained by the disciplinary moves of reproductive futurism. They were also fraught with, and continuously came up against, ways of living in relation to time and to other people that were not organized according to the future-oriented and depoliticizing logic of family reform in the global age of development and modernization theory.

In the following sections, I explore *Nusb al-Hurriyya* from various temporal perspectives, paying special attention to how the work reveals both normative and creative aspects of Iraqi nationalist imaginings of femininity, masculinity, childhood, and time in this period. I will begin, like most analyses of the monument, on the right, in order to raise questions about its depictions of linear-historical time, the form of temporality on which the conventional reading is based. On one level, after all, *Nusb al-Hurriyya* is a remarkably literal illustration of the nationalist apprehension of “homogeneous” linear-horizontal time that Benedict Anderson tells

us is a prerequisite of any national becoming.
⁽¹⁶⁾ But on other levels, as I will also show, the work evokes heterogeneous and non-linear conceptions of time that may also be seen as constitutive of Iraqi nationhood, and as instances of what Dipesh Chakrabarty has called colonial and postcolonial experiences of “heterotemporality.”⁽¹⁷⁾

There are many ways of dividing *Nusb al-Hurriyya* into sections for purposes of analysis. In what follows, I use two different methods. The first results in three sections, which I refer to as the “past sequence” (the figures on the far right comprising the rearing horse and struggling men), the “historical sequence” (from the male demonstrator to the revolutionary soldier), and the “future sequence” (from the figure of Freedom to the industrial worker). My second method results in five divisions, and exposes some of the temporal modifications or disjunctures that occur even within the historical sequence. Here, each division is marked by the primacy of a specific geometrical shape: the horse and

struggling men (where the dominant shape is the spiral); the urban demonstrators and the child (the square); the feminine sequence, from the wailing woman to the mother and infant (the circle); the revolutionary sequence, from the political prisoner to the figure of Freedom (the X); and the rest of the figures in the future sequence, from the reclining woman to the industrial worker (the vertical rectangle).⁽¹⁸⁾

1. Historical Time

What should be most immediately obvious about the monument, when viewed in its entirety, and even restricting ourselves to what Al Sa`id calls its horizontal-diachronic axis, is that its right-to-left movement is not in fact uniform. Only about half of the figures are depicted in “forward” (i.e., leftward) motion. Neither the figures on the far right edge of the monument, typically seen as representing the nation’s past, nor those to the left of the central revolutionary scene, representing its future, are traveling from right to left. They frame the historical events but are not themselves moving in historical time, which is itself constituted by these two temporal ruptures.

The first rupture is the central drama of the rightmost set of figures. This scene depicts a rearing horse, its erstwhile rider, and three

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other men struggling to contain the ensuing chaos: a prehistorical and prepolitical past in which human and animal can hardly be distinguished (see Figure 2). The battle between temporal stasis and linear progress is reflected aesthetically in the spiral shape that is dominant here: “the intersecting directions are now conflicting directions. The horse is jumping toward the right with its front legs, moving upward with its neck, and toward the left with its head. The overall combined movement is a spiral—from right to top to top left.”⁽¹⁹⁾ The scene appears in some



Figure 2. Beginnings.

ways to overflow with masculinity: the human bodies are all male, and the horse, as Jabra Ibrahim Jabra noted in his 1974 book on the monument, is an Arab symbol of masculinity.⁽²⁰⁾ Yet, as Al Sa`id points out, the spiral shape, in Salim's art, signifies a concept of androgyny, or of “equilibrium between motherhood and fatherhood,” by way of equilibrium between the circle as a symbol of femininity and the square as a symbol of masculinity.⁽²¹⁾ On the level of the scene's content, the spiral is reflected in the fact that the male bodies are not constructed in contrast to, or difference from, female bodies, as they will be in later scenes of the monument. Historically, one could say that the specific forms of sexual differentiation performed on human bodies by modern institutions such as the public school have not yet worked on these bodies.

In any case, the artist has managed to condense, in a single vivid scene, the ambivalent nationalist relation to the past, or the non-ambivalent relation to two different national pasts: something that was right (in a valorized distant past) has clearly gone wrong (in a tragic nearer past). Salim's view of this recent past may not be as dark as Qasim's, who proclaimed in 1959 that Iraqi artists must “nourish the noble spirit in the rising generation, and cleanse their souls of the filth of the past,



Figure 3. Historical Time.

the past of darkness, the past of treachery. I don't mean the glorious past..."⁽²²⁾ But the rupture between two pasts is clear enough in both, as it was in all nationalist discourse of the time. It was a necessary device of the drive to purge the colonial/monarchical past from the nationalist/revolutionary present without compromising the historicity of the nation. And it is this national historicity—or, to be more precise, historical time itself—that is born from the tragedy of the monument's first scene, a single irrepressible motion "driven leftwards

by force of the horse's arching neck."⁽²³⁾

The next set of figures emerges directly out of this struggle, carrying forward the triumphant leftward motion of the horse's neck (see Figure 3). Evoking the organized demonstrations of the Hashimite era, a man and a woman march forward in unison, hoisting political placards in the air. The female demonstrator, destined to become one of the monument's most iconic figures, was instantly recognized by contemporary observers as a young, modern, and revolutionary Iraqi woman claiming her equality with the man striding at her side. To the left of the couple floats the figure of a child.

Historical time is thus set into motion through three very particular bodies, strongly individuated and clearly differentiated by gender and age. In their individuality and their differences, as well as the ways in which the adult figures are marked as urban and modern—by their placards, which testify to their literacy; their clothes, which are snug-fitting and straight-lined; their disciplined bodies, attesting to both modern schooling and political organization; and, of course, their resolute march forward, abandoning the past for the future even as the man's left fist draws sustenance from the former—they form a stark contrast to the ahistorical and undifferentiated mass of human and animal bodies in the first

scene.

The depiction of a male and a female together in the public sphere marks the second set of figures apart from all the other scenes of the monument as the only representation of a heterosocial community, and the child confirms that it is a heterosexual one as well. As a triangular structure of relations, it clearly evokes the “bourgeois” conjugal family frequently associated with Western modernity. Many nationalist intellectuals in Iraq conceived of this family type as the most conducive to fostering both women’s equality with men and the nation’s political sovereignty and development. In *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, the stability and power of the conjugal family structure are precisely what enable the progressive linear motion and futurity of the nation—that is, its history.

The dominant shape in this scene is the square, reflected in the placards, the straight lines of the protestors’ bodies, and the spaces formed by the right angles of their limbs and clothes. The square and the straight line were symbols of masculinity in Salim’s work, as they had been in ancient Mesopotamian art.⁽²⁴⁾ Paradoxically, then, a properly modern form of Iraqi masculinity comes into being at the very moment that Iraqi women enter the public sphere.⁽²⁵⁾

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The monument’s primal nomadic scene, with its figures turned inward, onto their own drama, has no public. At best, it depicts one precociously prepolitical figure attempting to find or create a public with a clumsy attempt to raise his own placard, as some have read the vertical male figure in that scene.⁽²⁶⁾ The second sequence, by contrast, is unmistakably oriented toward a national public, as indicated by the orderly placards, the demonstrators’ coordinated march and raised fists, and the female figure’s direct gaze outward, at the viewers or the monument’s own public. In some ways, the triangular configuration resonates with Jurgen Habermas’s historical account of the modern European public sphere as originating in the private sphere of the bourgeois family, not in the sense of differentiating itself from that sphere but in the sense of being actually constituted by private (reading) individuals with “audience-oriented subjectivities.”⁽²⁷⁾ In *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, the audience-oriented subjectivities of the conjugal family are what bring a national public into being and, through it, a nation moving

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forward in historical time. Yet it is noteworthy that the conjugal structure is not depicted here in the gendered *spatial* terms of a masculine public and a feminine private sphere; I will return to this point in several sections below.

2. Generational Time

If the conjugal couple resonates in some ways with a familiar modernization narrative, nothing in its representation suggests a scene of private bourgeois domesticity or even, outside the mere existence of the child, of a gendered division of labor. They are certainly not at home; they are both (all three?) engaged in dangerous political action in the public sphere. Indeed, many contemporary observers saw in them not so much universal qualities of modernity as particular sensibilities of Iraqi urban life in the 1950s: leftist heterosocialized activists as representatives of the “generation of ‘58,” formed in the crucible of the mass urban protests of the postwar era. The role of both women and youth in these protests

was a regular feature of nationalist narrative in Iraq, in addition to being a well-documented historical phenomenon; even children of elementary school age were widely reported to have participated in street demonstrations of the pre- and post-revolutionary years.⁽²⁸⁾

In the political convulsions of the 1930s through the 1960s, youth in Iraq, as in many other places, were constructed both as bearing “the promise of the future” and as “unbridled political and sexual subjects” threatening various established orders, to quote Omnia El Shakry’s description of nationalist discourses in interwar and postwar Egypt.⁽²⁹⁾ The student demonstrations of 1935 and 1936 in Egypt “ushered in the figure of youth as an insurgent subject of politics. Youth were recast as a problem in need of regulation and control and as a necessary object of study.” By the 1940s:

The construction of the adolescent as a psychological subject was geared toward a particular mode of subjectification, which involved the elaboration of an apolitical psychological interiority and an attempt to domesticate the “boundless energy of youth” through the production of normative gendered, heterosexual, and ethical subjects engaged in the cultivation of self-health.⁽³⁰⁾

The two young adult figures in *Nusb al-Hurriyya* who do, in critical ways, act positively as “insurgent subjects of politics,” forcing the nation’s future and even its very history into

being, are simultaneously normalized not only through the marks of their orderly discipline but also through their gender difference, their heterosocial/sexuality, and their child. There is no hint in this sequence of the widespread public anxiety around the purported “marriage crisis” (i.e., avoidance) among young Iraqis or the general social-sexual disruption feared to be produced by politically mobilized youth⁽³¹⁾—except, perhaps, for that which might be read in the arguably strenuous marks of normalization themselves.

As many observers have noticed, the child in the second scene of *Nusb al-Hurriyya* is the monument’s only fully three-dimensional figure. It is also one of the few figures in the historical sequence that exhibits no sign of leftward motion or interest. It faces outward, its arms stretching into the three-dimensional space that it alone occupies; it even hovers slightly away from the wall to which all the other figures are firmly fixed. It is the first real hint we have of a second way of locating the past and the future in the monument—based on what Al Sa’id calls its “axial” plane—in which the future is located outward, where the viewer stands.

In the modern political imaginary of reproductive futurism, the nation’s future is embodied in the figure of the child. But,

following Edelman, this figure should not be confused with any “historical children.”⁽³²⁾ Likewise, the future it embodies should not be confused with any historical future; it is not a future bound to the present. The child is accorded the honor of embodying the nation’s distant and conflict-free future, but at the cost of being literally severed from any direct, agential connection to the political present or the immediate, historically bound future. In stark contrast to the agonistic engagement of historical Iraqi children in Hashimite-era uprisings, the figure is marked by its nonpolitical temporal distancing from the tumultuous struggles swirling around it. Unlike all of its companion figures, it is barely even attached to the wall behind it, which, as nearly all critics remind us, is a tribute to the wall-relief art of ancient Mesopotamia, the historical origin of the nation. It is as if the child has been released from the burden of time altogether.

3. Gendered Time

As many observers have noticed, the child in the second scene of *Nusb al-Hurriyya* is the monument’s only fully three-dimensional figure.

In the next scene are three primary female figures depicting somewhat different nationalist visions of femininity. The first, carrying on the vital leftward motion launched by the horse and channeled into disciplined order by the couple, is dressed in a long *`abaya*, her posture and affect evoking the female homosocial work of wailing in grief and/or urging men into battle (see Figure 4).⁽³³⁾ The tribute to mourning as women's work is elaborated in the next scene, a woman curled over the body of her martyred adult son (see Figure 5). The faces of two other grieving women can be seen in the background. Both the primary female figure of this scene and that of the one just beyond/below it, a mother cradling her newborn child (see Figure 6), modify the monument's linear forward movement with their markedly circular shapes (which are enlarged mirror images of the circles carved out of the folds of the wailing woman's *`abaya*), evoking the cyclical-feminine time of mourning and reproduction without which linear-historical time would come to an end (with the death of the martyr) and the nation would not emerge.

Muhsin al-Musawi has eloquently analyzed the prevalent use of "regeneration themes" adapted from ancient Sumerian and Babylonian literature in 20th-century Iraqi nationalist art, themes that were often joined



Figure 4. The Wailing Woman.

with Shi'i narratives of redemptive suffering. This "combination of ancient hymns and canticles with Shi'i rituals" marked even "the most leftist secular discourse."⁽³⁴⁾ For example, al-Musawi notes the frequent reference of artists to poems attributed to Enheduanna, the daughter of King Sargon of Akkad around 2350 B.C. An especially popular poem attributed to her, "Lament for the Fall of Ur," evokes the simultaneously cyclical and time-accelerating conception of mourning Iraqi art of this period.



Figure 5. The Mother of the Martyr.

The poem narrates the destruction of the third dynasty of Ur, as the

god Enil

called the storm

the people mourned

winds of abundance he took away from the
land

the people mourn

good winds he took away from Sumer

the people mourn

deputed evil winds

the people mourn(35)

Here, the cyclical repetition of the work of
Then the next line displays, but is covering
the caption of Figure 5:

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Figure 6. The Mother and Infant.

the people mourn⁽³⁵⁾

Here, the cyclical repetition of the work of mourning can be heard as a kind of ominous drum-beat, not slowing down time but hastening it, much as in Salim's monument the figures of the monument's historical sequence—and the female homosocial scene both lies at the heart of and traverses the largest part of this sequence—drive the ever-accelerating rhythm of linear-cyclical nationalist time, heralding the coming temporal explosion of revolution.

There is clearly a modern/traditional dichotomy established in the contrast between these female figures and the female demonstrator in the earlier scene: on the one hand, a modern woman engaged in heterosocial publics, heterosexual companionate marriage, and organized political activism; on the other, traditional women living in homosocial community as they carry out the now politicized work of mourning and mothering. Yet, by marking the latter figures with what in the urban nationalist imagination were unmistakable signs of tradition, the artist did not bind them to a stagnant familial space or to a past time: the irrelevance of any past/future binary is underscored by the very ordering of the figures in linear time. Both types of femininity play crucial roles in bringing the sovereign nation

into being. In this sense, the modern and the traditional are just different ways of being a patriotic Iraqi woman.

The two modes of living patriotic femininity do share a common denominator, however: in both, women's reproductive labor is essential to national becoming. Yasin al-Nasir has argued that "there is not a figure in the monument that lacks the symbolism of mother and child, whether explicit or implicit."⁽³⁶⁾ But if the theme of motherhood is implicit in much of the work, it is clearly quite explicit here. In fact, there is a striking paucity of active male figures in the historical sequence up to the revolution, which represents the entirety of the Iraqi nationalist movement in the colonial-monarchical era. In the whole sequence, there are four primary female figures and two secondary ones, compared to one active male figure, the urban demonstrator, in addition to one ambiguously gendered child, one adult male corpse, and one undoubtedly male infant to replace him and enact the revolution.

The scarcity of active male figures does

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not translate into the absence of male agency, however. Rather, it could be argued that there is only one male represented in the entire sequence, the educated urban nationalist, who is not only “universal”—through his achievement of full individuality and autonomy—but also eternal. However often the corrupt regime guns him down, the nation will throw him up again. In the second sequence, he emerges directly from the nation’s primordial past (keeping one fist in contact with it); in the central revolutionary sequence, which he carries out single-handedly, he emerges from a woman’s body. In both cases, he becomes the universal subject of national-historical time by differentiating himself from the authentic core of the nation: its women, peasants, and tribal nomads. This happens a final time in the last, futuristic sequence, where the male industrial worker stands alone at the monument’s edge, set apart from the equally necessary but far less individuated peasants, women, children, and animals of the sovereign nation.

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Joan Scott writes that “since the Enlightenment, the abstract individual of political theory has been presumed to be masculine, while the feminine has been synonymous with the particular and the concrete.” Scott notes Simone de Beauvoir’s expression of this contrast in terms of “man’s transcendence, his disembodiment, and woman’s immanence, her confinement to the body.”⁽³⁷⁾ The eternal repetition of the universal (i.e., male) subject of historical time in Salim’s monument might be read as a repetition of this masculine transcendence of the body, which—despite the real dangers it might pose to that very body—does not contradict the autonomy of the male nationalist but is a condition of its possibility.

If much of female agency in *Nusb al-Hurriyya* is located in the reproductive realm, the way in which the nation’s women reproduce its universal male subject clearly goes beyond banal biological observations. After all, almost the entirety of the historical sequence is devoted to representing it. In Partha Chatterjee’s well-known argument, anticolonial thought constructs two domains, the outer/material/masculine and the inner/spiritual/feminine, and then “declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to

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intervene in that domain.” Chatterjee accepts Anderson’s analyses of homogeneous linear time and of “modular” forms of nationalism that are developed in the West and adopted in the colony and the postcolony—but he accepts them *only* for the outer/masculine domain of nationalism, the domain that permits the adoption of Western technology and universal conceptions of progress. He proposes that it is within the inner, protected, feminine domain where “nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a ‘modern’ national culture that is nevertheless not Western.”⁽³⁸⁾ One of Chatterjee’s most important insights is that this anticolonial binary cannot be directly aligned with the private/public spheres of Western capitalist modernity, as it often is in feminist analyses of nationalist movements.

Yet my reading of *Nusb al-Hurriyya* suggests that the relation between gender and linear-historical time in Iraqi nationalist

discourse was more complex and dynamic than can be depicted by simply locating the latter within the outer/masculine sphere. In neither the traditional/homosocial sequence of the monument nor the modern/heteronormative scene that precedes it does feminine reproductive time exactly unfold within an inner sphere assigned the role of preserving tradition, nor is it simply contrasted with a masculine public time of material progress. There do indeed seem to be (at least) two different temporalities at work here, constituted through their contrast and interplay with one another: one masculine/linear/heterosexual and the other feminine/cyclical/homosocial. But this interplay is not adequately captured through the binary *spatial* categories of the public/private spheres of capitalist modernity or the outer/inner spheres of anticolonial nationalism. Feminine time in *Nusb al-Hurriyya* does not really compensate for the future-directed modern temporality of the larger narrative, thereby safeguarding the nation’s authentic past. Rather, it functions as that temporality’s deep motive force, literally accelerating historical time and propelling the nation into its future. Or, to be more precise, into its revolution, which explodes directly out of the feminine sequence.



Figure 7. The Soldier of 14 July.

4. Revolutionary Time

This scene depicts the liberation of a political prisoner, while the monument's central figure, a muscular soldier, takes an exaggerated step forward in time to smash through the bars of the larger prison, the old regime itself (see Figure 7). A disc hangs above the soldier's head, presumably representing dawn, the actual time of the revolution and the endlessly recycled metaphor of the new age it inaugurated—perhaps even a reference to a different part of the Sumerian poem on the destruction of Ur attributed to Enheduanna:

*Dawn and the rise of the bright sun
he locked up with good winds
let not the bright sun rise upon the country
like a twilight star it dawned⁽³⁹⁾*

In many ways, the scene is a visual composite of the most pervasive rhetorical tropes—some might say clichés—for temporalizing the July Revolution, as expressed, for instance, in this unoriginal example from the governor of Nasiriyya province: “With the break of dawn on July 14 [the revolution] broke forth, to set right what had been corrupted over centuries of darkness and...to see with open eyes Iraq’s giant leap forward in every field.”⁽⁴⁰⁾ It may be its resonance with now deeply unfashionable language such as this—along with retrospective knowledge of revolutionary Iraq’s actual historical future, and especially the unwillingness of its military officers to consent to democratic institutions—that has made this scene the least admired of the monument, at least among recent commentators.⁽⁴¹⁾

The soldier is hailed, on the other side, by the figure of Freedom, who is gendered female and draws on certain European conventions, such as the torch in her right hand, for representing this particular abstraction. (The torch is also one of many direct references in the monument to Picasso’s *Guernica*.) In a somewhat peculiar way, Freedom seems

to be rushing toward the soldier in the wrong direction, against the vital forward movement established by the rearing horse and accelerated in each subsequent scene. When viewed together with all of the figures to her left, who are also either facing “backwards,” toward the past, or directly outwards, toward the viewer, she seems to signal the stopping of historical time altogether.

Some art critics writing in Arabic have pointed out that the radical dislocation produced by the revolutionary scene, the abrupt shift in directional flow, opens up another way of “reading” *Nusb al-Hurriyya*. As al-Nasir writes, “time does not flow in [only] one direction” (*al-zaman la yasir bi-itijah wahid*) in Salim’s monument.⁽⁴²⁾ Rather than proceeding in linear fashion from right to left, past to future, this method of reading begins with the revolutionary present and works outward in both directions simultaneously. When this method is used, it quickly becomes apparent that many of the figures in the revolution’s past “mirror” figures in its future, and vice versa. Revolutionary time here ruptures the linearity of historical time, whether the former is understood as a centrifugal explosion that irreparably tears the past from the future and sends them flying in opposite directions, or as a more centripetal movement, a kind

Revolutionary time here ruptures the linearity of historical time

of temporal “setting right” that establishes harmony between the nation’s past and its future.

Either way, one can picture the entire monument in this reading not as a fixed horizontal line but as the spoke of a wheel, perpetually rotating around the axis of the July Revolution, itself represented by the disc fixed above the soldier’s head. A close look at the disc reveals that it is crossed by straight lines that meet it in the middle, like spokes. Two of the lines, which form a vertical X, appear slightly more prominent than the others, echoing the three X shapes of the main human figures in this sequence. The repetitions of the X, combined with the various suggestions of rotation—not least among them the strange axis-like line connecting the prison bars to the soldier’s thigh—produce a vertiginous effect on any viewer who begins to imagine the monument as a wheel. Is the soldier’s left hand really opening the prison bars, or is he just hanging on?

The circularity of this conception of revolution does not, of course, suggest that

it can be seen as the pre-Enlightenment meaning of the term in European languages, which implied a restoration of past stability, “a rotation of movement back to a point of departure.”⁽⁴³⁾ As we will see, there are too many differences between the nation’s past and its future in *Nusb al-Hurriyya*. Rather, the revolution’s non-linearity lies in its quality of temporal rupture or explosion. This quality is captured in the most common word used in Iraq for the events of July 14, *thawra*, which has the sense of volcanic eruption, rather than the other available option, *inqilab*, which is closer to the English “revolution” in its sense of rotation or turning upside-down.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The modern experience of revolutionary time has a complex relationship to the equally modern apprehension of homogeneous linear-historical time. In European history, the two are not disconnected in spite of their apparent contradiction; Koselleck even argues that, in Europe, “the sphere of a genuine human history was opened up *through* its contamination by ‘revolution.’”⁽⁴⁵⁾ Still, nationalist revolutionaries in Europe’s colonies ultimately directed the urgency of absolute temporal rupture precisely against the European Enlightenment promise of gradual linear progress. As Chakrabarty writes, to the repeated “not yet” of the self-proclaimed modernizing colonizer,

the colonized nationalist finally responds: “now.”⁽⁴⁶⁾ If it is true that the “not yet” has never been slow to make its reappearance, it is also common for the “now” of the revolutionary event to never quite lose its force. In *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, it is the center toward which the nation’s past and future are both directed; in the steady gaze of several of the figures of the future backward, toward the revolution, its memory and its possibility remain as a permanent presence.

The non-linear “now” of revolutionary time is even more dominant in yet a third way of reading the monument’s overall temporal structure, one in which time does not “flow” in any direction. Many observers have seen in its rightmost set of figures, the horse and struggling men, a famous scene of 14 July itself: the destruction by the Iraqi “masses” of two statues of men on horseback: the first of General Maude, the British conqueror of Baghdad in 1917, and the second of King Faysal, installed by the British in 1921. Apparently these were two of only three public

to the repeated “not yet” of the self-proclaimed modernizing colonizer, the colonized nationalist finally responds: “now.”

statues in Baghdad prior to the revolution, and their spontaneous dismantling on 14 July made a “deep impression” on Jawad Salim, whose own public sculpture would soon replace them.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Following this method of reading, the entire monument can be seen as capturing no time but the revolutionary moment, with its angry and jubilant masses, its disciplined demonstrators, its loyal soldiers, its just-released prisoners, its martyrs and mourners, its mothers sheltering their infants from the turmoil, and its dreams of a better tomorrow.

5. Future Time

In the monument's final sequence, in Makiya's words, the “restless motion, anger, tension and pain of the revolution ceases. Peace descends. Repose enters the people's hearts. Iron bars turn into branches; and eyes close with serenity because peace is an offering which knows no fear.”⁽⁴⁸⁾ The female figure to the left of Freedom is reclining, eyes closed, in what seems from the suggestion of wavy movements across her legs to be a pool or a bath (see Figure 8). According to `Abbas al-Sarraf, she is a “girl at the threshold of marriage, preparing to meet her groom,”⁽⁴⁹⁾ implying that now that Iraq has attained its sovereignty, Iraqis can settle down to the



Figure 8. The Reclining Woman.

business of marriage, sex, and procreation. The figure is also often seen as representing nature, with the water running over her legs, the tree branches behind her head, and the bird perched on her shoulder. Many have interpreted the bird, which looks like a dove or a pigeon, as a symbol of peace, though Al Sa`id proposes that it can also be read as a link integrating the monument in time and space with its Baghdadi environment: that it



Figure 9. Women Harvesting.



Figure 10. Men of the Future.

is “a secret companion” for every other bird who “comes to land on the shoulders of the monument’s figures from time to time.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ The bird further works as a visual pun in Arabic: a pigeon (*al-hamam*) symbolizing the bathhouse (*al-hammam*) in which the woman rests, and thus celebrating Baghdad itself through reference to the city’s legendary bathing institutions, understood as a spatial embodiment of temporal continuity from ancient to modern times.

To the left are two more female figures, representing the Tigris and Euphrates rivers; the latter is pregnant (see Figure 9). Between them is the figure of an adolescent girl with a tray on her head. It might be noted that Makiya’s account of the futuristic scene no longer really applies, once the reclining woman is left aside; while historical time does seem to have stopped, “repose” is not exactly what has replaced it. All three figures are hard at work, as are the two male peasants to the left of them and the lone male worker on the monument’s far left edge (see Figure 10). A sheet of metal is curled around the right side of the worker’s body, signaling the industrial materials of his labor as well as the historical closure effected by this sequence. These figures inhabit not just a posthistorical utopia (or not just *any* posthistorical utopia) but,

more specifically, a land made prosperous through their agricultural and industrial labor, and they are no longer directed toward the future—which would be redundant, since they *are* the future, and there is only one future in the national-developmental imagination—but toward the ongoing exploitation of Iraq's natural wealth for the benefit of its people. That is, they inhabit a developed country.

The dominant shape here is the vertical rectangle. Unlike the squares and straight lines in the second sequence, which convey a sense of horizontal movement in linear time, the rectangles here are formed through the frontal positionality in which most of the figures are depicted. As Sa'id notes, in moving from forms in which the "side and forward views coincide" to forms that face us squarely, we have "broken through to stillness...except that this is a stillness bursting with movement," since the figures confront us in "an axial, not a vertical or horizontal," direction. One wonders, though, just what the temporal quality is of this stillness that is "bursting with movement," especially given that Al Sa'id also reads into this sequence the theme of "rebellion against rebellion itself."⁽⁵¹⁾

Scholars have theorized various ways in which the time of modernity, when conceived in all its fullness, is a paradoxically timeless

time. The whole concept of the modern is predicated on a radical rupture with the past and on notions of perpetual newness and the linearity of a historical time stretching into infinity. Yet equally central to the production of modernity is its spatialization as a *place* to which some (nations, races, classes) have *already* arrived.⁽⁵²⁾ Two institutions have been seen as particularly charged domains for the production of modern forms of timelessness: the nation-state and the family. As Anderson, Koselleck, and other scholars have noted, the clock time and calendar time that measure modern homogeneous linear time, and that emerge with the rise of the modern nation-state, are predicated on uniform duration and endless repetition. As these forms of time become the basis for modern experiences of governance, they come to mean "precisely not innovation or anything new but rather stability and routine both in the everyday and in the modes of organization of a political society... through repetition, precisely that which is new in it turns into the everyday and loses its meaning as new time."⁽⁵³⁾ What James Scott calls the "administrative grid" of the modern

the time of modernity, when conceived in all its fullness, is a paradoxically timeless time

state paradoxically produces mobile people and objects by first rendering them stable.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Elsewhere I have examined postwar development projects in Iraq that aimed to fix pastoral nomads and peasants in space by settling them on small, family-sized plots of land, themselves brought into existence through the stabilization of the course and flow of the two great rivers through new dams and irrigation systems.⁽⁵⁵⁾ In other words, the linear forward motion of development was seen to depend on the production of new kinds of spatial immobilities. Similarly, in Salim's monument, historical time is set in motion, and the end of development achieved, by *eliminating* the ungovernable mobility of the tribal nomads in the first scene. We might thus conceive of the future "sequence" in *Nusb al-Hurriyya* not as the end of historical time in Anderson's sense, but as the end of the eventfulness of nationalist, revolutionary time and the proper beginning of homogeneous linear time: the opening up of a fully modern temporality instituting the "fantasy of timeless, even, and limitless development" within the territory of the sovereign nation-state and through the productive agency of disciplined, self-governing citizens.⁽⁵⁶⁾

6. Bio-Time

Sex and gender have never been tangential to any modern state-building project, whether colonial or nationalist; the centrality of what Michel Foucault calls "bio-power" to modern disciplinary regimes has ensured this. Starting in the 18th century in Europe, according to Foucault, new forms of power were deployed at the intersection between "the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population," which "constituted the two poles around which the power over life was deployed."

If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.⁽⁵⁷⁾

In many ways, such modern formations of power can be seen as driving the temporal motion of *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, even if actual power relations are somewhat opaque in the work. The monument's visual narrative establishes a rhythm, a tension, and a productive dialectic between some of the central "poles" of the functioning of bio-power described by Foucault: the (human) body and the (national) population, life and history. As noted above, a similar configuration of poles, namely "the relationship between the body

and history,” is seen by Al Sa`id to constitute a central dynamic of the monument.

The second sequence of *Nusb al-Hurriyya* already points toward how modern forms of discipline were fostering new kinds of body- and subject-formation in time. The disorderly movements and non-differentiated bodies of the nomads are firmly located in the past, superseded by the geometrical and coordinated movements of the protesters’ highly disciplined, and deeply gendered, bodies. But it is the sequence of bodies on the far left that is ultimately both the proof and the guarantee of the nation’s achievement of sovereignty through its progress in historical time and the rupture of its revolution. Following the non-linear method of reading that begins with the revolutionary center and works outward in both directions, the three primary male figures in this scene—the two peasants and the worker—mirror the three male figures struggling furiously with the horse in the far right scene, while the placid, domesticated, and wealth-producing ox mirrors the ungovernable horse itself.⁽⁵⁸⁾ The male figures in both scenes are strong, muscular, and determined. But the marks of their difference signal the reconstruction of Iraqi masculinity through the nationalist struggle and the July Revolution—from the noble but somewhat wild, possibly

violent, and unquestionably disorganized nomads of the past to the cooperative, disciplined, and productive male workers and farmers of the future. As Jabra writes: “The posture of the worker is a posture of pride. In this optimistic posture, this belief in the future, the epic of freedom reaches its conclusion.”⁽⁵⁹⁾ It is precisely the worker’s *posture*—his modern, masculine bodily comportment—that effects the end of history in the nation’s long and difficult march toward freedom, and in this “conclusion,” the future he “believes” in can be none other than the future he already inhabits. (If he has any doubts, the thick metal-and-stone slab blocking any further leftward motion or even view should dispel them.) In this posture is the promise, or the dream, that the revolution is, or will become, far more than a political or even economic revolution; its effects will be as deep as those described by Koselleck as the aim of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: “to impel disruption into Chinese sensibility, dictating revolution into the body as it were.”⁽⁶⁰⁾

The reconstruction of Iraqi feminine bodies is somewhat less clear. The three adult female figures in the future sequence—the reclining woman and the two women harvesting—can be seen as mirroring the three rural/traditional adult female figures in the historical sequence:

the wailing woman, the mother of the martyr, and the mother of the infant. Unlike the latter group of figures, however, or the male figures in the future sequence, the females of the future double as symbolic figures standing for Nature and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. It would seem that rural women, once released from historical time (through its coming to an end), revert to the cyclical-biological time of nature and fertility. What becomes of urban women in this imaginary is a question I return to in the conclusion of this article; here I will just note that the male worker of the future, unlike the male peasants of the future and the male urban demonstrator of the past, does not have a female counterpart visible in the public space depicted in the monument.

7. Counter-Memory and Heterotemporalities

The monument's future sequence is now often viewed as a "utopia." This is perhaps an obvious reading, though it might be remembered that at the time of its construction most people did not see the development of

underdeveloped countries as utopian—after all, developed countries actually existed. Moreover, the sequence primarily depicts hard manual work regulated through rather familiar divisions of labor: urban/rural, male/female, human/animal, and adult/child. As utopias go, this is surely a modest one, and it is arguably only retrospective comparison with revolutionary Iraq's actual dystopian future that makes it appear otherwise. In this sense, Salim's vision is not so much a utopia as it is a future truly past and gone.

But my aim in this section is not really to challenge the representation of historical reality lying at the end of the linear narrative of time through which *Nusb al-Hurriyya* is most often read. Rather, it is to introduce a few complications related to that representation's connection to just this linear narrative, and to ask how strong a hold the monument's historical sequence really has on its future sequence, even within the aesthetic limits of the work itself. As Al Sa'id argues, such complications—that is, the work's numerous marks of tension, disruption, contradiction, and breakdown—call for more attention to the "counter-memory" (*al-dhakira al-mudadda*) that shadows nationalist memory at every step of the way in Salim's epic of freedom.

⁽⁶¹⁾ Al Sa'id sometimes frames this counter-

Sex and gender have never been tangential to any modern state-building project

memory as a plane of “verticality” in the work that repeatedly cuts through its “horizontal” plane, or “the progress of human freedom in its political and humanist sense.” He also links it to the “ruptures” in Salim’s own life during the monument’s construction—the heart attacks that preceded the one that would kill him and the “psychological breakdowns” they incited—and to the “latent counter-imagination of the artist,” manifesting in the work as “everything he did not dream of before its realization” and even as “every mistake he made during its execution.”⁽⁶²⁾ This is what, according to Al Sa`id, allows us to see *Nusb al-Hurriyya* anew with each viewing. Despite our knowledge of the conventional reading, which rests on the work’s “superficial” plane of horizontality, “the horse breaks loose” again every time, and “we perceive in the monument something that gives us freedom of imagination.”⁽⁶³⁾

One of the most glaring vertical “cuts” may be the gaping white space between Freedom’s backside and the future, by far the largest physical gap in the horizontal sequence of events. There is only one other noticeable, though shorter, visual pause in the narrative, which marks the unseen irruption of power between the defiant uprisings and the corpse of the martyr. Following the linear-historical method of reading, the void after Freedom

aligns precisely with the post-revolutionary present of the monument’s construction and thus might be read as a question mark regarding both how the story really ends and how the future-oriented and present-transcending time of the revolution is to be experienced or depicted. Koselleck has noted how the Enlightenment notion of historical progress ended up leading not simply to a “homogeneous” experience of linear time but to an ever-widening gap in present time between “the space of experience” and “the horizon of expectation.” This is never more vivid as during modern revolutionary time, when the revolution “appears to unchain a yearned-for future while the nature of this future robs the present of materiality and actuality.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ The white space in *Nusb al-Hurriyya* that corresponds to the revolutionary present in which the artist lived (and, as Al Sa`id reminds us, in which he knew that he would die) marks this otherwise unrepresentable gap.⁽⁶⁵⁾

Following the reading of the work as capturing only the revolutionary present, beginning with the destruction of the statues of General Maude and King Faysal, the white space could be similarly seen as marking the gap between the revolutionaries’ actions and their dreams of the future, or even between the revolutionaries and (at least some of) the Iraqi



Figure 11. Freedom.

masses. The fact that the two male peasants and one of the female peasants are turned toward the revolutionary events, as if pausing only momentarily in their work to watch them unfold from afar, lends support to this reading. And then there are the closed eyes of that first figure after the void, the blissfully bathing woman, which Makiya interprets as symbolizing “peace as an offering which knows no fear.” But there was no shortage of fear in Iraq during the revolutionary years

in which Salim designed and sculpted the monument, least of all among the country’s peace activists. The main peace movement organization—the icon of which was a dove—was the Partisans of Peace, led by communists, who were involved in a deadly street war with the Ba`thists throughout the Qasimite era. In any case, an offering of peace is probably not the only possible interpretation of closed eyes as a visual clue. They could instead intensify the threat of unbridgeability suggested by the white space, further marking the dream-like and ephemeral quality of the future sequence, perhaps in the process even evincing something a bit more ominous about what the historical, undreamed future might hold when the nation finally awakes to its present.

Few commentators, it seems, have dwelled for long on the unsettling aspects of the figure of Freedom itself in the monument: her apparent flight toward the past; the posture with which she turns her back on both the future and the viewer; her mangled body and the hollowed-out, skull-like appearance of her face; and what could be seen as her desperate gaze backwards and her scream (see Figure 11). The common interpretation is that the figure “surges out into the daylight looking towards its liberator” and that “asked why freedom had no

feet, Salim is reported to have said: 'Feet stick to the ground; I wanted her to soar high.'⁽⁶⁶⁾ But Freedom does not look toward her liberator in the form of the soldier; at best, she looks up, though she can easily be seen as looking backwards and upside-down with rolled eyes, toward the monument's viewer. Salim may or may not have said what he is reported to have said about the symbolism of her missing feet.⁽⁶⁷⁾ But a glance at the monument is enough to see that the artist did not let Freedom soar very high after all. Her head is lower than the heads of most other figures, and the bottom of her footless leg is one of the lowest points of the entire monument. Far from soaring, she appears to be sinking, with her front leg even lower than the back.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Indeed, Al Sa'id suggests that Freedom's invisible feet (along with the wavy folds of the garment around her legs) might suggest that she is wading through water rather than soaring through the air.⁽⁶⁹⁾

Interestingly, one of the earliest extended works on *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, al-Sarraf's 1972 book, paid more attention than most later analyses to the marks of dismemberment and pain on Freedom's face and body. Al-Sarraf compared the figure favorably to the serene, whole, and unrealistic "goddess of beauty"—one plump and healthy breast revealed—representing Freedom in Eugene

Delacroix's famous painting "Freedom Guides the People." Jawad Salim's torn and mangled figure, in stark contrast to Delacroix's Freedom, "speaks clearly and openly of her tragedy; she appears as that wounded girl whose body is rent by bullets, knives, and whips because she is a perpetual victim of human institutions: wounded by religion, hindered by morality, imprisoned by politics..." Al-Sarraf's ultimate interpretation may differ little from other observers, since "in spite of the torture, [Freedom] carries the torch high in order to light existence with it," but his analysis opens up a variety of other possible readings.⁽⁷⁰⁾ For example, when his vivid descriptions of the figure's mangled body are joined with the peculiarity of its seemingly desperate and decidedly non-linear movements in/against time (which al-Sarraf does not address), Salim's Freedom begins to develop an uncanny resemblance to the Angel of History famously described by Walter Benjamin:

His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him

grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.⁽⁷¹⁾

Conclusion: Gender and the Time-Space of Development

There are important ways in which the nation's future is not at all a mirror of its past in *Nusb al-Hurriyya*, and its gender configurations are prominent among them. The historical sequence depicts an urban male and female demonstrating against the monarchy, and the future scene depicts an urban male worker, but the females of the future are all marked rural, or at least as embedded in nature. The metanarratives of modernization and development had difficulty imagining any role for urban women beyond those of housewife, mother, and consumer of the new domestic products of national industry. Once the revolution was accomplished, that is, urban women were to return to the private sphere, or rather to enter a properly modern private sphere for the first time. This sphere would have resisted representation in Salim's epic, oriented as every sequence is to and about a national public. The first real differentiation of the Iraqi nation into properly gendered public and private spaces is imagined to occur *after* the revolution that brings the sovereign nation into being.

The heterosocial/sexual demonstrators/family are thus the only set of figures in the monument's historical sequence that do not seem to be fully mirrored in its future sequence. Their singular failure to find a place in the nation's future points to the imagined and attempted depoliticization of the Iraqi public sphere after the revolution.⁽⁷²⁾ And it points to the related fact that the female counterparts of the two most likely heirs to the male demonstrator—the soldier and the industrial worker—are un-representable in the national public space that the revolution has transformed. According to present-day notions of progress, this might signify a strange regression—after all, the female counterparts of the past urban nationalist, the past tribal nomads, and the future laboring peasants are all accounted for: so why not those of the two most indisputably modern male figures in the monument? But in the 1950s, modernization and development were widely understood—on a global level—to be constituted by male industrial productivity and female reproductive domesticity. As *Nusb al-Hurriyya* shows, this was not the only way that women's reproductive and political roles could be envisioned in contemporary Iraqi nationalist imaginations. It was just the most futuristic, the most developed, way.

Notes

- * Sara Pursley is a 2014-16 Cotsen Postdoctoral Fellow at the Princeton Society of Fellows. She is the author of several articles, including "The Stage of Adolescence: Anticolonial Time, Youth Insurgency, and the Marriage Crisis in Hashimite Iraq," *History of the Present* (Fall 2013) and "Daughters of the Right Path: Family Law, Homosocial Publics, and the Ethics of Intimacy in the Works of Shi'i Revivalist Bint al-Huda," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* (Spring 2012). She is working on her first book, *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq, 1932-63* (Stanford University Press).
- 1 Caractacus, *Revolution in Iraq: An Essay in Comparative Public Opinion* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), 8.
- 2 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
- 3 See Sara Pursley, "A Race Against Time: Governing Femininity and Reproducing the Future in Revolutionary Iraq, 1945-63" (PhD diss., Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2012), esp. the introduction and chap. 5.
- 4 "Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya: Dhakirat Zaman, Dhakirat Makan," <http://www.annabaa.org/nbanews/62/197.htm>.
- 5 Kanan Makiya, *The Monument: Art, Vulgarly and Responsibility in Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 83.
- 6 Shakir Hasan Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim: al-Fannan wa-I-Akharun* (Baghdad: Wizarat al-Thaqafa wa-l-I'lam, 1991), 159.
- 7 In making this point, Al Sa'id quotes Michel Foucault in Arabic translation: *inna al-jasad huwa al-sath alladhi tartasim 'alayhi al-ahdath* (the body is the surface on which events are inscribed). Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 202.
- 8 Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 19.
- 9 This is not to say that historians have taken such discourses at their word; on the contrary, the nationalist construction of educated feminine domesticity has been seen by nearly all recent scholars as a thoroughly modern phenomenon. Still, exploring uses and effects of the future in such discourses has not been a major interest, while deconstructing invented traditions has. The concept of invented traditions comes from Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- 10 Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
- 11 Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Blake, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1981): 13-35.
- 12 Lee Edelman, *No Future*, 2-3, 25.
- 13 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 202-205.
- 14 Edelman, *No Future*, 2.
- 15 See Pursley, "A Race Against Time," esp. chap. 5, "Revolutionary Time and Wasted Time."
- 16 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*:

- Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Books, 1983).
- 17 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 95.
 - 18 As Al Sa'id has pointed out, most of these shapes can be found in every set of figures in the monument. But I argue that they appear relatively dominant or latent according to this five-fold classification, which is based on but differs in some ways from his analysis. See *Jawad Salim*, 208-11.
 - 19 Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 193.
 - 20 Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya: Dirasa fi Atharihi wa-Ara'ih* (Baghdad: Wizarat al-I'lam, 1974), 136.
 - 21 Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 194.
 - 22 "Al-Za'im Yaftatih Mahrajan al-Rusafi," *al-Mu'allim al-Jadid* 22, no. 5 (May 1959): 2-3.
 - 23 Makiya, *The Monument*, 84.
 - 24 Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*; Nada Shabout, *Modern Arab Art: Formation of Arab Aesthetics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 9, 156n10.
 - 25 I have shown elsewhere how the expansion of coeducation in Iraq at the elementary and postsecondary levels from the 1930s through the 1950s paralleled the increasing sexual differentiation of the curriculum itself during these same years. That is, the more women mixed with men, and girls with boys, in the public sphere, the greater became the impetus to produce differences in their learned modes of thinking and acting. See Sara Pursley, "Building the Nation through the Production of Difference: The Gendering of Education in Iraq, 1928-1958," in *Writing the Modern History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges*, ed. Jordi Tejel et al. (London: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2012). On connections between the heterosocial public sphere and the "heteronormalization of eros and sex [as] a condition of 'achieving modernity'" in Iran, see Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 146.
 - 26 Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya*, 136.
 - 27 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), esp. 43-56. See also Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005).
 - 28 See, for example, "They Blazed the Trail," *The Iraq Times Women's Supplement*, 10 March 1959, 1; Najiya Hamdi, "al-Jil al-Sa'id," *al-Mu'allim al-Jadid* 26, nos. 1-2 (January 1963): 158-62.
 - 29 Omnia El Shakry, "Youth as Peril and Promise: The Emergence of Adolescent Psychology in Postwar Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 592-93.
 - 30 Ibid., 592.
 - 31 See Sara Pursley, "The Stage of Adolescence: Anticolonial Time, Youth Insurgency, and the Marriage Crisis in Hashimite Iraq," *History of the Present* 3 (2013): 160-97.
 - 32 Edelman, *No Future*, 11.
 - 33 On mourning as women's work, see Lila Abu-Lughod, "Islam and the Gendered Discourses of Death," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

- 25 (1993): 187–205. For examples of Iraqi nationalist narratives of women urging men into battle, see “Iraqi Women on the March,” *Iraqi Review*, 30 July 1959, 18.
- 34 Muhsin al-Musawi, *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 29.
- 35 Ibid., 28.
- 36 Yasin al-Nasir, “Qira’a fi Nusb al-Hurriyya...Sirr al-Fann fi Nusb al-Hurriyya...al-Ta’ayush ma’a Jami’ al-Uhud al-Siyasiyya,” *al-Zaman*, 20 January 2003.
- 37 Joan Wallach Scott, *The Fantasy of Feminist History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 18.
- 38 While his framework is derived from a particular historical analysis of India, Chatterjee explicitly proposes that these two domains are a “fundamental feature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa.” *The Nation and Its Fragments*, 6.
- 39 al-Musawi, *Reading Iraq*, 28.
- 40 Government of Iraq, *Manhaj Ihtifalat wa-Mahrajanat al-Dhikra al-Rabi’a li-Thawrat 14 Tammuz al-Majida li-Liwa’ al-Nasiriyya* (n.p., 1962).
- 41 See, for example, Makiya, *The Monument*, 87, 120.
- 42 Al-Nasir, “Qira’a fi Nusb Al-Hurriyya.”
- 43 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 45. Linear and circular conceptions of historical time in Arabic literature as the modern era approaches are as complex and as interrelated as they are in European languages. The 14th-century historian Ibn Khaldun is often seen as introducing, long before the European Enlightenment, a new conception of linear historical time that is embedded within a cyclical understanding of history over the *longue durée*.
- 44 *Inqilab* is now used most often for “coup,” but in interwar and early postwar Iraq it could also mean “revolution.” No doubt the Iraqi choice in 1958 was influenced, if not determined, by the already established use of *thawra* for the events of 1952 in Egypt. Still, the fact that Persian speakers continue to use *inqilab* for “revolution,” including the 1979 Iranian Revolution, suggests that the shift to *thawra* in the Arabic-speaking world was not a foregone conclusion. I thank Ervand Abrahamian for this point.
- 45 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 48.
- 46 Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 9.
- 47 Makiya, *The Monument*, 81–82; Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya*, 136. This interpretation has often not extended to questioning the reading of the monument purely as linear-historical narrative, however.
- 48 Makiya, *The Monument*, 84.
- 49 `Abbas al-Sarraf, *Jawad Salim* (Baghdad: Wizarat al-I’lam, 1972), 146.
- 50 Al Sa’id, *Jawad Salim*, 203.
- 51 Al Sa’id, *Jawad Salim*, 199–200.
- 52 On the colonial “spatialization of time” that is constitutive of our modernity, see Timothy Mitchell, “The Stage of Modernity,” in *Questions of Modernity*, ed. Mitchell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000).
- 53 Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 150.
- 54 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have*

- Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). For a more nuanced analysis of how modern forms of governmentality, rather than the modern state per se, render subjects mobile and stable at the same time, see Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008).
- 55 I also show how these efforts to fix people, animals, land, and water in certain spatial grids often led to ecological and social catastrophe. Pursley, "A Race Against Time," chap. 3.
- 56 On the global postwar fantasy of "even, limitless" development and the end of "eventful" time, see Kristen Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 10.
- 57 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 139, 143.
- 58 Still, *Nusb al-Hurriyya* continuously works against any effort to fix its meanings decisively. For example, Al Sa'id writes that the apparently "stagnant" body of the ox (*thawr*) can at times appear to us "like a desolate mountain containing in its depths an enormous volcanic eruption/revolution" (*thawra*). Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 203.
- 59 Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya*, 158.
- 60 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 43.
- 61 Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, chap. 7, "Memory and Counter-Memory in *Nusb al-Hurriyya*."
- 62 Ibid., 206-207.
- 63 Ibid., 203.
- 64 Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 23.
- 65 Nada Shabout notes that in Al Sa'id's theoretical work on modern Arab art, "the 'temporal now' is... expressed through spatial means. For example, an opening in the pictorial surface is a temporal void." Shabout, *Modern Arab Art*, 112.
- 66 Makiya, *The Monument*, 84.
- 67 Makiya's source here is Jabra, who does not cite his own source, though his use of the passive voice ("When Jawad was asked why he didn't give her feet...") might suggest that it was not Jabra who asked (Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya*, 152). In any event, Freedom is only one of several prominent figures in the monument who are conspicuously lacking feet, a fact routinely ignored by decades of commentators who have repeated Jabra's uplifting interpretation of Freedom's own missing appendages. Jabra himself did not ignore it, though he interpreted the missing feet differently for the other figures. Al Sa'id also attends to the repetition of missing limbs throughout the work, though he, too, seems to want to exempt Freedom from his interpretation of this motif in the other figures (Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 152-53; 197-98). For an example of a female figure with amputated feet in Salim's earlier art that clearly cannot be read through a "soaring high" interpretation, see his painting *Kayd al-Nisa'*.
- 68 I am not suggesting that Freedom's form need be read as a literal representation of a body laid out in a "realistic" depiction of space within the work of art. Salim was strongly influenced by Cubism, after all, and there are many tributes to Picasso's *Guernica* in the monument, including in the figure of Freedom (though it might be noted that Cubism is not the dominant style in most of the other figures of the

monument). I am simply questioning the tradition of reading Freedom's form as symbolic triumph by interpreting its apparent bodily distortions (e.g., its "missing" feet) as simplistic spatial metaphors (e.g., "soaring high") that themselves rely on certain conceptions of spatial realism.

- 69 Al Sa'id, *Jawad Salim*, 200. Jabra speculates that the footless figure below the ox in the future sequence evokes the marshdwellers of southern Iraq and their celebrated spirit of resistance, though he does not seem to apply that reading to the figure of

Freedom. Jabra, *Jawad Salim wa-Nusb al-Hurriyya*, 158. In Iraqi nationalist discourse, the southern marshlands have often stood for "a historical space" that "valorizes a politic of revolt." See al-Musawi, *Reading Iraq*, 30.

- 70 al-Sarraf, *Jawad Salim*, 146

- 71 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 257–58.

- 72 See Pursley, "A Race Against Time," chap. 5.