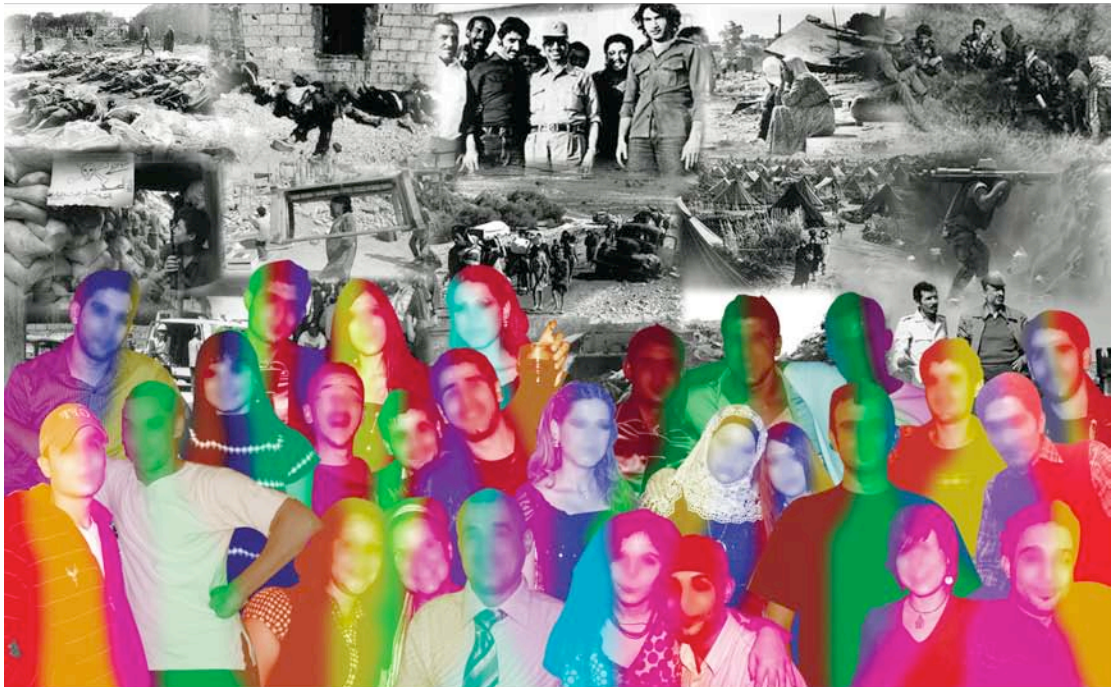# Non-Cockfights:
On Doing / Undoing Gender
In Shatila, Lebanon

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and Political Science

Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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I declare that my thesis consists of 97,844 words.

List of Illustrations

Abstract

Non-Cockfights: On Doing/Undoing Gender in Shatila, Lebanon

The thesis investigates the extent to which acting as a male provider remains an open avenue for coming of age and displaying gender belonging for the *shabāb* (lads) of the Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp, in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. The literature on Palestinians prior to 1948 suggests that a man would come of age by marrying at the appropriate age and bearing a son. For the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon, and throughout the 1970s, acting as a *fidāʾī* (fighter) worked as an alternative mechanism for coming of age and displaying gender belonging. Accordingly, the central question of this thesis is how the *shabāb* today come of age and display their gender belonging, when on the one hand, Lebanese legislation, through forms of institutional violence, bars their free access to the labour market, forcing them to postpone marriage plans, and on the other hand, participation in the Palestinian Resistance Movement, at least in its military version, is not an option anymore.

Through a plethora of investigative techniques – participant observation, questionnaires, focus groups, and open-ended interviews – I have registered the differences between the *fidāʾiyyīn* and their offspring in their coming of age and gender display. While the *fidāʾiyyīn* bore pure agency – understood as resistance to domination – and displayed their maturity through the fight to return to their homeland, their offspring have a far more nuanced relation to Palestine and articulate their coming of age and gender belonging in different ways, such as building a house and getting married.

Effectively, by observing how the *shabāb* do their gender, it is not only the full historicity and changeability in time and space of masculinity that come to the fore, but also the scholarly concepts of agency and gender that can be transformed and undone. The tendency in studies of the Middle East to define gender strictly in terms of power and relations of domination

fails to grasp the experiences of those, like the Shatila *shabāb*, with very limited access to power. It is not that the *shabāb* are emasculated, but rather that defining agency only in terms of resistance to domination and gender in terms of relations of power alone is rather restrictive.

Throughout my fieldwork, I have also become acutely aware of anti-state forces at play in Shatila. Accordingly, this study portrays the (dangerous) liaisons between gender and agency as concepts and state machines. Thus, I reflect on what happens to gender (and agency) when state effects organizing and attempting to solidify a sex-gender system at the local level are of limited purchase. Ultimately, this ethnography points to an economics, a politics, a citizenship and sexes-and-genders of another kind, beyond the state.

Obsessed, bewildered
By the shipwreck
Of the singular
We have chosen the meaning
Of being numerous.

George Oppen
Of Being Numerous

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To Shatilans,
including Rosemary

Anti and Acknowledgments

As the concept of the "anti" often characterizes my reasoning in the following pages, I want to make use of it at the very beginning of this study for an *anti*-acknowledgement: to the United Kingdom Border Agency. After I lived in the Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp in the surroundings of Beirut for one year, my standing towards the Agency witnessed a dramatic shift, and the treatment reserved for me changed likewise. When I applied for a visa to return to London in order to continue my doctoral work, my passport was held at the British High Commission in Beirut for one month. One year later, when I applied to extend my residence visa, this time in Rio de Janeiro, my application was turned down twice – in one instance, without any legal basis, as it was later revealed – and, what is more, the valid visa in my passport was cancelled. I would certainly have enjoyed and profited from my UK experience much more had I been treated differently – let us say, as a legitimate student, trying to pursue higher education in the UK (which, incidentally, happened to be my status). Certainly it is discouraging for any prospective overseas student to consider pursuing higher studies in the country, knowing that she may have her movements severely curtailed, for what seems to me casuistry.

Anyway, as academic life does not thrive on discord only, I also have the pleasure to name a number of people without whose help this research would simply not have been possible. Prominently among those, the Shatila *shabāb* (lads) and *fidāʾiyyīn* (fighters) whose biographies populate the following pages. In the case of the *shabāb*, after they gave me what they describe as "a hard time" – the special treatment they reserve for researchers (and others), in an effort to make the latter realize the camp is not just there to fulfil their academic ambitions or other interests –, they spared no effort to make me belong (as is duly discussed in one of my chapters). So, if this research "is happening" – to make mine yet again their vocabulary – I owe this to them and their fathers. Using one of their expressions, I can say this was the "best hard time ever happened" and I thank them dearly, this time extending back to them a word that exists only in my native Portuguese and admits no easy translation into other languages: *saudade*.

My family members have always been supportive and respectful, even when my options and ways of leading my life did not make sense to them. Here, I name them, who, together with me, know simply all too well that it is genuine affection that creates the most enduring bonds: Roberto, Therezinha, Beta, Antoine, Aude, Raji, Leila and my little niece and nephew, Samar and Taha.

My supervisors, Professor Martha Mundy and Doctor Rosemary Sayigh, also gave me "a hard time," but then it was also one of the "best hard times ever happened." I know that ultimately it was for my own interest and out of respect and the belief that I could effectively respond to their challenges to my lines of reasoning. They guided me through the sometimes mysterious and hazardous "waters" of academia and managed to rid the coming pages of several inconsistencies and plain mistakes. The ones that may have remained are my entire responsibility, of course.

Because any intellectual endeavour is necessarily a collective project – hence, a collaboration (illusions about authorship notwithstanding) – I want to share with several colleagues the eventual merits of the chapters to come. Throughout my period in Lebanon, I counted on the help of four research assistants, *shabāb* in different moments of their lives, who generously provided me with always enlightening commentary on whatever we observed together: Ibrahim Maarouf; Alladin Helou; Majid Belkiss, and Rabie Zaroura. My professors, colleagues and friends from the London School of Economics, the American University of Beirut, the Brazilian Consulate in Beirut, the Brazilian Embassy in Damascus and beyond read different versions of my chapters, checked information and made articles and books available to me, continuously engaged in critical exchange and provided me with support on more than one level. Too many to name (and I have always struggled with the word count, my Latin-inspired verbiage having always been an obstacle to overcome), I prefer to run the risk of committing injustices and still mention some of them, in no specific order: Tom Boylston; Monika Halkort; Samar Kanafani; Denis Regnier; Aristóteles Neto; Daniela Kraemer; Tania Lima; Gabriel Banaggia; Marcio Goldman; Sylvain Perdigon; Andrey Petrichtche; Thaera Badran; Elizabeth Saleh; Rana Bashir; Elizabeth Frantz; Aziza Khalidi; Salah Salah; Cathrine Fueberg-Moe; Agnes Hann; Miranda Johansson; Alanna Cant; EJ Fang; Philip "Ejer Fakkhoura;" Ghassan Abdallah; Ana Paola Gutierrez-Garza; Dina Makram Ebeid; Laleh Khalili; Michelle Obeid; Giovanni Bochi;

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To you all, I reserve my sincere gratitude.

And to the *shabāb*: *yalla, it **is** happening!*

A cidade, que tem braços abertos no cartão postal,
com os punhos cerrados na vida real,
lhe nega oportunidades
[...]
Alagados, Trenchtwon, Favela da Maré,
a esperança não vem do mar,
nem das antenas de TV.
A arte de viver da fé,
só não se sabe fé em quê.

The city, with its arms wide open in postcards,
but with clenched fists in real life,
denies opportunities to them [its poor].

Alagados, Trenchtown, Favela da Maré,
hope doesn't come from the sea
nor from TV aerials.
The art of living out of faith,
but one doesn't know in what one has faith.

Alagados, Paralamas do Sucesso [1]

نفعلُ ما يفعلُ السجناءُ،
وما يفعل العاطلون عن العمل:
نُرَبِّي الأمل.
[...]
أَعلى وأَعلى تطيرُ الحماماتُ، بيضاءَ بيضاءَ
ليت السماء حقيقيةً
[...]
أن تُقاوم يعني: التأكُّد من صحّة
القلب والخُصيَيْن، ومن دائك المتأصِّل:
داء الأمل.

We do what prisoners do
And what the jobless do:
We cultivate hope.
[...]
Higher, higher still, the white, white doves
fly off. Ah, if only the sky were real.
[...]
Resisting means assuring oneself of the heart's health,
the health of testicles and of our tenacious disease:
the disease of hope.

Under Siege, Mahmoud Darwish

لشباب زهقوا الحياة عمال يعبوا فراغات،
[...]
وآخر قرش ييجي بتسرقوا الجمعيات،
غيروا المكاتب، بس عشكل التنظيمات،
لوقت منشوف كل شي عم يدمر منحارب عشانو،
[...]
خلصت الأغاني الوطنية
خلص دقوا البيت،
[...]
كل المناضلين ناموا،
بقيوا الكلشنات،
شعر عالحيطان وبقايا رصاصات،
لشباب كثير ملّت من الروحة عالسفارات،
[...]

For the lads who have had enough of life and of filling in emptiness,
[...]
Last cent comes in, it'll be stolen by NGOs,
They transformed their offices in political organizations,
To the point of destroying everything in which we believe,
[...]
Enough with the nationalist songs,
khalas, come on let's play the beat,
[...]
While all the militants have slept,
the kalishnikovs remain,
Poems written on the wall and remains of bullets,
For the lads who have had enough of visiting the embassies,
[...]

---

[1]Alagados, a song by the Brazilian rock band Paralamas do Sucesso, draws a parallel between the lives led by the poor in the squatter settlements of Alagados, Trenchtown and Favela da Maré. Alagados – literally meaning flooded area – was built over muddy seawaters in Salvador, Northeast Brazil. Trenchtown, built over a ditch used to drain sewage of Kingston, in Jamaica, has been marked by political unrest and economic hardship and, immortalized in a song by one of its illustrious former residents, Bob Marley, became indissolubly linked to the very history of reggae. Favela da Maré – meaning 'Slum over Sea-tide' - built over the salty swampy waters of the borders of Guanabara bay, is an agglomeration of 16 shantytowns in Rio de Janeiro, the city described in the song as having its arms wide open, in a reference to the Corcovado Statue, Rio's omnipresent postcard, but with clenched fists in real life. In all three communities, the lyrics suggest, people – who have been denied opportunities by the city, live out of faith, even though one doesn't know in what they have faith. The similarities of social life in marginal urban spaces have been explored particularly by anthropologists and sociologists working in refugee camps, favelas and shanty-towns in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East and writing in French. The studies by Agier

حمام بالسما وطفل عمال يناديها،

أكتر ناسها بالحرمان الله باليها،

[. . .]

شباب ضايع،

إذا شُتِم وطنهم

قلبوا عاليها واطيها،

[. . .]

بنايات مهدومة من كتر الطلقات،

طرقاتها متاهات مليانة حشرات،

سماها جنة،

[. . .]

ليك، بالمخيم اللي أنا في بعدو صامد لحالو،

إتغيرت أشكالو بس باقي نضالو،

[. . .]

يا ميّ من تحت الأرض ما عاش إطوفي،

الشباب غرقانين بالبطالة بالعطالة،

فش شغل،

فش مصاري،

[. . .]

أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)

The small boy calls the pigeon flying in the sky,

People in the camps are deprived by God,

[. . .]

Our youth are lost,

They fight

when people curse their country,

[. . .]

Buildings have been destroyed by many bullets,

Roads are like mazes full of insects,

The sky is like heaven,

[. . .]

Look, the camp I'm living in is still resisting alone,

Its form has changed, but its struggle is the same,

[. . .]

Water please, stop flooding from underground,

Lads are already drowning in unemployment,

There's no work,

There's no money,

[. . .]

Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)

Welcome to the Camps, Katibe 5 [2]

(1999, 2010) constitute a typical example. Dias (2009), in turn, endeavours to compare what she herself describes as being incomparable: life in Beddawi, a Palestinian Refugee Camp in Northern Lebanon, and Acari, a favela in Rio.

[2] Katibe 5 is a hip-hop/rap band composed of five shabāb (lads) from the Burj Al-Barajneh Palestinian Refugee Camp, in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Welcome to the Camps is one of the band's greatest hits. For a discussion on the rap authored by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, check Puig (2007).

1.

Thinking Through Water –

The Case for a Composite Image of Shatila

Figure 1 - A Micro-Desalination Plant in Shatila

From the Ethnographer's Fieldnotes – The Disorder of Things

Shatila, 21st September 2009.

"You know, Gustavo, things shouldn't be like this."

For a change, the anger in Firas'[1] voice was evident. One of my closest friends in Shatila, Firas, 28, always somehow managed to keep his calm. Only

---

[1] The characters in this dissertation have been identified by fictitious names, in the hope of keeping my informants and friends from Shatila anonymous, and respecting their right to privacy. Public figures, such as local leaders, have normally been identified by their real names, unless there was reason for me to believe it was unwise to do so. Whenever people shared with me sensitive information, I have opted, when writing, to change not only their names, but also some of the features that would allow their identification. In a few extreme

after proper initiation, one learns how to sense the almost imperceptible signs of interior upheaval: he starts stuttering, his gaze gets lost in the infinite and he smokes, one cigarette after the other. Having become a passive chain smoker myself, I knew that, at these moments, it was better to remain silent and let Firas speak.

This time, even more pronouncedly than before, I shared Firas' anger. As it was Eid Al-Adha, when Muslims commemorate the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son to God, I popped in for a visit. I still think it is my duty, as an ethnographer, to observe local patterns of interaction – in the vain hope of overcoming my difference, in terms of class and cultural belonging, otherwise piercingly obvious. Shatilans visit friends on the Eid Al-Adha, so there I was, trying to get to Firas' place.

But I didn't manage to. It was pouring rain the night before and, as it happens whenever it rains heavily, Shatila flooded. Firas' place – the one room-apartment he occupies, under his family's household and where he keeps his most precious belongings: his philosophy books – was completely flooded with water. Firas has a diploma in business administration and deeply regrets having had to quit his undergraduate studies in psychology for lack of money to pay for the tuition. Unemployed for a couple of years, he cherishes the time he spends away from the hustle-and-bustle of camp life, in his cramped room, where the dim light that pours in from the only diminutive window doesn't dishearten him from engaging in his favourite pastime: reading. He has his preferred authors: Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari. There is a chance that under the water, now lies Al-Murāqaba wa Al-Muʿāqaba[2] (Foucault 1990) – *the translation into Arabic of Foucault's classic* Discipline and Punish, *the reading of which Firas, oblivious to my limited understanding of classical Arabic, encouraged me to take up together with him. We stopped at page 62,*

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cases, I went one step further, "splitting" some of the research participants in two, identifying them by two different names, always with the care not to falsify data.

[2] With the exception of names of places and people, which I have simplified to facilitate reading, I have adopted the IJMES' system for the transliteration of words in Arabic, even for those in the colloquial dialect: http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes/pages/transliteration.html.

with Firas depressed by Foucault's rendition of Damien's torture, and me, by my reading abilities in literary Arabic.

We remained silent, looking at the water – as if there was a chance that, by magic, it would quickly disappear into a ditch. We were awakened from our trance by a noise from the gate leading to Firas' family house. His neighbours appeared at the door, carrying his grandfather in their arms. The old man can't walk: normally, he is carried down to the street whenever he needs to leave home. This time, however, the neighbours were carrying Firas' grandfather in their arms with half of their own bodies submerged within the water. Firas' brother came after them, holding the old man's wheelchair over his head. The grandfather was being taken to a doctor's appointment. Firas looked at me and repeated:

"And today is Eid, Gustavo, a day for celebration… Things should definitely not be like this."

_____

London, June 22nd, 2010.

I was happy when Nadine's e-mail showed up in my mail-box today, from distant Australia. For a short while, I shared the guesthouse kept by the NGO Children and Youth Center in Shatila with Nadine. An anthropologist, Nadine was conducting fascinating research, using disputes around access to water and electricity in the camp as a port of entry to understanding conflict among the different Palestinian factions. I sometimes felt jealous of the inescapably material basis of her study, which made the highly discursive nature of my own object of interest – "gender" – look diaphanous. Nadine's message today brought back nice memories of our Shatila evenings, when the heavy rain forced us to stay in and discuss our "findings" of the day.

Aware of how captivated I had become by her line of reasoning, Nadine – in a show of generosity increasingly rare among scholars – promptly replied to my request of accessing some of her data on how access to water has been historically administered in Shatila. It is based on her data that I reconstitute the "water story" below.[3]

Being situated in a topographic depression, Shatila has always been subject to floods. Access to water has been less of an issue throughout, though securing potable *water has presented more of a challenge. The conditions of the drainage system in the camp and of access to drinking water reflect very closely the vicissitudes marking the history of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon. Lebanon is a country of some 4 million inhabitants, belonging to 18 different religious communities/confessions - the main ones being the Maronite Christians, Sunnites, Shiites and Druzes. Often placed at the intersection of different local, regional and international interests, Lebanon has been historically prone to conflicts. To safeguard their sectarian interests, the different Lebanese confessions search for the support of powerful foreign allies: in this way, both Israel and Syria in the immediate neighbourhood, and the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Europe farther afield, are brought into the Lebanese conundrum. Since 1948, Palestinians, the majority of whom are Sunnites, have played a role in Lebanese sectarian politics.*

Initially, there was overall sympathy for the Palestinian plight upon the refugees' expulsion from the Palestinian Territories in 1948 (Sfeir 2008). The local idiom obliging one to extend hospitality towards guests was adopted to frame the way the newcomers were to be treated, at least in the beginning. Already in 1949, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) was established by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) to provide assistance for those dislocated by the 1948 conflict in Palestine. At the outset, UNRWA had the intention of contributing to major infra-structural works in the countries with refugee populations, aiming at employing Palestinians in such enterprises. The

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[3] The use I have made of Nadine's data is my sole responsibility.

continuous political crisis in the region, constant cuts in UNRWA's budget and weariness on the part of host countries led to the postponement of such works to a never realised future.

It soon became evident that the refugees' stay in Lebanon would be longer than initially anticipated. The idiom of hospitality was quickly replaced by that of security concerns – and the military intelligence, named the Deuxième Bureau, *was to extend its infamous controlling hand over the Palestinian community, whose activities and movements were severely curtailed. For a country like Lebanon, having gained its independence from France only in 1943 and coping since them with unresolved issues of self-identity, Palestinians became useful "enemies within" (Sfeir 2008), providing a handy "meeting point" through which the various Lebanese factions put their differences aside in their shared opposition to the naturalisation of the refugees, or* tawṭīn.

It was an already politically burdened environment that the Palestinian leadership encountered in Lebanon upon its relocation from Jordan, following the conflict of Black September in 1970. While the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) was the result of historic divisions within the country and not at all alien to class struggle, Palestinians did give their helping hand to it, serving as catalysers for its explosion (Picard 1996; Trabulsi 2007). The years between 1967 and 1982 were the heyday of the Palestinian resistance in its military form in Lebanon – a period refugees refer to as the golden times of the ʾayyām al-thawra *(the days of the revolution): this was the paramount moment of strength of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the country as well as of its leader, Yasser Arafat, and the Palestinian fighters, the* fidāʾiyyīn.[4] *1982 marks the turning point in this history. In that year, the Israeli Army invaded Lebanon and the PLO leadership and Arafat left the*

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[4] Plural for *fidāʾī*, defined by the Hans Wehr's *Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* as "one who sacrifices himself (esp. for his country), fighter who risks his life recklessly; […], freedom fighter (esp. for the freeing of Palestine)."

country along with the fidāʾiyyīn.[5] *A sequence of difficult years was to follow. Between 1985 and 1987, Amal, a Shiite militia, backed by the Syrians, triggered what came to be known as the War of the Camps.*

With the end of the Lebanese Civil War, legislation depriving Palestinians of civil, social and economic rights, including the right to work, began to be reinforced more consistently. The 1989 Saudi Arabian and Syrian brokered Taef agreement signalled the official end to the Lebanese Civil War and sanctioned the exclusion and scapegoating of Palestinians, blamed for the conflict. Since 2001, Palestinians have been denied the right to own real estate in Lebanon as well. Some Lebanese blame Palestinians for the Civil War and justify the denial of their rights in the interests of protecting Lebanon's fragile confessional equilibrium. The refugee community in the country has increasingly become dependent on financial and emergency aid as well as services provided by UNRWA and local and international NGOs – and a period that might be called the "NGO era" has started in the 1990s. Recently, the widening of the Sunnite-Shiite divide, which led to the escalation of violence of May 2008,[6] has again caused worry to the refugees themselves that Palestinians could serve as useful tools employed by the various sides to fuel Lebanese differences.

Today a sprawling and increasingly vertical shantytown, home to an estimated population of 13,000 – many of whom are not Palestinians -,[7] Shatila is obviously not immune to the political realities of the country. The establishment of the camp dates back to 1949 when UNRWA leased the area for the first refugees, almost all from the same village, Majd Al-Krum, in Northern Galilee (Sayigh 1979). Its bare two square kilometres have actually been the stage to several of the episodes marking the history of Lebanese-Palestinian relations, the most infamous of which is the 1982 massacre, during which a Maronite militia, the Lebanese Forces, together with other militias

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[5] With the exception of those fighters who were registered in Lebanon and returned to civil life at this juncture.
[6] To be explored in Chapter 2.
[7] As is the case of Shadi, whose biography is portrayed below.

and supported by the Israeli Army, killed some 3,000 residents of the camp and surroundings, Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike (Nuwayhed al-Hout 2004). In 1985, Amal, the Shiite militia, kept Shatila under siege for two years. In 1987, conflict broke out in the camp, opposing Palestinian factions backed by Damascus and their anti-Syria enemies (Sayigh 1993). Understandably, this is an episode hardly talked about for it exposes the myths surrounding the idea of unity around the national cause.

In the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, Shatila fell under Syrian control, that was to last until 2005 when, following the events of what came to be known as the "Cedar Revolution," the Syrian Army and intelligence were forced to leave Lebanon. In the explosion of violence of 2008, opposing the mainly Sunnite party Mustaqbal and the Shiite Hizbullah, there was fear that Shatila might again be involved in the disputes. This was due to the location of the camp, situated between a Sunnite and a Shiite district, Al-Tariq Al-Jadida and Dahiya respectively. It is indeed revealing – and somewhat challenging for those who insist on portraying Palestinian camps in Lebanon as lawless "states of exception" (Hanafi 2008a, 2008b, 2010)[8] - that in 2008 the decision to close Shatila off was taken. With the memories of the Camp Wars between Palestinians and Shiite militias still fresh, Shatilans wanted to prevent the local shabāb *(lads) from taking part in the events happening outside, as this might attract revenge towards the community. The loaded trajectory of Palestinians in Lebanon is cleverly captured by one of the sketches reproduced below (Figure 2), drawn from the movie* Roundabout Shatila, *by Maher Abi Samra. The sketch places the camp at the center of a series of circles of increasing complexity, indicating how the fate and daily lives of its inhabitants are shaped by circumstances well beyond their control.*

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[8] A critical review of these pieces of work is presented in Chapter 3.

Figure 2 - Sketch from the movie *Roundabout Shatila*, by Maher Abi Samra

The "water histories" collected by Nadine closely reflect this eventful trajectory of Palestinians in Lebanon. Throughout the 1960s, drinkable water was made available to Shatila through the connection of the camp pipeline to the Beirut network. This was the result of negotiations between UNRWA and the Lebanese government, when Palestinians and Lebanese were generally still on speaking terms, and the refugees had not yet been selected as a favourite scapegoat, as would happen with the Civil War. UNRWA covered the costs for the supply of drinking water. This pipeline, however, was severely damaged during the Civil War and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO)/Fatah stepped in and commissioned the digging of three artesian wells. In fact, much of the remaining water infrastructure of Shatila was built by the PLO/Fatah during the ʾayyām al-thawra, *the days of the revolution. One of the wells dug then was located at the top of a hill near the Sports Stadium, in the surroundings of Shatila, and provided water well beyond the perimeter of the camp. That was an area belonging to the Lebanese government: as a consequence, with the demise of the ʾayyām al-thawra and the weakening of the PLO and Palestinians in Lebanon, the well was taken over by the state during Rafik Hariri's premiership.*

With the Palestinian leadership gone in 1982 and the spectre of Damascus' increasing control over life (and death) in Lebanon having extended to Shatila, the camp popular committee linked to the Syrians – known as the Tahaluf[9] – dug two wells. The departure of the PLO effectively left Shatila without clear sources of authority: actually, on certain occasions, there were different popular committees linked to the various Palestinian factions simultaneously at work in the camp (Suleiman 1999). This multiplicity of sources of authority[10] – with the mutual exchange of accusations of corruption among them – rendered the administration of daily matters of importance to the population – such as access to water – highly complex. In Hanafi's work (2008a, 2008b, 2010), this state of affairs is known as "the problem of governance" in the camps, providing a new paradigm for the analysis of refugee life in Lebanon.[11]

The fate of the two wells dug by the Tahaluf popular committee is telling of this state of affairs, whereby no undisputed source of authority over the community has become consolidated. By 1999, the Tahaluf outsourced the administration of the wells to two men, in charge of running the water supply on a daily basis against payment by individual households. Several of the residents were willing to pay the LBP 10,000 monthly fee to guarantee reliable access to water. The private administrators have a larger portion of the

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[9] In the IJMES system, Tahaluf is transliterated as *taḥāluf*, the Arabic word for "alliance." The Tahaluf was an umbrella coalition joining several anti-Arafat factions (such as the Saiqa, PFLP-General Command and Fatah Al-Intifada).

[10] I was made acutely aware of the competition over resources and unnecessary duplication of efforts arising from the existence of multiple sources of authority in the camp when I was invited by one of the political factions to volunteer as an English teacher for Shatila children. By then, I had already been acting for several months as a voluntary English teacher for children at a local NGO. Willing to avoid being identified with any political force in particular, I keenly accepted to discuss the matter with the political faction in question and meet my prospective students. When I showed up for the meeting, the children waiting for me were the same ones I had already been teaching at the local NGO. I observed that to one of the leaders of the political faction:

Me: But the children here are the same ones I'm already teaching.

Leader: Yes, Gustavo. But the organization you'll be volunteering with is not the same…

[11] I take a completely different stand on the issue proposing that Shatila residents have learned how to live without counting on protection or aid provided by state-like institutions. There is governance in Shatila: it is simply not of the state type.

clientele than that of the wells administered by the PLO popular committee, even though the latter charges only LBP 3,000 monthly for water. The PLO popular committee does not have the means to enforce payment and as a result cannot maintain the wells properly. Besides, on the part of the users, there is widespread suspicion that the money collected is never used for the maintenance of the wells. The private administrators of the Tahaluf wells can enforce payment – as they simply cut the supply of those who do not pay – and keep their wells in proper order. Nonetheless, the two administrators fell out of the Tahaluf's grace. To safeguard their trading interests, they had to seek the protection of the PLO popular committee.

With the different popular committees not reaching an accord, there was room for NGOs[12] to step in in order to ensure the provision of basic services. In Shatila, NGOs financed the construction of two cisterns to store water pumped from the wells. Such facilities are especially important in light of the constant blackouts Shatila is prone to: with no electricity, there is no power to pump water from the wells. In 2006, for example, when the camp went without electricity for nine months, residents faced water shortages as well. Having learned how risky it is to depend on the popular committees, or UNRWA, or the Lebanese government, or NGOs alone, for access to essential services, Shatilans have secured potable water by purchasing it directly from "micro-desalination plants." These small shops are found throughout the camp and filter water through a system that is well-hidden behind curtains, protecting it from the scrutinizing gaze of the ethnographer (Figure 1).

An ambitious project to sort out Shatila's issues with potable water and drainage illustrates the recent state of affairs, when there is no clear source of consolidated authority over the camp. Several stakeholders and power-that-be reclaim control over Shatila, and the result, more often than not, is paralysis, threatening the continuation of provision of basic services. Counting on financing from an Italian NGO, UNRWA set in motion a two-fold project: the

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[12] For a history of NGOs working with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, see Suleiman 1997 and Bianchi 2011.

construction of a deep well to ensure access to drinkable water for Shatila residents and the rebuilding of the sewage and drain-water system of the camp. It took a number of years for the latter intervention to move beyond the planning phase; as for the first, at the time of fieldwork (2007-2009), there was no sign of it effectively being implemented. In spite of the funds having been made available to UNRWA in 2007, both lines of intervention were mired in polemic. UNRWA held meetings with both the PLO and the Tahaluf popular committees, but none approved of the deep well being located near their offices or homes of party officials. It is no easy task to find a clear area in which to dig the well in Shatila, characterized as it is by a high population density and narrow alleys between crowded buildings. One of the obvious choices lies in one of the few open squares in the area, actually a terrain already situated outside the camp, but belonging to the PLO. This plot contains three apartment blocks built by UNRWA to shelter refugees who, originally from the Tal Al-Zaatar Camp,[13] had been illegally occupying abandoned buildings in Ras Beirut for a couple of years. The opposition to the construction of the well in this plot was due to the perception that, if the project moved ahead, the construction of a massive structure would render the area as congested as any and deprive its residents of natural light and breeze.

The large-scale rehabilitation of the sewage and drain-water system was not spared from controversy either. With no mechanism for draining storm water, the more depressed roads and homes of the camp often flooded with the rainwater mixed with sewage. The problem was reported by a member of the elected committee to a commission of notables made up of UNRWA and Lebanese government officials during a visit the latter paid to the camp in 2006. In 2005, increasingly disillusioned with the internecine conflicts between the different Palestinian factions, and in a pioneering if short-lived initiative, Shatilans elected their own popular committee (PHRO 2005; Kortam 2010). One of its affiliates approached Richard Cooke, then UNRWA director for Lebanon, during the 2006 visit and reported on the flooding of the camp

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[13] Tal Al-Zaatar was razed at the outset of the Lebanese Civil War, in 1976, by Christian militias backed by the Syrian regime.

every rainy season. A later meeting at UNRWA headquarters triggered the announcement of a US$ 2,5 million project for the rehabilitation of the sewage and drain-water system of Shatila. But the project was to linger for the years to come.

Since Shatila is a favourite target for deceitful contractors who simply pocket the larger part of funds while implementing, on the ground, a mediocre rendition of the original projects, the engineers' club of the camp, in yet another example of self-government and autonomy, exerted pressure to have access to the rehabilitation plans and the terms of the contract with a view to monitoring the execution. The engineers identified two major flaws in the feasibility study of the rehabilitation of the pipeline: the diameter of the recovery pipeline was too narrow and the angle of its slope too slight to enable proper water flow from the camp. They voiced their concerns to the popular committees in the expectation that the latter would request a new feasibility study from the part of UNRWA. Instead, the popular committees – or at least one of them – felt cornered. One of the shabāb *(lads) interviewed by Nadine stated that this popular committee is required by the political faction to which it is subject, to show it has complete authority over the camp. For this reason, it wanted to keep the pipeline rehabilitation plan going, in spite of the engineers' public outcry. Caught in this political impasse, the implementation of the rehabilitation plan was delayed by months.*

It was only after Nadine returned to Australia that the rehabilitation of the sewage and drain-water system effectively started. Throughout the summer of 2009, comprehensive earthworks took place in the main roads of the camp. Shadi was one of the construction workers hired for the project.

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Shadi was recovering from his work shift when I showed up for the interview we had previously arranged. He lay on a bed located in an open area, connecting the various households belonging to his extended family in Shatila. He was aware of what my research was about – by then I had gained a certain unwanted notoriety as the "foreign researcher" living in the camp.[14] He knew I wanted to "collect" his life history:[15] his work biography; state of relations within his family; perceptions of Palestinian nationalism and so on. The present chapter being also about the limits of representation in ethnography, I will let Shadi, who is Syrian, speak freely, only minimally editing his words when strictly unavoidable.[16] It is in a deliberate provocative spirit that I start this dissertation about the Shatila shabāb *(lads) with the story of a* shāb *who, strictly speaking, is not Palestinian. My intention is to start rendering more complex and nuanced all these apparently solid materials, such as a "unified national identity," which will hopefully melt into air.[17]*

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[14] During my time in Shatila, only three other foreigners also lived there, for shorter periods. Before Nadine, I shared the guesthouse at the Children and Youth Center with a British middle-aged woman for a couple of weeks. For several years, this woman, having been moved by the plight of refugees in Lebanon, kept spending a couple of weeks in the camp. She commissioned Shatila women to produce embroidery, which she sold in the UK. The money she raised was then distributed back to the artisans. The third foreigner was a British writer, Peter Mortimer. He published a book with a chronicle of his time in Shatila (Mortimer 2009). The "I was there" style often adopted in the book serves as an alert as to how the liberties - in terms of style, objectives and ethics – a novelist thinks he can afford jeopardize responsible ethnographic effort.

[15] I am fully aware of the methodological difficulties of life histories, such as the artificiality of the presentation of a coherent self, attending to the ethnographer's demands, and the "untypicality" of speakers (Sayigh 1996). In spite of these difficulties, I judge this method as having irreplaceable heuristic value for the ethnographer.

[16] There is nothing original in this method. Dwyer (1982) has done the same in his *Moroccan Dialogues*, which Marcus and Fischer (1986) describe as "a virtual compendium of lightly edited transcripts of field interviews." (69) I share what Marcus and Fischer identify as being one of Dwyer's objectives: "to expose [...] the field-worker's imperfect, shaky control of material." (69) The resultant text, Marcus and Fischer continue, "[stresses] the vulnerability of all participants in the ethnographic project: anthropologist, informant and reader." (70) I am also troubled by what seems to have bothered Dwyer, described by Marcus and Fischer as follows: "[Dwyer] disturbingly questions the value of continuing with the project of representation in any of its conventional senses." (70)

[17] There is no reason as to why scholars should subscribe to a restrictive view of who counts as Palestinian. Rather, this is an open question, which should be investigated: for

Me: So what can you tell me about your life?

Shadi: I'm 26. I have a Syrian father and a Palestinian mother. [silence] In the future, after I finish my two-year military service, I want to build a house and have a wife. I've learned construction as a job. My father is Syrian but he has been living here for 45 years. He married my mother here. All of my brothers and sisters were born in Lebanon. My father used to be a fidāʾī *and fought in the Camp Wars. One of my brothers, who died in that war, was a shahīd.[18] My father was a fidāʾī because Israel doesn't forget anyone and doesn't distinguish Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian or even Brazilian. It hits us all. He had all the right to defend himself and his land* (ʾarḍ) *and honour* (ʿarḍ).[19] *We were five siblings in the family; one died, so now we're four. […] My father met my mother because he knew her brothers. My mother wasn't a* fidāʾiyya, *but there were a lot of* fidāʾiyyat,[20] *during the* thawra *(revolution). My father worked in construction, like myself. My mother is* bil-bayt (in the house, meaning a housewife). *[silence] I never saw Palestine, not even from the border. [silence] I studied till the 7th grade. I stopped because of family problems, even though I was a very good student and wanted to continue my education. Education is a good thing and Mohammed -* ṣallā Allāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam *(May God honor him and grant him peace)[21] – said: "*ʾuṭlub al-ʿilm" *(seek knowledge). I was 12 when I dropped out of school. My older brother stopped at the* brevet *level [i.e. 9th grade]. Even him, he stopped because of the same situation. The girls in my family didn't continue with their education. They studied till the 6th grade and stopped. When my father married my mother, he paid LBP 5,000 as* muqaddam.[22] *Now, this is the price of two packages of cigarettes! In the cases of my married sisters and brothers, the* muqaddam *was a golden lira. They all married Palestinians. […] My second sister is divorced. Her husband was Palestinian. My father asked for her divorce, so there was no* muʾakhkhar.[23] *[silence]*

Me: And how's your work life?

Shadi: About my work story? I've started working when I was still at school. My first job was at a shop, because I was still a ṭifl (little boy). *Human beings are* ṭammāʿīn *(greedy). And it was because of money that I stopped school and I wish I hadn't. Money isn't everything. My family*

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instance, and according to my informants, who is considered to be Palestinian and when? During the period I socialized with the *shabāb* from Shatila, I paid attention to when or why they would frame themselves as Palestinian, or "refugee," or "worker," or "student," or a *shāb*, or *ʾibn al-mukhayyam* (son of the camp). At times, I myself would be referred to as being Palestinian or as having gained the right to Palestinian nationality.

[18] The *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* defines *shahīd* as "witness; martyr, one killed in battle with the infidels; one killed in action."

[19] Several of my informants often played with the phonetic similarity, in Arabic, of the words for land *(ʾarḍ)* and honour *(ʿarḍ).*

[20] Feminine for *fidāʾiyyīn*. See footnote 4.

[21] This is one of the sentences Muslims normally say to praise Prophet Mohammed, whenever his name is mentioned.

[22] The *muqaddam* is the first part of the bride-price (*mahr)* advanced to the bride so that she gets prepared for the wedding. In case the husband asks for a divorce, he is normally expected to pay the second part of the *mahr*, the *muʾakhkhar*, as originally negotiated by the groom's and bride's families in the period just prior to the wedding.

[23] See footnote 22.

didn't prevent me [from dropping out of school]. I studied at UNRWA school. For three years, I was studying and working at the same time. Then, I stopped school and started working selling movies and CDs in several places. After that, I started working with my father in construction. Sometimes I work with my khāl *(MB). Sometimes, we have no work. And there was this project at the camp [for the recovery of the pipeline]. My brother was a boss at the construction team in this project, so I started working with him. When I started working, I thought it was just construction, but it is also sewage. This project is financed by – who's our President? Abbas Zaki?*[24] *– and UNRWA. They hired this company, Jihad Al-Arab. The situation and conditions of this project aren't much better than that of others, in the past. The project has two parts: sewage and drinking water. The part about drinking water still needs to be done; nothing has happened about it yet. And, as for the sewage, the project isn't succeeding. There are lots of mistakes in the project and sometimes there are broken pipes inside the ground, and they haven't been replaced. In other words, the work wasn't professional. The work was* bazziq wa lazziq *(not properly done).*[25] *Lots of mistakes took place. As far as our salaries are concerned, payments were always delayed. As an example: today is my payday. They'll say: come tomorrow. And, then, tomorrow they'll say: come the day after tomorrow. And this goes on and on. This is why the project began to go astray. The workers started hating their work. First, at the beginning, they worked very well, when they were being paid right on time. But, when payment started being delayed, the workers started to hate their work. The lack of care by the managers and bosses is the reason for the failure of this project. There was no management, no direction and no follow-up. I was working carrying a trolley and I fell. My hand was injured. I got treatment – they paid for that. But they didn't pay for the days I couldn't work. There was a lot of stealing in this project. There was no contract between us and this company. Half of the money has been stolen. There was insurance, but the problem is that they say: "go and get care. Pay and bring us the bill." The problem began when they started to delay our payments. No one had money to pay for medical treatments. So what can we do in this situation? After my work finished in this project, I went back to working in construction, with my father and brothers. All of my brothers work in the same field, but the girls in my house don't work. They aren't allowed to. But there are girls who work to help themselves and their families. This is excellent. But there are others who don't work. [silence] I'm here in Shatila, because I was born here. And, from inside* (min dākhil)*, I'm Palestinian. All of my friends are Palestinian. [short silence] For now, I'm living with my family, but I think of building a home for myself. If the camp stays the way it is now, I prefer to leave it. Because I want my children to live peacefully, quietly* (bi-hudūʾ)*, with religion* (al-dīn) *and education* (al-ʿilm)*.*[26] *I want them to stay away from injury and "this-kills-that and stabs-this one." A person wishes his son to be better than him. [short silence] I have been in prison twice, because I made trouble.*

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[24] Abbas Zaki was the Palestinian Ambassador to Lebanon at the time of fieldwork.

[25] *Bazziq* comes from the word for saliva (bzāq) and *lazziq* means sticky. *Bazziq wa lazziq*, meaning something along the lines of "glued with saliva" (thus not properly glued), is Lebanese slang for hasty work, not done properly.

[26] *Al-ʿilm* literally means "science," but is employed here by Shadi with the sense of education.

One occasion was in Ain Mreisse and the other in Ard Jalloul. In both, I only stayed in prison for a couple of days. [silence]
Me: What can you tell me about your friends?
Shadi: I have Palestinian and Lebanese friends. I don't distinguish between Sunnite and Shiite, Christians and Muslims. If a Christian is better than the Muslim, then I prefer the Christian. The reason why I have lots of acquaintances (maʿārif) *is because I don't ask about nationalities* (jinsiyyāt)[27] *or religions. [silence] Palestinians are rulers here in the camp and nobody else. All the problems here are due to the factions* (faṣāʾil)*. Me, my brothers, my family, we live in terror* (ruʿb) *because of these problems and shootings all over. Even if a man is big as a mountain, another one comes with a gun and shoots at his head. The problem is Fatah Abu-Ammar* [PLO] *which follows Tayyar Al-Mustaqbal,[28] which follows Saudi Arabia. And Saudi Arabia follows Israel. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, we have Fatah Abu Moussa [Fatah Al-Intifada]. They follow Syria, which follows Iran. All of them, on both sides, Abu Ammar and Abu Moussa, reflect the questions of their partners outside. [Realizing that I am scrutinizing the green ribbon around his fist][29] I know, this is a symbol of Harakat Amal.[30] But I don't use this ribbon because of them. I wear it because I want to. Sometimes I wear a blue one, the colour of the Mustaqbal, sometimes a yellow one, the colour of Hizbullah. I don't think this is an issue. I hate all of these divisions* (ʾinshiqāq)*. As an example, if I go up to Al-Tariq Al-Jadida[31] and I tell them there that I'm Syrian, they'll say that I'm a Jew. If I go to Dahiya[32] and say that I'm a Sunnite, they'll say that I'm a Jew. So what do I do? When I go to Al-Tariq Al-Jadida, I say that I'm a Sunnite and won't mention my nationality, that I'm Syrian. And they'll love me there. [On the other hand] [i]f I tell the Shiite [at Dahiya] that I'm Syrian, without mentioning that I'm Sunnite, they'll love me there.[33] [looking at me] My bro* (yā ʾakhi)*, who in this country hasn't killed us? The Syrians destroyed Tal Al-Zaatar and that happened because Palestinians had bombed a Syrian tank in Saida.[34]* Yā akhi, *in Syria, Palestinians have the right to*

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[27] Even though *jinsiyyāt* means "nationalities," Shadi probably means by this word "sects."

[28] In the current Lebanese political stalemate, Saad Hariri's Tayyar Al-Mustaqbal, of mainly Sunnite composition, is one of the principal members of the March 14 coalition, which, siding with Saudi Arabia, the USA and Europe, has a Westernising view of Lebanon, defending the implementation of neo-liberal policies in the country. Its chief opponent is the mainly Shiite Hizbullah which forms the backbone of the rival alliance, the March 8 coalition, which sides with Iran and Syria.

[29] I became aware of the significance of green ribbons as a symbol of either Shiite belonging or sympathy towards the Shiite party Harakat Amal because I myself used to wear one around my wrist during my first days in the field. This, combined with the rather Islamicized Arabic I tended to employ at the outset – a reflection of my training in classical Arabic – led to the gossip among camp residents that I was hiding the fact of being Shiite. This incident is fully described in Chapter 2.

[30] Harakat Amal is a party of mainly Shiite composition belonging to the March 8 alliance. Amal has a scarred history with Palestinians, whom they fought during the Camp Wars in the mid-80s.

[31] Located in the immediate neighbourhood of Shatila, Al-Tariq Al-Jadida is mainly a Sunnite area, controlled by Mustaqbal.

[32] Also located in the immediate neighbourhood of Shatila, Dahiya is mainly a Shiite area, controlled by Hizbullah.

[33] Hizbullah, which controls Dahiya, has strong links with the Syrians.

[34] Saida is a city 37 kilometres south of Beirut.

become employers, to become Ministers of Interior. Palestinians also take part in the national teams in Syria, for sports. This shows how Palestinians in Syria are appreciated (muqaddarīn)*. [...] I'm Syrian. If I was in Syria and talking about politics and a Palestinian came along and saw me, he could admonish me. He has that right, even if I'm an* ʾibn al-balad *(a national)*[35] *[and he isn't]. There, Palestinians have the right to do whatever they want, provided they stay away from politics. [...] [silence]*
Me: How do you see the future?
Shadi: I think about marriage. I'd like to have a Palestinian wife. Now, I have a Palestinian girlfriend. But the situation is hard and I can't marry right now. It's not possible to marry unless you are totally secure (mūʾamman) *for at least one year. There are the expenses of marriage, and then children, and paying for child-birth, and so on. To marry, I need approximately US$ 4,000 to buy a roof and then another US$ 4,000 for construction and US$ 2,000 for furniture and US$ 3,000 for the engagement* (khuṭūba)*,*[36] *the trousseau* (ʿalāma)[37] *and the wedding party. Getting married in the past was easier. First of all, people were very close and they used to love each other. If you knocked at someone's door, he wouldn't say "no." Today, it's different. There are problems, few job opportunities, all of these make life harder. Times have changed. [silence]*
Me: Have you got family outside Lebanon?
Shadi: I have relatives outside Lebanon. I'm from [...] in Syria. All my relatives are there, from my father's side. The family of my mother is here in Lebanon and also in Sweden. I only visited Syria once. Even in Palestine I have relatives, from my mother's side. The brother of my grandmother is there. [silence] I don't think of migrating (safar)*, because homesickness* (al-ghurba)[38] *is not easy. I went to Syria and felt homesick. In Lebanon, there are two things that make you live as a king. The first is money; the second is the fact that people don't interfere with what is going on around them. Money in Lebanon goes to those who have money already. Who always wins the Lotto? Those who have money already. [long silence] [...] The* thawra *(revolution) is gone and the reason is that there are no* fidāʾiyyīn *as there used to be. If we fight against each other, we're like monsters* (al-wuḥūsh)*; if we fight against a stranger* (gharīb)*, no one will join to help. Palestine is a pure land* (ʾārḍ ṭāhira)*. It's from the God of us all. We have Mecca in Saudi Arabia, also holy. If there was true feeling for Islam and Arabhood in Saudi Arabia, the Saudis would be the first ones to appeal for Palestine. [very long silence]*
Me: How's your daily life?

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[35] Literally, ʾibn al-balad means "son of the country."
[36] The *khuṭūba* normally includes the engagement ring and the *mahr*. The *mahr* designates what the bride's father asks for to agree with the engagement, for example, a golden lira or a copy of the Koran or simply money.
[37] Literally ʿalāma means mark. One of my informants told me that, in past times, a woman about to be engaged was *marked* and would start getting prepared for the wedding, getting clothes and gold. Another one reported that the word is used to describe what the bride is expected to get, in between clothes, make-up and perfumes, to the exclusion of money. In any case, *jihāz* is more commonly deployed to refer to the trousseau.
[38] *Al-ghurba* is a complex term in Arabic and it admits several translations. It evokes ideas of nostalgia, homesickness and longing for a place left behind. Some Shatilans who have managed to migrate to Europe and come back for a visit, even though normally stating that their present quality of life simply cannot be compared to the one they had in Lebanon, eventually report experiencing *al-ghurba* abroad.

Shadi: Everyday it's the same thing. From work to the house; I have a shower and then I go to a coffee shop and I play cards. Then I come back home to sleep. When I have free time, I go for a walk in Ain Mreise[39] with my friends and with my girlfriend (ḥabībatī). *I do sports; I play football.* [short silence]

Me: Do you pray?

Shadi: I used to pray; I used to fast, but not anymore. The reason why I don't fast is my work. It is very hard work and we need to drink water while working. But every Friday I go to the mosque. [silence]

Me: What do you think are the phases in one's life?

Shadi: This depends on the person. Every person lives his life as he wants. Some think about work and about what will come (ʾilli jāyī). Others spend their lives with problems and fooling around. Others think about knives and pistols. When I was young, I was a trouble-maker (mashkaljī). *This is the first year that I see myself as having ʿaql[40] and walking the right line* (māshī ṣaḥ). *My family will not last forever for me. So I have to think about myself and my future. [silence and getting back to my question] If a girl is destined for marriage, she'll indeed get married. Marriage itself is considered to be half of the Islamic religion.[41]* [silence]

Me: How is your relation with the members of your family?

Shadi: I have a normal relation with my mother. I hide no secrets from my family. That's because they'll be the first ones to help me if something happens to me. With my sisters, I also have a normal relation. But everyone has problems in their lives and with their families. I also have my problems with my family. In general, I don't spend a lot of time at home. My mother and sisters are my responsibility (masʾūliyya). *The way they dress is very important to me, because they're my honour* (sharaf). *A girl should be modest* (muḥtashima). *My relation with my father sometimes is one of total friendship. When he starts acting towards me as a father, that's when our problems start. He doesn't like me to try new things and he doesn't let me do what I want. Smoking, for example. He always tells me to stop and I don't. I also used to drink. And he kept telling me to stop. I stopped. And as for me and my brothers, we're very close. They help me, telling me everything that's good for me. I feel responsible for my father, mother and everyone in the house. And vice-versa. If someone in my family gets sick, I take care of him and he'd do the same for me. My sister takes care of me and helps me. She serves me* (takhdimnī). *I do that for her too. […] The way my brothers and fathers are dressed does not concern me. My father, he's the one who tries to control* (yataḥakkam). *He's Syrian. His way of thinking is Arab. For example, my sisters only learned how to write and left school.* [silence]

Me: How does life today compare to life in the past?

Shadi: Life in the past was better. But, at the same time, now there are things which are better. Freedom now is all over and for all people.

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[39] This is a favourite past-time for the *shabāb* from Shatila, who walk from the camp to Ain Mreise and back, through the pleasant Corniche by the sea. A couple of times, in the company of the *shabāb*, I did the walk as well, which takes a couple of hours at a leisurely pace.

[40] *ʿaql* defines the imminently social "faculty of understanding, rationality, judiciousness, prudence and wisdom." (Altorki 1986: 51) It is an indication that one has come-of-age.

[41] Several of my informants repeated this to me. The idea that marriage is half of the religion comes from the sayings and acts of the Prophet, the *ḥadīth*.

Fathers, in the past, used to tell their sons: "Don't go out." Sons would listen to their fathers. But, now, no one listens. [silence]
Me: What do you think of the Israelis?
Shadi: From all sides, Israelis are bad (ʿāṭilīn). *They're the enemies* (al-ʾaʿdāʾ) *of God. They don't act right in peace or in war. In war, if you capture someone, you have to respect him and treat him in the best way. The Israelis degrade* (yudhillū)[42] *their prisoners. [very long silence]*
Me: How about the future?
Shadi: I think of the future. I want it to be better than the past. I have hope in the future. My dreams are like the ones of any of Adam's sons:[43] to get married to the girl I love; to have a happy marriage life, and to build a nice family (ʾusra jayyida).

In the three hours we spent together, Shadi provided me with many threads: remarks about the factional fights in the camp and criticism of Palestinian leadership, observations about the demise of the fidāʾiyyīn *and the* ʾayyām al-thawra, *perception of achieving* ʿāql *as an indication of his own coming-of-age and comments on the goal of getting married and building a house as paving the way for a happy future. I had in front of me a program of work – to try to bring order, unfortunately at the analytical level only, back to things which in Firas' words, "shouldn't be like this." But then the relevant question is: what kind of order?*

From the Anthropologist's Desktop – Framing the Field is not Taming the Field

The spectre of *Naven* (Bateson 2003) haunts me. I find Bateson's classic simultaneously inspiring and profoundly disturbing. The uneasiness with which he faces the daunting task of rendering a comprehensive ethnographic account of the totality of the Iatmul culture – the "accomplishment" expected from classic, functionalist ethnographic monographs – is a feeling I sympathise with. Indeed, Bateson sensed the artificiality of the enterprise and, because "words must necessarily be arranged in lines," (3) his discomfort is patent when attempting to present, through this all-too-insufficient medium, the "elaborate reticulum of interlocking cause and effect" (3) that he assumes defines a culture. Acutely aware of the issues raised by the predicament of representation at the

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[42] This is probably a reference to sexual assaults against war prisoners.
[43] Meaning: any other human being.

moment of writing, Bateson ends up entrapped by what Marcus (1985) names a "hermeneutic-empiricist bind:" (75) a loyal heir of the best of the British empirical tradition, Bateson is outspoken about his doubts as to the ability of non-fiction writing to capture the "wholeness" of another form of life. In a sense, the strength of *Naven* comes precisely from the fact that it is a failed experiment.

Nonetheless, the solutions that Bateson adopts throughout the book are ingenious and some of them triggered several of the threads of analysis that follow. He proceeds by circles, placing at the very center the ritual of *naven*, through which the mother's brother (*wau*) celebrates a deed accomplished by his sister's son (*laua*), like homicide for example. He sets off by doing what ethnographers are expected to do, by brushing off the layers of exotica characterizing naven – like the *wau*'s transvesticism or the rubbing of buttocks – by contextualizing the ritual within Iatmul kin relations: that is what he calls the *structure* of that group. The second perspective, described by Bateson as the *sociological* account of naven, gives a very functionalist explanation of the ritual, in terms of the role it plays for the integration of Iatmul society. Finally, in the most original – and, therefore, controversial – part of the book, Bateson tries to come to terms with the emotional tones and overtones of *naven*: while he feels that his analysis would be incomplete without this *ethological* rendering of the ritual, he simultaneously senses the artificiality of the enterprise, which offends his commitment to empiricism. As a result, in this section of the book, his writing becomes even more hesitant than usual, a reflection of the very difficulties an anthropology of emotions faces in an empiricist environment: when it comes to analysis, scholars routinely opt to keep risks at bay by filtering out of their reports the erratic emotions that necessarily characterize the "field." On that front, Shatila provides me with no comfortable shelter.

A first aspect of Bateson's classic that informs the following line of argument is the way he portrays "gender" in *Naven* – even though that very

word is conspicuously absent from the text for the good reason that, in its contemporary sense, it simply did not exist then, its wide adoption coinciding with the burgeoning of feminist struggles in the 1970s. *Naven* depicts in the relations between the sexes a feature that has been lost since that interaction was framed as "gender" by the civil rights movements beginning in the 60s and found its way into academia from the 70s on. "Gender" is not necessarily about power relations between men and women and, if meaningful at all, it gains sense in relation to several significant others as well, sometimes of the same sex – a parent, a partner, a religious or political leader, an ancestor, a *wau*.

In yet another front, Bateson's consecutive presentations of *naven* – from a structural, sociological and ethological point of view – is inspirational for the study of the coming pages. In Chapters 4 and 5, I will "frame" Shatila from two different perspectives – the first provided by the *fidāʾiyyīn* (freedom fighters) and the second by the *shabāb* (lads). The refugee camp coming to light in the two cases looks dramatically different, an indication not only that masculinity changes from one period to an other, but that the very perception of space is not immune to the flow of history: from the "cradle of *fidāʾiyyīn*" of the late 60s and 70s, Shatila has turned, during the 90s and 2000s, and for many, into a place to be left behind when the first opportunity of immigration arises.

Furthermore, Bateson does not lose sight of the fact that his consecutive presentations of *naven* – from a structural, sociological and ethological point of view – are mere perspectives. They belong to what Bateson names as the world of Creatura – the explanations *about* "reality." For "reality," he reserves the name of Pleroma. The distinction between Creatura and Pleroma comes with a warning, explained by his daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson, in the following terms in *So What's a Meta for?* (1987):

> If it is true that there are *things* in Pleroma, then nouns (which are not things) are a useful invention for talking about things – but with nouns we have invented the capacity for false reification. There are no things in Creatura – only ideas, images, clusters of abstract relations – but the vast convenience of talking about things leads us to treat any available idea – truth, God, charisma – as if it were thing-like. (188, her emphasis)

Hence, treating structure, sociology or ethos of the Iatmul culture as "reality" – and not as analytical tools for explaining and categorizing "reality" – is to commit what Bateson identifies as the fallacy of misplaced concreteness, a major epistemological flaw. Such a mistake also characterizes analyses that fail to identify "gender" as belonging to the order of categorizations about "reality" and of discourse.

In Pleroma, the world of "things," events are caused by strengths and impacts; while in Creatura, the world of discourse about "things," effects are caused by difference, like the marks on the map. The map is necessarily a representation of the territory and it never captures the territory completely: it contains nothing else but appearances (Bateson 1980). Similarly, "gender" – being of the order of the Creatura and the map – is an appearance. It registers differences. Differences, however, do not immediately and necessarily imply a hierarchy. In a specific cultural-political setting like the one organized by state-structures, differences tend to be framed as hierarchies. As a consequence, "gender" as discourse, when defined within the limits of such a cultural-political setting, may lose the capacity to reflect ways difference is conceptualised where the state is not omnipresent.

In yet a third vein, Bateson's work supplies a point of reference – methodological this time – for what is to ensue. In the 1950s, when teaching a group of art students, many of whom beatniks, Bateson places a dead crab on the table in the classroom (Bateson 1980). He provokes his students to identify the reasons as to why the remains of a living being lie on the table. The aesthetic bias of the class conspires in favour of the experience: prompted to spot vestiges of life in the corpse lying on the table, the

students immediately search for the patterns that connect them to that creature. Their verdict: the claws of the crab suggest symmetry, precisely as happens with our own limbs. In both cases, there are similar relations – a homology, rather than an identity – approximating our and the crab's members. On the level of logic – which could be termed metaphorical – we find the pattern that connects the crab to us. These syllogisms of metaphor – which Bateson called *abduction* – provide him with a new heuristic tool: "the search for insight through analogy." (1987: 192) That's what metas are for: by identifying the pattern that connects beatniks to crabs, the latter's claws may offer new intelligibility to our own limbs. Likewise, in Chapter 2 of this study, it is my contention that the search for what connects the *shabāb* (lads) of Shatila and myself – the limited access to power that, however differently, we share – offers new intelligibility not only about the functioning of the state in marginal places like Shatila – an endeavour already undertaken in a number of ethnographic studies (Agier 1999, 2010; Das 2008) –, but also, more originally, about the functioning of the *anti-state* in our own societies. The *empathy* thus created through the pattern that connects is the condition of possibility for a meaningful and critical anthropology: a study not only of how the social is, but also of how it *should* and *may* indeed be (Sykes 2003). "Empathy is a discipline:" (Bateson 1987), a point to which I return further below.

As academic dialogue does not only thrive by encouraging concord, but also by defiant divergences, *Naven* is also disturbing in one specific facet. While painfully aware of the inadequacy of academic writing to represent social reality and his depiction of it, Bateson does not extend his epistemological concerns to the moment of the constitution of data itself (Marcus 1985). Occasional moments of doubt notwithstanding,[44] he normally considers that it is part of his task as an ethnographer to register the behaviour of the Iatmul. It is precisely in this sense that Bateson never

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[44] Lipset reports that shortly after his arrival to conduct fieldwork among the Baining, Bateson started measuring their skulls. At one point, a Baining asked him why he was doing that. The question deeply troubles Bateson, who is not able to provide any convincing answer, especially in his rather limited pidgin (Lipset 1980).

ceases to be a good heir of the British empiricist tradition: his writings betray his anxiety about his activity as an interpreting analyst, but the concerns of the Iatmul – themselves also interpreting subjects – do not trouble Bateson.

Being, at most, a bastard son of the British empiricist tradition, having been initiated into anthropology in the much less secure waters of Brazilian academia,[45] I did not find in Shatila a reassuring shelter to "set down surrounded by all […] [my] gear, alone […] close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which […] [had] brought […] [me] there sail[ed] away out of sight." (Malinowski 1992: 4). The *service*[46] that dropped me at the entrance of the bustling market of Sabra, which leads to the refugee camp, brought me to a place that in no way fed into my neo-orientalist expectations of a site dotted by tents, inhabited by intrepid *fidāʾiyyīn* wearing black-and-white *kuffiyyat*.[47] If the adrenaline suddenly pumped into my blood while I walked through Sabra at the anticipation of the dangers I had been taught to expect to find in a refugee camp (Rougier 2007; Hanafi 2008; InternationalCrisisGroup 2009), what I encountered in Shatila was an anti-climax: a shantytown – with children playing in the alleys, women seated in white plastic chairs chit-chatting in front of their little stores, men

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[45] On one occasion, one of my professors at the London School of Economics, commenting on an essay I submitted, scolded me for being too "philosophical," for reasoning "like a Frenchman." "You're very French in the anthropology you do in Brazil, aren't you? A lot of philosophical training, you seem to have," she remarked. I had, by then, become familiar enough with my academic environment to understand that this was not a positive comment. I replied: "Indeed, we are. Maybe it's because our indigenous people are themselves very philosophical."

[46] Shared taxis, very common in Beirut.

[47] Square kerchief, used as a headdress and originally a garment of peasant men. In an illuminating text, Swedenburg (1990) demonstrates how the *fallāḥ* (peasant) became a unifying figure for Palestinian nationalism, symbolising the Palestinian nation and serving to disguise social and class cleavages to the point that everyone, even the engineer Arafat, could claim to be a *fallāḥ* and wear a *kuffiyya*. Nevertheless, to function as a unifying symbol, the *fallāḥ* needs to be devoid of diacritical markers – in terms of class, origin, kinship belonging and accent. Swedenburg's analysis also shows how the uses of *kuffiyya* have changed through time, as this piece of cloth was re-appropriated and re-invented as tradition, for instance, by Arafat, rendering his leadership, thus, supposedly "natural," or by women, in the context of the first intifada, to demonstrate their support for the cause. During my field, a Lebanese female friend of mine, an activist at one of the NGOs where I volunteered, showed up at our office one day wearing a violet *kuffiyya*. When I remarked to her that the violet *kuffiyya* bore only a distant resemblance to the original black-and-white piece of cloth, she winked at me and remarked: "This is intifada for girls."

waiting for their turn to have a hair-cut at Suleiman's salon (where I was to become a customer myself) – not dissimilar from the *favelas* of my native Rio de Janeiro.[48] Moreover, contrary to my academically-trained reverie that – after an initial and short-lived resistance against their objectification (which I thought it was my duty to pursue) – Shatilans would finally bow, my informants from the camp, increasingly friends, constantly objectified and represented *me* and my science back. It is not simply that my objects were intractable: they were defiant.

Shatila, October 29th, 2008.

> *I popped in today at Akram's office, at a local NGO, in the hope of getting an appointment with his boss, the president of the institution. Akram initially reacted to my request, but ended up accepting it:*
> *"You know, Gustavo, I don't precisely like researchers, but there you go, I'll try to give you a hand."*
> *Ali, a non-Arab common friend of ours – who has been working among the* shabāb *for a number of years now – made my discomfort even more pronounced:*
> *"You can understand, can't you?, why people here don't have a lot of respect for researchers. It isn't only that people from Shatila have been researched forever by now, and nothing ever changes. It is also because, in your academic work, you have to observe a certain format when presenting your results. The format ends up limiting what can be said. And what can be said within the limits of that format is not the best for us."*

Following the stimulation I find in Bateson's work, how can I search for the pattern that connects me to the *shabāb* and yet avoid the risk of disciplining their difference, of forcing them to bow to sameness and share in our common human nature, in *my* understanding of it? How can I frame my field and yet, taking full account of what I heard at Akram's office, not tame its difference?

Here, empathy needs to play a role in the ethnography (Sykes 2003) as it leads to a problematisation of the normally-taken-for-granted separation between subject – forever thought of as sentient – and object – forever thought of as intractable – as a way out of the crisis of

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[48] In her doctoral work, Dias (2009) compares – if somewhat controversially - a *favela* in Rio and a Palestinian refugee camp in northern Lebanon.

representation. Through different avenues, Latour (1999), Wagner (2001) and Strathern (1999) tackle the issue, when showing how "researchers" and "the researched" come to share the effort of trying to find order in the apparent chaos of social life. The postmodern critique doubts the very possibility of describing the objective world, but provides no solution for the problem (Marcus and Fischer 1986). Latour, Wagner and Strathern face the challenge: to circumvent the Cartesian dilemma, which irrevocably leads to the crisis of representation, they do not ask "*what* do things mean to our informants?" – which casts the unavoidable doubt as to how sure the ethnographer can effectively be that s/he knows what things mean for others – but rather, less ambitiously and more productively, "*how* do things mean?" for researchers and the researched alike.

Latour recognizes how scientific knowledge is entangled in social relationships. Instead of rendering scientific knowledge aseptic post-facto, as disciplinarian "good practice" so often forces scholars to do, he advocates a full admission of this entanglement. As Wagner (1981) also argues, science does not mirror a supposedly objective world existing-in-itself: rather, it creates that world and then maps it out again, only to discover it – as a matter of fact, not very differently from what "gender" as a discipline does. In one point, however, Latour and Wagner (2001) diverge: while the former is hesitant when allowing his own entrapment by what he proposes to study – permitting a distinction subject/object to surreptitiously find its way back into his findings – the latter unashamedly confesses from the start his own entanglement by the network of social relationships he researches. That "capture by an-other" is what anthropologists understand as ethnography: very much as happened with Jean Genet (2004), who recognizes that he has become "a prisoner of love"[49] in his life among the *fidāʾiyyīn* in Jordan. Strathern (1988) for her part uses the idea of perspectives to imagine how some of the presuppositions of cultural domains in Euro-America[50] – such as

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[49] The translation of Genet's title into English somewhat loses the sense of the author's will to be captured, preserved in the French rendition of the expression "*un captif amoureux.*"
[50] It may be worth noting that Euro-America is itself an ambitiously over-arching construct, probably unintelligible for many of the ordinary people living in those regions.

"gender" – might look like when seen upon from a Melanesian perspective. In Pottage's words:

> The ambition is to generate an analogical counterpart to the cultural domain of Euro-America, a perspective from which the presuppositions and contexts of that domain can be made visible. [...] [Strathern's ethnographic analogy] emphasizes thematic difference in order to generate alternative domains of social action, neither of which may be entirely real, but each of which affords a context or perspective from which to explore the presuppositions of its counterpart. (2001: 113)

It is for this reason – and in an ironical mode – that I suggest my own way out of the crisis of representation by inviting in an additional crisis: a crisis of *political* representation. Indeed, the functioning of the anti-state in Shatila – as illustrated by my "history of water" – serves to defy the teleology of political liberalism that makes the state look analytically inescapable and has blinded scholars to "anti-state" effects at work even in their own societies. That teleology, since the Hobbesian attempt to justify the centralization of power in the hands of the king (Hobbes 2008), has reduced politics to a matter of alienation, completely obliterating the fact that before, in the Roman *res publica*, politics was a matter of delegation (Asad 2008). What is needed, thus, is not simply an analysis of how the state looks like when seen from the margins – as much of political anthropology has done (Abélès 2005; Das 2008; Agier 2010) – but a true *marginalisation* of the state, that renders it as margin to the citizen-body. Such an exercise not only liquefies modernity (Bauman 2000), but also makes the apparently solidified state melt into water and turns bare not life (Agamben 1998) – which ethnography could possibly aim at that? – but more appropriately the king and the queen.

All that is Solid Melts into Water – Taming Leviathan and the Bare King

Deleuze and Guattari (2004) describe in the following terms states' proverbial discomfort with uncontrolled flows of water:

> It is certain that the State itself needs a hydraulic science [...]. But it needs it in a very different form, because the State needs to subordinate hydraulic force to conduits, pipes, embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constrain movement to go from one point to another, and space itself to be striated and measured, which makes the fluid depend on the solid, and flows proceed by parallel, laminar layers. (400)

To this hydraulic science, the two authors oppose a hydraulic model of a different type: instead of making flows submit to the "royal science" of solids, it treats fluids as fluids, accepts their movement and takes proper note of heterogeneity, as opposed to the constant, the identical, the eternal and the stable. The sea is the hydraulic model par excellence and it is precisely its flat character that Western powers saved no effort to striate, to make it dependent on the land, with its fixed routes: "[o]ne of the reasons for the hegemony of the West was the power of its State apparatuses to striate the sea by combining the technologies of the North and the Mediterranean and by annexing [and submitting, I would add] the Atlantic." (Deleuze and Guattari 2004): 427)

To my understanding, the hydraulic model offered by Deleuze and Guattari is the most analytically relevant for registering the functioning of anti-state effects in a setting like Shatila. The hydraulic model of the "nomad" or "minor science" that they advocate, in contrast with the state and royal science, operates through proposing problems and not axioms: it is a "thought that appeals to a people instead of taking itself for a government ministry." (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 417)

While Shatila is not an anti-state setting, the "anti-state effects" – to rephrase Scott's (1998, 2009) expression – are salient there and simply cannot be ignored. Indeed, my notes from the very first days in the field register my "state-strangeness" towards the camp. Having grown up in a country still coming to terms with dictatorship and military rule, I learned how to be acutely aware of the functioning of state forces, with their capacity to silence dissenting voices, and erupt, in the middle of the night, in the form of soldiers in plain clothes, in one's household to abduct those who

dared to think differently. Everything in Shatila – the idiosyncrasies of political life and local functioning of "power" (as developed in Chapter 2); residents' economic strategies (as developed in Chapter 3); sex roles (as in Chapters 4, 5 and 6) – eluded my "state logic," and I developed a new sensitivity with which to look at the camp through new lenses.

It is precisely the adoption of worn-out "state lenses" that has blinded many who write about Shatila to the anti-state effects also at work in the camp. In a counter-vein to what is proposed by that literature, the prominence of anti-state effects in Shatila does not mean chaos and lack of order. The extreme discomfort that Shatilans, Palestinians and refugees cause to Lebanon and states in general, as well as to geographers, political scientists and ethnographers wearing "state lenses," leads states and scholars alike to present as necessarily chaotic what simply functions differently. Having grown used to state effects – either because states are to be watched out for, as in the case of my own Brazil under military dictatorship, or because states provide tenure positions at public universities, or research funds, or retirement plans – geographers, political scientists and ethnographers experience nostalgia for them. Shatila's lack of a state apparatus, or its weakness – the literature thus produced indicates – *has* absolutely to be depicted as an issue: that is how the so-called "problem of governance" in the camps has acquired (undue) scholarly respect (Hanafi 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Hanafi & Taylor 2010; InternationalCrisisGroup 2009; Kortam 2010).   In certain cases, echoing the aspirations of Palestinian nationalism – especially intense during the ʾayyām al-thawra (the days of the revolution) – scholars who conducted comprehensive fieldwork in the camps back then also seemed to long for a state (Peteet 1991, 2005, 2007; Sayigh 1993, 1995). Within such a theoretical framework, it becomes difficult to understand and accept that Shatilans have grown weary of states (or state-like institutions) such as Lebanon or the Palestinian Authority, which have effectively done very little for them, and that they have learned how to live without: there is governance beyond the state.

The fact that Shatilans' relation to Palestinian nationalism has changed is not surprising when seen from the perspective of camp residents themselves. On two occasions, they have been utterly disregarded, to say the least, by their own leaders: in 1982, when Yasser Arafat left Beirut for Tunis, taking along with him several of the *fidāʾiyyīn* and leaving the camps vulnerable, and in 1993, with the Oslo agreements, when the Palestinian leadership agreed to postpone the discussion of the fate of refugees to a final round of negotiations with the Israelis in an unforeseeable future. A third recent episode can be added to that series: in 2011, in the discussion of the acceptance of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations, the Palestinian Ambassador to Lebanon, Abdullah Abdullah, in what was probably a move to calm down Israelis, affirmed that "[Palestinian refugees] will not be considered citizens [of a Palestinian State]." (Slemrod 2011) The reason, the ambassador went on to say, adopting a logic that appears already rather tortuous, is to protect their right to return: "Statehood will not affect the right of return" for "dignity is much more important than a loaf of bread." Abdullah's own rosy almost voluptuous cheeks show that his is not precisely a diet low on carbohydrates.

The prominence of anti-state effects in Shatila does not mean that there are no state-effects there, in precisely the same sense that the prominence of state-effects in our own societies does not mean that there are no anti-state effects here (Barbosa 2004). It is the otherwise welcome empirical nature of ethnography that has led to political anthropology being more tuned to studying states as institutions than to venturing into the apparently more diaphanous and nebulous domain of state or anti-state "effects." As a result, political anthropology has multiplied typologies of political systems, African or otherwise, according to the strength, presence or absence of the state as institution, or has plunged into a fruitless search for the origin, the very moment of "eruption" of the state, inaugurating the "grand division," the ultimate severance between "us" and "them," which feeds easily enough into evolutionary classifications of political arrangements (Abélès 2005).

Of course, the anti-state effects I witnessed in Shatila do not allow us to assert that we are in the presence of a group similar to the anti-state Amerindians of Clastres' classic (1987). Obviously, Shatilans feel the state-effects emanating from the Lebanese government – which issues legislation, such as laws barring free access to the Lebanese labour market for Palestinians – or from the Palestinian leadership – which shows pronounced unwillingness to cope with the refugee issue, through statements like Ambassador Abdullah's above.

By paying attention to anti-state effects produced by the political functioning of the camp, we understand that Shatilans have learned how not to depend on or to wait for solutions from state-like figures (governmental or non-governmental alike). They have developed a certain finesse in the art of *not* being governed (Scott 2009). The question we have to tackle is: in the context of a lack of state-consolidated and clearly established sources of political authority, how is it that life in Shatila is still orderly and that eventual and episodic eruptions of violence are kept under relative control? In a vein not dissimilar to the fission of Clastres' Amerindians, who whenever menaced by the possibility of consolidation of a sole source of authority over them, opted to split (Clastres 1987), and to the "divide that ye be not ruled" of Scott's (2009) Zomians, the various Palestinian factions, in constant rivalry, avoid the emergence and solidification of a sole source of power, with the capacity to impose its will over the group. On the one hand, such a "strategy" is the source of various problems, such as the one, very real, of ensuring the functioning of sewage systems and proper access to drinkable water; on the other hand, however, it keeps Leviathan at bay. Shatilans taught me that there is a social contract that does not necessarily lead to Leviathan and that one of the anti-state effects can be, precisely and surprisingly enough, order. They liquefied the state for me.

This is not the only reason why this study is organized around different movements of water, used to name the various chapters. First,

ethnographers working in varying settings – Jakarta (Kooy 2008), Mumbai (Analand 2010) and Soweto (Von Schnitzler 2010) – have persuasively demonstrated that relations of rule are materialized through hydraulic networks, establishing at both the discursive and material levels who counts as citizens. For Soweto, Von Schnitzler argues that residents' opposition to the installation of pre-paid meters, framed as tools for techno-political intervention, reflects all the ambiguities surrounding citizenship in post-apartheid, neo-liberal South Africa – a line of reasoning quite useful for the analytical need to liquefy the state and for the contemplation of other notions of citizenship advocated here.

Secondly, and furthermore, the lads from Shatila, the *shabāb*, also liquefied anthropology for me. Anthropology has a pronounced, if hardly assumed, spatial bias and is haunted by a spatialized model of culture (Poole 2008), which is expected to "sit" in places (Escobar 2001): the very spatialized "field" – the mandatory rite-of-passage of any anthropologist – does not let us speak otherwise. Yet of all peoples, Shatilans, taking into consideration their understandably obsessive relation to an *utopia*, Palestine, have de-territorialized their relation to territory and have shown to me how interjected with several other "domains of meaning," such as "time," a place can be.[51] The Palestine some Shatilans yearn for is situated both in an idealized past – with all its pastoral images – and a redemptive future – often assuming religious and eschatological overtones. The omnipresent olive tree and cactus (*ṣubbār*) exemplify the myth-making, almost totemic thinking, informing the utopia of a place one has never set foot in and yet wants to *return* to. As the word denoting cactus shares the root in Arabic with patience (*ṣabir*) and as it is very difficult to eradicate the plant, which blossoms again and again, in spite of every effort made to uproot it, *ṣubbār* has become a politicized term, called upon to symbolize Palestinian tenacity and the insistence on the return. This botanical

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[51] See Chapter 2 for the description of another remarkable scene from the movie *Roundabout Shatila*, by Maher Abi Samra, which captures how notions of space are irrevocably informed by notions of time in Shatila.

imagery[52] puts into relief that, in the international order of states – itself informed by the sedentarising images of "national soils" and "roots" (Malkki 1992) – refugees like Shatilans are "displaced" and "uprooted" people: thus, matter-out-of-place (Douglas 1991), and literally so. In Malkki's (1995) explanation:

> The danger of pollution posed by statelessness or refugeeness to the categorical order of nation-states corresponds quite neatly to the process studied by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger* (1991). Refugees are seen to hemorrhage or weaken national boundaries and to pose a threat to "national security" as is time and again asserted in the discourse of refugee policy. Here, symbolic and political danger cannot be kept entirely distinct. Refugees are constituted, in Douglas' sense, as a dangerous category because they blur national (read: natural) boundaries and challenge "time-honoured distinctions between nationals and foreigners" (Arendt 1973). At this level, they represent an attack on the categorical order of nations which so often ends up being perceived as natural and, therefore, as inherently legitimate. (7-8)

It will thus come as little surprise that in another myth-making, this time the one informing the constitution and consolidation of nation-states, refugees are all-too-often depicted in terms of water imageries: waves, flows, floods, inundations, and seas of people, that need to be contained (Jayawardena 1995; Malkki 1995; Peteet 2007). In the case of the most recent war in Iraq, to take just one example, two strategists, Pollack and Byrman, as reported by Peteet (2007), proposed the establishment of "catch-basins" – to prevent displaced people's "spill-over" to neighbouring countries. With "catch-basins" being defined by the Webster dictionary as "sieve-like device[s] at the entrance of the intersection of a sewer, for retaining solid matter likely to clog the sewer," Peteet concludes that, in this hydraulic image, displaced persons have not only become no longer human but also the equivalent of a biological by-product of filth: sludge.

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[52] Pirinolli (2009) reports a story that testifies to the force of plants as justifying claims to the soil. In 1906, in the project of reforestation of Herzl, in Palestine, the agronomist in charge originally used Palestinians as workforce. Jewish workers protested strongly and uprooted the trees, only to *replant the same trees* after.

If refugees are matter out-of-place in the international order of states and if, as Malkki (1995) recalls, "people categorize back," let us listen to what they have to say – as I did, for instance, with Shadi, the *shāb* working in the recovery of the pipeline in Shatila and do again and again throughout this study – or what they have to sing – as I do in Chapter 5. Let us see what they can teach us, not only about the functioning of the state at the margins, but also about the functioning of the anti-state at the so-called center:[53] that is, a true *marginalization* of the state (Asad 2008), which is not to be taken for granted.

At the margins of Beirut, there are other possible ways of "faire-ville" (Agier 2010) and these "other cities" are based upon and lead to other notions of citizenship, exposing the very ambiguities of subjectification, particularly within the Western political philosophical tradition. Indeed, for that tradition, a subject, while being "subject to something," – thus, a citizen – also has the capacity to act: one has obtained *agency*, yes, but in and through subjectification (*assujetissement*) (Foucault 1995). In Shatila, as Chapter 6 shows, pigeons fly for other reasons and do not easily allow for "pigeonholing" in a national order of things. For, as Ferme (2008) convincingly argues about "the ambiguous zones of rights that all states produce:"

> In these ambiguous zones there are also possibilities for flight, and it is here that the reconstitution of subjectivity beyond the categories of citizenship, refugees and migrants can unfold. (114)

In Shatila *I* was also matter-out-of-place, and that is probably the condition of possibility for any meaningful ethnography. There was ground for an utmost *empathy* – which, as we have seen, is a discipline (Bateson 1987: 195) – with and towards the *shabāb*, themselves matter-out-of-place, and on more than one level. They are not only refugees and thus out-of-place in the national order of things, but they also find no easy location, as

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[53] In the topography of political liberalism, the center, as Deleuze and Guattari (2004) show, surprisingly is not exactly at the center – but above.

men destitute of power, in this other discipline, which sometimes comes across as a discipline of a rather disciplinarian type: "gender."

(En)gendering/Endangering Knowledge: Impurity, Danger and the "Gift" of Gender

From the standpoint of both the national order of things and the order of things established by much of the academic discourse on gender, the Shatila *shabāb* of today count as "pollution:" impure, they are matter-out-of-place. Not only are they stateless refugees, but they are also men with limited access to power: not emasculated, though. From Douglas (1991) and Malkki (1995), we know that being out-of-place is dangerous, but not only for those concerned. Being out-of-place is also creative, because it puts into relief that there is nothing natural in the categories applied. Matter-out-of-place produces noise in widely accepted categories and creatively opens up the way for change: matter out-of-place endangers the world, as we know it. Thus at issue is a politicization of one of the traditional themes of anthropology: the study of social classification.

Feminists' appeal to "en-gender" knowledge – opening it up for women's point-of-view, recognizing, hence, that much of the scholarly production thus far had been biased by a male perspective – while obviously welcome, entails dangers. As a double-edged project – simultaneously academic and activist – feminism has provided fertile terrain for questions relevant to one domain invading (and eventually hijacking) the other. In academia, such a demarche has been fundamental for a long-adjourned and nonetheless necessary (politicized) destabilization of well-established categories. This destabilization, however, has been accompanied by certain political agendas of Euro-American feminist activists infusing the preoccupations of gender as an academic discipline and thus being exported into other ethnographic settings – where political agendas are quite different. By being offered as a "gift" to other settings, gender activism and studies might have unwillingly contributed to silencing the subaltern (Spivak 1988).

Before this analytical perspective provokes the criticism of being anti-feminist, let me hasten to stress that this study is not only inspired by the feminist debate, but, in a sense, wants to take that debate to its limits: it aims to submit feminist studies themselves to a feminist critique. Accordingly, it shows that there is a "gender bias" to "gender studies:" actually, there is a "gender" to "gender". As Strathern (1988) appropriately observes, one cannot be a half-hearted radical. By rightly insisting that "women's" perspectives be taken into account and forcing scholars to realize what a difference perspective makes, "gender studies" have sometimes, however, opted to turn a blind eye to the fact that that was precisely a "perspective." Human problems are not the same all over, reasons Strathern, and "women" may not be a universal issue. She brings in Haraway in her support, according to whom "gender might not be global identity after all," (Haraway 1985, cited in Strathern 1988: 40) and remarks that the adoption of the "feminist view" leads to suppression of "internal differences," in terms of class, ethnicity and sexuality. Several "other women" therefore end up silenced by the "essentialized woman" of certain gender discourses.

Reflecting on her own personal trajectory from social activist to academic, and on the increasing difficulties she finds to combine these "discourses," Messer-Davidow (2002) shows how feminism, a venture launched forty years ago with the objective of changing academic and social institutions, has itself been transformed and captured by those institutions. It is not only that feminism has become a discipline over the years: it has also been *disciplined* along the way. Strathern (1988) dares to remark: "the field or context for feminist debate itself (women's oppression) entails the activation of conceptually conservative constructs." (27) She indicates that "domination" – the denunciation of which certain trends in "gender studies" understand as their task to make – is deeply informed by how "property" is conceptualized in Western societies. According to her, Westerners see themselves as proprietors – of themselves, their personal attributes, their

genders, their cultures and their societies. As property, a culture can be owned by some, to the detriment of others. The reasoning of certain trends in "gender studies" goes on to propose that men normally own culture and mould it according to their perspective. As a result, women's experience of "culture" may be at odds with their experience of themselves and their bodies. Now what happens to this theoretical edifice if property is taken out of the picture? In Melanesia, where Strathern conducted fieldwork, local systems of knowledge are organized differently. Thus: "We must [...] stop thinking that an opposition between male and female must be about the control of men and women over each other. Realising this ought to create fresh grounds for analysing the nature of that opposition." (1988: 15) Indeed, other ethnographic settings may understand "gender" and "opposition" differently.

In Egypt, the participation of women in a Cairo revivalist movement offers Mahmood (2001, 2005) the opportunity to discuss some of the liberal presuppositions of the feminist movement. Her argument is that within the feminist framework, "agency" has come to be defined somewhat narrowly as resistance to domination: in such a mindset, a pre-discursive self has the "naturalized" will to be free from coercion and domination. Such an analytic framework does not capture the experience of the women Mahmood worked with: those women actively participate in a movement through which they learn to accept subordination in their search to attain a pious life. Their docile agency – the capacity for action within historically specific relations of subordination – exposes a liberal bias in much of what is written under the label "gender studies" and it does not come as a surprise that, in various circles, the situation of those women would call for a "diagnosis" and attempts at reform. In their own liberal vein, certain trends within feminism assume a prescriptive character, both at the analytical and political levels. Mahmood opts to parochialize some of the assumptions of liberal feminism, denaturalizing its normative subject and revealing its teleological certainties. It is feminism and feminists that may come out transformed from the "clash" with the mosque-goers in Cairo:

> Critique, I believe, is most powerful when it leaves open the possibility that we might also be remade in the process of engaging another's worldview, that we might come to learn things that we did not already know before we undertook the engagement. This requires that we occasionally turn the critical gaze upon ourselves, to leave open the possibility that we may be remade through an encounter with the other. (Mahmood 2005: 36-37)

Property and individual's free will are two of the tenets of the liberal and neo-liberal ideology. Has feminism – or, at least, certain of its trends – contributed, perhaps unwillingly and unconsciously, to the consolidation and solidification of the liberal and neo-liberal project? Has it yielded to the latter's power? Is it part of the colonising process, spreading to other settings its specific technologies of political order, new forms of personhood and means of manufacturing the experience of the real and novel ontologies of representation (Mitchell 1991)? If so, are we still in a position to decolonize the methodologies we adopt (Smith 1999) in order to crystallize alternative futures (Messer-Davidow 2002), ones in which language, meaning and political order have not been disciplined by the metaphysics of liberal representation (Mitchell 1991)? Can we "unlearn" (Spivak 1988) the precepts of liberal representation, so that the subaltern – Cairo mosque-goers, brown women (Spivak 1988), brown men and Shatila pigeon-raisers - can finally be heard?

Les Enfants de l'Apatrie[54]

This study deals with what in the national order of things or the order of things of the academic discourse on gender, is an oxymoron, or as Foucault (2010) would have it, a *heterotopia:*[55] the Shatila *shabāb*, stateless men with very limited power. For me, rather than the oxymoron of power discourses – academic or otherwise – they were friends.

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[54] The expression was suggested by François Chatêlet to Jacques Meunier (2001).
[55] I see no reason as to why *heterotopias* should be limited to places and spaces.

Accordingly, the following investigates how acting as a "male provider" has increasingly become an avenue closed to the coming-of-age and display of sex-belonging for the Shatila *shabāb*. The specialized literature on Palestinians before the *Nakba*, or catastrophe, as refugees refer to their forced departure from Palestine in 1948, suggests that a man would come of age by marrying at the appropriate age and having a son (Granqvist 1931, 1947). When it comes to the saga of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon, acting as *fidāʾiyyīn* or freedom fighters provided throughout the 1970s an alternative mechanism for the coming-of-age and display of sex-belonging. The central question of this study is: how do the Shatila *shabāb* come of age today and display their sex-belonging?

The answer to this question is far from obvious, particularly taking into consideration two factors. Firstly, Lebanese legislation, through what I name as "institutional violence," bars Palestinian refugees from free access to the labour market, forcing the *shabāb* to postpone plans for getting married and starting an independent household. As a result, the economic avenue of acting as "male providers" for their families has ceased to be the straightforward track for the coming-of-age and display of sex-belonging it used to be before 1948 – and that, precisely in a place situated in the Middle East, the region often taken to be, by much of the feminist literature, as the bedrock of "patriarchy." Secondly, the Palestinian Resistance Movement, in its military version, does not exist anymore in Lebanon. The political military avenue for displaying adequate sex-belonging is thus not open to the *shabāb* either, unlike what was the case during the 1970s – and that, precisely, in Shatila, often taken to be, by much of the nationalist literature, as one of the bedrocks of Palestinian resistance.

To tackle this issue, this investigation is conducted through a plethora of investigative techniques: participant observation; questionnaires; focus groups and open-ended interviews. During the fieldwork, which lasted from 2007 to 2009, I lived in Shatila for a year and

conducted a household survey with 39 families[56] and two workshops using music as a prompt to trigger debates,[57] interviewed 16 sets of parents and children,[58] collected the life stories of 20 *shabāb* and 3 *banāt* (young women) and talked to a number of local leaders, UNRWA and NGO staff and scholars dealing with Palestinian refugees from Lebanon. My aim was to register the differences between the *fidāʾiyyīn* and their offspring, the *shabāb*, as far as their coming-of-age and display of sex-belonging are concerned.

By examining the differences in the ways the pre-1948 Palestinians, the *fidāʾiyyīn* and the *shabāb* "do" their gender, do the full historicity and changeability in time and space of "masculinity" come to the fore? Furthermore, are the scholarly concepts of *agency* and *gender* transformed and, possibly, undone this way? In studies of the Middle East, and arguably elsewhere, "gender" tends to be strictly defined in terms of power and relations of domination. Does such a definition grasp the experience of those, like the *shabāb* from Shatila, with very limited access to power? Rather than presenting them as emasculated for not being able to act as fighters and for facing difficulties to act as "male providers," should the analyst instead take issue with the concepts of *agency* and *gender* themselves and propose that defining *agency* only as "resistance to domination," and *gender* in terms of "relations of power" alone, is very restrictive? As the reader becomes aware of the "anti-state effects" at play in Shatila, should this study also point to the (dangerous) liaisons between "gender" and "agency" as concepts and canons of the royal, state science (Deleuze and Guattari 2004)? What happens to "gender" (and "agency"),

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[56] The 39 families were distributed like this: 24 were Palestinian living in Shatila; 6 were Palestinian living outside the camp (because I was interested in investigating whether residence made a difference to the stories I collected), and 9 were non-Palestinian living in the camp (because I wanted to check to what extent being Palestinian made a difference). Some of the data gathered this way is explored in Chapter 3.
[57] As reported in Chapter 5.
[58] These 16 pairs were composed mainly of fathers (in two cases, mothers), all of them ex-fighters, and their sons (in two cases, daughters). I first interviewed the parent, then the child, and then talked to both together. Chapter 5 provides a more detailed explanation of how these interviews were conducted and draws upon the respective results.

when the state-effects are not taken-for-granted as part of the picture, organizing and *solidifying* a "sex-gender" system at the local level?

This is how we will go along, when following the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s and the *shabāb*'s trajectories. Chapter 2 – "Submerging – Under Siege" – shows how life in Shatila has decolonized my methodological assumptions and canons (Smith 1999). Rather than only arguing for the power and heuristic value of local methodologies (Smith 1999), should scholars take issue with the idea that methodologies need to be informed by power? It was only when I realized how lacking in power I myself was in Shatila that a sense of deep empathy (Bateson 1987; Sykes 2003) with the *shabāb* was established – and my research took off. Through such repositioning in my field, I was able to see what I had been blind to thus far: the anti-state effects in operation in the camp.

Chapter 3 – "Drowning by Numbers and Legislation – Statistics and (Non)State-Making in Shatila," asks what happens to the "economy" and "political life" when looked upon without the aid of "state lenses." Are two of the traditional tasks associated with states, enumeration (Das 2008; Jeganathan 2008) and law-making (Poole 2008), transformed as a result? Do statistics – as an essential tool for state-making – falter when in presence of anti-state effects? Are numbers feeding statistical tables on the economy of the camp of limited significance and do they capture the way Shatila's "economy" functions? Does Shatila allow for a different gaze into the mechanisms of "making the economy?" And does it also uncover new ways of "making a city" (Agier 1999, 2010) – revealing, along the way, alternative visions of citizenship? Can it be the case that alternative instruments for money circulation, social security and savings (represented, respectively, by local practices of dowry, by *jamʿiyyat*[59] and by women's golden bracelets) are in function in Shatila, instruments, nevertheless, completely ignored by the statistical surveys on life conditions in the camp?

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[59] Plural of *jamʿiyyah*, a joint pooling of resources by different households. The resources can be used by those taking part in the arrangement when and if the need arises.

The *shabāb* and their fathers, the *fidāʾiyyīn*, speak in Chapter 4 – "Swirling and Twirling – The *Fidāʾiyyīn*'s Heroism and the *Shabāb*'s Burden." Do their biographies, as portrayed by them, show how the coming-of-age and display of sex-belonging have changed from one generation to the next, providing an example of the pliability and full historicity of "masculinity?" Do they serve to indicate the sense in which "gender" – understood as different access to power – may work as an analytic tool to make sense of the fathers' trajectories but loses much of its heuristic reach when applied to the *shabāb*'s life stories? Do they also depict changes in the perceptions of Shatila through time: from the "cradle of *fidāʾiyyīn*" in the 1970s to the dreadful shantytown of today, to be left behind when an opportunity of moving out or migrating arises?

The extreme conditions, often leading to utter poverty in the camps, are reflected in the rap produced by the *shabāb*. In Chapter 5 ("Pororoca – Thinking through Music: *Fidāʾiyyīn* and *Shabāb* Talk (Sometimes) Past Each Other"), *shabāb* and *fidāʾiyyīn* go on talking – not anymore to the ethnographer, but to each other. They do that through music. Chapter 5 reports on two workshops, held with Palestinians from different generations, in South Lebanon and Shatila, during which participants were invited to listen to and express their views on two songs: *Romana* (pomegranate/grenade), a typical example of Palestinian nationalistic music from the 1970s, popular among the *fidāʾiyyīn*, and *Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt* (Welcome to the Camps), a recent rap song by the Palestinian band Katibe 5, which the *shabāb* never seem tired of listening to. Does what emerged from the workshops show the different ways *fidāʾiyyīn* and *shabāb* relate to Palestine? Do the former feed into the ideology of the return and the latter opt for a "contextualized engagement," (Puig 2007) in which a much more nuanced relation to what counts as "motherland" merges with another preoccupation: coping with the dire conditions of life in Lebanon? Do the *shabāb* find through rap a medium to speak about what otherwise seems forced into silence: that the never-forgotten demands for return have

to be combined with more urgent ones in Lebanon (where refugees do not have the right to acquire real estate and where access to work is extremely burdensome)? Are rap songs then infra-political, as Puig (2007) posits, or do they rather point to other ways of being political?

Based on pigeon-raising by the *shabāb* as well as on another workshop – this time, one on "gender" held at a local NGO - Chapter 6 ("Re-Emerging – Non-Cockfights") interrogates the extent to which the activities by Shatila young men can be framed as "gender performance." Rather than portraying the *shabāb* as emasculated, for not being in a position to perform a "gender," shouldn't scholars take issue with "gender" itself? In its final pages, this study inquires whether "gender" circulates in a semantic universe defined by the quest for political power. As such, isn't "gender" problematic when applied to lives so deeply marked by anti-state effects, as those led by the Shatila *shabāb*? Should such a discussion have consequences on the way anthropologists and feminists frame yet another concept – "agency" –, exposing some of its liberal underpinnings?

The last chapter ("Resurfacing – The Anti-Love of Empire") puts together the various threads and lines of reasoning presented throughout this study. It also takes us back to where we started: the (dis)order of things. Foucault (2010) teaches us that the history of order imposed on things (whether by nationalistic or academic discourses, we might add) is the history of the Same. In such order, are heterotopias – such as the universes navigated by the stateless and powerless young men from Shatila – in any sense disturbing? Heterotopias – Foucault goes on to reason – undermine language, dissolve our myths and destroy syntax, because they make obvious how difficult it is to hold together disparate elements, words and things. As such, do they also put representation in question – in the case here, political representation? Hasn't, then, the time perhaps arrived to venture into new skies?

Chapter 2

Submerging –
Under Siege

Figure 1 – Haven't 15 years of hiding in toilettes been enough?
Nada Sehnaoui's Installation/Downtown Beirut, April 08

"Please, Gustavo, open the gate downstairs for me," Latif, 29, a Palestinian chemist from the surroundings of Shatila, shouted over the interphone of my building, in the late afternoon of May 8th, 2008. By then, the Lebanese political stalemate had peaked to a crisis of major magnitude and the country seemed on the brink of a new civil war. Earlier that day, the opposition party Hizbullah had encircled Qreitam, in the western part of Beirut, reacting against the decision by the government to curb its parallel communication network and to dismiss one of its delegates from the strategic position of security coordinator at the International Airport. The palace belonging to Saad Hariri, inheritor of the Mustaqbal movement from his father, the late Premier Rafik Hariri, is in Qreitam. He was one of the leaders of

the American-Saudi-supported alliance then governing the country, and his very ornate headquarters was one of the targets of Hizbullah on that eventful May 8th. Between Hizbullah and the Mustaqbal militiamen sat the worn-out building where this researcher kept a small pied-à-terre, in the hope of securing a place for retreat and note-taking so as to recover from the harshness of daily life in the Shatila camp. Trapped in the exchange of fire taking place in the neighbouring district of Hamra, Latif had decided to seek refuge in this very apartment, since the rapid multiplication of military and paramilitary checkpoints throughout the city made returning home impossible. In the following hours, Latif, himself a survivor of Shatila's various sieges during the Camp Wars of the 1980s, taught me how to outlive such situations. This experience has marked my own coming of age as an ethnographer, and Latif and myself have emerged as brothers from the siege – an indication that in addition to the diaphanous discourse on food-sharing (Carsten 2000), subtle in the bonding it purports, and to the over-sexualized mores of blood-relation (Schneider 1968), relatedness also stems from pure dire necessity.

Under Siege[1]

I regret having missed the installation by Lebanese artist Nada Sehnaoui in downtown Beirut in April 2008. The installation, suggestively named "Haven't 15 years of hiding in toilettes been enough?" consisted of 625 lavatories distributed in one of the rare empty spaces not yet claimed by the post-war reconstruction of the city center (Figure 1). When I finally managed to find my way to the exhibition, the lavatories – symmetrically arranged over the area, in an eerie evocation of a cemetery – were already being removed. Sehnaoui's objective was to provide a compelling mémoire *of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), during which Beirutis effectively took cover in bathrooms, the internal corridors of buildings and underground parking lots. I*

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[1] In *Fieldwork under Fire*, Nordstrom and Robben (1995) have put together essays exploring the vicissitudes of life and research conducted amidst political turmoil. By their focus on the everyday, the essays try to come to terms with the way in which violence, rather than extraordinary, is a dimension of living.

could not have anticipated that, weeks later, I myself would consider sleeping in the bathroom.

With the city brought to a halt, I opened the door for Latif, and in the following hours, he initiated me into how to live through a siege. "No, Gustavo, the situation is not bad enough yet for us to sleep in the bathroom. Let's just move beds away from the windows, so that we aren't hurt by shards of glass if an explosion happens outside." This is just one of the many good pieces of advice he gave me. He explained to me why bathrooms are the safest places in a house: the absence of large windows greatly reduces the risk caused by shattering glass. Besides, the compartment above the bathroom where water heaters are normally installed provides an extra layer of protection, in case the building is severely hit and collapses. Even though he was far from empathising with the Mustaqbal, Latif taught me that pragmatic considerations precede ideology in certain circumstances: ''We're both on Hariri's side at this moment, Gustavo, for it's his men who are protecting us right now.'' He also harshly criticized me for not having purchased a TV set yet: "How the hell are we going to know what is going on in the city?'' Throughout that night, we ate sparsely as well: being unprepared to face a crisis of such a magnitude, I hadn't stocked up on provisions and had only some vegetables and fruits in my fridge. The next day, we rushed to one of the few neighbouring shops that opened its doors, to buy long-life canned food. Apart from the vendors, Latif and I were the only men in the shop. I had read that, during sieges, women have more mobility than men, for snipers think twice before shooting at them. It had been like this during the Camp Wars in Shatila between 1985 and 1987,[2] and it was like that again in my own neighbourhood in that early morning.

The lessons I learned from Latif that night were not restricted to how to survive to a siege. He also taught me something fundamental about what he had once disapprovingly described as "this anthropology of yours." I had

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[2] Evidently there is no guarantee that snipers do not shoot women as well and indeed several women were killed while trying to bring food into the Shatila or Burj Al-Barajneh camps during the sieges of the Camp Wars.

always thought of the exercise of rapprochement to/distancing from the "other," the basic tool of ethnography, as a mere intellectual task. During that rainy night in May, under the siege imposed by Hizbullah, while our own destinies seemed both interconnected and uncertain, and while we chatted about the fear of death and the importance of having children in order to leave grandchildren for our parents, my identification with Latif moved well beyond the limits of a mere intellectual exercise. I was finally able to fully understand Peteet's (1991) remarks about her own days under siege, during the Israeli invasion of Beirut in 1982:

> *A strong overwhelming solidarity in face of invasion and siege bound together the residents of West Beirut. Muslim and Christian, Arab and foreigner. Facing the siege together forged the sense of sympathy that Kirschner (1987) describes as an essential component of the interaction between self and other. But to distance oneself, the other component of ethnographic interaction, was emotionally, as well as physically, impossible. (211)*

On the morning of May 9th, the Brazilian Embassy contacted me, asking whether I wanted them to send a car to evacuate me from Qreitam to Baabda, a Christian suburb east of Beirut. I again asked for Latif's advice. He strongly recommended that I accept the offer. I told him that I would do so, provided that he come along. He countered that it did not make sense for him to go to Baabda, even farther away from his home, and added that should he need to escape, I would be a burden to him: "Besides, Gustavo, I will never forgive myself if you turn down the offer from the Embassy and then something happens to you after. I just ask you to let me stay in your apartment until I manage to get back home."

I embraced him very strongly in front of the Commodore Hotel, near my flat, where the Embassy car was waiting for me. Latif returned to my place. On my way out of Qreitam, I saw several checkpoints, some with soldiers from the Lebanese Army, and some with non-uniformed men, probably from the Hizbullah militia. I had a glimpse of what it means to leave one's place, one's friends and one's belongings behind, counting on coming back some day, but not being completely sure if it would be possible.

When I finally returned to my Qreitam apartment, I found a message in Arabic Latif had left, saying: "Thanks, brother." It was a sharp change from our first meeting a couple of months before when he thought I was a British researcher and reacted when I asked for his mobile number – "for I don't actually know you, do I?" – and when he finally conceded, gave me the wrong number. The next time we met, it was Latif who strongly embraced me and said, in English: "We're brothers, now, Gustavo, because we've suffered together." My own standing vis-à-vis the very suspicious shabāb *(lads) from Shatila improved after the siege. Since news had got around that I did not panic during the siege, one of them explained to me that I was promoted to "hardcore Palestinian." Another one commented: "Buddy, you're in the game now."*

The Map is not the Territory

"So, you really *like that map, Gustavo?"*

I sensed a speck of sarcasm in the voice of Dalal, 24, a Lebanese-Palestinian resident of Al-Tariq Al-Jadida, in the neighbourhood of Shatila, who has a diploma in English literature. Indeed, after being admitted into "the game," I realised that to remain a "buddy," I had to come to grips with the complex ways space, time and respective representations interacted for my Palestinian friends.

In a remarkable scene of the movie Roundabout Shatila, *by director Maher Abi-Samra, a man reproaches his female neighbour for not sweeping the sidewalk in front of a dwelling belonging to a third family in the refugee camp. The woman's adamant refusal is met by the man's insistence: "Think of the pavement as being Palestinian territory. It's 1948." She remains defiant: "It*

isn't 1948. It's 1967."[3] *What happens in a place like modern Shatila, where the state is not present to produce and impose ostensibly indisputable representations of space and time? What does it mean to long for a return to a space, Palestine, where one has never ever set foot, and to a time, the years preceding 1948, which one has not lived? Moreover, what does such a yearning feel like for a Palestinian who has lived her entire life in a highly politicized, conflicted and divided country such as Lebanon?*
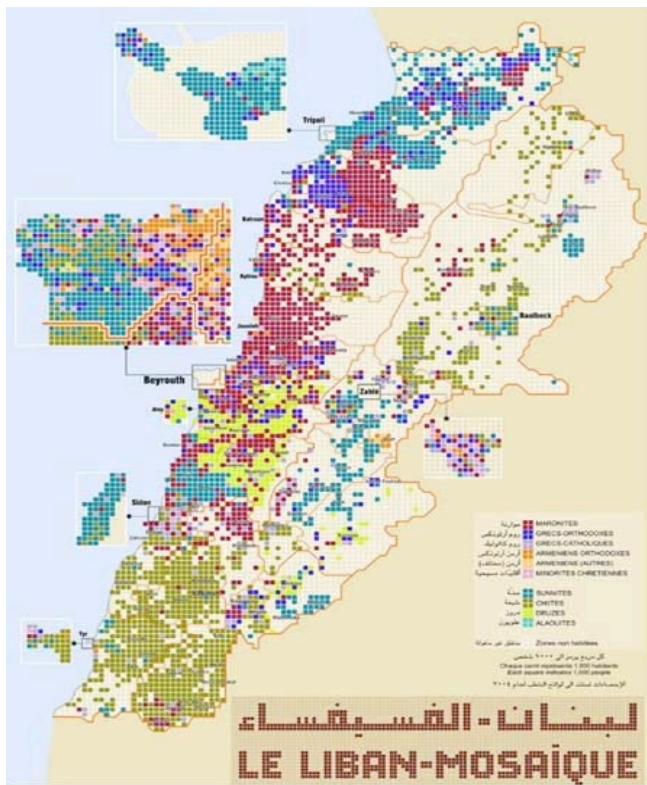
Source: Author's Photo

Figure 2 – The Map is not the Territory:
The Lebanese Sectarian Patchwork

Until my chat with Dalal, I was very happy with the map I had purchased at the fashionable bookstore Antoine (Figure 2). I thought of it as providing a relatively sound illustration of the Lebanese sectarian patchwork. Dalal quashed my illusions pitilessly:

"This map is a total lie, Gustavo."

Dalal's point was not simply that by selecting the brighter colour red to represent the Christian Maronite communities, the map gives the impression that the latter are more numerous than is effectively the case. The caption of the map informs the viewer that it reflects data from 2004. Since 1932, however, no census has been carried out in Lebanon. As the statistical data collected back then serves to freeze the distribution of political power among the various sects, Dalal rightly questioned the information on which the map was based. Further, she

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[3] Following the Arab defeat by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967, a new inflow of Palestinian refugees found its way into Lebanon and neighbouring countries. The house, the pavement of which the woman is refusing to clean, probably belongs to a refugee family of 1967.

called my attention to the fact that the map is published by someone identified as François Eid. "Most definitely, a Christian, Gustavo," she remarked, before adding her by now irrefutable conclusion:

"This map serves as a political statement."

It is indeed telling that, with time, I have come to think that a caricature poster bought at a decaying bookshop near the American University of Beirut is more revealing than François Eid's map. Rather than claiming to represent the "reality" on the ground, the caricaturist aims simply to provide a comment. The first impression one gets from the Civil War period caricature, "Beirut, Have a Nice Day," (Figure 3) is that the conflict-ravaged capital of Lebanon is a completely chaotic place. Yet, upon closer inspection, the drawing reveals a city striving to keep its everyday routine in spite of war-related violence. It depicts businessmen on their way to work and students, to school; housewives running errands; roads being repaired and construction work going on; dealers selling drugs and lovers having sex.
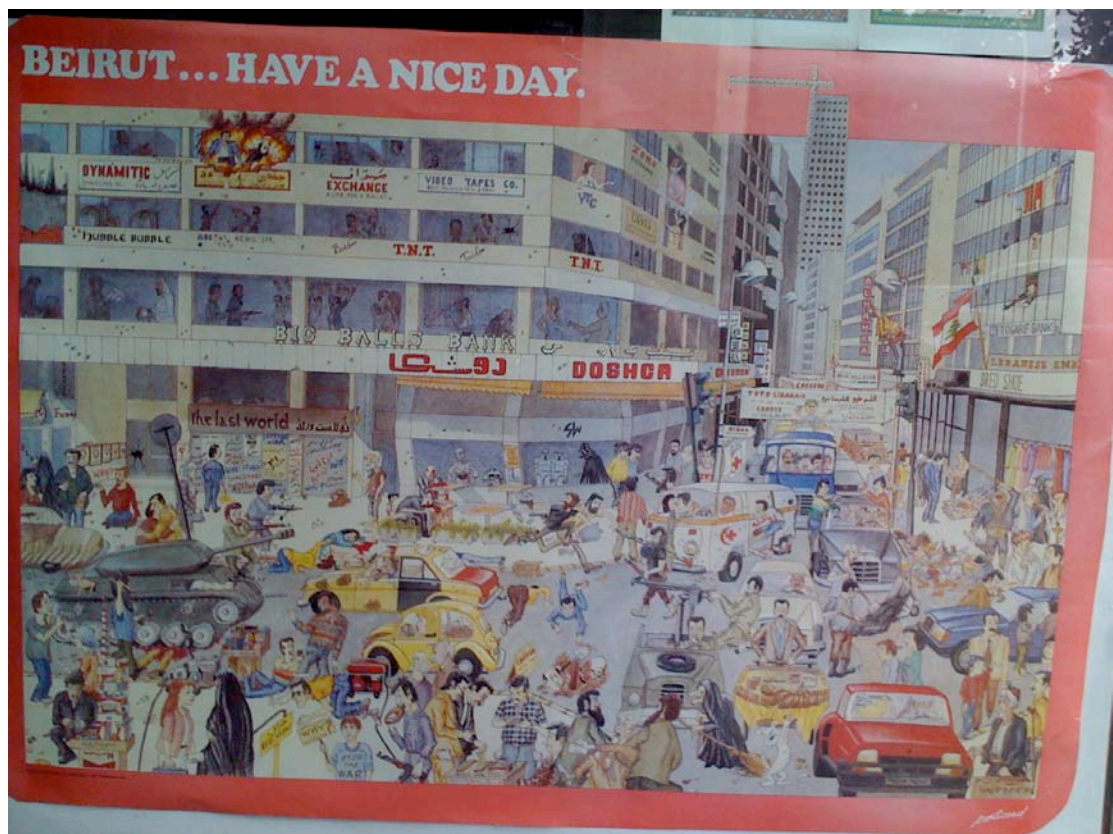
Figure 3 – "Beirut... Have a Nice Day"

Indeed, the image functions as a compelling argument about the absolute impossibility, in the case of Beirut and probably elsewhere, of separating violence from non-violence as if some kind of golden standard exists, establishing that conflict cannot take place on an everyday basis (Cushman 2004). It works as well as a post-facto criticism of what one of my instructors, back at the university in London, observed when I announced my intention of conducting research among Palestinian refugees in Lebanon: "But how are you going to pursue that objective? You'll be dragged in by the politics of it all."

In a place like the Middle East and Lebanon, and also in the UK, conflict and politics are fully social matters and thus arguably invite sociological analysis. A brief detour to Jean-Klein's (2001) and Kelly's (2006) depictions of the first and second intifadas (1987-1992 and 2000-present, respectively) corroborates the point. Their representations of the two Palestinian uprisings in the Occupied Territories can hardly be farther apart. Jean-Klein understands Palestinian practices during the first intifada as a result of the decision to *suspend* everyday life. Unable to manifest revolt through the usual political channels due to Israeli control, West Bank Palestinians infused everyday activities (such as writing shopping lists, visiting, eating together and celebrating marriages) with political meaning. They did so by suspending the customary ways in which such actions were performed.

Jean-Klein believes that Palestinians seek to preserve their own capacity to assign meaning to their suspended daily activities, by presenting the effects of Israeli control as self-authored. Accordingly, if the traditional costs of marriage celebrations became prohibitive during the intifada, Palestinians presented the ensuing sobriety as originating from their own decision not to be joyful. In Jean-Klein's account, Palestinians do not bow to passive victimization, but assert a heroic agency, as exemplified by the mother who protests against the description of her son's imprisonment *as if*

he had been taken by the Israelis: "What do you mean, 'They took him?' He *went*!"(Jean-Klein 2001: 114)

By focusing on the second intifada, Kelly sheds a different light on the same West Bank Palestinians. He maintains that instead of being mesmerized by outbreaks of animosity, analysts should also pay proper attention to *non-violence* and to their informants' persistence in *preserving* their mundane routines. Second-intifada West Bankers, according to Kelly, strived not to let their lives be disrupted by the Israelis. One of his young informants, for instance, decided to go on with his studies to become an accountant in spite of the conflict. Jean-Klein's combative first-intifada activists appear to have been pursuing somewhat more bourgeois goals only a couple of years later, in light of Kelly's fieldwork.[4]

Nevertheless, what Jean-Klein's and Kelly's explanations hold in common is more revealing than what sets them apart. Both Jean-Klein and Kelly highlight that the ordinary itself is an inherently political category and that the social and political are inextricably linked. Consequently, if in Palestine, as in other conflict-ridden areas, "more time is [still] spent watching television, waiting for buses […], preparing dinner" (Kelly 2006a: 23) – or coming of age and displaying adequate sex roles, to bring this debate closer to the one which will occupy the following chapters – that does not mean that the ordinary is apolitical. The decision either to suspend the ordinary, as did Jean-Klein's first-intifada activists, or to maintain it, as did Kelly's second-intifada accounting student, entails an intrinsically political process. The key question here is precisely what counts as ordinary. As Kelly argues, this should not be left unexamined as a "residual analytical category" (2006a: 12) but rather needs to be probed.

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[4] I base my argument here on a lecture given by Kelly (2006a) at the London School of Economics and Political Science, during which he also offered various reasons as to why the second intifada was not a mass rebellion like its predecessor. My comments do not necessarily apply to the bulk of his work (2003, 2006b).

Indeed, in some parts of the world and the Middle East in particular, with its active warzones, violence and conflict are ordinary. If a caricature may seem too fragile a basis for such contention or for my assertion about the porosity between violence and non-violence in Beirut, some photos from the Civil War period help to sustain my case. The first two, both by Lebanese photographer Stavro Jabra, show respectively a traffic jam in war-torn Beirut, with a tank stuck right in the middle of the cars (Figure 4), and a child carelessly reading a newspaper, leaning against a tank (Figure 5). The third picture, from an international photo-news agency, portrays a Lebanese woman enjoying her day by the sea, wearing the latest beach-fashion and a rather unexpected accessory: a machine-gun (Figure 6).

Source: www.stavrotoons.com

Figure 4 – Traffic Jam in Beirut

Figure 5 - Reading a Newspaper

Source: Le Mémorial du Liban – Chronicle of a War

Figure 6 - A Day at the Beach

It is true that these photos date from the Civil War period and the situation today is not the same. Yet, there is ground to assert that violence and conflict continue to inform daily life in Beirut. An illustrative example is that of the fast food outlet Buns & Guns, which opened while I was in Lebanon, in the Hizbullah-controlled Shiite district of Dahiya. With the motto "a sandwich can kill you," the restaurant, an immediate if short-lived commercial success,[5] adopted a military theme both in its décor and the uniform of its staff (Figures 7 and 8). The dishes were identified according the names of weapons and the leaflet celebrated the efficiency of the place's home delivery service, claiming that the food arrived to customers' homes faster than a bullet.[6]

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[5] According to one of my informants, Buns & Guns closed its doors precisely because of its success. An increasing number of curious customers started finding their way to Dahiya, an area under Hizbullah's strict control. The Shiite party did not approve of the outlet's sudden notoriety.

[6] American philosopher Richard Rorty (1989) argues that thinkers such as Freud and Nietzsche adopted an ironic perspective, through which societies, instead of being depicted as the ultimate realization of human nature, were rather presented as mere historical contingencies. In this study, I show how several of my Beiruti and Shatilan friends have enabled my own ironic gaze not only towards *their* reality – with its food outlets, unexpected photos from the war period and posters with caricatures – but also towards my own reality, including the polities I have to live with.

To offset possible and erroneous "exoticizing" readings of the nature of violence in Beirut that the example of Buns & Guns might invite, I should add that two tanks were constantly parked in the surroundings of my ill-situated pied-à-terre in Qreitam, and that I passed through three checkpoints on my way home, for instance, from the gym. I grew so accustomed to them that I hardly noticed the tanks anymore and automatically opened my back-pack for inspection by the soldiers, who checked to see whether weapons were surreptitiously hidden among my tennis-shoes, towels and bottles of water.

It makes sense to ask whether our difficulties in thinking simultaneously about violence and non-violence, conflict and the everyday, do not arise from a certain ethnocentric expectation as to how societies should function. As a matter of fact, such an expectation is far more revealing of our own anxiety about conflict, often ignored, and my LSE instructor's remark ultimately might have much more to do with how conflict is (or is not) perceived in the UK than with the reality of the city where I conducted my fieldwork.

While insisting on the everyday nature of conflict in Beirut and Lebanon, the impossibility of separating violence from non-violence and the intertwining between war and daily living (Khayyat 2012), caution needs to be taken not to render clashes and disputes banal, for they have consequences: in the case of the incidents in May 2008, at least 80 fatalities.

For this reason, the "structural violence" paradigm, as offered by Scheper-Hughes (1992),[7] is insufficient to render intelligible daily violence in Beirut. When it is proposed that mothers in Northeast Brazil exert a malign negligence towards their children, eventually contributing to their deaths, and that this is due to the "structural violence" of everyday life in the country, it remains unclear what precisely is meant by that *modality* of violence. What does "structural violence" consist of and in what way does it affect the lives of these women or, in the case of this study, Palestinian refugees in Lebanon? Circumventing such insufficiencies, I consider it more adequate in my own field to reason along the lines of "legal and institutional violence." The concept enables me to effectively *locate* the sources of violence, such as Lebanese legislation that bars free access by Palestinian refugees to the local labour market, as Chapter 3 demonstrates.

ʿādī *(normal) is how my friends and informants, Lebanese and Palestinians alike, described outbursts of violence throughout my period in Beirut.[8] The Abu Tarek family, for example, who I interviewed in Shatila, proudly reported to me that they were not even woken up when the Israeli jets destroyed the nearby airport flyover during the 2006 July War. "We have a military mind," Abu Tarek explained to me. In February 2008, in addition to the sporadic street fights in Beirut, the city was hit by a sequence of earthquakes of minor magnitude. A friend who called me to talk about the event hardly disguised her excitement about what she had seen on TV: a clairvoyant predicting that the Lebanese capital would be struck by a tsunami following the earthquakes. I myself had felt the tremors, but had attributed them to some bomb exploding somewhere in the city, far enough not to be*

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[7] Still making use of the same concept – "structural violence" – Farmer (1999, 2003, 2004) has a more nuanced – if still ambitiously over-arching - understanding of it, showing how past political-economic events have a direct link to present-day suffering, particularly in Haiti and Russia.

[8] As will become increasingly clearer to my reader, I will throughout this study argue for a certain ordinariness of Shatila, thus not taking the camp to be an exception in any sense. Along that vein, even the "Palestinian-becoming" of the ethnographer – to which I will come to in a few pages – should not be seen as exceptional, human connection being very much a requirement for any meaningful fieldwork.

dangerous, and, in Beiruti style, I kept on working: Kul hadhā ʿādī *(all this is normal).*

In a place hard to describe as "post-conflict" like Lebanon, I have also grown aware that concepts, academic or otherwise, entail violence.[9] The always-sagacious Nadim observed to me once how "conflict resolution" is an unfit notion for the country:

> *We're living the era of "conflict resolution" now. All these Europeans come here to teach us about "conflict resolution" and they don't even realize the kind of violence they're committing. There are certain words that one needs to put in projects to get money from the Europeans and those words change from year to year. Some time ago, it was the period of "women's empowerment:" write that on your project and you get the funds you need. Then, we had the years of "youth." Now, it's the time of "conflict resolution" and I bet the next phase will be that of "moderate Islam." What kind of "conflict resolution" is possible in Lebanon, where everyone killed everyone? All we can attempt here is "conflict management."*

Dalal was of a similar opinion: "Don't let yourself be impressed by moments of peace here, Gustavo. What we live in Lebanon is a cold war."

History is not the Event

*It was the first day of Eid Al-Adha in November 2009. We – a group of young Shatila men and women, myself and a friend, a British scholar – met before dawn in front of Abu Mujahed's center, in one of the few squares of the refugee camp. Following the Muslim tradition of commemorating the dead on the first day of Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, we were going to the cemeteries near Shatila led by Abu Mujahed, an ex-fighter (*fidāʾī*) and presently the director of a local NGO. In the fine breeze of the very early morning, he called our attention to some of the graves. The group listened attentively while Abu Mujahed spoke about the destruction of the Tal Al-Zattar camp in 1976, pointing to a grave with corpses from that camp. We stopped again in the*

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[9] The analyst should be careful, however, not to see violence everywhere to the point of diluting any significance the idea may have.

*place where Ghassan Kanafani, a famous Palestinian novelist, painter and militant, is buried. Kanafani and his niece were assassinated, allegedly by the Mossad, in a car bomb in Beirut in 1972 in retaliation for the power of his nationalistic literature. Later, Abu Mujahed pointed to me an epitaph that, surprisingly enough, showed a cross. He explained that the corpses of some Palestinian Christians were refused burial in Christian cemeteries and were laid there instead.[10] Once the visit was over, we returned to Shatila and after a brief stop in the modest mosque where the corpses of the martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*) of the Camp Wars are kept, we rushed back to the center for breakfast. By then, we were all very hungry.*

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In September 2009, I attended a commemoration of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre, during which Lebanese Christian militiamen, with the support of the Israeli army, killed an estimated 3,000 inhabitants of the camp and its surroundings (Nuwayhed al-Hout 2004). Organized by an Italian NGO, the commemoration was conducted outside Shatila, in an auditorium graciously offered by the administration of the Ghobeiry municipality, where the camp is situated. Participants, women and children from the camp, especially those with ties to NGOs, and foreign sympathizers, listened to a few speeches, before finding their way to the mass grave in the immediate surroundings of the camp, where the victims from 1982 are buried. The area is mainly Shiite and for quite some time, particularly during the Camp Wars, Shatilans did not have access to the grave.

On an earlier visit, my Palestinian friend Rania called my attention to the Shiite character of several features in the mass grave. A placard in one of the corners displays the photos of a family massacred in 1982 (Figure 9). "That was a Shiite family, Gustavo, not a Palestinian one," Rania said. Next to the placard, a sequence of posters reminds the emotionally overloaded visitor of

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[10] Other friends of mine explained to me that Christians considered to have died as martyrs (*shuhadāʾ*) tended to be automatically buried at the cemetery near the camp.

more recent attacks by the Israelis during the 2006 war in Qana, Marawahin and Chiah: all against the Shiites. The few centimeters separating the first placard from the posters glossed over the 24 years between 1982 and 2006 (Figure 10), including the Camp Wars of the 1980s, which set Shiite against Palestinians and Palestinians against Palestinians, a period several prefer not to talk about. If brought to the surface this period would compromise the Shiite political re-appropriation of the grave and the 1982 massacre,[11] as well as the myths surrounding Palestinian unity. "Even the gatekeeper here is Shiite, Gustavo," Rania told me as we were leaving the place.

Figures 9 and 10 - 24 years in few centimetres: the 1982-massacre mass grave

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I was arriving home to the camp on an especially hot mid-afternoon in the summer of 2009, when I noticed that several plastic chairs were arranged in the square in front of Abu Mujahed's center. I was not aware of any celebration taking place that evening. When an important date for Palestinians is remembered, some of the political factions hold events in the square, showing movies with Arafat or performances with traditional

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[11] The Shiite appropriation of the mass grave reflects to a certain extent, a demographic "fact." The area surrounding Shatila on the side of Dahiya is today majority Shiite while in the past, it was quite heterogeneous, with Shiite, Syrian, Egyptian and Palestinian dwellers, as well as Dom (see footnote 12, below). The first areas attacked by the militiamen of the Lebanese Forces in 1982 – Hayy Orsan and Hursh – were actually Lebanese-inhabited (with several Palestinian dwellers as well).

Palestinian songs and dances. The occasion for the gathering that day, however, was somewhat more somber. While walking in the alleys of the camp, one of the dwellers, Samira, died when a brick fell from a building and hit her on the head. As her house was too small to accommodate all those wanting to pay a visit to the mourning family, male relatives sat in the square receiving condolences from male acquaintances and friends, while the women did the same elsewhere.

Shatila is not a Palestinian community in any obvious sense. Perhaps some 50% of its inhabitants are not Palestinian, but Shiite Lebanese, Syrians, Kurds, Dom,[12] and, more recently, Iraqis. These "foreigners" are attracted by cheaper rents in a relatively central location with the extra advantage of such utilities as water being at times available for free, and for those with documentation irregularities, the guarantee of not being bothered by Lebanese officials who do not normally enter the camps. Nevertheless, Shatila does *sometimes* and *for limited periods crystallise* as a Palestinian community – notoriously when inhabitants gather to remember their dead, to mourn or celebrate the highly scarred events marking the refugee saga. Here, history, or given the absence of any official history in Lebanon, historical events play a role, and so do the fighters, and the martyrs (shuhadāʾ), who, upon death, strangely enough, acquire "agency," the capacity to act and make a Palestinian community out of Shatila. As a community, Shatila is also composed – and primarily so – by those who are not there anymore.

When I came to pay a visit, Um Yousef was busy trying to get her and her neighbour's sons to study. They had a history exam in the coming days and, to Um Yousef's despair, did not seem very worried. While they engaged in lively

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[12] The Dom – often referred to, rather derogatorily, as Nawar or gypsies – are a nomadic population that lives between Syria and Lebanon. Those living by the border between the two countries, often working at making dental prosthesis, have kept their nomadic residence patterns. Those in Shatila have developed more sedentary habits and gain a living through selling fake watches at traffic lights. Shatilans often criticize them for not sending their children to school. Very little has been written about the Dom, with a thesis by Bocchi (2007) and a study by the NGO Terre des Hommes (2011) being the few pieces that have come to my attention.

chatter with one another, the books, with their pages celebrating the majestic history of ancient Egypt and Babylon, were forgotten. I asked Um Yousef how Palestine and the history of Lebanon were presented at UNRWA schools. "They aren't, Gustavo. Mamnūʿ, mamnūʿ, mamnūʿ *(forbidden, forbidden, forbidden)." UNRWA follows the Lebanese academic curriculum and at Lebanese schools, history of Lebanon after 1943 is not taught – precisely the year when the country started to exist as an independent political entity. Lebanese history is highly controversial and there are several versions of the same events, according to the readings of the interested parties. No textbook of Lebanese history exists that enjoys the approval of the various sects. For the earlier grades, UNRWA has given a green light for teachers to use a brochure, with some general data on Palestinian history and geography, as I observed while sitting for classes of* tarbiya madaniyya *(civil education) for the elementary cycle, at the Ariha school in the camp. More advanced students, as Um Yousef's children, do not learn Palestinian history or geography at school.*

Through participation in such activities as the commemoration of the dead in the first days of both Eids, Shatila youth get acquainted with the historical events of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon. The following is what they are *not* taught but end up learning anyway on varying levels of depth. They come to understand that the idea of Palestinian refugees' permanent settlement in Lebanon (*tawṭīn* or "naturalization") has always been anathema for the government in Beirut, legally constituted by the sectarianism characterising Lebanese political life, one of the reasons for the murderous Civil War (1975-1990) (Picard 1996; Trabulsi 2007). The prohibition of Palestinian *tawṭīn* has even been incorporated into the Lebanese post-war constitution. The rhetorical excuse for this is to not weaken the cause of refugees' right of return by recognition of a permanent status in host countries. The pragmatic reason is that assigning full citizenship to Palestinians in Lebanon would dramatically unbalance its fragile demographic politics (Sayigh 1995) as it would increase the number of Sunnite voters.

Before and during the Civil War, Palestinians played an active role in Lebanese sectarian politics. The *ayyām al-thawra* (the days of the revolution, 1967-1982) constituted the heyday of the Palestinian Resistance Movement in Lebanon (Sayigh 1979, 1993; Sayigh 1997; Peteet 1991, 2005). Through the 1969 Cairo agreement, some civil rights were ensured for the refugee population in the country. Palestinians also obtained official permission to launch attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory and gained virtual autonomy for the camps' administration. Upon expulsion from Amman in 1971, the Palestinian leadership and guerrillas found their way to Lebanon, which became the main focus for Palestinian political and military activity until 1982. The invasion of Lebanon by Israel, the forced evacuation of the PLO and the massacre of thousands of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila, all in 1982, marked the demise of the *ayyām al-thawra*. In addition, the position of Palestinians in Lebanon was further compromised by their confrontation with the Shiite Amal movement in the Camp Wars (1985-1987).

Since 1982, the government in Beirut has been trying to regain authority over Palestinians. The 1989 Taef agreement, the official "end" to the Lebanese Civil War, sanctioned Palestinian exclusion and scapegoating. A 1962-law, made more stringent in 1982, and partially lifted by a decree in 2005, producing nonetheless little change in practice, forbade Palestinians from working in more than 70 professions and trades. Unemployment levels are consequently very high among the Palestinians. In the May 2008 crisis, when the Lebanese leaders gathered in Doha, Qatar, to discuss a solution to the country's stalemate, the Palestinian issue was not even on the agenda – an expression of their absence from the political equation.

Events affecting the Palestinian refugee population elsewhere in Lebanon have immediate repercussions in Shatila, which in many ways has always been an iconic camp. Sayigh's ethnohistory (1993) narrates Shatila's

saga from the single-village camp of 1948[13] to today's sprawling vertical shantytown. Peteet (2005) demonstrates how reminders of the camp's scarred history populate its landscape: "the armed guards... [monitoring] the camp ... the pervasiveness of the handicapped, extreme forms of poverty, the multitude of female-headed households." (170) The 1982 Israeli invasion left the camp completely devastated, and Shatila was again severely affected during the Camp Wars and barely survived three sieges in the late 1980s. Its modest mosque, sheltering the bodies of the fallen *fidāʾiyyīn* that we visited with Abu Mujahed on that Eid Al-Adha, remains a compelling *aide-mémoire* of Palestinian vulnerability in Lebanon.

In the eventful history of the Palestinian diaspora, 1982 and 1993 are benchmarks, as I came to learn when I listened to elders and leaders talking about the subject, as Shatila youth do. "Everything changed in 1982," Abu Mujahed told me. "Because it was then that the leadership accepted 1948 and gave up fighting to have the whole of our country back." Abu Maher is of a similar opinion: "Before the PLO came to Lebanon, we had no problems getting jobs. The Lebanese didn't look down at us the way they do now. If no position was available here, it was relatively easy to travel abroad. And there was no competition from the Syrians. When the PLO left, all this changed and we started to worry about how to get jobs." UNRWA Relief and Social Service Officer for Beirut, Ibrahim Abu Jumaa, illustrated the point, based on his own work of providing assistance for refugee families classified as hardship cases by the organisation: "Before 1982, there was no social relief program, for it was simply not necessary. The PLO was here [...] and Palestinians [...] then were mobile and could work." The provision of relief services by UNRWA only started in 1983. Since then, and especially since 1987 as a result of the Camp Wars, the number of families on UNRWA's list of hardship cases entitled to assistance has been increasing. Today, in the Beirut area alone, this includes 2,200 families living below the poverty line, who receive 10 dollars per

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[13] Although from the very beginning, there were also refugees in the camp from other villages in Palestine.

member and some provisions in relatively small quantities every three months.[14]

The situation is even more dismaying in terms of health care. Before 1982, the PLO shared with UNRWA part of the costs for hospitalisation. "Today, some corpses are held in hospitals because families can't afford the bills," the director of the Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, Ghassan Abdallah, reported to me, relating again the changes Palestinians have faced in Lebanon with the fluctuation of PLO's strength in the country. "Throughout the 1980s," Abdallah continued, "some funds kept arriving for refugee families, from relatives who had managed to escape the Camp Wars and get asylum status in Germany and Scandinavia or who had migrated to the Gulf." In Abdallah's evaluation, the more dramatic changes in refugees' standing happened after 1990, with the war in Kuwait, Arafat's support for Iraq, the closure of the Gulf as a destination for migrant refugees, and Libya's decision to stop issuing work permits for Palestinians. Abu Rashid, for his turn, concurred: "In 1993, after the Oslo agreements, the PLO started focusing on the Territories and stopped helping people here. The economic problems of refugees became evident and the era of the NGOs started." Indeed, 28-year-old Akram remarked to me once, jokingly, "Gustavo, we're born in NGOs."

From the perspective of Shatila dwellers, the Palestinian leadership has turned its back on them at least twice. The first time was in 1982, when Arafat left Lebanon taking along with him several of the *fidāʾiyyīn*,[15] and the second, in 1993, when the PLO opted to direct its resources to Palestinians from the Territories and agreed to postpone the discussion of the refugees' destiny to an unforeseeable final round of negotiations with the Israelis. Understandably, Shatilans nowadays are extremely disillusioned with

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[14] I collected these numbers with the UNRWA officer responsible for delivering relief services to Palestinian refugees in Beirut. I also had a couple of meetings with the officers answering for the same task in Shatila and surroundings. Finally, I interviewed a number of families who used to be or kept on being on UNRWA's list of hardship cases.

[15] Including all the *fidāʾiyyīn* who were not registered in Lebanon.

politicians, and it is my understanding that they have learned how to live without counting on them.

Perhaps in only one way Shatila dweller Um Ahmad's life story is not typical: her family owned farming plots in Northern Galilee before 1948. Um Ahmad, 66, is from the jīl al-Nakba, *the generation of the catastrophe, as Palestinians refer to those who were children and forced out of Palestine in 1948 or born just after. She left Palestine when she was four and settled with her family, who lost everything, in the Tal Al-Zaatar refugee camp. Upon the destruction of that camp in 1976, her life became one of constant moves and new beginnings. She lived in Dekwene, in Eastern Beirut, then in the Bekaa Valley, in Syria, in Damour, in Al-Tariq Al-Jadida and, finally, Shatila. In Syria, she met former servants of her family. "We're all the same now. We're all refugees," she remarked to them. In the 1980s, one of her sons went missing in the Camp Wars and the family, by then living in a house they had purchased in Al-Tariq Al-Jadida, decided to lock and leave it and moved into Shatila, where they felt safer. Once the war was over, they found out that the house had been occupied by a Shiite family linked to the Amal movement, who simply refused to give it back.*

Um Ahmad started working as a cleaner at a relatively advanced age, when her husband became severely ill, and she stepped in so that the family could make ends meet. Because she had unmarried adult sons at home, the family was not entitled to UNRWA's assistance, in spite of the boys not being able to get any work. Very talkative, Um Ahmad complains about the characterisation of Palestinians as terrorists: "It's Britain who did terrorism to us, putting another people in our land and saying that they had been there in the past. The Israelis got our land; the Lebanese killed us in Tal Al-Zaatar." Her son, Ahmad, 31, has the following to say about the Palestinian saga in Lebanon:

> *We don't have the rights here to live as human beings. We don't have the right to work; we don't have the right to register a house in our names. I don't know why they [the Lebanese] allow us to study*

subjects we can't work at, such as law. We can buy a taxi licence, but we can't work as taxi drivers. I don't know which situation is worse, when we were killed by guns or now, when we're killed by hunger.

Ahmad believes in return, but just before the prophetical end of time. "It's written in the Koran," he told me. "When Jesus returns, we'll fight the Jewish and have our land back." It is also an account of mythology that Shakir, 26, an accounting student, shared with me one evening, when talking about Palestine. We had visited the bars in Hamra that are popular with Palestinian activists and decided to stay at my place in Qreitam for the night instead of finding our way back to Shatila. We got home and he immediately connected to the Internet from my computer. That infuriated me, for it was late and I wanted to sleep, and the computer was in my bedroom. Shakir started checking the Facebook profiles of several blonde girls from Germany and Sweden. He used to do this very often and assured me he was attracted to their physical features. I have always suspected, though, that the fact that these women can get him a visa out of Lebanon also played a role in the attraction. When he was done with Facebook and I thought he would finally find his way to the sitting room couch, he received an e-mail, which to my complete despair, included several photos of Palestine attached. Shakir opened every single one and kept calling me to check the photos out: "Shūf (have a look), Gustavo, what Palestine is like, with all those olive trees. They're nice, aren't they? Palestine is like Europe." It is the rural imagery, and namely the ubiquitous olive tree, that is called upon to lend consistency to the short account of mythology-making I was witnessing. The olive tree gives some unity to Shakir's discourse. For if he wants to migrate to Europe, where the blonde girls who can pave the way to the visa out of Lebanon live, it is an idealised Europe. It is a Europe similar to Palestine, to which he wants to return, and in addition, a Europe covered by olive trees.

Mourning Academic Power

"I'm not sure I'll get married, Gustavo."

At first, Farid's remark did not surprise me. I had, by then, become used to commentaries by the shabāb (lads) that revealed a lot of anxiety about not having the means to get married and start an independent household. What was relatively unique in Farid's case was that he did *have the means. Having reached 28, Farid is a middle-class Palestinian, lives in the surroundings of Shatila and holds a diploma in physics from a renowned Lebanese university. I thought it was my obligation to probe for further clarification. Yet I was not prepared for the answer:*

"I'm not a straight guy, Gustavo."

In the long silence that followed, I perused the set of questions I had elaborated beforehand for my interview with Farid. They looked somewhat pointless as investigative tools to portray the complexity of his biography: "Do you plan to get married? Does your wife need to be a relative, Palestinian or Sunnite? Can she be Shiite, Christian or foreigner?" I had already surrendered to Latif's obvious superior knowledge on how to tackle a siege, and submitted to my Palestinian friends' readings of the space, the map, the territory and events, to remain a "buddy," taking part in the "game." Now, with Farid, my own understanding of what Latif once disdainfully named "this anthropology of yours" was being challenged and the respective limits – mine and of my discipline – painfully exposed. At the same time, however, unsuspected potentialities for both – my discipline and myself – came to the fore.

I had read Crapanzano's Tuhami *(1980) and was aware of the difficulties and risks surrounding ethno-psychoanalysis: it can go dreadfully wrong. Besides, I have never been trained as a counsellor. Yet, my interaction with Farid did assume a therapeutic character from this point on and at his own initiative. Our initial interview unfolded into a set of four interviews and a total of some seven hours of recording. He shared with me the difficulties of being a "non-straight guy" in a setting where homosexuality is highly taboo: his fears about not being a proper son to his very caring mother; his anxiety*

about not living up to the expectations placed on him and not paying adequate homage to his father's memory; his melancholy about having opted for celibacy as a way out of his many dilemmas. Shatila was a late discovery in Farid's life. Constantly haunted by the feeling of not belonging – with his peers from the university, for being one of the rare Palestinians around, and, with his male friends, for being a "non-straight guy" – Farid found in Shatila a place where he felt at home and among his own people. The camp seems to have allowed Farid to start processing some of his unspoken emotions. The same happened to myself.

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I started collecting Shatilan Um Raad's life story following as usual my very ambitious set of questions. I realized, when I first arrived, that contrary to what normally would happen, Um Raad, 38, did not stand up to greet me. I saw a cane lying in one of the corners of her very modest sitting room and I thought that Um Raad, as it has happened to so many in Shatila, was partially handicapped by one of the many wars the camp went through. Originally from Tal Al-Zaatar, she left it upon its destruction in 1976 and moved to Shatila, where she witnessed the 1982 massacre. With a sad laugh, she remarked "I move from massacre to massacre." In the razing of Tal Al-Zaatar, she lost her father, a brother and a sister. With my set of questions in front of me and interested in checking visiting patterns among camp dwellers, I probed Um Raad as to whether she often received friends at her place and reciprocated. She told me she always received visitors but did not go to her friends' places often enough. With my curiosity stirred, I pressed her for an explanation. She lowered her eyes, and after a moment of hesitation, lamented:

"I'm very sick. I have cancer."

This word, "cancer," is the last one I registered on my notepad that evening. My questions obviously did not offer an easy refuge out of the situation I had placed myself in, and were senseless anyway vis-à-vis Um

Raad's very tragic biography. We remained silent for several minutes, during which she came very close to crying. Me too. Both of us tried, for a short while, to make small talk, but that seemed completely artificial. I decided to tell her about my own experiences of loss. At the sharing of experiences of loss, we managed to establish a bridge between one another and effectively communicate. There is more to anthropology and fieldwork than collecting migration trajectories, work stories, and kinship charts, as I had been doing until then. If anthropology should be a two-way bridge, as Clastres (1968) proposes, my ethnography of the Abu Raad family and Um Raad's ethnography of myself happened once we established this human connection, in spite of our obvious differences of gender, class and culture. On my way out of her house, Um Raad insisted that I should come back. I never did. I met her only once again in the surroundings of the camp and we waved very shyly to each other. It was as if we had done something academically indecent by not having observed certain canons normally disciplining the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. Nonetheless, her and Farid were essential for my coming of age as an ethnographer and my "Palestinian-becoming:" they repositioned me in my field.

Renato Rosaldo (1989) also writes about being repositioned in his field. Pointing out the traditional vice of classic ethnography of taking the ideal of detachment too far to the point of actual indifference, he shows how self-reflexivity does not necessarily mean being completely absorbed by oneself to the point of abolishing the culturally different "other." He avows his initial difficulty in understanding headhunting. When the Filipino Ilongots tell him that the reason they engage in headhunting raids is to placate the anger they feel when in bereavement, Rosaldo considers their explanations too opaque or too thin. Only when he is repositioned in his field, due to the devastating loss of his wife, does Rosaldo begin to grasp what the Ilongots mean by anger in bereavement. He does not imply that the Ilongots' and his own feelings are precisely the same: there remain differences in terms of tone, cultural form and especially consequences of the anger felt in one and the other case. Moreover, he insists that the

analysts' attention should not concentrate merely on the programmed unfolding of prescribed acts typical of ritual situations, as if bereavement is only about adequately following the rules of a book of etiquette, rather than an open-ended process, trying to cope, and *à peine*, with death. Nonetheless, concentrating on prescribed acts is what ethnographers of mourning rituals so often do, safeguarding their "comfort zone" and keeping emotions at bay.

In different ways, Latif, Dalal, Farid and Um Raad submitted me to an "dis-education" and exposed the limits of the perhaps arrogant view I held of myself and "this anthropology of mine" before finding my way to Lebanon. I was previously convinced that in the field, the researchers, and never the locals, are in control and in the know. In a setting like Shatila – and elsewhere – this somewhat colonial presupposition simply does not apply. That is precisely the source of the difficulties I have with some of the discipline's guidelines on ethics (AAA 1986, 1998, 1999), which may invite a "tick-the-box" legalistic attitude towards the issue.[16] A purely legalistic approach to ethics serves more to protect the anthropologist from juridical claims and to preserve her standing vis-à-vis her peers than to safeguard the respondents' and ethnographer's safety and well-being. Whereas ethnographers should not discard wholesale the discipline's codes on ethics, it needs to be recognized that they were elaborated for ideal environments, where quietude, freedom from fear and stability facilitate data collection. In a minefield like mine, this could not be further from reality. Thus, my humble acceptance of local definitions of ethics – what Kovats-Bernat (2002) names a "localized" approach to the question and to risks, maps and events – is just a pragmatic recognition of the dramatic shift in Shatila of the infamous "power relations" characterising the ethnographic encounter. It is Shatilans who know and are in control, and not myself (even if they may be in control of little else, but, temporally, me).[17]

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[16] Such an approach is informed more by a preoccupation by funders and administrators rather than anthropologists themselves. One should not lose sight that anthropology does not involve anthropologists only.

[17] Of course, this shifting of power relations is not far-reached. At the end, one needs to keep in mind that having a nationality and a passport makes a difference.

An ethnographic vignette serves to illustrate the point. On my first trip to Lebanon and contact with Shatila, I wore a green ribbon around my wrist, a souvenir from Northeast Brazil, with a distant religious meaning and a superstition surrounding it: it needs to be worn until it breaks, otherwise it brings bad luck. I was surprised to find out that in Shatila the political-religious meaning of green ribbons is not distant at all. It may be an indication that the person wearing it has visited the Shiite Zeinab mosque, near Damascus. Furthermore, during the Camp Wars, some of the Shiite militiamen manning the checkpoints to Shatila wore a green strap around their shoulder blades. All this, combined with my rather Islamicized classical Arabic during my first days in Shatila, led several of my acquaintances to suspect that I was actually Shiite. As the memories of the Camp Wars are still painfully felt in Shatila, to the point of not normally being talked about, their suspicion of me being Shiite was an unnecessary hindrance that I did not accept. At a certain point, the usually protective Shakir winked at me, and suggested: "You could very well cover that ribbon". I followed his advice and bought myself a watch.

"Palestinian-becoming," "Gender" and Power

"I'm going to say it very slowly, so that you can repeat after me: Lā ilāha illā Allāh, wa Muḥammad rasūl Allāh *(There is no god but God and Mohammad is his messenger)."*[18]

This was sheikh Habib talking to me, on the staircase leading to his apartment in Shatila. My friend Fawaz, in his early twenties, and a militiaman[19] *with one of the Palestinian factions in the camp, took me there. When our friendship started to deepen, Fawaz became increasingly troubled*

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[18] Known as the *shahāda* (testimony), a single, but sincere, enunciation of these words is considered, by several schools, as sufficient for conversion to Islam.

[19] Some young men are employed by different Palestinian factions to protect the security of the camp. Several research participants – especially those of an older generation – criticize the way these young men execute their tasks, for supposedly framing them merely as a job, and not as a national duty, as – the same informants claim – was the case with the *fidāʾiyyīn*.

by the fact that I was not Muslim. On that afternoon, after checking whether I had five minutes to spare, he put me on the back of his scooter and took me to sheikh Habib's. The sheikh was not home. As we waited a little for him while on the staircase, I was completely unaware who we were there to see and what was to follow. When we were about to leave, the sheikh showed up. There, on that humble Shatila staircase, the process of my "Palestinian-becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004)[20] reached its peak.

The process started several months before and developed very smoothly. When I first arrived, the shabāb submitted me to the same kind of treatment they so often reserve for the naïve and rather uninformed foreigners finding their way to the camp: they gave me what they like to describe as a "hard time," using the expression in English. "But we [meaning "the shabāb"] *decided to give you a chance," Akram, the social worker with a local NGO, told me. "Besides, you have a very genuine laugh," Shakir explained.*

At a certain juncture, I myself started questioning the validity and usefulness of my own research. "In the end," I commented to Shakir, "nothing will change. I will write yet another book on Palestinians and all will remain the same." He came to my rescue: "No, Gustavo, some things do change." I myself had grown increasingly suspicious by then. "What will change, Shakir?" "Well," he answered, "you'll get your PhD in the end, won't you?"

When I realized that the shabāb *and I were not there just to fulfil my academic interests, my research took off. This happened by me giving up any illusion of control and power I may have nurtured until then. I let the* shabāb *take the lead and very often dictate the pace and content of our interactions. Akram triggered the process of my "Palestinian-becoming:" "You need to have your hair cut in Suleiman's salon in the camp. You know, we need to contribute to the local economy." "But I don't have the specific vocabulary in Arabic to*

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[20] As inspired by Deleuze and Guattari (2004), "Palestinian-becoming" is not the same as becoming Palestinian and should be taken more as a heuristic tool to overcome my own (state-oriented) foreign-ness.

explain to Suleiman how I want my hair cut," I observed. "You don't need to, Gustavo." Akram explained. "He cuts the hair of all of us in the same way."

When I emerged from Suleiman's beauty parlour, I had the same short military-like haircut of the Shatila shabāb – a style I ended up being very fond of. Actually, going to Suleiman's became one of my favourite activities in Shatila and the interaction in this all-male environment was sometimes very informative. I got into the habit of going to Suleiman's late in the evening, just before finding my way to my Shatila dwelling and getting to bed: I suffer from chronic insomnia and having my hair cut helps me to unwind. Whenever I showed up, just before the salon closed, I checked if Suleiman would still have the time for one extra haircut. My question – "maftūḥ?" (open?) – was invariably met by an explosion of laughter by the customers. It was only towards the end of my stay in Shatila that Suleiman explained to me why: "It's almost as if you are asking if I, and not my shop, am open…" I also came to understand, for instance, why hairdressers for men in the camp and surroundings so often have a fish-tank: for Palestinians, fish is so much associated with men's sexual potency that I rarely came across Shatila women who liked fish.

My diet was the shabāb's next target. Shakir has always been very critical of my predilection for salads and fruits. Knowing of my particular taste for Arab proverbs, he once told me: "ʾakl al-rijāl ʿalā qad ʾafʿālahā" (a man eats what he does). Feeling comfortable enough at my place, which he had helped to reinvent as a Palestinian space by offering me several pieces of memorabilia that I scattered around my house, Shakir would uninhibitedly open my fridge to check what he could grab for a bite: "Gustavo, all these vegetables, this isn't food. You should eat like an Arab man."

After a while, my "Palestininan-becoming" and "dis-education" started paying off. The shabāb hardly disguised their pride when they witnessed me giving a recently arrived American scholar a "hard time." "Best hard time ever happened. Gustavo," Latif remarked, employing another broken-English

expression, "best thing ever happened," which the shabāb *show a special predilection for.*

When they realized that I was already 40 and unmarried, some of the shabāb *started teasing me about the need to find a bride: "Let's go to Dbayeh, Gustavo, to get you a woman." Dbayeh is the only Palestinian camp in mostly Christian East Beirut and its inhabitants are Palestinian Christians. While there was no question that my prospective bride should be Palestinian, the* shabāb *still thought that, as a non-Muslim, I was not a suitable partner for one of their sisters. When I observed Shakir making some timid advances towards a Brazilian friend of mine, I teased him: "This is not the practice in my country, Shakir. To have access to* my *women, you need to give me one of yours." His response would have pleased Gayle Rubin (1975): "Then you traffic in women?" On yet another occasion, I remarked to Shakir that I did not think it fair that a Muslim man can marry a Christian woman, but a Muslim woman is out of reach for a Christian man. "This is what is written in the Koran, Gustavo." I decided to provoke him further: "But then the Christian man can always convert. Conversion to Islam is very easy." He put a stop to our conversation. "Yes, but for that he has to feel the need for the conversion deep in his heart." My Shatila adoptive mother opted for a somewhat more pragmatic approach towards conversion: "You say the* shahāda *and we get you a wife from here." She introduced me to a couple of candidates, normally Shatila widows around my age. Her conversation with a prospective bride once even had clearly sexual contours to my complete embarrassment. "Have a look at him," she advised her. "He's good-looking and you like good-looking men." Turning herself to me, she probed about whether I understood what she was saying. I denied that I did, even though my very red face gave me away. Both women laughed.*

For quite some time, I thought that Shatilans' efforts at "palestinianising," marrying and converting me were attempts at exerting "power" over me. They knew I was there doing research; by turning me into one of "them," they might be trying to ensure that I would publicize

sympathetic images of the camp. Since the issue of conversion was strictly linked to partnering me, I also framed it, at the beginning, as a way of controlling my sexuality. It took me quite some time to realize that the endeavors at making me "belong" were not about "power" only: those most troubled by the fact that I was a Christian and those most entrepreneurial in making me "fit" were the Shatilans who actually cared *about me. One of my closest friends, Anis, once observed: "Gustavo, I want to go on thinking that my God is just. And you're a nice chap. But you won't be saved, because you're Christian. I once even talked to a sheikh about it: can't a Christian be saved, if he's a nice person? The sheikh said 'no' and that that was the will of God."*

The easiest way out of Anis' dilemma was naturally my conversion. My training at the university back in London made me very sensitive to and aware of instances of "power." For that reason, and for quite a while, I insisted on framing remarks such as Anis' as aiming at establishing "power" over me. Nonetheless, I finally came to appreciate that there were possibly other reasons informing Anis', my adoptive mother's and the fighter Fawaz's attitudes. As a result, not only did I reposition myself in my field, but the very object of my research, "gender", came to be re-conceptualized. As a concept, "gender" is deeply informed by political power struggles that have more to do with the politics of Euro-America than with the place where I conducted my fieldwork. What are the other ways of conceptualizing the display of adequate sex-belonging in a situation where both women and men *have very limited access to power?*

On a very early morning when I was leaving the camp, Fawaz stopped me. We had already chit-chatted on a couple of occasions. At that time of the day, Shatila alleys are still very empty, and I worried when Fawaz, who was on duty and holding his machine-gun, told me: "We need to talk." My worry almost approached panic levels when he asked: "Are you Christian?" His reaction to my positive answer finally allowed me to relax: "You should consider converting and come to pray with us." I replied that I most definitely

should and never gave it a second thought until that day he asked me if I had some minutes to spare and put me on the back seat of his scooter.

At the beginning of my time in Shatila, some people named me "Mustapha." The "g," like in the English word "garden," and the "v" are non-existent phonemes in Arabic and Shatilans of an older generation, with more limited exposure to formal schooling, found my name, "Gustavo," particularly difficult to pronounce. Some of them started calling me "Gestapo" (with the "ge" similar to the French "je"). As I reacted against that, they renamed me: Mustapha. When I descended from sheikh Habib's staircase that afternoon, I was officially given the name Mustapha. Word-of-mouth quickly spread through the camp and when I bumped into Ahmad near his place, he generously smiled at me and said: "Now we can look for a wife for you."

Yet my "Palestinian-becoming," as happens with all "becomings," is necessarily a frustrated process. In the end, I will never completely be a "local." Even when I went as far as partaking in some of the shabāb*'s feelings, my "becoming" was still partial. Once I got to know them from close, several of my friends reported they have* marad nafsī*, which can be translated as a psychological condition or* mal d'âme*. UNRWA only provides psychiatric assistance to extreme cases and only very recently did the NGO* Médecins sans Frontières *start a program of psychological support aimed especially at Palestinian refugees in the not-very-distant camp of Burj Al-Barajneh. The majority of the* shabāb *are not victims to* marad nafsī*: several indicated to me they had very troubled years during adolescence – when they experimented with drugs and some reported being persecuted by* jinns,[21] – *a period followed, nonetheless, by recovery. Several of them kept dreaming that they would manage to migrate or find a foreigner willing to marry, providing them with a visa out of Lebanon, to the point that I started asking myself about the role dreams play as a coping mechanism or in devising economic strategies. Badr, in his late twenties, succeeded in finding a Palestinian with a German passport*

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[21] Mentioned in the Koran, jinns or genies are creatures with free will, who can be good or evil and who inhabit a parallel world.

for marriage. He was happy in Germany, but once his wife found out that he was sleeping around, she asked for a divorce and he lost his residence rights and was forced to return to Shatila. I met him in my first pre-field visit to Lebanon, when he still nurtured the hope of returning to Europe: "Here, it's so dirty and noisy. I miss Germany a lot. And German girls like me. If you know of one available…" When I came back to Beirut, he had disappeared from the alleys of the camp. A common friend informed me what had happened to him: "He spends his days at home now. He has marad nafsī, *Gustavo."*

Another case of marad nafsī *was my friend Firas, 28, whom we met in the previous chapter. A holder of an undergraduate diploma in business administration, Firas also studied psychology for three years, but left prior to graduation for lack of funds with which to pay the tuition. Unemployed for quite some time, he often spent his days in his very tiny room, reading. He once explained to me that it was simply logical not to have any hope: "Gustavo, our lives and destinies as refugees are determined by instances completely out of our control. We live on a day-to-day basis. There's no ground for us to have any hope. The future is black." I had to totally agree with Firas' remarks. The fact that I myself had difficulty in seeing any hope for those I had grown so close to took its toll: I also fell victim to* marad nafsī. *This was precisely the reason I decided to move out of Shatila. Shakir had anticipated that it would happen. He once prognosticated: "You like Shatila, Gustavo, but actually you can't stand it. You like Shatila because you know you can leave. For me, Shatila is not a game I can easily get out of." I thought of yet another Arab saying:* Illi byākul al-ʿiṣī mish mitil illi *biʿidd*ā (He who's being whipped is not like he who's counting the blows).

Chapter 3

Drowning by Numbers and Legislation –
Statistics and (Non)State-Making in Shatila

"Watch out when you're collecting those figures, Gustavo," Abu Mujahed[1] warned me. I came to see him at the outset of my field research, in the hope of obtaining some data on the size, composition and income levels of Shatila households, in order to appease my scientifically–trained obsession with numbers. Abu Mujahed knew very well what he was talking about: prior to becoming the president of a local NGO, he studied social sciences during his exile in Cuba and wrote about the housing situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. He even published an article on the subject under the name he shares with the Palestinian politician Mahmoud Abbas (Abbas 1997). He explained the reasons for his suspicion towards numbers: "You may find that, for instance, on average, 3.5 people live in a room in the camp. That tells you nothing about the conditions of the real rooms or the kind of interaction among the residents." The way out was obvious: to visit the rooms and get to know the respective residents. I followed his advice, which marked the beginning of a household survey I conducted with 30 Palestinian families, registering their living conditions and collecting their work stories. At the end, I was left with a considerable quantity of data of arithmetical nature, together with an acute unease with the numbers I have collected and a pronounced awareness of the limits of the history they revealed.

At first glance, the work stories of the four different families depicted in the following pages tell of a similar tale: economic hardships, interrupted schooling, inadequate housing and migration attempts in search of a better

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[1] It is a common feature throughout the Arab world that a man comes to be known by the name of his eldest son, as in "Abu Mujahed," meaning "Father of Mujahed." This patrilineal naming system works, further, as an indication of the respect due to older men. The *fidāʾiyyīn*, the Palestinian fighters, have followed such a pattern when adopting their *noms de guerre* – in some instances, they have come to be known as "'father of so-and-so," even if they have not bore any sons. That is precisely the case of Yasser Arafat, who only bore one daughter and yet is known in the camps by his *nom de guerre*: Abu Ammar.

future. Yet, there is something fundamentally different between the four families in question. Their "exceptional" situation – as revealed, in one of the sections of this chapter, by the analysis of social-economic indicators and relevant pieces of the Lebanese legislation impinging upon some of those families – is not at all an exception. It only appears so if looked upon from the perspective of a state, an awkward point of view in a setting like Shatila. Accordingly, I problematise the links between "statistics" and state-making and the adequacy of either a "numbers-only" or a solely economistic approach to the refugee issue in Lebanon. Further, I interrogate the extent to which Hanafi's (2008a, 2008b, 2010) and Hanafi's and Taylor's (2010) work, presenting the camps as "states of exception," is based on a rather cursory reading of recent developments in political philosophy (Foucault 1991; Agamben 1998; Agamben 2005). Moreover, Hanafi's *corpus* of work may have contributed to a further unwelcome "othering" of Palestinian refugees, with potentially hazardous political consequences not completely anticipated and, in any case, hardly acknowledged.

Work Stories: *Plus Ça Change, Plus C'est la Même Chose 1*

Ahmad's Family

*"As the Arab saying goes, 'only his pocket shames a man' (*al-rijjāl mā biʿībū illā jībū*)," 31 year-old Ahmad told me, commenting upon his own difficulties in making ends meet. We were sitting in his well-kept sitting room in Shatila, together with his 66-year-old mother and his 23-year-old wife, who just put their 8-month daughter to bed. An unexpected item of decoration hung from one of the walls: Ahmad's diploma in accounting, from one of the local institutes (ma ʿhad).[2] Realizing my surprise, Ahmad explained: "I've never managed to get a job as an accountant. So I framed my diploma and hung it there."*

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[2] A *ma ʿhad* is a professional institute that students attend for three years. If the holder of a *ma ʿhad* diploma attends classes for a further year at the university level, s/he is entitled to a bachelor's degree.

Actually, Ahmad holds two higher degree diplomas: the first in accounting obtained in 1988, and the second in computer engineering in 2003. His mother supported him throughout his studies. As he was not able to get a position according to his skills upon his first graduation, she suggested that he make his way back to the institute and work towards a second diploma. With one brief exception – a one-month position as a computer engineer in a Lebanese company – Ahmad has never found work in any of his majors. The job at the Lebanese company, where he had no formal contract, did not end well: after enduring shifts of ten hours, with half-an-hour breaks for lunch and dinner, Ahmad was paid US$ 200 at the end of the month: "And I spent half of that just on my meals," Ahmad complained. He also tried a couple of manual jobs: prior to his classes at the maʿhad*, repairing air-conditioners, and before getting his second diploma, as a painter. He started repairing air-conditioners at the age of 17, but this activity was cut short by a dreadful accident, which left him with parts of his body severely burned. His firm paid for the US$ 12,000 spent on several surgical interventions, but he was not entitled to compensation.*

Ahmad's mother, the very talkative Um Ahmad, is from the jīl al-Nakba (generation of the catastrophe*) and left Palestine when she was 4 years old. We have already met her in the previous chapter. She lived in Tal Al-Zaatar as a married woman, but her husband left to Qatar, where better job opportunities existed for construction workers like him. From Qatar, he sent remittances back to his family in the camp. He came back to Beirut upon the destruction of Tal Al-Zaatar in 1976. A couple of years later, a cancer and heart disease prevented him from working. He passed away in 2005. Throughout her husband's long ailment, Um Ahmad worked as a cleaner in offices and supported her rather large family: 5 sons (one of whom went missing during the War of the Camps) and 3 daughters. Assistance from UNRWA has always been refused to her family, under the justification that she should count on the young men she had at home. "But we could not find jobs," Ahmad explained. And added: "She was the man of the house."*

Um Ahmad's loquacity contrasts with her daughter-in-law's silence. Only when prompted to speak, she tells me she dropped out of the first year of training in Business Administration at the maʿhad *because her father could not afford the fees. Prior to her marriage in 2006, she worked at a nursery, a job she liked. Differently from her mother-in-law, Ahmad's wife thinks it is better for a married woman not to work outside her home in order "to preserve the harmony of the couple." Nevertheless, she has plans of working as a hairdresser in the future, if Ahmad manages to save enough money for them to set up a salon for women in the camp.*

The family lives on the ground floor, just below Um Ahmad. The house belongs to Um Ahmad, bought from one of Ahmad's uncles, who was leaving for Germany and needed the money for the trip. "That is, my mother owns the walls, not the ground," Ahmad clarified. "For we, as Palestinians, aren't allowed to own property in Lebanon."[3] Um Ahmad used to rent out the ground floor for extra cash, but she agreed to cede it to her son upon his marriage.

Nowadays, Ahmad makes his living in the cramped entrance room of his house by giving private classes to high school students. He makes US$ 300 per month, tutoring some 30 students from 9 am to 9 pm. The summer months normally witness a sharp decline in Ahmad's income, due to school holidays. In the summer of 2007, he made some money by making deliveries; he thinks, however, that he is too old for that kind of work. With a family to provide for, however, he has no other option. He complained that it is easier for women to get jobs, because they accept to work for less. He once tried to migrate illegally, but was caught when entering Greece and forced back to Lebanon. Today, he would only consider migration if accompanied by his mother and wife – in no way would he leave them behind, for he does not think Lebanon is a safe place for aging and young women.

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[3] The prohibition dates back to 2001, when Law 296 disciplining estate ownership by foreigners in Lebanon was approved (Al-Natour 2007).

I asked Ahmad how he had succeeded in putting money together to get married. He told me that his father-in-law, "a wise man," decided that Ahmad's muqaddam[4] *was to be just a golden lira.[5] The father-in-law even helped the newly established family by buying some pieces of furniture. An NGO officer had already told me that it is becoming more and more common that brides' families do not insist on the* muqaddam. *"Otherwise," she added, "no one would get married, for no one has the money." The situation is different, though, when it comes to the* muʾakhkhar, *the sum to be paid by the husband if he asks for a divorce. Families insist on marriage contracts making the appropriate provisions for the* muʾakhkhar *and inflating the respective values, a way of protecting their daughters if a divorce takes place. For Ahmad, this means having to pay the unaffordable amount of US$ 5,000. "So I'll never get divorced," he said and winked at me. When reflecting upon his own situation, Ahmad told me about some of his dreams:*

> *To tell you the truth, without the help of my mother, I wouldn't have completed my education. My mother's work wasn't nice, because she was serving people. But it was honest work. We don't like to put women in that situation. We like women to stay in the house and be the lovely lady. That's how we think as Arabs. But these days we need the support of our ladies. [...] Now women are the men. Some of the men have no work, while their wives work outside the households. I have the dream of being able to keep my wife at home, of giving her a happy life. But sometimes our destiny doesn't allow us that. [...] I have a dream: I want to sleep one night, one night only, not having to worry with the next day, not having to worry with what will happen if the milk is over, if my daughter or my mother gets sick. What if I can't even pay for my mother's medication; then, what did she raise me for?*

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[4] See footnote 22 of Chapter 1.

[5] Due to the very conditions characterizing fieldwork these days, I was not able to gather enough data to follow a tendency suggested here by Ahmad's story. Indeed, even though the bulk of this thesis presents the limited economic opportunities open to the *shabāb*, the analyst should contemplate the possibility that marriage might constitute precisely an opportunity of this kind and potentially open to all. Prospective grooms for jobless daughters are much coveted by fathers-in-law, providing an economic vista for low-income households to reproduce themselves over time. As potential husbands, the *shabāb* might be in possession of a card they can use to improve their situation. Proper investigation of such a trend would force me to probe for older men's power over daughters and occasions in which such power is evaded or contested. If the *shabāb* may have reason to fret against this power, which curtails their access to the wives and girlfriends they want, they will nonetheless become fathers one day and may tend to repeat the same pattern. Such line of research would require me to follow people's biographies for considerably longer than the period I lived in Shatila.

Um Sahar, 41, struggled with the remote control of the newly acquired air-conditioner. Oblivious to the fact that it was not summer yet, the thermometer was already exceeding 30℃. The device was purchased with the money sent back to Lebanon by Abu Sahar, 47,[6] who relocated to Dubai only three months before. Unemployed for a while in his native Lebanon, Abu Sahar secured a position as a construction worker in the Emirates. The couple decided that he should travel alone: life being cheaper in Lebanon, it made sense for his wife to remain behind with the three children, aged 16, 13 and 8, so that some money could be saved. "But he calls all the time, because he worries about us by ourselves here. You know, Lebanon isn't a safe country," Um Sahar was reporting to me when the phone rang. It was her husband.

*Um Sahar has never worked outside her household. She performed well enough in the baccalaureate to pursue higher study in chemistry at university, as she would have liked. Originally from the Tal Al-Zaatar camp, she left it upon its destruction in 1976 and moved to Libya. Still in Libya, she met Abu Sahar and got married at the age of 20. Soon after, the birth of a mentally challenged daughter forced her to file for good her plans for further education. The child died young, but other pregnancies followed and Um Sahar stayed at home in order to look after the children: "Having to take care of three children is enough of a workload!" she remarked, laughing. She thought it adequate to add: "Mind you, I don't have issues with women working outside their households to help their families. I have no problems, for example, if my daughters get work outside Shatila. But it needs to be a respectful (*muḥtaram) job, adequate for women."*

Um Sahar left Libya in 1994. It was getting increasingly difficult for Palestinians to find work in Libya, so the Abu Sahar family thought it better to

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[6] I opted to identify Abu Sahar through the name of his daughter so as to avoid multiplying different names in this study. Nevertheless, as it happens throughout the Arab East, Abu Sahar is actually known in the camp by the teknonym that identifies him as the father of his son.

return to Lebanon and settle in Shatila. "I didn't expect that the situation for refugees here would be even worse," she lamented and was about to continue, when we heard knocks on the door. It was her prospective son-in-law, Mahmud, 19, who showed up with his mother to pay a visit.

*In Mahmud, Sahar, 16, finds a supportive partner to fulfil her academic and professional plans: once she graduates from high school within the following months, Sahar wants to get into college (*maʿhad*) and, then, find a job, keeping it upon marriage. "Of course, women can work, if they want, to help their families," Mahmud stated. The wedding will take place in some two or three years – the time Mahmud needs to put aside enough money for the bride-price (*mahr*) and to complete the house he is currently building.*

"Our home is almost ready," he rejoiced, while placing the charcoal on the hubble-bubble, which gave a nice apple scent to Um Sahar's modest sitting room. "But I still need to buy the furniture," he clarified. To gain money faster, Mahmud left his professional training in hotel management and worked double shifts as a delivery boy. He also counted on some money sent back home by his brother, who had migrated to Germany. Actually, Mahmud would like to follow his brother's path, but he knows it is difficult to get the appropriate visa. His mother has applied three times, but has not received the visa that would allow her to see how her eldest son was living in his new country, with his newly acquired German nationality. In spite of his mother's negative experience, Mahmud has not lost hope: "I'll still apply, because life in Germany is easier than here. And Europe is better as a destination than the Gulf. My two sisters will remain in Lebanon and they can look after my mother. If we, Sahar and I, manage to migrate, life will be easier. If we stay here, we'll face poverty. But we'll cope."

Once the interview was over, Mahmud watched me on my way out from the Abu Sahar's household. He confided to me: "Sahar and I, we aren't relatives, you know. We met during the relief efforts, in the 2006 war, and immediately fell for each other. We're marrying out of love."

The strong sweetish smell of lamb meat was coming from Um Ubaida's kitchen. Yet again, my interview with a Palestinian family was to turn into a feast, and my tentative plans to become a vegetarian would need to be postponed. More often than not, my Palestinian hosts opted to ignore my own predilection for the lower-status mujaddara, *a tasty combination of rice, lentils and caramelized onions. Guests are to be properly honoured, entailing a suitably defined menu, with meat as the invariable* pièce-de-resistance*. I was in no position to decline the Abu Ubaida family's generous offer of hospitality: meat is a relatively expensive item, reaching LL 20,000 (ca. US$ 14) per kilo in a butchery in the popular Sabra market, and my hosts' household budget was pretty tight.*

"My monthly income varies a lot. Sometimes I make up to 600 dollars; at other times, I make nothing," Abu Ubaida, 56, a carpenter, told me. His career began quite early, at the age of 9, when the young Abu Ubaida served at a hairdresser's and a juice shop in the summer, during the school holidays. He dropped out of school prematurely, during the 3rd grade, complaining that the teachers beat him. Already at 14, Abu Ubaida was working full-time, following the path of one of his brothers, an accomplished carpenter. In yet another domain, the older sibling set a model for Abu Ubaida: the brother was a Palestinian fighter, a fidāʾī. *"I also picked up arms, because we were being attacked and had to defend ourselves," Abu Ubaida recalled. "And I went to Palestine," he added. My roused expectations of a report filled with daring guerrilla activities conducted in the Palestinian territories were cut short by the more dramatic, and not at all less heroic, outcome of Abu Ubaida's military years: "I was incarcerated in an Israeli prison in Eilat, for one year and a half. From there, I was sent to Algeria." Returning to Lebanon in 1984, Abu Ubaida felt the time had arrived to relocate out of Shatila.*

His sister exerted a decisive influence on another one of Abu Ubaida's decisions, one that would have lasting repercussions. She spotted Um Ubaida, 18 years younger than her future husband, and thought that she would be a good match for her brother. Belonging to a family originally from Kfar Shuba, in southern Lebanon, Um Ubaida is Lebanese and was born in the Fakhani area, in the surroundings of Shatila. She spent most of her youth in Fakhani, except when wars forced brief relocations. Um and Abu Ubaida only met twice or three times prior to getting married. "There was no love, nor anything of the kind," Um Ubaida recollected, and added: "It made no difference, in the eyes of my family, that my husband was Palestinian. My brother and sister married the same way. Lebanese, Palestinians, there isn't a lot of difference among us." By then, Abu Ubaida was making enough money to start a family and could afford the costs of the wedding. Of his earnings, he paid the 800 dollars required of the muqaddam.[7]

Um Ubaida only briefly stopped working after the marriage. Her career also started early, when she was 15. The young Um Ubaida divided her time between work and school. She held a number of short-lived jobs: as a junior clerk in a company; a teacher in a nursery; a hairdresser and a junior accountant. Her scholastic career was more successful than her partner's: she studied until the 10th grade and only stopped because her family could no longer afford the fees.

Only three months before I came for the interview, and the lamb banquet that followed, Um Ubaida had started working again in a Palestinian NGO, giving remedial classes for students with poor performances at the UNRWA schools. She has a long experience with NGOs: she was trained as a coiffeuse and accountant in vocational courses offered by them, and worked at a nursery belonging to an NGO. Her new job assures the family LL 400,000 (ca. US$ 270) per month, a much needed income at times when Abu Ubaida's earnings are so erratic. With three children, aged 16, 13 and 5, to provide for, Um Ubaida was almost shocked by my question as to whether women should

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[7] See footnote 22 of Chapter 1.

work: "Lāzim *(it's necessary)! You know, we don't exactly lead easy lives here."* *She further explained: "We need to pay for everything in Lebanon: for proper education or adequate health care."*

I interjected: "But how about the services available at the UNRWA clinic?"

Abu Ubaida expressed his astonishment: "At the clinic, no matter what the disease is, you're always medicated with Panadol. Palestinians have nothing here, no health care, no civil rights, no proper work."

Um Ubaida rectified her husband's remark: "The situation isn't much different for the Lebanese. To get work, to get medical assistance, one needs wāsṭa."[8] *Abu Ubaida did not disagree: "Very true. All we can still do is study and hope to get a position in the Gulf."*

Yet and in spite of having close relatives in Denmark, Canada and Saudi Arabia, the Abu Ubaida family does not seriously consider migration, even though they have given it some thought. Um Ubaida was very realistic about their meagre chances of getting out of Lebanon:

> *To begin with, one needs to show to the Embassies statements of bank accounts with considerable amounts of money and we have none. So what's the point of getting passports and applying for visas, while one knows beforehand there's no chance? We've never even tried.*

Abu Ubaida's evaluation of their perspectives was even gloomier: "We have no future here," which recalls the commentary made by another one of my interviewees: "Future, in Lebanon, is only for the Hariri family and the Mustaqbal."[9] *The most striking remark about their current situation came, rather unexpectedly, from the young Ubaida, 13. Towards the end of the*

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[8] Literally defined as "means," *wāsṭa* refers to the network of influence one deploys to speed up procedures and/or strengthen one's chances of success, when, for instance, renewing a passport, getting a job or a promotion, or securing a bed in a hospital.

[9] *Mustaqbal* means "future" in Arabic. The interviewee was playing on words by stating that the future exists only for the Hariri family, leader of the Mustaqbal movement.

*interview, I was inquiring about the existence of electronic devices at the Abu Ubaida's house. The Abu Ubaida's family has all basic appliances, but none of the luxury ones, with the remarkable exception of a battered car and an obsolete computer. When I asked about the existence of air-conditioning or heating (*chauffage*), Ubaida expressed extreme surprise:*

- "Chauffage? Shū chauffage?!" (Heating? What is heating?!), as if my question was somewhat of an absurdity.

The Abu Walid Family

The Abu Walid children, aged 11, 9 and 7, were smartly dressed, waiting for "the researcher." In what was most likely an unbearably tedious experience for them, they remained amazingly quiet and well-behaved throughout the two hours I chatted with their parents. My friend Ahmad made the arrangements for me to visit the Abu Walid's household. Their eldest daughter is a student of his: he helps her with the demanding homework from the private and relatively expensive school she attends. Abu Walid has already considered sending the children to study in Syria, where education is free. At the same time, he is still trying to keep his family with him in Lebanon: "Sometimes, my boss pays for the school fees, because if my salary reaches the 10th day of the month, that's already an achievement!" Abu Walid, 36, complained. As an aluminium worker, he does not make enough money to live up to his family's expenses: in addition to the children's school fees, he has to pay US$ 200 as rent for his two-bedroom apartment in Shatila. He moved there in 1997, shortly after his marriage to Um Walid, 32.

She is his FMBD and MFBD and they are both from the same village, which facilitated the negotiations leading to the wedding. She studied up to the baccalaureate level. For the time being and with an eye to her husband's approval, she prefers not to work. "I'm not against women working, but, you know, we have three kids for her to look after," Abu Walid said. She nodded.

Um Walid expresses herself in the Palestinian accent. As a result of his wider exposure to off-camp society, Abu Walid shifts, speaking Lebanese to the Lebanese, Palestinian to Palestinians and Syrian to Syrians. In spite of the capacity of adaptation revealed by his language skills, he confessed to me that he did not feel completely comfortable in the camp:

> *I like this building where our apartment is. I've known my neighbours for quite some time [...]. They're all from the same extended family (ʿāʾila). After all these years, they've come to think of us as part of the ʿāʾila as well. For instance, if something happens here to my family while I'm out at work, I can count on my neighbours for help. But it isn't like that all over the camp. Shatila has changed a lot over the years. Beforehand, it was a respectful (*muḥtaram*) place to live. Not anymore, with all these loose (*faltānīn*) shabāb, out in the alleys, carrying guns.*

Abu Walid had the opportunity to move outside the camp. He opted to stay, because of his neighbours and the relative short distance to his work. He has been working with the same aluminium company since 1997: "I used to carry my boss' son on my shoulders, and now the son has become my boss!" he said, laughing. Previously, Abu Walid was in military service for three years, from 1994 to 1997. In 1989, having failed the 9ᵗʰ grade, he dropped out from his studies and worked as a doorman until 1994.

He trusts his neighbours so much, and vice-versa, that he has become a member of his building jamʿiyya.[10] *That is precisely why he does not seriously consider moving out – of Lebanon or Shatila: "I feel like a fish outside water when I travel, even for short trips," he told me. With no savings at the bank, should they be faced with an unexpected expense, such as a hospital bill, Abu Walid's family believes that they can ask for their cousins' help in addition to turn to the resources from the* jamʿiyya*. Abu Walid added: "As you may imagine, I have no health insurance."*

By 10 pm, the children's eyes showed obvious signs of tiredness and I realized it was time to leave. It was quite chilly by then – I interviewed the

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10 See footnote 59 of Chapter 1.

family in winter and there were no luxury items – computers, air-conditioners or chauffage *– at Abu Walid's house.*

Despite similarity across socio-economic indicators, the families whose work stories I have described in this section differ in one important way: of the four families, only Ahmad's and Abu Sahar's are Palestinian and live in Shatila. Abu Ubaida's family is Palestinian as well, even though Um Ubaida is Lebanese, but they live in Sports City, within the vicinity of the camp. Abu Walid's family members, for their turn, are Shatila residents, but have Syrian nationality. This indicates the problematic nature of some of the abstractions – "imagined populations," I call them – statisticians work with: as I ask in the following sections of this chapter, what do generalizing labels such as "Lebanon," "Palestinians" and "refugee camps," which show up so habitually in studies of statistical nature and within the "state-of-exception" literature (Hanafi 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Hanafi & Taylor 2010), effectively mean? In the process of manufacturing such generalizations, what is being left out and silenced? As a matter of fact, researchers often portray such lives as those of Abu Ahmad's and Abu Sahar's families but very rarely visit the likes of Abu Ubaida's and Abu Walid's families – mine was the first interview the two families had with a researcher. While there is no doubt that Palestinians face barriers against legal inclusion in Lebanon – a topic covered in the next section – I argue that, together with other sectors of the population, Lebanese or otherwise, they also face barriers against social and economic inclusion. In this sense, the efforts of Palestinian nationalism to make Palestinians a single case notwithstanding, there appears to be more in common between Shatila and other poverty-stricken districts of Beirut than initially supposed. By accepting the terms of Palestinian nationalism and emphasising Palestinians' "Palestinianess," researchers may have contributed to "othering" refugees in Lebanon, tending, in the process, to downplay other kinds of belonging – such as class.

It took less than ten minutes. At 3:02 pm on August 17th, 2010, the Lebanese members of Parliament started deliberating on a bill prepared by the Justice and Administrative Committee granting Palestinian refugees some working rights (Lamb 2010). The version prepared by the committee was a watered down rendition of the original draft, proposed by the Druze leader of the Progressive Socialist Party Walid Jumblatt earlier that summer. Jumblatt's proposal stipulated that refugees should have the right to work on equal footing with the Lebanese, to be covered by the National Social Security Fund and to buy real estate property in the country. An immediate outcry by some politicians and manifestations of support by others followed. The Justice and Administrative Committee managed to rid the draft of its most controversial aspects and, by 3:06 pm on August 17th, the MPs agreed to change Article 50 of the 1964 Labour Law. They did so by unanimous vote, rather surprisingly, given the deep division on the Lebanese political scene. The fact that little, if anything, will change with the new piece of legislation enabled the MPs' unanimity around the issue and the expediency with which the matter was dispatched.

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As it often happens with beginnings, data on the first years of the Palestinian work history in Lebanon is rather scant. With the publication of Mundus' groundbreaking 1974-study of the work force in the Tal Al-Zaatar camp in East Beirut (Mundus 1974), one can start identifying some trends and patterns about Palestinian labour, such as persistent high unemployment levels and concentration of workers in manual and menial jobs. This already speaks of the highly discriminatory effects against Palestinian refugees of the Lebanese labour legislation. Other features, such as the minor impact of higher education on career perspectives or the small, but increasing female participation in the labour force, clustering around the relatively higher status positions found in the education, health and social

work services with NGOs and UNRWA, are also telling. In this section, after a brief examination of the economic conditions prevalent in Palestine just prior to the *Nakba* and in Lebanon immediately after it, I present a succinct history of the legal framework affecting refugees' working conditions in the country.

In times of world conflict, such as the Second World War, periphery economies may benefit from a certain upsurge in development, precisely due to the loosening of the grip connecting them to the central powers. Palestine under the last years of British rule and post-independence Lebanon are no exceptions. With the European vessels facing mounting difficulties to reach the Levant, there was an increase of the demand for native products, accompanied by a boost in investment levels (Al-Natour 1993). In Lebanon, the industrial sector saw a rapid expansion during the war years (Sayigh 1952). The Arab defeat to Israel in the 1948 war and the magnitude of the flow of Palestinian refugees to neighbouring countries would cut short such promising prospects.

The highly disputable nature of the figures evaluating the numbers of refugees expelled from Palestine notwithstanding, it can be said that the majority of the some 130,000 who found their way to Lebanon were of rural background. Prior to their eviction, they mainly cultivated their own small-sized farm or worked as agricultural labour. Insufficient income was supplemented by casual work in villages or urban centers. A significant number of middle-class urbanites also found their way to Lebanon, a country they were familiar with as a business and educational hub or as a holiday destination. The work profile of this sizable population was very similar to that found in Lebanon, then still mainly an agricultural country, but with a substantial community of skilled urban traders. Quite predictably, the capacity of absorption of the Palestinian labour force by the host country was limited.

With 10,400 square kilometres of mainly mountainous surface area, Lebanon has little agricultural land and, already in 1951, could only barely support its 1,3 million inhabitants, the highest density population of the Arab world (Sayigh 1952). Under France's authority, mandate Lebanon adopted an externally-oriented liberal economic policy, which increasingly privileged trade at the expense of other labour-intensive sectors, leaving the country highly vulnerable to external shocks (Picard 1996). Menaced with unemployment or under-employment, a considerable part of the Lebanese searched for better job opportunities in Africa, Australia and the Americas. While the bi or tri-lingual and relatively highly educated Lebanese secured positions abroad and sent remittances back home amounting to a significant 20% of the Lebanese GDP (NA 2009), the local economy was manned by cheap foreign labour: at certain points in time, Syrian and Egyptian, and more recently, South-East Asian, and throughout, Palestinian. As the integration of foreign workers, if it occurs at all, happens at the margins of the Lebanese society, there are pernicious social consequences to such an economic policy.

To the structural pitfalls characterising the Lebanese economy should be added the immediate effects of the war with Israel in 1948. On the one hand, the Arab boycott against the newly created Jewish state boosted the role of the Beirut port and the Lebanese service economy. On the other hand, however, Lebanon also lost Palestine as a market and many Lebanese who had secured jobs on the other side of the border had to find their way back home. The main burden, nonetheless, remained the more than 100,000 refugees, some 10% of the Lebanese population then, and one, whose skills were already largely available locally.

The newly arrived refugees contributed to sectors where opportunities existed. In agriculture, Palestinian knowledge of specific crops and techniques contributed to the intensification and improvement of cultivation. Additionally, the vigorous pace of the booming construction sector in Beirut took advantage of the available Palestinian labour. It

remains true, however, that for the vast majority of the *fallāḥīn* (peasants) who crossed the northern border of Palestine, exile in Lebanon meant unemployment and utter poverty (Sayigh 1952).

In turn, with inadequate investment levels and insufficient job vacancies, the Lebanese economy was inescapably impacted by the arrival of the newcomers, especially in terms of wages and property rent (Sayigh 1952). Counting on UNRWA aid and in desperate need of income to supplement their meagre rations, refugees accepted to work for salaries that were not viable for the Lebanese. Unwillingly, they strengthened the bargaining power of entrepreneurs, who thus imposed lower salaries on their employees, including the Lebanese. Notwithstanding the brisk pace of construction in Beirut, housing has always been in short supply. Even though a number of other factors intersect to explain the high price of accommodation in Lebanese urban centers, the influx of thousands of Palestinians in need of shelter has certainly contributed to such a tendency.

Undoubtedly, economic conditions alone do not explain the varying treatment refugees have received throughout their history in Lebanon. The potential political effects of the inflow of mostly Sunnite Palestinians on the complex Lebanese sectarian patchwork have given rise to the fear of *tawṭīn* (naturalization). Elsewhere as well, refugees tend to be an uncomfortable presence, for they remind nationals how fragile "national identities" are. For a young state like Lebanon, just emerging from the mandate period and with unresolved questions of self-identity, the problems arising from the arrival of a large number of refugees soon reached the point of eruption. The politicization of the refugee issue in Lebanon quickly followed, with Palestinians exacerbating it, especially during the *ʾayyām al-thawra*.

In order to achieve a more thorough picture of the Palestinian history in Lebanon, the economic dimension of the equation should be considered. Effectively, the Lebanese reaction to Palestinians varies not only throughout history and through/within sects but also according to class and with

relation to the government in Beirut, particularly when it comes to access to and competition over the latter's limited resources. Moreover, Lebanon's economic history helps to explain the puzzling alternation between harshness and laxity in the application of the Lebanese legislation limiting refugee access to the labour market. While this alternation reflects the very nature of the Lebanese state and the shifting political strength of Palestinians during different periods, it also mirrors specific needs of the economy at certain times. Thus, if in 1951 and in spite of the public manifestations of sympathy to the Palestinian plight during the debates in the Lebanese Parliament, the Minister of Labour Émile Lahoud approved a decision requiring that refugees obtain work permits (Al-Natour 1993), this in practice produced limited immediate results only:

> The practical effect of the official attitude has boiled down to a prohibition of refugee employment in government offices and concessionary companies, and to its toleration elsewhere until there is a public outcry or the clustering of refugees becomes notoriously evident. (Sayigh 1952: 64)

Nonetheless, the basis for the legal discrimination of Palestinians in access to the job market was then established. Public outcry eventually followed and toleration grew shorter over the years. While Palestinians kept on working, the fact that they often lacked the necessary permit for the exercise of certain trades left them vulnerable to exploitation, especially by small and medium-sized firms.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with the expectations of a rapid solution for the Palestinian issue waning, the Lebanese government increasingly treated the refugees as a security matter. The 1962 law regulating entry, exit, work and residency of foreigners in Lebanon included Palestinian refugees in such a category. Putting Palestinians on equal status with other foreigners living in Lebanon, the legislators chose to ignore their refugee status – a break with obligations assumed by the Lebanese state under a number of international conventions, notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Said 1999; Aasheim 2000; Al-Natour 2007).

Decree 17661 of 18/09/1964 which regulated foreign labour in Lebanon did not break with the legal orthodoxy of treating Palestinians as foreigners on the same footing with other foreigners residing in the country. In due time, a few exceptions were made to this rule, facilitating access to work in construction and agriculture, thus meeting the needs of the Lebanese economy for cheap labour in these sectors, and access to positions with UNRWA and Palestinian organisations. Generally, however, in order to work legally, Palestinians have to obtain work permits from the Ministry of Labour, permits which, over the years and despite the growing numbers of refugees living in the country, are granted on an increasingly rare basis, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Work Permits Granted to Palestinian Refugees

Year	Nº of Permits	Year	Nº of Permits
1966	9887	1993	327
1967	1244	1994	350
1968	2448	1995	354
1969	2362	1996	271
1970	1826	1997	460
1971	1990	1998	355
1972	1866	1990	350
1973	1850	2000	229
1977	307	2001	316
1978	312	2002	293
1979	284	2003	245
1982	319	2004	245
1985	2362	2005	272
1992	193	2006	188

Source: (Al-Natour, 2007)[10]

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[10] As a first indication of the difficulties entailed by analysing numbers in this case, as further developed in this chapter, the figures in Table 1 should be considered with caution.

The above figures are all the more revealing when compared to the total number of work permits issued to nationals from other countries, whose communities are smaller than the Palestinian community in Lebanon. According to one scholar, the number of work permits granted to Palestinians since 1968, for instance, amounts to those given to Filipinos in 2004 alone (Halabi 2007).

While the legal orthodoxy has opted not to grant Palestinians a special status remaining oblivious to their condition as refugees, the adoption across the board of a second legislative principle – the principle of reciprocity – excludes them from the category of foreigners on equal footing with others living in the country. According to the principle of reciprocity, a state should return, in kind, favours, benefits and penalties accorded to its own nationals by other countries. As Palestinians cannot claim belonging to any recognised state, the application of the principle of reciprocity has placed them into a de facto situation of "stateless foreigners."

Until very recently, such a condition prevented refugees, even the rare holders of work permits, from benefitting from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and additionally forbade them from the exercise of the so-called "liberal professions." Dating back to 1963, the Lebanese legislation on social security states that foreigners can only benefit from NSSF funds if they hold the appropriate work permit and if their countries of origin apply the same principle to the Lebanese living there. For the few Palestinians who have obtained work permits, this effectively meant that they were

While effectively revealing of the general trend of declining numbers of work permits issued to Palestinian refugees, they remain problematic. For different years, Al-Natour collects statistics from various sources (Ministry of Planning; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; *Al-Nahar* newspaper and Central Administration of Statistics). This not only raises questions about the consistency of the data over the whole period, but also explains the remarkable discrepancy between the figure for 1985 and those for previous and subsequent years. Moreover, nothing is said about the number of refugees applying for work permits, which may as well have declined over the years, due to the overall expectation that obtaining one is difficult anyway. In an interview on the blog *Qifa Nabki*, the former Director for the Center of Lebanese Studies at Oxford, Nadim Shehadi, says that only 261 work permits were issued for Palestinian refugees in 2007 because only 261 were applied for (Shehadi 2010).

obliged to contribute to the fund without being entitled to its benefits in cases of disease, unemployment or retirement.

For the "liberal professions," their exercise in Lebanon is only possible through membership of the respective syndicate. Unions may legally adopt sets of internal rules that, by application of the principle of reciprocity, bar the exercise of these professions by the stateless Palestinians. Table 2 summarises the conditions foreigners have to meet to become members of the unions of physicians, engineers, lawyers and pharmacists:

Table 2: Membership in Syndicated Professions

Name of Professional Association	Specific Conditions for Foreign Membership	Quota	Fees for Membership	Relevant Legislation
Order of Physicians	• Work Permit • Principle of Reciprocity	No	• Same as Lebanese • No benefits from NSSF	Law 1658 (1979)
Order of Engineers	• Work Permit • Principle of Reciprocity	10%	• Same as Lebanese • No benefits from NSSF	Law 636 (1997)
Lebanese Bar Association	• Work Permit • Principle of Reciprocity • Special intervention by the President	10%	Not applicable	Law 8 (1970) (and later amendments)
Pharmacists	• Work Permit • Principle of Reciprocity	N/A	N/A	Law 367 (1994)

Source: (Halabi 2007), based on (Hanafi 2007), combined with (Al-Natour 2007)

The stringent legislation curtailing refugee access to the labour market was lifted for a while, upon the signature between the PLO and the Lebanese government of the Cairo Agreement in 1969. Following clashes opposing Palestinian factions and the Lebanese army, the Cairo Agreement

not only allowed Palestinians to launch attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory and to administer the camps, but also acknowledged the right to work for those already residing in Lebanon. A period of strengthening of the Palestinian presence and institutions in Lebanon, the "glorious days" of the ʾayyām al-thawra, ensued, at least from the refugees' perspective. With funds flowing in from international donations, the Palestinian leadership erected the apparatus necessary for its functioning on Lebanese territory. Its offices had to be staffed; hospitals under the Palestinian Red Crescent Society required specialised personnel to provide care for the fidāʾiyyīn (fighters) and their families; cooperatives and nurseries were established under the Palestinian organisation Samed; publishing houses were founded. Jobs for Palestinians were then in no short supply, including jobs for women. It was a service economy, though, created to attend to the demands generated by the presence of the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon. Accordingly, its foundations were highly vulnerable, and with the leadership removed from Beirut in 1982, it quickly collapsed.

The impact of the 1982 events should be evaluated against this background. The departure of the PLO for Tunis, the massacre of Sabra and Shatila and the Israeli siege of Beirut set the tone for decades to come. For a while, some Palestinians did not gain full conscience of the economic dimensions of the difficulties, because they continued to rely on remittances sent by those who had migrated to the Gulf states or to Germany and Scandinavia, where refugees obtained asylum status due to the conditions prevalent in Lebanon during the War of the Camps. In 1991, in reaction to the PLO support for Iraq in the first Gulf War, Palestinian refugees were expelled from Kuwait and the doors of the oil-producing Arab states were increasingly closed for them. Furthermore, in Lebanon, Palestinian economic problems, in sharp contrast with the previous decade, gained the contours of a true crisis.

In an indication of the mounting difficulties refugees were increasingly to face, Minister of Labour Adnan Mroueh issued a decision in

1982 reserving some 70 professions for the Lebanese alone, barring, consequently, access to Palestinians. His successors renewed the list of forbidden professions in 1993 and 1995. While the Lebanese government made efforts to absorb the recently demobilised members of the various militias by creating job opportunities for them upon the signature of Taef in 1989 and the end of the Civil War, nothing of the kind was envisaged for Palestinians. No longer being able to count on the structure set up by the PLO in the previous decade, lacking the remittances which, for a while, kept arriving from the Gulf, and with free access to the local job market hindered by a plethora of Lebanese laws, decrees and decisions, refugees had no other option but to accept work under exploitative conditions. They plunged into sheer poverty.

In June 2005, in what was prematurely celebrated as a breakthrough, the departing Minister of Labour Trad Hamade issued Ministerial Memorandum 1/67, allowing refugees access to 50 professions in the banking, administrative and clerical sectors, out of the former 70-odd forbidden to them (Al-Natour 2007; Halabi 2007; UNRWA 2007). Table 3 lists the jobs that are now permitted to Palestinian refugees, provided that they are born in Lebanon and registered at the Directorate General of Political and Refugee Affairs. In practice, though, very little has changed.

Table 3: List of jobs allowed by the Ministry of Labour (2005)

Memorandum 1/67, of June 2005	
Employees	**Employers**
All administrative and mercantile work of whatever nature, in particular the work of director general, director, personnel manager, treasurer, secretary, archivist, file clerk, computer, commercial officer, marketing officer, trade consultant, foreman, warehouse officer, seller, money exchange, jeweller, laboratory, pharmacy, electric mains, electronic works, paint works, glass [installation], mechanics and maintenance, doorkeeper, concierge, guard, driver, cook, waiter, barber, elementary, intermediate and secondary schoolteacher	All commercial work of whatever nature; banking, accounting, assessors, engineering work of whatever kind, contracts and trade in building, jewellery, manufacturing of shoes and apparel, all furniture work of whatever kind and the industries that rely on it, sweets industry, printing, publication and distribution, haircutting and styling, clothing press and cleaners, car repair (metal work, mechanical, glass attachment, upholstery, car electric works)

Source: (Halabi 2007)

In effect, the Ministerial Memorandum simply attempted to "legalise" professions which Palestinian refugees were already engaged in, albeit informally. It did not address the vigorous disincentives towards regularisation of the working conditions of Palestinians, which remained intact. With the adoption of the memorandum, and in the event refugees work legally, they had to start paying taxes, and together with their employers, to proceed with the deductions for Social Security. As has already been noted, even when contributing to the Social Security, Palestinians could not benefit from it, due to the application of the principle of reciprocity. A rigorous implementation of Hamade's memorandum, therefore, would lead to a decrease in refugees' salary levels, without any benefit.

Secondly, the memorandum did not waive the requirement that Palestinians obtain work permits to engage in the professions newly opened for them. I have already indicated the insignificant number of work permits issued for Palestinians every year, leading to a situation whereby relatively few refugees are willing to apply. It is not surprising therefore that Hamade's legal change has failed to produce major shifts in the situation of the Palestinian workforce.

Finally, as jurists quickly pointed out, Hamade's memorandum, due to its very nature, could be easily undermined. As a ministerial memorandum, it occupied the lowest rank in the statutory hierarchy and could be overridden by a presidential decree, which could be, in turn, overruled by a parliamentary law. In addition, it could be annulled at any time by another ministerial memorandum. Easily nullified, it did not offer sufficient leverage for effective legal change in the long run.

The bill approved by the Lebanese Parliament on August 17th, 2010, may have addressed the latter point – the legal frailty of Hamade's measure – but not the first two. To begin with, the disincentives towards the regularisation of the Palestinian workforce remain in place. Only in case of

retirement or end of service, can Palestinians now benefit from coverage of the NSSF. For sickness, maternity or family allowances, a private fund should be set up, so as not to "burden the Treasury or the National Social Security Fund," states the bill. Secondly, and probably more seriously, the new legislation does not waive the requirement of work permits: it simply exempts Palestinians from paying the required fees. The Ministry of Labour had already reduced the fees for Palestinian and Syrian workers, and that was not the sticking point. As a Palestinian organisation points out, "the requirement to obtain a work permit opens the door for procrastination and administrative bureaucracy," (PHRO 2010) fostering employers' disinclination to hire or regularise Palestinian workers. Finally, the bill does not address the highly politicized and thorny file of the liberal professions, access to which remains forbidden for Palestinians. The same NGO classifies the move by the Lebanese Parliament as simply "a gesture," (PHRO 2010) not enough to produce major changes in practice. The *Financial Times* reports the following on refugees' reaction to the legal shifts:

> When asked what he is thinking of doing with his business studies degree, 23-year-old Mohammed Sheikh grins ruefully from the money transfer stand he is working in Sabra refugee camp [sic]. "I'm not thinking about anything. I'll graduate and then come back here (NA 2010)."

———————————————————————

Given this legal-historical background, what do the recent figures about Palestinian labour tell us? Basically, they speak of the same tendency observed throughout the history of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon, with the refugee workforce reflecting the changes within the Lebanese economy and acting as a reservoir of abundant and cheap labour.

The analysis of the state of the Palestinian workforce in the present faces a number of difficulties, two paramount among them. The first is the necessary caution when handling numbers of refugee residents in Lebanon advanced by different stakeholders. While UNRWA points to the existence of 425,000 *registered* refugees (UNRWA 2010), scholars and policy makers opt

for figures ranging between 210,000 and 600,000 – often fuelling differing political agendas. Such a discrepancy in the numbers affects the quantification of the Palestinian workforce. Nonetheless, the former figure – 210,000 residents – is more realistic, as it takes into consideration two recent phenomena: the rapidly declining fertility rate among refugees and the widespread out-migration of young men, leading to a situation where 8 out of every 10 families have close relatives living abroad (Tiltnes 2005). On the basis of the numbers of *registered* refugees, the Norwegian research institute FAFO indicates that 37% of Palestinians are effectively in the workforce, as shown in Table 4 below. Chart 1 breaks down this data by sex and age, and reveals that on average 63% of men are in the labour force versus only 13% of women, with marriage tending to force the former into work outside the household, while keeping the latter away from it. Chart 1 also exposes the overall limited female participation in the workforce. The Palestinian workforce, in reality, is very similar to the Lebanese workforce, which is also young and male-dominated. The study of unemployment patterns in both populations, however, reveals some remarkable differences, as we shall soon see.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Palestinians in the Labour Force

Total Population 450,000			
Working Age Population 69%			Below Working Age 31%
Persons in Labour Force 37%	Outside the Labour Force 63%		

Source: (Halabi 2007), based on (Tiltnes 2007)

Chart 1: Palestinian Labour Force Participation by Sex and Age (2006)
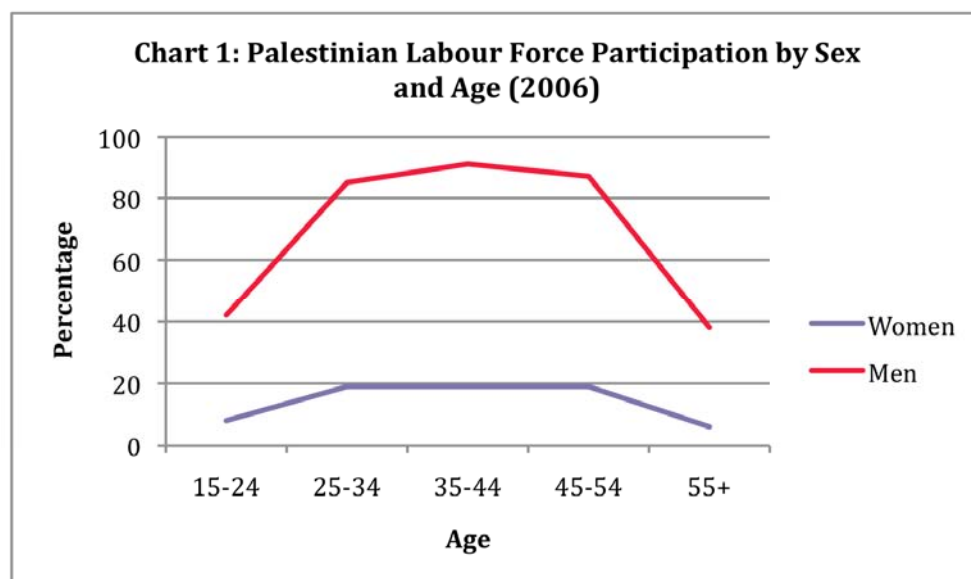
Source: (Tiltnes 2007)

The second source of difficulty in the study of the present state of the Palestinian workforce in Lebanon is brought up by the controversial definition the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopts for unemployment (ILO 2010). This is how employed and unemployed populations are defined within the ILO framework:

> The *employed population* is made up of persons above a specified age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services. When measured for a short reference period (of one week or one day), it refers to all persons who worked for pay, profit or family gain during that period. [...] The *unemployed population* is made up of persons above a specified age who are available to, but did not, furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services. When measured for a short reference period, it relates to all persons not in employment who would have accepted a suitable job or started an enterprise during the reference period if the opportunity arose, and who had actively looked for ways to obtain a job or start an enterprise in the near past. (original emphasis)

Even though an international standard is important to allow for comparisons between different economies, the one-week or one-day rule is highly arbitrary and more applicable for liberal labour markets, where structural flaws do not hinder the chances of work seekers to get jobs – hardly observable in Lebanon. Besides, such a definition tends to conceal the occurrence of severe under-employment and does not address the situation

of "discouraged workers," who have given up looking for a job, out of lack of hope of finding one, a high number among refugees in Lebanon. Within the ILO framework, the unemployment rate of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is 10%, which peaks to 25% if a "relaxed" definition is used to account for the "discouraged" (UNRWA 2007) – figures higher than those prevalent for the Lebanese, whose unemployment rate ranges between 8 and 15%, although strictly comparable data is not available (Halabi 2007). Unemployment, as shown in Chart 2, affects especially youth and women, precisely those who are not expected to be the main bread-winners in their households, being normally provided for.
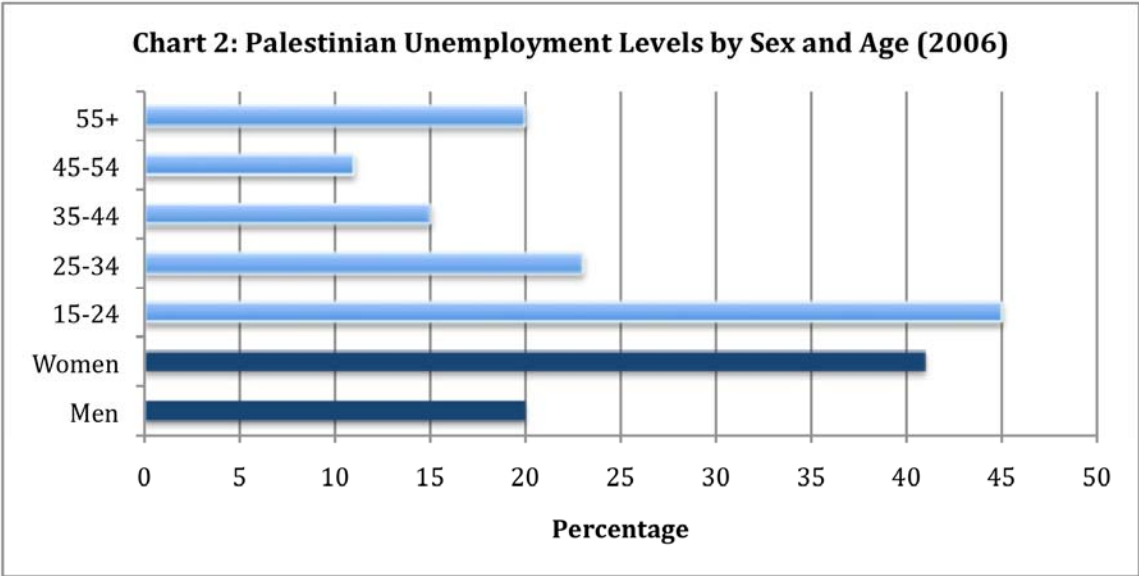
Source: (Tiltnes 2007)

One of the most striking characteristics of the Palestinian workforce in Lebanon is the minor impact of higher education on the job seeker's chances of securing a job (Halabi 2007). Chart 3 leads to the counter-intuitive conclusion that pursuing higher education does not necessarily translate into higher employment rates. Such figures may be a reflection of out-migration, with young skilled Palestinian men finding their way to better-paid positions, especially in Europe and the Gulf. Nevertheless, this alone does not account for the phenomenon and it is likely that a sizable quantity of Palestinians with upper-level diplomas cannot find work corresponding to their qualifications – not surprisingly, since the highly

controlled access to the so-called "professions" in practice forbids refugees from the respective legal exercise. One exception to this general rule, however, exists: education has an impact on *women's* career perspectives and participation in the workforce increases according to the years spent in schooling (Egset 2003).

Chart 3: Palestinian Educational Levels in Relation to Employment (2003)
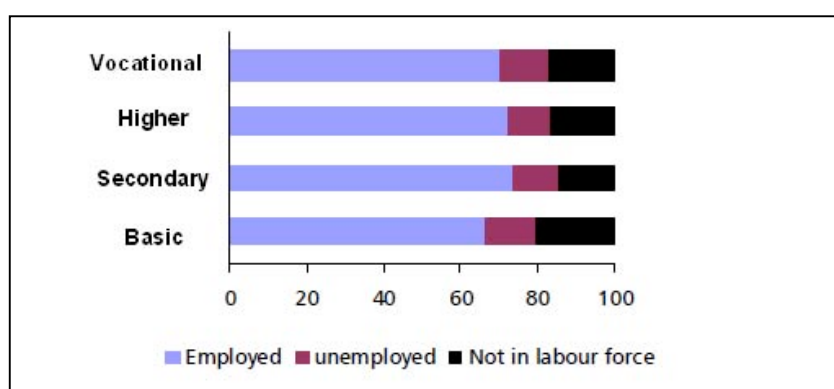
Source: (Halabi 2007), adapted from (Jacobsen 2003)

Such a particularity results from the very specific working conditions of refugee women. There is indeed a clear gender clustering around specific sectors of the economy. While trade and agriculture count on a mixed workforce, the physically demanding often hazardous and highly "informal" construction sector employs almost solely men. Women, for their part, are over-represented in the higher-status education, health and social work segments, where formal contracts, paid holidays and sick leave are more common. Among Palestinian refugees, "formal" and "informal" economic activities do not function as a sharp dualism (UNRWA 2007): some workers may not have a formal contract, yet benefit from paid leave and health insurance. Nevertheless, the construction sector tends towards seasonality of work and "informality," whereas formal contracts, especially with UNRWA and NGOs, are more frequent in the education, health and social work segments. One in every three women is employed in the latter segments, where higher education is often a pre-requisite and incomes are

considerably better (Tiltnes 2007), to the point of rendering women's salary levels comparable to men's, as depicted in Chart 4. Thus, while only a tiny minority of Palestinian refugee women effectively takes part in the workforce and secures itself positions in the labour market, female workers' social visibility well exceeds their numerical importance. It is no wonder that their husbands, fathers and sons have been so sensitive to the eventual impact of such a trend on traditional gender hierarchies. In effect, one in two men does not approve of women working outside their homes, and among the women not taking part in the workforce, a considerable number report familial obligations, such as care-giving, and social restrictions among the main reasons for non-participation (Jacobsen 2004). In practice, this translates into a relatively low female participation in the workforce and restricted mobility: among those with jobs, the majority works in the camps where they live.
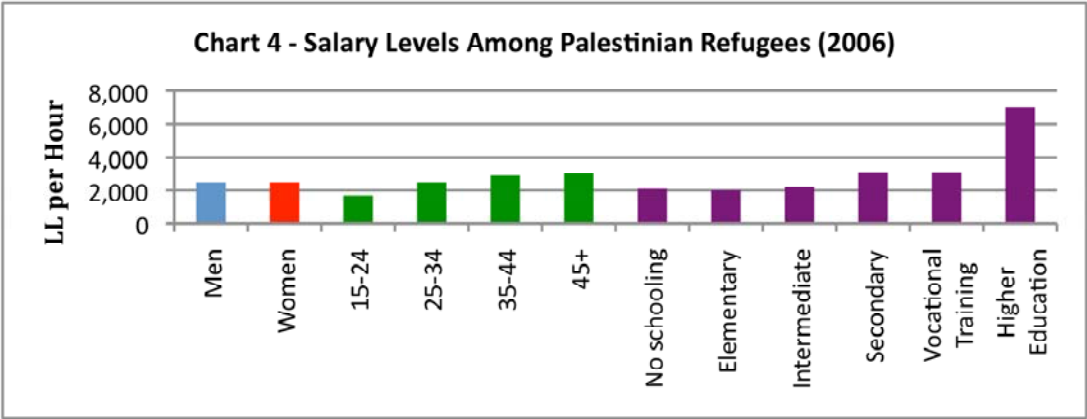
Source: (Tiltnes 2007)

Chart 4 also reveals the overall low salary levels, the mean hourly wage not exceeding LL 2,600 (US$ 1.73). This is all the more problematic in a country that has known inflation in recent years and whose economy is faltering due to political turmoil. The volatility of the Lebanese political situation has deepened the economic recession: as far as the job market is concerned, there has been a sharp decrease in the demand for labour since 1996 (Halabi 2007), with institutions very wary about expanding their

businesses. In addition to coping with a highly discriminatory set of laws hindering their access to the labour market, Palestinian refugees also strive to guarantee jobs in a shrinking economy, in which they moreover face the competition of Syrian labour, especially in the construction sector.

There is a lack of studies evaluating the real scope of the participation of Syrian labour in the Lebanese economy and the advanced figure of 1,4 million workers for 1994 is too alarming and appears politically motivated (Halabi 2007). Upon the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 and the general hostility against Syrians, many have left Lebanon, but there are indications that they have recently started returning.[12] Leaving their families behind in their homeland, where prices are lower than in Lebanon, Syrian workers can afford to work for less and target job vacancies similar to those aimed for by Palestinians, representing a veritable source of competition to the latter.

The combined effects of such a scenario – an economy in retreat and fierce competition by the Syrian labour force – in addition to the plummeting decline in UNRWA aid, which affects Palestinians from Lebanon more than in other countries (Sayigh 1995), have kept a vast number of refugees in utter poverty. In spite of the negative impact of the labour regulation, which hampers Palestinian free legal access to the job market, income from employment, on average not exceeding US$ 3,367 per year, still represents the major part of household revenues (Tiltnes 2005). The outcome is that poverty among the Palestinian population is considerably higher than that prevalent not only among the Lebanese, but also among refugees living in Jordan and the West Bank. As far as poverty levels are concerned, only in Gaza is the situation worse than in Lebanon (Table 5). Social support and remittances from relatives living abroad constitute a vital compensatory scheme for the lowest-income households, but can only partially counterweigh the cumulative results of the structural situation – a

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[12] The writing of this chapter predated the war presently taking place in Syria (2013). The current crisis in the neighbouring country has led to a large number of Syrians finding their way to Lebanon.

state of affairs described by one author as a "negative spiral" (Tiltnes 2005). Given the focus here, a brief analysis of three arenas – health, housing conditions and education – suffices for the portrayal of this "negative spiral."

Table 5: Percent Households that are Poor (less than US$ 2 per person) and Ultra-Poor (less than US$ 1 per person)[13]

	Lebanon		Jordan		West Bank		Gaza Strip	
	Camps	Gatherings	Camps	All	Camps	All	Camps	All
Ultra-Poor	15.0	13.2	8.6		13.0	8.4	23.9	21.6
Poor	36.2	31.3	30.6	8.0	19.2	14.5	37.7	33.00

Source: (Tiltnes 2005)

War-related chronic illnesses and disabilities and psychological distress affect the refugee community in Lebanon more than in neighbouring countries[14] – and matters are rendered worse by the lack of access to long-term and comprehensive care. While child and mother health care have improved throughout the years, they remain worse than in other areas of operation of UNRWA. Child nutrition goes on being a problem, with 5% of the children being malnourished and 4% vulnerable; high figures, particularly when compared with the 1 and 2%, respectively, registered for Jordan (Ugland 2003; Tiltnes 2005). As far as housing conditions are concerned, war has left its marks: ¾ of the camp and gathering infrastructure have been destroyed and some 6 to 15% have not yet been restored, especially in the south of the country. Overall, connection to sewage systems and septic tanks, access to piped and drinking water and refuse collections are deficient and camp and gathering dwellers complain of the lack of reliability of water and electricity supplies (Ugland 2003; Tiltnes 2005). Notwithstanding improvements in the education status of Palestinians over time, education levels are lower, and grade repetition and dropout rates are higher than those found among the Lebanese and in other UNRWA countries. In spite of not being directly comparable, available data

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[13] Even though not indicated in the original table copied here, I gather these amounts refer to day periods.

[14] It should be remarked, once again, that the data I am analysing here pre-dates the present-day (2013) conflict ravaging Syria.

suggest that illiteracy is twice as high among refugees than among the Lebanese. Educational achievements are poor, with 16% of the Palestinian refugees of working age holding a secondary diploma, 10 percentage points lower than in Jordan and Syria. Pass rates at the end of the preparatory cycle for Palestinians in Lebanon are also much lower than those of neighbouring countries (Ugland 2003; Tiltnes 2005).

Sørvig (2001) characterises migration to Europe or the Gulf as a mechanism to cope with such adverse conditions. Various studies advance differing estimates for Palestinian out-migration from Lebanon, ranging from more than a quarter registered refugees living abroad to the alarming evaluation of half of them (Halabi 2007). In spite of the controversy around figures, analysts concur on the favourite destinations, the Gulf countries and Europe, as well as on the general profile of typical migrants: unmarried men of working age, leaving the country alone. This impacts the population pyramid of refugees in Lebanon, with working-age men lacking.

Out-migration has varied through different periods. In the case of the Gulf, it preceded the oil boom of 1974 and considerably receded in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. For Europe, it became particularly prominent during the Camp Wars in the mid-80s, when young men managed to obtain asylum status in Germany, Sweden and Denmark, and it declined in recent decades, under the impact of more restrictive migratory laws. Highly educated Palestinians normally opt for the Gulf, where their qualifications can immediately be converted into economic gains. The majority, though, elect Europe as the favourite destination, despite the fact that discrimination, language barriers and different educational standards normally mean a devaluation of skills, at least at an initial phase (Sørvig 2001). One of the reasons for preferring Europe is that the stateless refugees may eventually obtain proper papers and a nationality. On the other hand, temporary work contracts offered in the Gulf do not provide the stability sought out by potential migrants. Effectively, together with economic motivations and the longing to escape from what is identified as the

"boredom" of refugee life, migrant candidates identify the desire for "stability and normality"' as the main reason for wanting to leave Lebanon.

With increasing barriers obstructing entry into the Gulf countries and Europe, migration aspirants recur to two main avenues to achieve their objectives, both of which require family connections and pooling of resources. Firstly, marriage with family members or acquaintances, who have already managed to migrate, may ensure through family reunification the necessary visa out of Lebanon. The second route involves buying fake documents and visas without which even boarding a flight is impossible. A "package" for Europe – including plane tickets and fake documents – normally reaches the prohibitive amount of US$ 4,000 (Sørvig 2001),[15] more than the average yearly income of refugee households. For that reason, pooling resources from different family members, still in Lebanon or already abroad, is vital for migration attempts. If successful, the migrant sends remittances back home, maintaining ties of mutual obligation linking him to his family that has remained behind. Sørvig (2001) insists on the importance of paying attention to the role that families play in the strategies refugees adopt to handle the challenges faced in Lebanon. The notion of household economic coping makes more sense than that of individual coping, he maintains. Khawaja's and Jacobsen's (2003) study, however, points to the limits of the culturalist argument about the "uniqueness of Arab extended family in nurturing exchange." (599) While exchange does effectively occur within families, it tends to take place between those able to reciprocate, expelling the poorest members and those most in need from the networks. Given the highly skewed nature of the division of wealth in the camps, this has huge implications in terms of how external aid should be distributed.

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[15] As of 2013, according to my own findings, this amount has considerably risen, often reaching US$ 8,000.

This is how Tiltnes (2005) sums up the three key conclusions of Fafo's report on the living conditions of Palestinians in Lebanon that I have been describing above:

> First, the current living conditions are certainly better than they were for the first generation of refugees. However, a closer look at outcomes compared to those found among Palestinian refugees in neighbouring countries shows a faltering development in Lebanon. Whatever progress made during the first decades after 1948 is seriously stagnating and even deteriorating. [...] Second [...], it is primarily in Lebanon camp and gathering households that we find that poor outcomes are directly linked to the *location* in Lebanon. [...] Third, the exclusion of refugees from the Lebanese labour market through a number of mechanisms, puts households in general, but young refugee men in particular, in a unique situation compared to refugees elsewhere. Those that can, leave the country. Those that cannot are forming a large group of young men who are leaving schools or performing poorly there, and have little hope or ambition for the future. Thus, both processes contribute to seriously undermine the stock of human capital in the communities not only for today, but perhaps more importantly, for the future (9-10, original emphasis).

Averting Drowning by Numbers and Legislation

Now, what stories does this history based on figures and legislation reveal and what stories does it hide? To what degree do the numbers and legal documents surveyed here speak of the "reality," and convey Shatilans' experiences? What "realities" and alternative stories do they silence, as suggested to me by Abu Mujahed's words of caution, with which I opened this chapter? What are the methodological and epistemological underpinnings of a history based on figures and pieces of legislation and what are the respective limitations?

Based on fieldwork on the Greek-Albanian border, Green (2005) demonstrates that figures make certain features noticeable and others invisible. Numbers are ultimately the result of negotiations and of the interweaving of statistical and non-statistical information, thus revealing the social relations and power dynamics characteristic of the place where research is conducted. For one brief moment only, the authoritative

depiction of Palestinian refugees' living conditions by FAFO (Tiltnes 2005) concedes to report on what has *not* been *said*: on page 27, one reads about a "general difficulty in data gathering […] during fieldwork: Some women may be wearing (precious) necklaces or rings, without considering them household savings. It is reasonable to assume that this resulted in at least some underreporting of savings of this kind." Maybe this should have put the surveyor in alert mode.

What if the survey questions were being asked in such a way that the very framing of what counts as "the economy" became of limited purchase for understanding the camp economy? What if analysts invited research participants to talk about *muqaddam* and *muʾakhkhar* as forms of making money circulate in the camp, golden bracelets and rings as saving instruments, and *jamʿiyyat*[16] as local mechanisms for providing some sort of social protection, instead of inquiring about salary levels, bank savings, access to formal social insurance and work stories? What if surveyors asked about how research participants spent their days (instead of probing for biographies of employment, formal or informal)? Does this bring us any closer to an economics that functions otherwise, whereby women may not consider as work the hours they spend at the family's small shops, opening them whenever domestic chores allow, bringing the children along and operating all kinds of alternative mechanisms of credit, based on a complex negotiation of trust/suspicion towards neighbours and kin? This chapter started with certainties informed by statistics and pieces of legislation, and is about to end with heuristic doubts about the distance separating numbers from the world, figures from life. It further sets the tone of the coming two chapters, also about heuristic doubts and other distances: those between concepts (gender, youth) and life, words and the world.

In addition, there may be more informing respondents' attitudes to some of the questions of the FAFO survey. In a country like Lebanon, where no census has been conducted since 1932, precisely because the data

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[16] See footnote 59 of Chapter 1.

collected back then has served to freeze the division of political power among the different sects, completely ignoring the dramatic changes the Lebanese population has undergone since, Palestinian refugees have themselves come to realize that there is power invested in numbers. *Yasser taught me that when it comes to understanding the numbers my own informants provided me with, it is essential to realize that lying – a condemned action by local notions of morality – is different from holding back information, not particularly problematic, especially when one does not know how the figures collected are going to be used. We had only just left the household of a family I had interviewed in Shatila, when Yasser whispered, so as not to be overheard: "You know they haven't told us the whole truth over there, right?" He had facilitated the meeting and probably thought it was his obligation to call my attention to its shortcomings. Not willing to show signs of my innocence, it was actually me who lied: "Of course, I know," I pretended. He probably sensed my lack of sincerity: "When you asked if they receive money from their relatives abroad, they replied that they don't. Well, they don't, but when the relatives come to visit, they bring presents and money. They do the same when it's Eid."* That was my first lesson that numbers being reported in a setting like Shatila are always the result of a negotiation: they may, at most, function as the starting position for an investigation, rather than its end point.

If I have to come to terms with the non-exact standing of numbers in the setting of my fieldwork, I have to do the same as far as the legislation is concerned. How can one understand the variation in the leniency or strictness with which the legislation has been applied throughout the history of the Palestinian saga in Lebanon? Is it indicative of the very status legislation occupies in a conflicted, and socially and juridically complex country, whose legal corpus reflects differing traditions and where personal matters are governed by religious tribunals and non-personal subjects by civil ones? Undoubtedly, the Palestinian issue in Lebanon is one of legal entitlement, but not only. While NGOs working with refugees in Lebanon have secured resources by insisting on the latter's lack of legal entitlement –

often because this provides a "facile" language, easy for donors to understand – the refugees' question is also undeniably one of social inclusion. Here there is more approximating refugees to than separating them from the Lebanese, or, at least, *some* Lebanese. Moreover, can I really derive my informants' multi-layered subjectivities from their economic and legal standing? Zetter (1991) pays attention to the stereotyping often implied by labelling someone a "refugee," normally to attend to a notion of bureaucratically defined "needs." *Shakir, the accounting student and Shatila resident we met in the previous chapter, provided the most potent critique of my poor attempts at labelling.*

Shakir and I decided to go to the cinema. The previous time we watched a movie together, we did not do it the proper way: the medium, the 17-inch screen of my computer, and the film we selected, Lila l'a dit*, were not the best options.* Lila *tells the story of a supposedly sexually liberated French woman living in an unidentified Arab country in North Africa. At a certain juncture, the main male character of the movie, tempted by Lila who wants to show him her sex, says something like "If I were given the choice of choosing between a cunt and liberating Palestine, I would opt for the cunt." Shakir laughed a lot and exclaimed: "Gustavo, this guy is a fucker." He criticized the French woman's behaviour and repeated one of his favourite mottos: "I don't trust girls!" The movie prompted us to discuss women's sexual behaviour and the conversation – which eventually turned to topics such as brother's relations to sisters and German women's habit, which annoyed Shakir, of not waxing their armpits - was marked by me frantically taking notes. When we chose to watch a movie again, we thought we should do it the proper way: in a cinema. We opted for an American blockbuster, so that I would not be given the excuse of turning a leisurely activity into work. It did not function.*

The movie we selected was only being shown in the upper-crust shopping mall ABC Ashrafiyeh, in the eastern, mostly Christian part of Beirut. To my astonishment, Shakir did not have any idea where the mall is, an indication of the profoundly divided nature of Beirut along class and sectarian

lines. I panicked: having read the guidelines on ethics governing ethnographic research, I was only too aware of the class and power differences between Shakir and myself. I worried about spoiling him and about allowing him access to activities that would be completely out of reach once I left. I finally conceded and we found our way to the shopping center. To my despair, Shakir loved the mall, filled with the blonde women he finds attractive. I reacted: "You shouldn't forget you're an ʾibn al-mukhayyam *(son of the camp) and poor and a stateless refugee. This place and these girls aren't for you." I deserved Shakir's pitiless criticism at my "labelling effort:" "So, that's it, Gustavo, for you, I'm a refugee, and nothing more. So, because I'm an* ʾibn al-mukhayyam, *I can't come to places like this, and enjoy it, and fancy the girls around?"*

The label "refugee" is obviously inadequate to capture Shakir's complex life and desires. The very labels I have extensively used in my statistical charts and analysis, "Palestinians," "camps" and "Lebanon," are also grossly over-generalizing. If "Lebanon" includes the likes of the Hariris, one of the richest families in the Arab East, with commercial links to the Saudi royal dynasty, it comes as no surprise that "Lebanon" is sharply different from "camps." Nonetheless, an analytical demarche along those lines not only glosses over the similarities between the immediate neighbourhood of Shatila – also part of "Lebanon" – and the "camp" itself. It also glosses over the sense in which Um Sahar's and Um Ubaida's lives are alike, although the former is Palestinian and a camp resident, and the latter is a Lebanese national and non-camp dweller. Similar to the academic work in the "states of exception" I examine below, statistical studies lump together in an over-arching unit, "camps," social-economic realities that are both very similar and very different. Considered on its own, every camp tends to be very similar to its immediate surroundings, while at the same time very different from other camps, according to its own respective history, or integration into the surroundings, or origins of the residents, or sectarian composition of the neighbourhood. The over-arching labels, by producing "imagined populations" such as "Palestinians," "camps," and "Lebanon" render both these differences and similarities invisible. The

biographies of the families presented at the outset of this chapter constitute counter-evidence to such discourse. Their exceptionalism – in that they remain far from levels of well-being and comfort that human beings should be entitled to - is in no way an exception.

In spite of the fantasy-like nature of certain figures they produce, statistical labels do contribute to making up a reality in the terrain, and not only because the numbers they juggle inform interventions by relevant stakeholders and policy-makers. In Lebanon, numbers concerning Palestinians have shaped the very perception that they are different from the Lebanese, thus serving statist nationalisms and the hardening of identity barriers, certainly more pronounced today than they were back in 1948. If labels like "Lebanon" and "Palestinian" might not have meant a lot prior to or just after the Nakba, today they increasingly inform political agendas on all sides of the ideological spectrum. Foucault (1991) shows how "statistics" is the "science of the state" and tells the story of how the concept of "population" has gradually emerged from the eighteenth century on, to increasingly become the object aimed at by governments. Counting serves surveillance and control in state-making projects – as Palestinians, from all peoples, know all too well (Zureik 2001). Thus, it should not raise any eyebrows that in a setting with pronounced anti-state effects like Shatila, refugees are very aware of the political implications of counting and have come to realize that withholding information makes perfect sense. One needs to concur with Genet when he observes that "each Palestinian is true" (Genet, Barrada et al. 1987):74), even when – and through – withholding information. They are true to themselves and, hence, having access to that truth is a privilege, hard to obtain.

During a lecture at the Jerusalem Forum in Amman, Rochelle Davis (2011) used some British Mandate statistics in order to indicate that the Jewish population was in the majority in Jerusalem by 1946. The audience, Palestinians many of whom lived there as children or adults prior to 1948, promptly reacted to the numbers, which were completely at odds with their

remembrances of an Arab Jerusalem. Several reasons were proposed as to why the British statistics were unreliable: women were probably undercounted, because a male researcher was not socially supposed to have access to their names; young men were probably undercounted, because of persistent fears of conscription into the Ottoman army; some Palestinian villages, even though close enough, were probably not considered, as they did not lie officially within the boundaries of the municipality. In any case, what is revealing in Davis' interaction with her audience is the latter's claim over and challenge to knowledge produced about them. Knowledge, Ann Stoler argues, bases its assertions of truth on "disqualifying some knowledges and valorizing others, [...] establishing a hierarchy of knowledges (quoted by Davis 2011: 138)." Sometimes, nonetheless, this hierarchy is disputed.

When I asked Ahmad to explain to me the meaning of those numbers written on the external walls of some Shatila dwellings, he told me that that was the result of a project dating some three years before to install electricity counters in every house: "The project involved UNRWA, the popular committees and Electricté du Liban [the Lebanese electricity company]. But it was only some months ago that they started with the installation of some counters, so I think the project didn't go too far. I volunteered in the project, but for two days only. The reality is no one can register anything here, Gustavo. Houses here are uncountable, because people keep building on top of each other. The situation changes all the time. Like birds flying in the sky."

Exceptionalism is not the Exception

The exceptionalism captured by the figures presented above, in that they portray the "negative spiral" Tiltnes writes about,[17] is not at all exceptional, as indicated by the biographies of the families presented at the beginning of this chapter. Yet, some analysts, and paramount among them sociologist Sari Hanafi (2008a, 2008b, 2010), go one step further, and

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[17] See page 122.

oblivious to the marked differences between the refugee camps in Lebanon, characterise all of them as "states of exception." Hanafi draws heavily on a highly selective rag-bag of Foucault's propositions on bio-politics as a technique of control, discipline and surveillance, and Agamben's concept of the *homo sacer*, who is reduced to "bare life," seen only as a body to be fed, devoid of social and historical attributes and of an individual subjectivity and is barred from the political domain. Throughout Hanafi's publications, "exception" assumes a number of different attires. In his earlier studies, "exception" shows a marked "space bias," with the camps considered as "closed." In his more recent articles, he concedes that the camps are not "geographically closed," yet still thinks of them as confined and as devoid of a clear authority and mechanisms of control, the two other definitions he gives for "exception." From the standpoint of Shatila, it is difficult to view camps as being "confined." Shatila is certainly part of Beirut and has an impact on the city. The failure to understand the extent to which Shatilans are also Beirutis, exposed to the same exclusionary mechanisms created by unrestrained liberalism and a very raucous *laissez*-faire, certainly compromises the kind of anthropology needed to understand a place like Shatila, found *within* the city, communicating with it and yet situated at its margins. Thus, *it is the nature of the links between Shatila and Beirut/Lebanon that leads to exclusion*: Shatila is at the margins precisely because it is *not* a confined space.

If class is considered, can other large and poor portions of Lebanese society also be seen as an "exception?" One may then legitimately ask what *is not* an exception. In this sense, have scholars played a role in further "exoticizing" Palestinians, obscuring the spheres they have in common with other poverty-stricken sectors of Lebanese society? When it comes to Hanafi's definition of the "exception" as a "void of authority," while there is no clear authority in Shatila, this does not mean that the camp lacks mechanisms for social control and conflict management at the local level. Camps and Shatila in particular are not lawless time-bombs that tick until the moment of explosion, where instability is nurtured and young

unemployed men are easily seduced and enlisted by salafists to engage in *jihad* (Rougier 2007; InternationalCrisisGroup 2009). Some academics are so bound to a state-centered perspective that they remain blind to mechanisms of social control or conflict management beyond the state.

Once I attended a presentation at the American University of Beirut (AUB), where such images of camps as time-bombs were conveyed during the launching of a study by the International Crisis Group entitled precisely "Nurturing Instability" (2009). I remember asking myself during the presentation how people can live in such places. Once the talk was over, I left AUB's pleasant campus and found my way back home, to Shatila. Already in the camp, the shabāb *welcomed me and asked what I had been up to during the afternoon. I lacked the courage to tell them about the images purporting to represent them I had been exposed to at AUB: "Oh, not much," I lied once again.*

Governance beyond the State: *Plus C'est la Même Chose, Plus Ça Change*

To my dismay, Shakir stopped talking to me. He was one of the first shabāb *I got close to in Shatila. I complained to a common friend, Omar, 28, that Shakir was suddenly not replying to my calls or SMSs. Omar asked whether I wanted him to intervene. He inquired with Shakir about what went wrong. He returned to report that the time was not yet ripe for squaring off the differences between Shakir and me.*

Omar attempted a simplified version of a *ṣulḥa* or *muṣālaḥa* (reconciliation), a traditional mechanism for dispute settlement in historical Palestine and other countries of the Arab East (Jabbour 1996; Pely 2008/2009). In its more elaborate form, a muṣālaḥa is conducted by a *Jaha* Committee, composed of respected members within the community, almost invariably older men. Due to the prominent role they assume in the *muṣālaḥa* process, elders crystallize their political authority over the rest of

the group. Peteet (1987) demonstrates how the Palestinian leadership opted for a cautious campaign of legal transformation during the ʾayyām al-thawra: instead of upsetting wholesale local mechanisms for dispute settlement, it chose whenever possible not to disrupt the authority of family heads, *shaykhs* or elders, but rather to build upon their influence. Nevertheless, elders increasingly faced a challenge by the young educated men coming from abroad, who constituted the core of the Palestinian leadership in Lebanon during the ʾayyām al-thawra. The leadership also did not hesitate to intervene decisively and exert its authority forcefully, whenever a legal breach deeply offended the community's notions of morality and justice or risked an escalation of inter-sectarian violence. This ended by further compromising the elders' authority.

After the ʾayyām al-thawra, the elders did not recover their previous prestige completely. Today, in Shatila, the Association of the People of Majd Al-Krum (*rābiṭa ahl Majd Al-Krum*) is still called upon to mediate in *muṣālaḥāt*, but increasingly rarely so. The *rābiṭa* brings together older representatives of the families of Majd Al-Krum, the Palestinian village of the original settlers of Shatila (Sayigh 1993). These families still benefit from a high-status standing in the community, but this has not been enough for the *rābiṭa* to keep its former role of frequent mediator in conflicts. One of the members admitted to me that the *rābiṭa* was involved in more *muṣālaḥāt* in the past. Today, young people sometimes set off processes of dispute settlement, and only at a later stage is the *rābiṭa* called upon to give its blessing to the outcome. There was a certain sorrow in the *rābiṭa* member's tone of voice when he reported that "the new generation doesn't have much respect for the older one."

The case of a muṣālaḥa conducted by young men in Shatila some time ago shows that the shabāb's *participation in the episode has not led to a crystallization of state-like political power to their benefit. The dispute occurred between two friends, Asad and Bishr, both very close to Ahmad. It involved the always explosive terrain of* sharaf *(honour) and sisters' standing*

in the community. Asad's brother was secretly dating Bishr's sister. The couple was spotted hand in hand in Sanaya, one of the rare green parks in Beirut, and the news quickly reached Bishr. Bumping into Asad in one of the alleys of Shatila, Bishr shouted, for everyone to hear: "I'll fuck your sister." Asad went back home to try to cool down, but could not resist the provocation. He grabbed a knife, returned to the spot where he was insulted, and stabbed Bishr in the abdomen. Bishr survived the attack, but spent several days in the hospital and the bill reached an astronomical US$ 5,000. Recovered and back in Shatila, Bishr received frequent visits from other shabāb, *including Ahmad, who recommended that Bishr forget the episode in order to prevent it from escalating. Bishr did not listen to anyone and kept repeating the menace against Asad's sister. Ahmad lost his temper and yelled at Bishr, before slamming the door at the latter's place: "Asad's sister is like a sister to me as well. And I would do the same Asad did and stab you for saying those things." Bishr sent someone to Ahmad's place, inviting him for a reconciliatory visit. During the visit, Ahmad spoke with Bishr's father as well, whose tone was somewhat more restrained than that of his son: "If someone says such things about your sister and you don't kill him, you deserve to die. [...] Let's close this whole affair. I propose Asad pays for the hospital bills and moves out of Shatila." Ahmad managed to renegotiate the request that Asad move out, since that would compromise his earning capacities and his chances of covering the costs of Bishr's hospitalization. Counting on his mother's and brother's help, Asad managed to collect US$ 3,600, but committed himself to continue paying during the following months. Bishr's father agreed: "You see, now Asad is asking me to give him credit. But* la ʿuyūnak *(for your eyes)."[19] Only at this juncture were the elders invited to witness the ceremony during which Asad gave the money to Bishr's family. The two* shabāb *met for the first time since the stabbing and they stayed one in front of the other, staring at each other with eyes full of anger. Two days later, Bishr's father went to the police to drop the case against Asad. The officer said that Bishr's and Asad's families, as Palestinians, should sort out the situation by themselves, without getting the*

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[19] The expression indicates Bishr's father's acceptance of Asad's proposal and can be translated as "you're welcome."

Lebanese police involved. With the problem sorted out, Bishr remarked to Ahmad that he actually respected Asad. According to Ahmad, Bishr said that Asad behaved the way a man should and that he would even give Asad his sister in marriage. It took Asad years to recover from the financial setback of the whole episode.

This story of a *muṣālaḥa* serves as counter-evidence to academic production that depicts camps as lawless spaces of void and chaos. Camps appear lawless, or places where law is temporarily suspended, only for those who, captivated by a state-centered perspective, cannot see beyond and continue to be amazed by the absence of clear sources of crystallized authority in places like Shatila. In this vein, it is worth noting Jennings' (2011) word of caution to anthropology's current fetish with sovereignty. He sets off by describing the genealogy of Agamben's critique of sovereignty, tracing it back to its Sorelian roots and, passing by Schmitt and Benjamin, investigates its crystallisation in the pages of *Homo Sacer* (Agamben 1998). Nevertheless, he asks what is bracketed out in the current mesmerisation with the Agamben-effect. In Arendt's contribution (1963), Jennings identifies what is being left out: the possibility of imagining local and non-sovereign political futures.[20]

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Only after a couple of months did I find out why Shakir stopped talking to me. Shakir had asked for my help to pay for his university fees. As he was facilitating and translating some of my interviews, I agreed to anticipate the payments due to him, which covered part of what he owed to the Beirut Arab University. He was thankful and invited me for dinner at his place in Shatila. When I arrived, I was startled to find out that Shakir had begun constructing a

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[20] I will come back to Arendt's conception of non-sovereign political futures at a later juncture and from a local and ethnographic perspective.

house on the roof of his family's dwelling.[21] *In a moment of pronounced lack of ethnographic sensitivity, I managed to comment to Shakir, in front of the other guests: "You tell me you have no money to pay for your university fees, but you're building a new house!" After several months, when we were on speaking terms again, Shakir remarked that my reaction during the dinner that day indicated my limited knowledge of his predicament: "Gustavo, I'm already 26. My life is very different from yours. I can't graduate, and then get a job, and then marry. I can't wait. I need to do it all at once." By then, I had not yet understood the plight and pride of a* shāb*. As Shakir himself repeated to me so often: "Gustavo, you need a hundred years to understand us." I still have 95 to go.*

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[21] As the costs of buying a house are normally prohibitive and as Palestinians cannot acquire real estate in Lebanon (see footnote 3), young men planning to get married often construct a house on the roof of their families' dwellings.

4.

Swirling & Twirling –
The *Fidāʾiyyīn*'s Heroism and the *Shabāb*'s Burden

Some Romance

Kabab-ji, Hamra, Beirut, 17th April, 2009.

Nawaf, 28, a clerical worker and aspiring painter, took a long puff of his cigarette. It was his fifth, but there was obviously no room for me to complain: by then, I had become a passive chain-smoker. Nawaf hesitated for several seconds, and after gathering his thoughts, finally continued.

We were sitting together for the second time in order to record his life story. At this opportunity, we opted to have a meal at Kabab-ji, a restaurant in Hamra belonging to a chain of eateries serving Arab food, away from the scrutinizing ears of Nawaf's mother, four sisters and brother, with whom he shares his tiny two-piece dwelling in Shatila. Between dips of hummus *and* mutabbal *and sips of over-sweetened tea, Nawaf directed our conversation.*

On the previous occasion, when I prompted him to talk about his childhood, Nawaf nostalgically dwelt on what were happy years, in spite of the severities of the Civil War, which forced his family to be constantly on the move. During the Camp Wars, Nawaf's family found its way to the Sanaya Garden in West Beirut, where they set up a tent in an abandoned building. "My father was afraid something might happen to us on the way to school. So we stopped attending the classes altogether," Nawaf told me. "With no school, we spent the days playing in a parking lot. My siblings and I, we pretended all those cars were ours."

Nawaf is one of the children from his father's second marriage. All of Nawaf's four brothers from his father's first marriage were fidāʾiyyīn. *Nawaf hardly disguises his pride when talking about the deeds by his brothers, one of whom was part of Arafat's personal entourage: "I remember it all quite clearly: how they carried their guns and defended the camp."*

At the Hamra eatery, Nawaf decided to talk about his love life. After a couple of short-lived relationships, he first discovered the pleasures of sex (and experimented with drugs) through a European activist, who had moved to Lebanon to develop her Arabic. The intense relationship lasted for as long as she stayed in the country. Her departure forced the love story to come to an end, with Nawaf not enjoying the means or visas to follow her. Another European, also an activist, captured the attention of the still heart-broken Nawaf some time later. She came from a family of communists and moved to Lebanon out of her political conviction that she had to contribute to the Palestinian cause. Her connection to Nawaf came to a sudden stop; this time, however, he decided it should end:

> You know, Gustavo, she loved Palestine in me. What she liked most about me is the Palestinian hero that I know I can't afford to be. What she loved was an image.

A Man's Gotta Do What a Man's Gotta Do

Nawaf's rather gloomy love life – and the relationships he can't afford to have – sets a dissonant tone to his own depiction of his *fidāʾiyyīn* brothers' heroic accomplishments. Back in the 1970s, the situation was indeed quite different. As previously stated, some civil rights were ensured for the refugee population through the Cairo Agreement. With donations flowing from the Arab oil states, the Palestinian leadership began to erect the military and bureaucratic apparatus necessary for its functioning in the camps, which went through a period of nationalistic fervour. Shatila back then could be legitimately described as a "cradle" for the *fidāʾiyyīn*.

The "feminine" is largely avoided in *fidāʾiyyīn*'s recollections of their heroic deeds during the glorious *ʾayyām al-thawra* (the days of the revolution). This echoes Kanafani (2005, 2008), who describes how the nationalistic discourse and the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s narratives colluded to frame Palestinian men's passage from boyhood into manhood within a hegemonic notion of masculinity, which purges the emasculating effects of refugees' lives in Lebanon and shuns feminine spatial and symbolic spheres. To be fit for the "consequential agency" (Kanafani 2008: 314) of fighting to re-conquer the motherland, Palestine – depicted in Palestinian imagery as a woman, who was the victim of a rape in 1948 – the *fidāʾiyyīn* had to detach themselves from another "mother-land:" home. Acceptance into the homo-social environment of military life was contingent upon the abandonment of the sphere of feminine domesticity, the perceived excess sentimentality of which might affect a *fidāʾī*'s determination. *The way in which Abu Fawzi, 62, an ex-Fatah commando, talks about his biography is fairly typical:*

> *I joined the* fidāʾiyyīn *without my family knowing. When they found out, my mother cried a lot and my father forced me into my first marriage, hoping I'd leave the* fidāʾiyyīn*. But my marriage didn't last: I gave up my wife, but not the* thawra *(revolution).*

A non-fighting man or a fighting woman does not find comfortable space within the limits defined by the nationalist and the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s discourses. The handful of women fighters who joined the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s ranks, while highly respected by their comrades, paid a high cost for their acceptance. *As Um Latifah, 47, a former woman fighter, who joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine at the age of 13, told me:*

> *When I speak of myself, I say that I'm a man* (zalamī)*, because I've spent my life with the* fidāʾiyyīn*. During the* thawra*, I didn't think of marriage. Before my parents finally forced me into marriage, I was engaged twice and split. And my life before marriage was more beautiful. Some people feel comfortable with marriage, but I never did. [...] I tell the* shabāb *that I don't feel like a woman. So this is why I started using eyeliners, so that the shabāb realize that I'm a woman. I'm used to being what I am. I don't feel my femininity* (ʾunūthatī)*.*

Here, I explore how Nawaf's biography and coming-of-age are profoundly different from Abu Fawzi's (and also from Um Latifah's). While "gender" is a useful tool to make sense of Abu Fawzi's and Um Latifah's experiences, it is not so for Nawaf's. With the Palestinian Resistance Movement, in its military facet, increasingly demobilized in Lebanon from the 1990s onwards, Abu Fawzi's and Um Latifah's extraordinary heroism cannot simply be re-enacted by Nawaf. Yet, Nawaf still needs to do what a "man's-gotta-do." Let us start with a brief consideration of the term "gender" itself.

Gender Theories: A Gendered Anthropology (or Theorizing Power)

Mar Elias Camp, Beirut, 19th July 2007.

It was an oppressively hot early evening in July 2007, during my pre-field trip to Lebanon. I was attending English lessons for adults at the Mar Elias refugee camp in West Beirut. The teacher spoke in Arabic, to cater to students with different levels of English. For a moment, she switched into English to say "gender equity" and immediately returned to Arabic. I decided to provoke her:

Me: You don't actually have a word for "gender" in Arabic.

She replied: "Of course, we do: it's jins*."*

Me: But jins *is actually "sex," no? It is not "gender."*
Teacher: Jins *is "sex;"* jins *is also "gender."*

And, to end our conversation and get back to her class, she added: "There isn't a problem here, all right?"

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Late 20th-century gender theorists have maintained that, actually, there *is* a problem here and that "sex" should be differentiated from "gender." The vignette from Mar Elias is less bewildering if we consider that "gender" is an academically generated concept. Here anthropology has made a major contribution (Moore 1999): as the cultural elaboration of the supposedly natural differences between men and women, "gender" cannot not be subsumed by "sex," the debate in the 1970s and 1980s argued. Evidence of varying social elaborations for the distinction men/women from different ethnographic settings was provided to demonstrate this. Separating "gender" from "sex" made sense at the time for it reflected the structuralist taste for binaries, as well as the nature/culture divide, a central disciplinary parameter in anthropology. In analysing socio-cultural matters, anthropologists busied themselves with studies of "social" "gender." "Natural" "sex," for its turn, remained under-theorised.

Since the inception of the sex/gender debate, gender has allowed for political mobilization and change, unlike the term sex. Psychology, with Freud (1931 [1977], 1933 [1974]); philosophy, with de Beauvoir (1949); sociology, with Connell (1985, 1987, 2002), and anthropology, with Rubin (1975), all share the insight that both masculinity and femininity are attainments and, as such, are constructed. While medical science and some psychoanalysis may promote deference to the normative rules governing such constructions, philosophy, sociology and anthropology endeavour to demonstrate how such rules are constitutive of inequalities to be politically "denaturalised." The difference between the constructions of masculinity and femininity is largely taken to mean inequality (Leacock 1983) and inequality has served to establish a hierarchy in terms of different access to power by men and women (Ortner 1974; Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Strathern 1988). From this, has ensued an association of masculinity with power, and femininity with the lack thereof. Liberal ideology has perceived the different access to power between men and women as unfair and has set a political agenda that mandates mobilization, with which scholars have been duly engaged. On the ground, however, ideals of masculinity may have

a complex relation to practice, varying from place to place and time to time. Unable to replicate the heroic personas of the *fidāʾiyyīn,* the *shabāb* from Shatila, with less access to power, quietly try to live their lives, engaging in the relatively mundane routines of building a house, or getting married, or raising pigeons.

It is helpful to redeploy Judith/Jack Halberstam's (1998, 2002) analysis of female masculinity concerning masculinities without maleness. Reflecting queer studies and new gender politics, Halberstam explores enactments of masculinity. In her view, the burgeoning field of masculinity studies has consistently ignored female forms of masculinity, thus reinforcing hegemonic norms of class, race and sexuality, and obscuring men's persisting roles in the maintenance of patriarchy. Halberstam disrupts accounts of masculinity centered on male embodiment and male privilege: s/he refuses authentication of masculinity through maleness. There can be masculinity without male embodiment. Accordingly, I contend that one can also contemplate the possibility of male embodiment without hegemonic masculinity, which may be precisely the case of the *shabāb* from Shatila.

Venus Boyz, a 2002-movie directed by Gabriel Baur, invites the audience on a journey through the universe of the female masculinity of drag kings in London and New York. In one of the scenes of the movie, one of the characters says: "Every time I put on a suit jacket, I feel a little bit more powerful." But what of someone, as the Shatila *shabāb*, who cannot or has no reason to put on a suit jacket or military gear?

Men's studies display a similar "mesmerisation by power" that occasionally blends into a "mesmerisation by the spectacle" conducted in public, a tendency pronounced in research on Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies (Caton 1985; Herzfeld 1985; Gilsenan 1996). Due to the notion that these societies are marked by a sharp distinction between public and private, domains conceived of as exclusive and gendered, scant

attention has been paid to the way men act as "engendered and engendering subjects" (Guttman 1997: 385) through their everyday chores and their (very) mundane anxieties: how to get married, start an independent household or fly pigeons, as it happens with the Shatila *shabāb*.

Herzfeld's (1985) *Poetics of Manhood* provides the consummate instance of such an "anthropology of the spectacle." According to him, in Glendi, Crete, a man does not only have to be a good man, but also good *at being a man*. When playing cards, abducting women, dancing or stealing animals, men have to display "performative excellence," by exceeding themselves and others. Thus, in order to gain *simasia* (meaning), deeds have to be narrated and displayed in public by their perpetrator, who shows off his latest daring goat theft, with the ethnographer providing the more than attentive audience. What if some men, however, are after a quest of a moral nature: simply that of being good men, according to a local ethics, rather than that of spectacularly bragging about their excellence at being men?

Following the example of the *shabāb* of Shatila, I do not seek to provide an all-complying audience to the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s narratives, as I would be simply contributing to the consolidation of certain discourses about hegemonic masculinity, which cost the *shabāb* dear. When the *fidāʾiyyīn* recollect their deeds, not only the feminine is shunned, as pointed out by Kanafani (2005, 2008), but the *shab*āb's burden also disappears from view. The *fidāʾiyyīn* were all power, all gender as precisely a discourse on power, all public, all spectacle. Their narratives amalgamate all that the heroic 1970s stand for: territorial nationalism, third-worldism, socialism and, in the case of some women fighters, a feminism of power. As Nawaf, the *shāb* of the beginning of the chapter has reminded us, however, one cannot ignore that certain tropes of the 70s have become an impossibility, particularly for those coming after.

At first, it is impossible not to succumb in awe in the presence of a fidāʾi narrating his heroic deeds.[1]

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Abu Fawzi – *the 62-year-old ex-Fatah commando who we met above* – *showed me the pronounced scar on his leg, proof of his intrepid activities as* a fidāʾī, *which included several incursions deep into Palestine. He bragged to me: "I still have a very strong body. I did wrestling when I was younger. […] In our* niḍāl *(struggle), we never stop; we don't retire. We fight until we die."*

Massaging the tips of his long moustache, Abu Fawzi recalled how he tried to keep his mother and father in the dark about his adherence to the factions (al-tanẓīmāt)[2]. *His own father had been a fighter, but in Palestine. He was against carrying guns in Lebanon. The young Abu Fawzi, though, was too rebellious to follow in his father's steps: "I always do what is in my mind."*

All of his brothers were fidāʾiyyīn *and one of his sisters was a nurse, "taking care of and healing the fighters." Only when I prompted him, did he comment on women who acted as fighters: "Oh, yes, there were women with us. They worked as we used to work. They had military training and they served us very well. In war, they did everything we did. If you're fighting and you see your wife or sister with you, you fight as a lion. My sister, who worked as a nurse, was kidnapped by Fatah Abu Moussa.[3] They were after me. Sometimes she still works as a nurse. She never got married."*

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[1] The far majority of my interviews with the *fidāʾiyyīn* and several of those with the *shabāb* were conducted in Arabic. I recorded most of them and worked on the translation with a *shāb* later. Whenever a *shāb* opted to talk in English or switched back-and-forth between Arabic and English, I respected his choice.

[2] Literally, *tanẓīmāt* means "organizations."

[3] Fatah Abu Moussa is a faction opposed to the mainstream Fatah Abu Ammar (Yasser Arafat).

Other Palestinian factions did not catch Abu Fawzi, but the Syrians did. He spent 16 days in a Syrian prison and was tortured. Neither this nor his second wife's criticisms that his time spent with the fidāʾiyyīn *meant that the family could not afford to buy a house outside the camp compromised Abu Fawzi's determination. Only in 1985 did Abu Fawzi finally give up his reluctance and start accepting money from his* tanẓīm *(organization). It was not an easy decision: "Our* thawra *was corrupted because of money. People started getting paid and started thinking of their participation as work, and not as a duty. They got spoiled. But, for me, it has never been like that."*

Abu Fawzi still defines himself as a fighter: "I go on thinking of myself as a fidāʾī*. I never look back, only towards the future. And I never feel sorry for what I did. This made me the man I am today. […] The future belongs to those who fight and don't accept defeat."*

Throughout our conversation, a question kept criss-crossing my mind – "how is it, to kill someone?" – but it never came to be verbalized. Instead, having seen a carefully kept cigar box on one of the shelves in Abu Fawzi's sitting room, I made a mental note that I should offer him a Habano. A couple of months after our meeting, I did.

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One occasion was not enough for me to familiarize myself with Abu Jalil's biography. In the total eight-odd-hour-period I spent with him over two days, I was fascinated by how Abu Jalil, 63, an ex-Fatah commando and presently doubling as a cameraman, intertwined his personal story with that of the eventful saga of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

He selected his father's departure from Palestine as the starting point of his recollection: "My father actually came to Lebanon even before the hijra.[4] *He married my Lebanese mother and lived here for a couple of years. It was only in 1955 that we moved to Shatila. [...] In the beginning, Palestinians had hope they'd go back. But here they faced humiliation* (idhlāl) *and were not entitled to a decent life* (ḥayāt karīma)*. This is what originated hatred* (ḥiqd) *in the heart of Palestinians. [...] This situation went on until there was a crisis in government in 1958[5] [...]. And, after the coup d'état failed, the* Deuxième Bureau[6] *became all too powerful. If a Palestinian wanted to go from the Beqaa to Beirut, he needed authorization. We were watched all the time [...]. It was at this time that I started to understand* (afham)[7] *things and I became a* shāb*. And I was watched even more closely."*

To Abu Jalil's mind, it was the pressure exerted by the intelligence apparatus that contributed to triggering the Palestinian revolt: "All this pressure affected Palestinians inside. And, then, in the 1970s, the thawra *entered the camps through the main gates. People were really happy in the beginning." Already back then, however, the* thawra *carried the seeds of internal conflict, according to Abu Jalil: "Palestinians said:* Khalaṣ *(over)! We're done with the disgusting police* (qaraf al-darak)*. In those days, we had two kinds of people. Some of us understood and said: our revolution isn't against the* darak*; it's for a bigger goal, which is to get back to Palestine. But*

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[4] Abu Jalil uses the word *hijra* rather than *Nakba* (catastrophe) to refer to Palestinian forced departure from Palestine in 1948. *Hijra* means migration.

[5] In 1958, oppositionists staged a revolt against President Camille Chamoun. In the crisis triggered by the nationalization of the Suez Canal in Egypt, Chamoun refused to break off diplomatic relations with Britain and France. There was pressure among sectors of the Lebanese public that the country should associate itself with the United Arab Republic, recently formed between Egypt and Syria and proclaimed as a triumph of pan-Arabism. The Army Commander, General Fouad Shehab, refused to attack the insurgents, many of whom were Muslims, fearing that the military would split along sectarian lines. Having gained popularity by his actions during the crisis, Shehab himself was recognized as a compromise candidate to succeed Chamoun in office (Picard 1996; Salibi 2005 (1988); Trabulsi 2007; Hirst 2010).

[6] Under General Shehab, the military intelligence, called *Deuxième Bureau*, went through a process of hypertrophy, being strategically used by the President to bypass deadlocks caused by sectarian strife. The Bureau exerted strict control over the Palestinian refugees (Picard 1996; Hirst 2010).

[7] In the following pages, I will come back to this concept (*afham* or *waʿī*), the importance of understanding and achieving ʿaql (the capacity for reasoning) for a person, and especially a man, to be considered to have reached maturity.

others thought that the thawra *was against the police and the government* (al-ḥukūma) *and started acting too freely."*

Yet again, Abu Jalil linked the Palestinian political awakening with his own, claiming that the revolution brought him to the threshold of maturity: "During the time of the thawra*, we lived a different life altogether. I started to understand* (afham) *things and I knew I was with the* thawra *not because I loved to fight or wanted to die. I knew that my voice couldn't be heard if I only spoke and that the* bunduqiyya *(machine-gun)[8] was the only way that my voice could reach all the corners of the world."*

Having fathered six children, Abu Jalil found himself divided between his duties towards his family and his commitment to the revolution: "Before the invasion,[9] I already had six children. And I wanted to stop my work with the military organization (tanẓīm)*. The* tanẓīm *accepted but I didn't stop completely. I continued visiting them and fighting in my free time. But I had six children and needed to take care of them, to teach them."*

Through educating his children, Abu Jalil found another way to continue with his struggle: "The greatest gift Allah gives us is the ʿaql *(capacity for reasoning) and that's the most important weapon with which to fight the enemy. [...] Today, the* shabāb *get an education, become engineers, but where can they work? [...] The Israelis are betting on time. They think that the elders will die and the younger will forget. But that's impossible; this will never happen. [...] If you keep squeezing something more than it can take, it bursts back into your face."*

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[8] Over time, the machine-gun, or *bunduqiyya*, became iconized, together with the *fidāʾiyyīn*. Both are celebrated in Mahmoud Darwish's famous *Rita and the Rifle* (*Rita wa al-Bunduqiyya)* – the musical version of which is sung by Marcel Khalife – in which the poet/fighter is torn apart between his love for Rita and his love for the machine-gun that stands in the middle of their relationship.

[9] Abu Jalil alludes here to the 1978-invasion of Lebanon by Israel, which withdrew later in the year, but not without turning its positions in the south to its Lebanese proxy, the South Lebanese Army. In 1982, Israel undertook a second invasion, this time reaching West Beirut (Picard 1996; Salibi 2005 (1988); Trabulsi 2007; Hirst 2010).

To Abu Jalil, once one is Palestinian, one will always be Palestinian, in spite of difficulties: "The Lebanese made the question of nationality and settlement (tawṭīn) a strawman. [...] But, from inside, I'll always be Palestinian. Even after a hundred years, every Palestinian stays a Palestinian. Even if he's angry and pretends to ignore (yiṭayyaz)[10] Palestine, his will be empty words. I lived in five different houses as a result of wars. I don't remember me and my elder children having known tranquility (hudūʾ). We lived all the wars. [...] In 85, my family left the camp [due to the Camp Wars]. I had by then started my own business, working with wood for construction. And I had purchased a pick-up. I lost everything in the war: pick-up, wood, house, everything was gone. I left everything behind me and we moved out of the camp." With the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990, the Abu Jalil family decided to return to Shatila: "But everything was on the ground. I rebuilt our house."

Abu Jalil does not give up his hope of returning to Palestine: "As a fidāʾī, I went to Palestine several times, in military operations. Every time I went there, I became more attached to the idea of going back. I think it'll be hard in my lifetime to go back, but I think it'll happen in my children's lifetimes. [...] But it's true that the shabāb today are completely lost (ḍāʾiʿa). [...] The problem is with the system (al-niẓām) that brings emptiness (farāgh) to their lives. [...] The problem with the shabāb today is that they have been hit by politics, but not in the way we were. Their lives are empty. And, because of that, the parties (al-aḥzāb) can easily take advantage of their sorrow and anger and use it the way they [the political parties] want."

Abu Jalil took care to keep his own children on the right track – significantly enough, no longer the one prescribed by adhesion to military ranks, which was previously almost mandatory: "My eldest son went to the muʿaskar al-ashbāl (the cubs' camp).[11] But I wanted him to take proper care

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[10] Yiṭayyaz literally means "to show one's ass to somebody."
[11] The *ashbāl* (cubs) are described by some of the fidāʾiyyīn as a Boy Scout movement with a military face. A whole generation of young Palestinian men (and some women) trained militarily with the *ashbāl*. Young girls were sometimes sent to the *Zahra* (flowers),

of his education, so I only allowed him to go to the ashbāl *on Fridays." Old habits, however, die hard: "When he grew up and got consciousness* (waʿī),[12] *he decided that he wanted to be a* fidāʾī *full-time. As a result, he lost his education. So with my other children, I was much more careful. I always told them: educate yourself, get cultured for the* thawra*. But my daughters always stayed out of the game."*

Abu Jalil is ambiguous when it comes to appreciating the role of women in the military ranks of the thawra*: "Women had a part. There was the Women's Union, which involved lots of activities. Some of them carried weapons, while others spread consciousness and educated others. Some sewed clothes and flags; others taught. Women were always supporting the* fidāʾiyyīn, *so that they could do their role. The percentage of women fighters was very small. You know, men have a strong build* (bunya)*."*

His health condition prompted Abu Jalil to share his memories of prison: "I was in prison three times. The first time was in 68, in a Lebanese prison, where I was accused of being a fidāʾī*. I stayed only for four days and was released after compromising myself to work for them as a* mukhābir *(intelligence agent), which of course I never did. Instead, I told my brothers-in-arms that we have to be more careful! The second time was in 83. The Syrians took me because of a similarity of names. I stayed in prison for two months and they had no proof against me! But they tortured me anyway, and as a result, [...] my spinal cord was injured. The third time was in 88, under the accusation that I was with Fatah."*

Still, there is no room to falter in Abu Jalil's determination: "The fidāya *(i. e. the fighters' movement) was a duty* (wājib) *and not work* (shughul)*. Through it, I told the world that we're the problem* (al-mushkila) *but also the solution* (al-ḥall)*. [...] Today, there is no* fidāya; *there's* sulṭa *(sovereign*

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gatherings where they sang nationalistic songs or read and wrote nationalistic poetry. The *Zahra* did not provide military training, though, which would not have been considered culturally appropriate for young girls, according to several research participants.
[12] See footnote 7.

power).[13] But who built the sulṭa? *The PLO itself." And he goes on to give his diagnostics about the state of the* thawra *today, which brought our conversation to an end: "It's possible that the struggle* (al-kifāḥ) *has been delayed, but now it isn't the time for fighting; it's the time for tactics. […] The Palestinian Revolution exists to stay. The activities and strategies may differ, but the main goal remains: the liberation of Palestine. […] Everyone tries to hold Palestinians in the same place; to kill the ambition* (al-ṭumūḥ) *that we once had. […] Yet every generation is more active* (ḥirik) *than the previous one. We aren't dinosaurs: we won't become extinct."*

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Abu Naji, 39, who retired from his military position with Fatah when he got a job at UNRWA, claimed his heroic persona even before we properly started with our interview. Barely one minute lapsed after I entered the sitting room of his dwelling in Shatila, when he volunteered:

Abu Naji: Do you want to see my wounds?
Me: Er…

Ignoring my hesitation, Abu Naji raised his shirt and showed me several scars on his lower and middle-back, a result of war-related injuries. He went on:

Abu Naji: And, now, do you want to see my bunduqiyya *(machine-gun)?*

I showed no hesitation this time:

Me: Yes… Wow! It looks pretty new!

Abu Naji winked at me: "I always keep it clean!"

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[13] The *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Arabic* defines *sulṭa* as "power, might, strength; authority; sway, dominion; influence, sovereign power, jurisdiction." *Sulṭa* is also the word used to refer to the Palestinian Authority inside the Occupied Territories. Abu Jalil's use of the word admits both meanings.

Abu Naji's self-presentation of his heroic persona should not come as a surprise. To begin with, he probably thought that I was seeking evidence of his heroism, similar to other researchers and journalists in Shatila. In addition, Abu Naji grew up among the fidāʾiyyīn. *Younger than the latter, and with many siblings (his father, a womanizer, married seven times and bore several children with each wife, hardly being able to give attention to any), Abu Naji left school at a very early age and spent his time in the military ranks. He even employed military language to describe his family: "We're so many, that we can probably start our own* tanẓīm *(here meaning military organization)!"*

He claims as his own the battles fought by his comrades, even though he was too young to have effectively taken part in them: "I spent my childhood with the thawra, *fighting against the Kataeb.[14] And then against the Lebanese Army. And then against the Kataeb again. And after that, against Sharon.[15] And, finally, I fought in the Camp Wars. And we survived the six-month-siege, during which we even had to eat cats." He actually only acted as a* fidāʾī *in the last battle, as he finally conceded: "My beginning as a* fidāʾī *was against the Shiite [during the Camp Wars]. I was young during the Sabra and Shatila massacre and also during the war against the Kataeb. At school, no one talked about the* thawra, *but we knew. Abu Ammar[16] – God bless him – used to come himself to see us and kiss us."*

Abu Naji was severely injured during the Camp Wars and almost died: "It was Doctor Giannou[17] who brought me back from the dead. He operated on me twice. And then I was sent to Italy for treatment." In Italy, Abu Naji

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[14] The Kataeb or Phalanges, a right-wing party-cum-militia, supported mainly by Maronite Christians, played a central role in the Lebanese Civil War and continues to be an important actor in Lebanese politics.

[15] A former Israeli Prime-Minister, military commander and Minister of Defence, Ariel Sharon was considered to have had "personal responsibility" for the 1982-massacre of Sabra and Shatila by a commission established by the Israeli government.

[16] In Shatila, Yasser Arafat is commonly referred to by his *nom-de-guerre*, "Abu Ammar." The employment of the teknonym has the effect of creating familiarity between the Palestinian leader and the speakers, as all of them are referred to as "Abu-so-and-so" when they parent a child, or even before.

[17] Chris Giannou, a Canadian doctor, describes the 27 months he spent conducting medical surgeries in besieged Shatila in his *Besieged – A Doctor's Story of Life and Death in Beirut* (1991 [1990]).

befriended an Italian patient who was recovering on the bed next to his. Once they were both released from hospital, the Italian man found Abu Naji a job and wanted to give him his own daughter in marriage. Abu Naji did not want to follow in his father's steps, and decided to live up to the family commitments he had left behind in Beirut: "I had just gotten married here one week before I was injured. So I returned for my wife." Um Naji graduated as a pharmacist, but Abu Naji is not keen on the idea of her working: "I have nothing against women working. But not my wife. People here talk."

Even though his years as a fidāʾī *are pivotal in Abu Naji's sense of self, he forbids his own son from becoming one: "In my opinion, no one should be a* fidāʾī, *unless there is a war. If something happens in Shatila, I'll be the first one to defend it." And, in a comment that surprised me, as it established a distance from his remarks at the beginning of our interview, he confessed: "You know, I actually don't like* Kalashnikovs.[18] *This is not my life. I just need it to defend Palestine, to fight our enemy, but not the Lebanese. No, I've never seen Palestine. I only hear about it on TV. We hear about Ramallah, Ariha.[19] But I'll never forget Palestine. If I'm told that the border is open now, I'll leave my wife and children and go to Palestine."[20]*

Yet, Abu Naji thinks this wish is unlikely to be fulfilled in the near future: "No one actually thinks of the future. Everyone here thinks of tomorrow only and of how to provide food and clothing to one's family. [...] My hopes? Well, I hope to return to Palestine, but without all these differences and divisions. [...] And my dreams aren't good. Why does one want to dream? Since 1948, we dream of going back. Tomorrow, there'll be a new generation and we're still saying we'll return."

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[18] The *fidāʾiyyīn*'s *bunduqiyya* was often the Soviet-made machine-gun AK-47, also known as Kalashnikov, after the name of its inventor, Mikhail Kalashnikov.

[19] Those are also the names of the two UNRWA schools in Shatila, both functioning in the same building.

[20] Diana Allan (2007) argues that comments such as these need to be properly contextualized and cannot be taken at face value.

With Abu Majid, 51, a former Fatah and PFLP cadre, and now an independent, and a writer-cum-journalist-cum-commerce graduate, the son of a baptized Palestinian Sunnite, himself born to a Lebanese Shiite father, my previous placid conviction that a fidāʾī *is always a* fidāʾī *- that is, a patriarch and a hero found in a virile, super-healthy and heterosexual body, even if scarred – began to wobble.*

Abu Majid was born in Tyre, outside the camps. During the Ottoman period, his Lebanese Shiite grandfather left South Lebanon for Argentina, where he managed to amass considerable wealth. When he came back in 1923, Lebanon was under the French Mandate. As the underdeveloped south of the country offered him limited opportunities for investment, he opted to move to Palestine and did not see a point in registering with the French authorities in Lebanon. The family established itself in a border town, on the Palestinian side of the region known as Naqura.

"You need to understand, Gustavo, that the borders made no sense back then," Abu Majid explained to me. "You see, that's Palestine. My grandpa lived in this border town, together with several other Lebanese, in this very Christian village, Al-Bassa, where there were also a considerable number of Sunnites. There were many intermarriages between Christians and Sunnites and my Shiite grandfather was welcome and well-accepted into the community. It was normal to have children baptized, even for Muslims. So my father, born to a Lebanese Shiite, was baptized. And later he converted to become a Sunnite."

The ill-fated decision of buying an orchard for 2,500 Palestinian pounds just before the Nakba *made Abu Majid's grandfather lose all his liquidity, so that the family was cash-stripped when forced out of Palestine. They set up in the grandfather's village in Southern Lebanon, where they were looked down upon as Palestinians, according to Abu Majid, in spite of their Lebanese origins. "In Palestine, my father used to be called* al-lubnāni *(the Lebanese),*

*but with no intention of ridicule. Here, my Lebanese neighbours used to mock me [...]. Even if we had some wealth, because my father managed to secure a job as a teacher at an UNRWA school in Tyre, and even if we had Lebanese origins, we were looked down as Palestinians and treated as outsiders. But, like other Palestinians, I feel dignity (*karāma*) [...]. I like Lebanon, I'm of Lebanese origin, but I feel Palestinian. Palestinians planted most of the lemon orchards in Lebanon; a Palestinian from the Chammas family set up the best school in Tyre; the largest bank of this country [Lebanon], the Intra Bank, belonged to a Palestinian. We brought our money and experience to Lebanon. No, we weren't a* fallāḥ *family. My grandfather was a* fallāḥ*, but not us. We lived in the city and we didn't work in agriculture. We had a car; we bought the first TV set of the neighbourhood; we had a magnetophone. We were upper-middle class and still thought of ourselves as Palestinians. Mind you, I've always been aware of our difference: back then, we didn't live in a camp, and even when we moved into a camp, it was Al-Bass in Tyre, which is better than other camps in Lebanon. I know my life wasn't like that of other Palestinians. But I felt Palestinian and identified with my people. [...] You need to understand, Gustavo, that for me, 'Palestinian' isn't a race. My Palestinianness is an idea."*

As Abu Majid himself brought the issue of class into our conversation, I decided to probe him further along those lines. *"Ok, Palestinianness is an idea, and then that's why you, middle-class, can claim a Palestinian-belonging?"* I provoked, somewhat clumsily. Abu Majid kept his elegance: *"Gustavo, class divisions weren't strong among rural communities in Palestine because people used to work on their own land. Class divisions were stronger in the cities, which is why Palestine saw the creation of the first Communist Party of this region. Even when we moved to Al-Bass camp in Tyre, when I was 12, we saw no reason for any embarrassment, because we were originally a* fallāḥ *family."* I still tried to hold on to my purified and reified understanding of class divisions: *"But, if you had money, why did you move to Al-Bass camp?"* Abu Majid tried to broaden my comprehension of "class:" *"My father wanted to own his house, instead of renting. And, I suspect, he also wanted to be among*

his own people. You know, for someone of Lebanese origin, he was quite nationalistic and quite Palestinian actually. And, by then, the Lebanese authority had collapsed, so we simply built a house on a plot that belonged to the government." He joked: "You see, there's a good side to the lack of government." He added that there was no strict separation between Al-Bass camp and Tyre back then: "Till 1982, people used the streets inside the camp to get to Tyre. We kept our friends, Lebanese including, from outside the camp. Al-Bass, remember, is in the middle of Tyre."

Abu Majid's parents sent him for military training with the ashbāl,[21] *because they wanted to toughen him up: "As a child, I often fell sick; I had lots of health issues. And, if people shouted at me, I'd easily cry. My parents didn't want me to be so breakable, so they sent me to the* ashbāl. I was 11 by then.*" He laughed: "And, then, they regretted! Because sometimes they had no idea where I was. Whenever there was a problem, I'd go after it. I'd run after danger. If there was an explosion in the Rashidyieh camp, off there I went. If there was a fight in Ain-Hilweh, there I was. By 12, I had already a gun! And, soon after, as I became a trainer for other boys and had to keep the weapons myself, I used to carry 18 guns! It is true that I never shot, but I was prepared to do so. Having a gun became some kind of ID for us. You know our ID is different from the ID of the Lebanese. So often we're treated as people with no identity. The gun became our identity."*

In 1976, already an adult working with the Palestinian factions, Abu Majid left Al-Bass. He then lived in Shatila for the first time: "I was studying at the Beirut Arab University and my father, whose financial situation changed dramatically with my siblings and I enrolling at the university, did not have the means to finance a house for me outside the camp." In 1978, he moved out of Shatila and shared a place with other students in Al-Tariq Al-Jadida/Fakhani: "But, again here, Gustavo, try to understand that this whole area was part of the Sabra and Shatila complex." In 1979, already as a PFLP cadre, he moved back to Shatila, working with the youth organizations. In the

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[21] See footnote 11.

following year, with a scholarship, he left Lebanon for Romania to study journalism for four years.

He described the time spent in Romania as having been very rich, both intellectually and politically: "I met people from all over. I benefitted a lot from that. [...] Because I was a member of the PFLP, I also got to work with people from Gaza and the West Bank. I met people from 1948.[22] As far as the struggle is concerned, I learned a lot. And that's precisely what my father taught me: if I wanted to fight Zionism, I had to be an educated man. Because of that, I've never been only a fidāʾī. *First, I was a* fidāʾī *and a student, and then a* fidāʾī *and a journalist."*

Upon his graduation, he did not manage to return immediately to Lebanon: "I couldn't go on living in Romania and yet I couldn't come back to Lebanon. After 82 and the Israeli invasion, the Lebanese government was controlled by right-wing Christians, so we couldn't renew our travel documents. That's why I moved to Syria instead. There, I lived in the Yarmouk Camp for four years, until 1988. Yarmouk isn't actually a camp: more properly speaking, it's a suburb, with proper buildings and infrastructure and wide streets. Camps in Syria aren't as poor as in Lebanon. [...] Palestinians, as Arab citizens, can work in Syria and lead a better life than here."

Abu Majid changed Fatah for the leftist PFLP in 1977. Actually, he came across some communist members of Fatah and they inspired him to turn left: "I was a student and I was independent in my thinking; I always chose what I wanted. I liked the level of culture of PFLP members. There, one could talk, discuss, argue. They read, they knew. They were intellectuals. I liked that." In 1988, a position became available at the Radio Station Sawt Al-Shaab, *controlled by the Lebanese Communist Party, which had good relations with the PFLP, and that is how Abu Majid found his way back to Beirut.*

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[22] Abu Majid is referring here to the areas belonging to historic Palestine, formerly annexed to Israel after 1948.

Being a seasoned interviewer, Abu Majid made me feel comfortable enough to ask him the questions about killing and sexual relations with women fighters I did not dare to pose to the other fidāʾiyyīn. *"How is it, to kill someone?" I ventured. Abu Majid's answer appeased the fear I had of facing a moral dilemma in my views of the* fidāʾiyyīn: *"Oh, I never had to shoot. I was prepared for that, but by coincidence, I never had to shoot. Remember I wasn't on the field all the time, most of my time I spent in the offices. But I did take part in operations and went to the frontline. We were in the middle of a war, and whether one wants it or not, one is part of his community. I had this friend, a* sheikh, *who would come, change into military gear and advance with me to the frontline."* His experience, nonetheless, cannot be generalized to all, and very disquietingly so for my moralizing quandaries.

"And how was it, I mean, with the girls, on the frontline?" I ventured again. Abu Majid gave me a generous smile: "In 82, we had four women fighters with us.[23] I had someone with me, who was like my girlfriend, we were always together. We didn't make love, because that was impossible in the war situation. But we protected each other. I saw her as a fighter; she was a fighter like myself. I took care of her and she also took care of me. Now, outside of the battlefield, of course, there were relations. I met girls who made love with all the men they knew. You see, this period, mid-70s, beginning of the 80s, it was a period of blowing up traditions. Before and after that, traditions worked, but not during that period. The girls with us in the Lebanese Communist Party weren't virgins and they lost their virginity because they wanted to. And some of those girls were from the camps. Sometimes I wonder why this tiny membrane, the hymen, has such importance. But, then, again, those were exceptional years and they impacted the condition of women. The 70s weren't years of military revolution only; they were years of social revolution too. In Lebanon, women from big cities already worked and were used to being outside their homes. The situation was different in the camps, because they were surrounded, so the older traditions persisted. But, at the beginning, the

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[23] Even though he had left to study in Romania in 1980, Abu Majid came back to take part in the battles in 1982.

camps particularly were the basis for the revolution and people started coming in from all over, from Africa, Europe and South America, and shared their lives with Palestinians. So the camps started being exposed to all these ideas, such as the communist principles of equality between men and women, and the communists weighed in on this part of the world. Women, including those from the camps, began breaking out of the shells of tradition. So relations happened, outside of wedlock. In the PFLP and DFLP, boys and girls were the same. But it wasn't like that with Fatah: the position of women depended on the impact of leftist ideas on the organization one belonged to. After 1982, with the defeat of the PLO in Lebanon, this social revolution, the ideas of that period, all this was gone. People went back to traditions and religion. Today, there's still a thawra*, but it isn't my revolution anymore; it's another revolution. I was in a total revolution; it wasn't only about using guns; it was about changing everything. Now it isn't about changing everything anymore; it's only about fighting Israel. So it isn't actually a revolution today; it's a fighting. In our times, it was a fight and it was a revolution as well. We changed concepts!"*

Presently, Abu Majid works for a leading Lebanese newspaper and manages to find time to volunteer in a Palestinian NGO, even though he is generally very critical of such organizations: "Today is the epoch of the NGOs. Their directors were leaders of the Palestinian factions, who made use of the same relations they had before. So, the same kind of logic that worked for the parties works for the NGOs. People become dependent on someone to give them things. People aren't given the chance to work. They become ensnared in the logic of dependence. And a dependent community can't act politically."

He goes on thinking of himself as a fidāʾī*: "Being a* fidāʾī *isn't only about military operations. Military operations are the most idealistic thing, but one can be a* fidāʾī *in other forms. I go on being a* fidāʾī *because I don't think the conflict is a military one only; maybe it shouldn't even be military at a certain level now. I still work for the cause, through what I write, for example. [...] I think my life was worth it. Life is not like all or nothing. We did*

something. Because we did what we did we moved something. We made mistakes, true, but this wasn't about the Palestinian cause only: it was the Cold War; conflict in the whole world, and we were part of it. We tried our best, but our enemies were very strong too. We did good things. And bad things. Without us, I don't think that the discussion would be like it is today: should we have a complete independent state or, what the Israelis want, should we have control of self-determined areas? We're discussing whether to have a state or not. We put Palestine on the political map. Even if we have been defeated so many times, politically we exist now."

These days, on a political level, Abu Majid defines himself as an independent. Nonetheless, I still tried to label him one last time:

> *Me: But you're still a communist at heart, aren't you, Abu Majid?*
> *Abu Majid: At heart, no, Gustavo. In the mind.*

A civilian, and yet a military, a Palestinian, and yet middle-class and of Lebanese origin, a Palestinian refugee from Lebanon, but with experience of having lived in Syria, Abu Majid defies my scientifically-trained labeling tendency and challenges my reified and purified categories. After all, how can pigeonholes, categorizations and overarching abstractions – "patriarchy," "hegemonic masculinity" – be used to make sense of complexity?

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Inhorn (2012) enumerates the clichés that characterize what she critically names "hegemonic masculinity, Middle-Eastern style:"

> In the Middle East, the hegemonically masculine man is said to be a *family patriarch*. He is socialized into patriarchy during boyhood, where he learns to dominate his sisters and even his mother, although he is still subordinated by the senior males of the family. Eventually, he achieves patriarchal control over his own family when he reaches adulthood, marries and produces offspring, especially sons who are necessary for the perpetuation of his lineage. Because he is a patriarch, he may exert power and authority over the women, junior males and children in his family through coercion and even force. This is especially true if *family honor* is

threatened. […] Marriage is not characterized by love, because it is *arranged* by families, often for the purposes of familial and tribal alliance. Without conjugal intimacy, men's primary emotional commitments remain with their own mothers. In this context of fragile marital bonds, hegemonically masculine men enjoy their rights to *polygyny*. Muslim men may marry up to four wives simultaneously, as long as they promise to treat them equally. Equal treatment demands *hypervirility* [.] […] Furthermore, the Islamic mandate to reproduce an Islamic "multitude" encourages *pronatalism* within polygynous marriage, with some men producing their own small tribes of children from multiple spouses. *Tribalism* itself requires large families, not only for the purposes of nomadic pastoral labor but also for tribal raiding and defence. Hence, men's tendencies towards *violence* and *militarism* are perpetuated, indeed encouraged, through tribal structures, as well as through Islamic *jihad*, or the mandate to defend religion when it is threatened by outside forces. (49-50, original emphasis)

Under such a guise, hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy are notoriously Orientalizing actualizations of the "theoretical metonyms" (Abu-Lughod 1989) – tribes, the harem and Islam – often adopted by a previous generation of anthropologists working in the Middle East. Such tropes – linking masculinity, violence and militarism – also fuel other agendas, within and beyond academia. Feminist writer Nagel (1998), for instance, establishes a connection between manhood and nationhood and between masculinity and nationalism through a series of hastily ascertained parallelisms. She takes pain to give a certain depth to both nationalism and masculinity, but on a definitional level only. For instance, when it comes to defining masculinity, she sets off by resorting to Gilmore's controversial classic *Manhood in the Making* (1980), where "Man-the-Impregnator-Protector-Provider" (223) is a ubiquitous figure. According to Nagel, there is a current set of masculine standards that can be defined as hegemonic, which also constitutes a core of modern "isms:" (territorial) nationalism, colonialism, militarism. For her, there is something inescapably and structurally masculine, both in a cultural and a social sense, found in institutions such as crime, violence and politics.

Nagel persistently ignores the notes of analytical caution by Connell and Gerzon, notwithstanding the citations of both in her text. Connell (1995)

properly observes that man does not actually behave according to a "John Wayne" model of manhood, and Gerzon (1982) shows how hegemonic masculinity, always well beyond reach, remains an ever-impossible achievement: "In comparing themselves to the dashing figure riding off into the setting sun or racing across the goal line, ordinary men in ordinary life cannot help but feel overshadowed." He goes on to write that, in private, "men no longer feel like heroes." (5) Against the demanding requirements of an ideal–typical hegemonic masculinity, actual men – within their class, ethnicity and/or sexuality – are pushed into eternal and mandatory crises, and that by heuristic fiat. So too the *shabāb* from Shatila.

In turn, Massad (1995) uses recent archival data on Palestinian nationalism to give some historical scaffolding to a thesis not unlike that of Nagel. He draws extensively on the Palestinian National Charter and the Palestinian Nationalist Charter, documents issued by the PLO defining Palestinian political goals and rights, as well as on communiqués by UNLU (Unified Leadership of the Uprising) during the first intifada, and finally, on some remarks by Arafat, in order to put forward the argument that Palestinian nationalist agency has a masculine basis: "Palestinian is always already conceived in the masculine." (483) In the very introduction of the Nationalist Charter, the Zionist conquest of Palestine is characterized as rape, as a result of which the motherland cannot be trusted anymore to produce legitimate Palestinian children. While residence in Palestine was enough to define someone as Palestinian until 1947, after that date "Palestinianess" became the monopoly of those born to Palestinian fathers: in Massad's words, "territory was replaced by paternity." (472) The UNLU communiqués portray Palestinian mothers, sisters and daughters as *manābit*[24] or the soil where "manhood, respect and dignity" grows. Massad also highlights, in some of the UNLU's calls and Arafat's utterances, the Palestinian nationalist agent as not only a man, but also bourgeois-in-the-making, virile and able-bodied: *he* is working hard in the Gulf to help *his*

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[24] *Manābit* literally mean "plant nurseries." "Botanical metaphors" (Malkki 1992) deployed in nationalist discourses are commonly gendered.

family out, *he* is protecting *his* parents, *he* is raising *his* children and *he* is paying for *his* siblings' education. The Palestinian people as a whole is seen as a body, furthermore as a man's body, which "has *erected* itself and will not *bow.*" (479, original emphasis)

Scholars have explored how gendered bodies become metaphors for the nation and how gendered subjectivities correspond to nationalist agendas (Lambeviski 1999; Puri 1999; Bracewell 2000; Hemmings, Gedalof et al. 2006).[25] Healthy and heterosexual bodies, duly idealised, stand in for the nation and impact on the way intimate relationships are shaped. In the case of the *thawra*, the idealized bodies are the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s: strong and scarred, they have survived torture. Abu Fawzi, the former wrestler, and Abu Naji proudly exhibited the bodily marks of their wounds to me. Moreover, the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s bodies forcibly exude virility, as often depicted in Palestinian imagery from the time and on the cover photo of a classic study on the Palestinian saga in Lebanon (Sayigh 1979) (Figure 1). Women who have transgressed the gendered limits of the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s universe pay a price: Abu Fawzi's sister, who nursed the *fidāʾiyyīn*, has remained single; forced into a marriage, Um Latifah, the ex-fighter, states that she does not feel her femininity. The *fidāʾiyyīn*'s bodies play a pivotal role in their own performance as daring commandos during the *thawra*, a performance which, as Kanafani (2005, 2008) shows, allows them to overcome, at least on a discursive level, their prior and assumed effeminized status as passive refugees.

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[25] In the case of Palestinians, the specialized literature, under the influence of feminist studies, has been remarkably prolific when it comes to researching women's lives in light of the relation between gendered subjectivities and nationalism (for example: Sayigh 1987, 1998; Peteet 1991, 1997; Faier 1997, 2002; Abdo 1999; Jean-Klein 2000, 2001, 2002; Kanaaneh 2002, 2003; Abdallah 2006). Surprisingly, studies on the relation between Palestinian men and nationalism constitute an exception, amounting to a handful only: Peteet 1994; Jean-Klein 1997; Pichter 1998; Kannaneh 2003, 2005; Hart 2008.
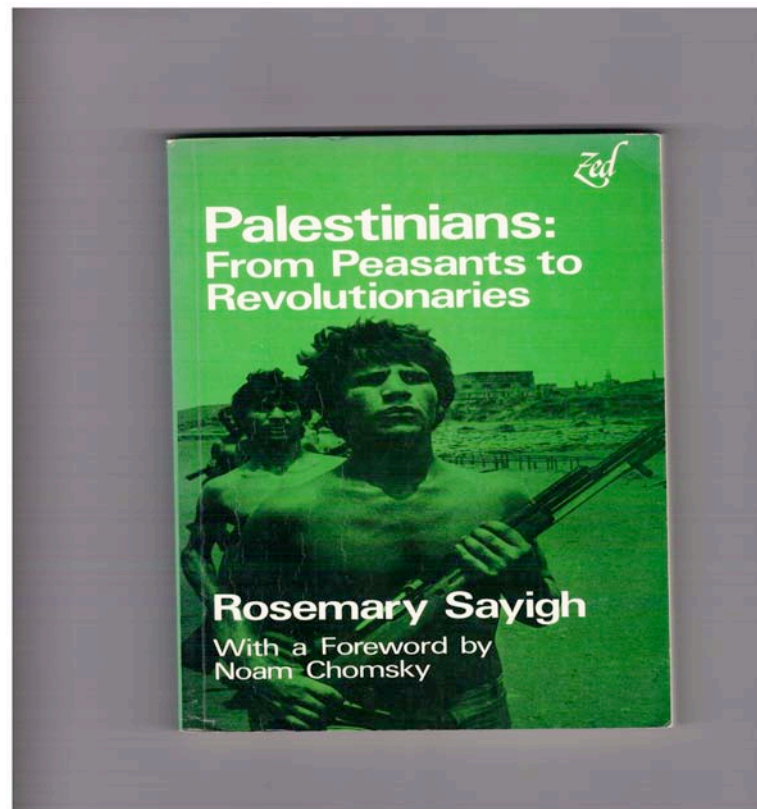
Figure 1 - The All-Virile *Fidāʾiyyīn*

The chroniclers of the Palestinian saga in Lebanon (Sayigh 1979, 1993; Peteet 1991, 2005; Khalili 2007a, 2007b, 2008) suggest that the camps, and Shatila prominently among them, functioned as moral spaces during the *thawra*, providing a hospitable environment for refugees to recover a certain sense of pride. Based on fieldwork among refugees in Jordan, Hart (2000, 2008) argues that it is through the display of gender by their young male residents as intrepid and stubborn *mukhaymjīn* (camp residents), and their female dwellers as modest persons, that camps become differentiated from the rest of Amman (where some 70% of the population is of Palestinian origin). During the *thawra*, and possibly also after that, gender display by the *fidāʾiyyīn*, through the narration of their deeds, which often assumed an aura of macho bravado, marked off the camps, and Shatila prominently among them, as a Palestinian moral space. In this sense, the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s quest is even more demanding than that faced by Herzfeld's Glendiotis (1985): in addition to displaying that they are good at being men,

they have to show that they are good men. Their moral pursuit differs, nonetheless, from that of their sons.

The discourse sustaining this imagined community – Palestine – is highly gendered. Through resistance, a new man was created. If the expulsion from their land and the defeats of 1948 and 1967 were blights on Palestinian honour (Humphries and Khalili 2007), restoring it through battle became, for the *fidāʾiyyīn*, a way of reclaiming back their manhood. The *thawra* made heroes out of young men (and only rarely out of women) and brought them to the threshold of maturity: "guns in hand," Haugbolle (2012) writes, "boys become men." (120) Posters produced by the Palestinian factions capture particularly well this image of the confident *fidāʾī,* bravely advancing through the crests of hills, *bunduqiyya* in hand and with black-and-white-stripped *kuffiyya* (Figure 2). Against such a background, in which a version of hegemonic hyper-masculinity is valorized, the Shatila *shabāb* today appear forcibly effeminized, with their masculinity on the verge of crisis. But in fact they are not.
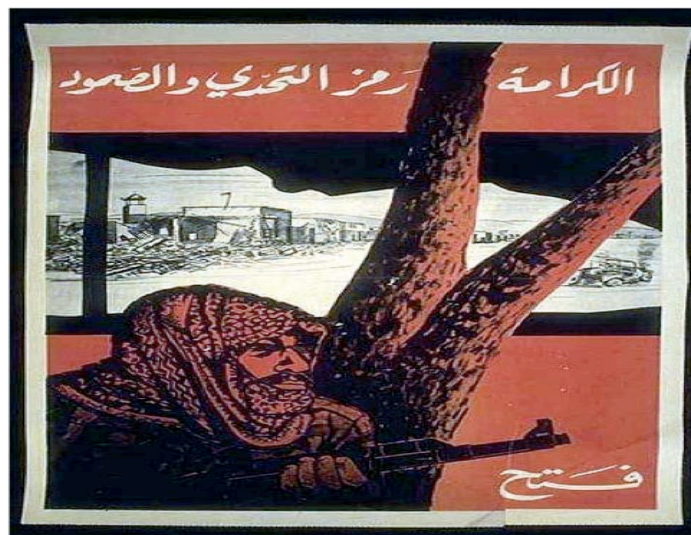
Figure 2 - Fatah Poster for the Battle of Karama (1968)[26]
The text in Arabic says: "Karāma is a symbol of defiance and steadfastness."
But has the meaning of karāma changed since then?

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[26] The Battle of Karama, which opposed on one side the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), and on the other, the Jordanian Army and the PLO, in March 1968, boosted Fatah's propaganda and served to convince several young men to join the ranks of the Palestinian national struggle. Coincidentally, the village where the battle took place is named *Karāma*, itself the term in Arabic for dignity.

In a manner quite similar to the attempt of this study, Nawaf, with whose love stories this chapter begins, chose to use his paintings to portray trivial details of the daily life in Shatila: what his pictures depict fit well into what Abu-Lughod (1991) describes as "ethnographies of the particular." While reserving due space to the ubiquitous symbols of Palestinian nationalism adorning the camp, including the flags, the murals with the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the photos of Arafat, the *fidāʾiyyīn* and the *shuhadāʾ* (martyrs), his art in no way makes of these themes its sole source of inspiration. In one of his efforts at framing himself for this ethnographer, Nawaf stated: "As an artist, I need to look at the camp deeply and also at myself, my mind, the shadows, the movements of people. An artist needs to be a patriot fighter, a dreamer, a poet, a passionate person, a horse rider."

The following pages argue that Nawaf and other *shabāb* have not been emasculated: rather, the content and boundaries of what counts as masculinities (and femininities) are fluid and shift in space and time. Indeed, there are men beyond hegemonic masculinity, just as there is nationalism beyond territory, and (non-bare) life and citizens (including in Shatila) beyond sovereignty.

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With the European activist gone, Nawaf finally found his girl.

The European's departure had an awakening effect for Nawaf. He actually knew the European was not for him: "When I was with her, I was out of the camp all the time, going to pubs, sleeping with her. After being like this for eight months, I had the feeling I wasn't me anymore. I was out of focus all the time, often drunk [...]. I had the feeling it was not me who was there. At the beginning, I thought that was a nice life: dancing all night long, drinking, having sex and smoking hashish. I was ignoring my university, my family. I was

never home and didn't know my mother's, brother's and sisters' needs. When the European travelled, I woke up." He warns the other shabāb *against taking the same route: "Most of the* shabāb *live in illusion, not in reality. We, as* shabāb*, are poor refugees in the camp. This is our life. We shouldn't be ashamed of this. But the* shabāb*, because they meet foreigners and go to Hamra,[27] they think they are another person; they think they are different. In their subconscious, they start thinking they aren't refugees: they're class. [...] Because of this illusion, they start thinking they aren't related to camp society and they want to marry a foreigner and live abroad."*

Through his job at a Palestinian NGO, where he benefits from an attractive package: contract; paid vacation; paid sick leave, and relative flexibility of working hours, Nawaf opened his horizons: "Before, my world was the camp. When I went outside, it was to visit relatives in the South. But, through my work, I started relating to foreigners, Lebanese and Palestinians from different areas. This is good, not to be closed in your own society. [...] Interaction with different people [...] enriches your mind and experience. But, ya ʿnī,[28] at the end, I'm related to my society. I'm from the camp, I'm a refugee. If I want to marry, I have to marry a woman from my society. Living outside – Europe, the Gulf – would be as if I were a fish taken out of water. Even if life abroad is easier, I don't know. I know everything here: my life, my family, my work is here. My wife should be from here, from my camp, even if she isn't Palestinian."

There was actually an attempt to marry Nawaf to a cousin, his bint ʿamm *(FBD),[29] who lives in Saudi Arabia. But he stuck to his logic: "I don't*

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[27] A bohemian, middle-class district of West Beirut.

[28] Meaning, "that is to say," *ya ʿnī* is often employed in daily usage of Arabic when the speaker is looking for words or trying to make a point clearer for the interlocutor, somewhat similar to the way Americans of a younger generation use "like."

[29] Reputed as ideal by previous generations, for a series of reasons – such as maintaining the wealth within the family; facilitating pre-wedding negotiations and reduced dowries, and promoting more harmony between the two families (previously known to each other) – marriages with the FBD are nonetheless on the decline in the region (Gunaid, Hummad et al. 2004; Shah 2004; Inhorn 2012). Lebanon has one of the lowest rates of consanguineous marriages within the Middle East, though there has recently been a new upsurge, one of the presumed reasons being the deep fractioning of Lebanese society during the Civil War

want to go to Saudi Arabia; it'd be like taking a fish out of water: it's a closed society there. And my bint ʿamm *wouldn't be happy here either: her room there is bigger than my whole house in the camp. [...] Her parents also want a large amount in* muqaddam, *which I can't afford." Besides, some of the lectures he was helping to organize as part of a reproductive health project at his NGO also affected his decisions: "We talk about marriage with relatives in this project. They say that marriage with a close relative causes lots of diseases. I also asked a* sheikha *about it and she confirmed that there is a* ḥadīth[30] *suggesting that close relatives not marry. [...] And I saw a dream in which I bore an alien child. So I combined all this –* ḥadīth, *dream and reproductive health program – and decided not to let the relation with my* bint ʿamm *go ahead." He tried to repudiate her by breaking her heart: "I lied to her, saying that I knew lots of girls, smoked hashish, drank and went to night clubs. But she loved me more. [...] By now, she and her family probably know I kind of got engaged, and they probably know that my girlfriend's family hasn't accepted me entirely."*

With the European girl's departure, Nawaf decided the time had come to be serious about his life: "That life I had with the European wasn't stable. After she left, I started thinking I should get engaged, build a house and have children. [...] I started looking for a girl that has the same life as me, same conditions, including economic, same camp, same religion, so that she can understand and encourage me."

One day, he crossed Jamila in one of the alleys of Shatila. He smiled. She smiled back: "I thought: she is the one. I asked a colleague and one of my sister's friends about her. I was thinking about how to approach her. You know

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(1975-1990) (Inhorn 2012). In Shatila, even though I have not investigated the matter comprehensively, I have come across a number of marriages with the FBD among the members of the Nakba generation and less so among the *thawra* generation. That pattern of marriage is, however, normally frowned upon by the *shabāb*. In the reproductive health program conducted by a local NGO, discussed in Chapter 6, consanguineous marriages was one of the topics young men and women wanted to discuss, an indication that that pattern of marriage was a source of anxiety.

[30] *Ḥadīth* are sayings ascribed to Prophet Mohammed, which function as sources of norms for Islamic schools of jurisprudence.

how camp society is. Out of respect, I can't talk to her directly. I don't want to embarrass her or myself. Another time I passed by her, I just moved my lips, saying ṣabāḥ al-khayr *(good morning). She replied the same way. So I sent a colleague to her place to give her my phone number."*

Jamila refused to call back, telling Nawaf's messenger that he had to talk to her father first, should he want to meet her. Nawaf sent his colleague again to overcome her resistance. She finally conceded: "Over the phone, I told her I wanted to get engaged, but I had to finish my university first. I suggested she asked the sheikh about me." The sheikh was an old friend. He already offered psychological support to Nawaf during adolescence, when the latter thought that he was being persecuted by jinn *upon the traumatic death of his father from a long ailment.[31] Once again, the sheikh came to Nawaf's help: he told Jamila he would marry his own daughter to him. She agreed to meet Nawaf.*

Their first encounter happened in a juice shop. Nawaf recalls: "The first time we met, she seemed like a village girl to me. Her hands weren't soft; she worked a lot at her home. And she didn't have a proper education. I encouraged her to get back to school. [...] In my previous relation, I felt alone. But not in this one, even if we can't meet often enough."

Sensing his hesitation and aware of how much was at stake for a camp girl like herself, Jamila forced Nawaf's encounter with her father: "Beforehand I was worried, because I didn't know what they would ask for me to get engaged to Jamila. They aren't Palestinian and we aren't completely familiar with their customs. As it turns out, their customs aren't so different from ours. We found out that, in the case of Jamila's sisters, they had asked for US$ 10,000 in muqaddam*. So we were worried they would ask for the same in my case and that's a lot of money for me."*

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[31] Rothenberg (2004) similarly reports how, through relationships to *jinn*, spirits mentioned in the Koran, Palestinians from Artas, in Palestine, try to tackle the complexities of life.

It was not the muqaddam, *however, that came in the way between Nawaf and Jamila. Nawaf reported how the much-feared meeting with her father went: "I was trying to decide whom I should take with me to meet him, because my father died several years ago. In situations like this, the* wajih *(leaders)[32] of both families should meet. If my father were alive, this role would be his. I brought my elder brother, my aunt's husband, who works for the UN, my sister, my mother and the sheikh. I was advised to talk as little as possible, not to make any mistake, so I only answered what Jamila's father asked me. The sheikh introduced us, saying that I was like a son to him. The father asked whether I was able to provide for her and he was informed that I hadn't finished university yet. He adjourned the meeting and suggested to my brother that we reconvene in a week, so that he would have time to check Jamila's reaction. At first, it seemed he would agree."*

To Nawaf's disappointment, however, the meeting one week later did not go smoothly. The beginning was promising: "The father said he had the time to check on me and that it was OK for me to get engaged with Jamila. As muqaddam, *they asked for US$ 2,000 in gold and another US$ 2,000 to get her prepared for the wedding, less than what we were expecting, and US$ 10,000 in* muʾakhkhar. *But, then, when they reached the issue of the house…."*

Jamila's father agreed to a one-year engagement, at the end of which Nawaf was expected to have purchased a house for the newly wed to live in. The groom's brother counter-argued with the father-in-law-to-be that Nawaf needed at least two years to graduate from university. An agreement could not be reached. As a result, now Nawaf has two priorities in his life: "I need to graduate and to build a house. My brother who lives in Denmark promised he would help me."

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[32] *Wajih* literally means "face."

When I came back to live in Lebanon, one year and a half after I completed fieldwork, I found out that Nawaf had graduated. Nonetheless, he hadn't married Jamila and according to some friends we have in common, was becoming increasingly religious.

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Being shot at by the Israelis in 2000 brought Adnan, 28, to the threshold of adulthood.

When the Israeli Defense Force withdrew from South Lebanon in 2000, several of the shabāb, *Adnan among them and 19 years old back then, travelled to the border. They wanted to see and touch Palestinian land: "I was very excited when I saw Palestine. I wanted to enter, to touch the land. They [the Israeli soldiers] told us to get back, but we tried to force our way in: you know, there were only 10 meters separating us from Palestine. And then they shot at us. In my case, at my leg. Before that, I didn't think of Palestine. […] But after this, the love for Palestine became very big in my heart. Love for the land is more important and implies more responsibility than the love of women. A woman may not love you back and, even if and when she does, that becomes routine with time."*

*Because of the shooting, with "*dumdum, *forbidden bullets,"[33] Adnan spent several days in the hospital, received 12 blood bags and was faced with a life-changing possibility: according to the doctors, he might never be able to walk properly again. At that point, he started exercising seriously, so that he could recover his leg movements. Until now, he goes to the gym everyday and tries to remain on what he considers the right track.*

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[33] The use of dumdum bullets, which expand upon impact causing more serious and potentially more lethal wounds, is forbidden by the Hague Convention of 1899.

Since the 2000 incident at the border, his life changed: "Between 15 and 19, I was a bad person. I took drugs, especially benzhexol.[34] I was often involved in fights, because I had nothing to do. [...] When I was 13, I got lots of tattoos on my body. I'd be a man, I thought, if I had tattoos and smoked. I see how those are childish thoughts and I regret that now."

Aware of the frequency with which he used to get into trouble, Adnan has been exerting caution to avoid repeating past mistakes: "After being shot by the Israelis, I began thinking about my future. I went to a professional center and learned how to operate a camera. [...] Now, if someone is fighting, I don't interfere, unless they're fighting with me, but then that's another story altogether. [...] Today, I always wake up late. I think that's better than wandering in the streets of the camp. Staying in bed will keep me away from problems. I have a lot of empty time on my hands. I use part of that time to pray. I prefer that."

After his late start to the day, Adnan gives a hand to his father in the family shop, goes to the gym and finishes the day with a visit to a camp-based Internet café, where he spends several hours cyber-chatting: "I prefer to chat about politics. I love politics. All Palestinians have politics in their souls. The thawra *and the* fidāʾiyyīn *brought no benefits for those of us [Palestinians] living outside [i.e. outside the OPT]. Actually, the* thawra *made the problem bigger. [...] I'm against using guns outside Palestine. The only way to liberate our country is by holding guns, but inside Palestine."*

In his evaluation, his life is better now than it was before. But he tells me he needs to find work: "My only problem is to get a regular job. I want a regular job; I need a regular job. After all, a man is considered according to his achievements."

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[34] Employed clinically in the cases of Parkinson disease, benzhexol or trihexyphenidyl is also used for recreational purposes, for its delirium-production and anxiety-reduction properties. The *New York Times* (Al-Husaini and Goode 2008) report that Iraqi troops used benzhexol to combat work-related stress.

Some two years after this interview took place, and just when I was about to leave Lebanon again, I met Adnan by chance. He was sitting in a plastic chair in front of his gym, recovering from his workout. He was even stronger: "I keep on exercising. I prefer it like this. You know how I am."

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In the case of Hilal, also 28, it was the experience of being taken to prison that brought him to the threshold of adulthood.[35] Before being arrested, he told me, his were tough years: "I had very difficult years as a teenager. [...] I stayed at a distance from my family; I met bad people. This was between the ages of 16 and 20 or 21. I stopped studying; I was doing nothing. I worked a little bit here and there as an electrician, but that wasn't what I wanted. I didn't find back then a way to continue with my education. [...] There were fights; lots of bad things. Everything came to me: sex, drugs. But, between me and myself, I knew that wasn't the way to live. It's difficult to get the respect of your own society if you're bad: no one trusts you."

He attributed his problems to the influence of jinn:[36] *"It's hard to understand the experience with* jinn. *We believe in the Koran; we believe in magic* (siḥr). *Some people can hurt you through magic; they don't hurt you physically. I felt, saw and dreamt with* jinn *back then. It hurt. My life stopped. I still feel them. [...] If you have a pain in your stomach, it's easy: you go to a doctor. But not with the* jinn. *I went to a sheikh; he said there was nothing wrong with me. At the end, I managed to overcome the problem, but for a while, the* jinn *were after me. Everything is written in the Koran.* Jinn *exist; humans too; both with different abilities. [...]. This is another world; you feel*

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[35] Note the difference of Hilal's experience from that reported by Peteet (1994) for the *shabāb* in Palestine during the first intifada. There, being arrested also brought the *shabāb* to the threshold of adulthood, but more in the sense of them becoming full political agents of their groups. The political dimension – at least, in the sense of politics as resistance - is conspicuously absent from Hilal's discourse. His quest is a personal one.

[36] See footnote 31.

that there are things going against you. If you want to work or to get an education, you don't manage to. Your life stops. The jinn *live inside your body and control you." And, to his mind, a proper* shāb *or* rajul *(man) needs to control himself: "This way, he can be responsible towards himself and others. […] That is why I had to get rid of the* jinn. *There are treatments for this."*

Hilal classified being arrested as a "strange" experience: "I was in prison for some two months. It was a Lebanese prison. It was strange to be there. Inside, it was another life, completely different from the camp. I saw things you can't even imagine. One loses one's respect inside, one's humanity. […] The fact that you're in prison doesn't mean that you're a criminal. I was bad, but not a criminal. So you have your choice: either you start establishing good relations or you become a criminal. I found myself. I started thinking about my future."

Having been expelled from an UNRWA school, Hilal opted to go back to a private school. Before that, he worked for two years as an electrician, a tailor and a painter, often enduring daily working shifts that lasted 16 hours in order to be able to afford the school fees. A relative living abroad also provided some financial help and he finally graduated from a technical institute (maʿhad) *in computer engineering and business administration. When I met him, he had recently been accepted into the Beirut Arab University in Al-Tariq Al-Jadida to study business administration and was trying to find ways to pay for the fees.*

Due to his academic ambitions, Hilal postponed marriage plans: "Before, I thought a lot about getting married. But when I got to know more about life and met people from different cultures, my ideas started to change. I have a different view of marriage now. I think now about my education, I have my ambitions. Marriage is important, but I don't think of getting married now […] After all these years, I need to control my own life. […] The guys here want to get married quickly. I was like that, but not anymore."

Marriage might not be occupying Hilal's thoughts often, but migration was: "I love life in Lebanon, but only if there's something for Palestinians here. If I get work here, I'll never think of leaving Lebanon. If I get a regular job here, I stay. I grew up here; I'm used to it here. I know this country; my family and friends are here. It isn't easy to think of leaving; it's another life. […] But I want to travel, get an education, a job and be able to save money. Here, you can work for several years and save nothing. […] I don't think being abroad will be easy, but at least I should try. Maybe I'll get my chance."

Upon my return to Lebanon, some two years after I interviewed Hilal, I found out that he had succeeded in migrating to the UK. He was waiting to get the appropriate papers to start looking for a job. He had dropped out of university and hadn't got married yet. In secular UK, the jinn *finally left Hilal in peace.*

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For Ghalib, 24, several passages through jail have not had any major transformative effect. He was arrested five times, twice for long periods of one year and a half. Prison did not make a national political agent out of him: "The Lebanese think we're Jews. Even in prison, we're treated worse. There are lots of Palestinians in jail. The food is awful: even dogs wouldn't eat it."

It was upon the death of his father, when he was still young, that his life was thrown in disarray. He left school, started working as a carpenter and held a handful of short-lived jobs. Soon he found his way to Sabra: "I started taking drugs: coke, heroine and hashish. And I also started stealing and cutting myself. I've had these tattoos made. People think I'm a bad boy (azʿar) *because of these tattoos. People with tattoos have a bad reputation* (ṣīt wusikh); *others think tattooed people take drugs and fight. But, in my case, they have a point, no?"*

Due to his reputation, the family of the girl he loves refused him: "I think of marriage all the time. But I'm poor and have a past. I think that's why her family didn't accept me, because they worry for her future. Nothing works for me. I think of something and always get something else."

He sees his mother's past as a fidāʾiyya *as glorious, but that past is not available for him: "Thawra in the past was good, but not today. Today, the* tanẓimāt *(political factions), if they see someone dying, they do nothing; they even make it worse. If they see someone taking drugs, they take him by force and give him to the Lebanese. They are the reason for a person going to jail and for all his suffering (ʿazābū)."*

Often using expressions drawn directly from Beiruti street language, immediately followed by a word from the Koranic vocabulary, Ghalib faces a dilemma. While attracted by the risks and pleasures of the street, his is a moral quest – including on the religious level. Upon his latest release from prison, he tried to put his life back on track: he found two jobs – as a sales assistant in a CD shop in Sabra and as a construction worker in the recovery of the Shatila pipeline. Between his two salaries, he was making some 600 dollars per month, "enough for me as a shāb*, but not enough to build a house and get married."*

Still single, he told me that he is at the end of adolescence (murāhaqa): "That's because a murāhiq *(adolescent) doesn't think of anything else, but girls and drinks. The life of a* murāhiq *is about [...] getting into problems. But, now,* al-ḥamdulillah *(thank to God), I got wiser (ana wʿīt) and I have ʿaql."*[37] *As it happened so often with the Shatila* shabāb*, he complained about not having an older figure on whom he could count for guidance: "My father died and I don't have an older brother. It would have been nice to have an older brother to give me advice on what to do."*

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[37] As I have had the chance of remarking before, Altorki (1986) defines *ʿaql* as the "faculty of understanding, rationality, judiciousness, prudence and wisdom." (51) For a discussion of *ʿaql* (or *ʿagl*) among the Bedouins of the Western Desert of Egypt, see Abu-Lughod (1986 [1999]: 108) and among Raï consumers in Oran, Algeria, see Schade-Poulsen (1999 [2004]: 147). See also footnote 7.

Ghalib stopped going to the mosque and praying: "I used to, but not anymore. Why did I stop, you ask? It isn't allowed to go to the mosque and after to go to drink and commit zinā.[38] *After drinks and* zinā, *I shouldn't even step on the praying rug* (musallah)."*

He does not believe in a bright future and thinks that his life would have been different were he living in Palestine: "The future? Well, when it comes, we talk about it. [...] I'd like to migrate, but I can't, because I'm wanted (maṭlūb). *[...] Palestine is my country. If I were there, I wouldn't be in such a situation. [...] Even if I get another nationality, inside* (dākhil), *I'll always be Palestinian."*

Although I intended to talk with both Ghalib and his mother, an ex-fighter, as I was doing with all the pairs of parents and offspring I interviewed, the new encounter did not materialize. When I tried to fix a new date for the meeting, I was informed that Ghalib was in prison yet again.

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At a very young age, Halim, 27 and a sales assistant at a mini-market, came to realize the consequences sect and class differences bear on his life.

In his recollection, his was a happy childhood. Upon the destruction of Tal Al-Zaatar in 1976, his family, along with several others, moved to Raouche, a district of West Beirut by the sea, previously popular among tourists. Together with other Palestinians and Lebanese, the Abu Halim family installed themselves in an abandoned hotel. With just one functioning bathroom to cater to all residents and with school several miles away, Halim's life back then was not immune to difficulties. Yet, he remembers those years with the patina

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[38] *Zin*ā, meaning sex that is not allowed, is a word from the Koran.

of nostalgia: "With the sea just 200 meters from us, I could go to the beach everyday. I played football and ate loads of fish."

The calm was over when the family, having no other option but to cede to pressure during the premiership of Rafik Hariri, moved to Shatila. Hariri wanted to revamp the pleasant seaside districts of West Beirut, and in order to do so, expelled the Civil War-era occupiers from the hotels of the area. To leave their former home "voluntarily," the Abu Halim family was offered the choice between US$ 5,000 and a place in Shatila. They decided for Shatila. Halim was 12 then.

Halim has an aunt (khāla, MS) *who is better off than his own nuclear family. Married to the owner of a taxi company, she lives outside the camp. Throughout his life, Halim consistently inherited the clothes of his richer cousin. He never liked it: "I didn't understand why I couldn't have new clothes. And my cousin had a basket full of toys. I had none. My aunt used to say things like: 'How does your mother send you to me dirty like this?' I didn't understand the meaning of this back then, but I felt something inside, to the point that I remember this up to now. [...] I felt lonely. I knew there was something different between them and me, but I didn't know what it was. The last time I saw her here in Shatila was four years ago. We don't visit them; they don't visit us. They're educated; we aren't. They have money; we don't. Of course, there are social differences among Palestinians. Money sometimes is everything, Gustavo."*

Soon after his family moved to Shatila, Halim dropped out of school and started working at a blacksmith's workshop in the Shiite-majority Dahiya, which borders the camp. The salaries of his father and mother – as a car mechanic and a cleaner respectively - were not enough to provide for his 8-member family: "We were really, really poor, Gustavo. We had no money whatsoever. I didn't have a bag to take to school. And I never, not even one single day in my life, enjoyed the calm at home in order to study. Nor electricity. So I told myself I'd better stop studying to begin working."

The beginning of Halim's work-life was burdensome. His co-workers used to beat him: "I didn't know anything about being Sunnite or Shiite back then. But they didn't like Sunnites there. And they made jokes that I was black, because of the work with iron. Then I started to understand that some people don't like Palestinians or Sunnites, simply because we are Palestinians or Sunnites. I understood I didn't belong to the same sect as them."

He left the job at the workshop and got a job at a restaurant in the camp, owned by a Palestinian, so "at least, there was respect." He worked for very long hours, up to 12 hours daily, for very little money: 11 dollars per day. He managed to find a position at another restaurant, with a better salary, but the owner migrated to Canada. After a couple of months spent in short-lived jobs, fixing electricity and repairing elevators, Halim's career at mini-markets started. He secured a job in an establishment of that kind, outside the camp: "The job was fine. I started making some money and started thinking of having my own mini-market. […] Maybe this is when my life really began. I started thinking of what I need for a good life: to buy a house, to get married, to buy a car." He was 23.

He started making some money – 700 dollars per month – and building a house, only half-finished, on the roof of the building where his family has an apartment. He verbalizes a deep distaste for camp life and wants to leave: "To be honest with you, I would have preferred to have a house outside. And you'll ask: 'why did you build in the camp, then?' Well, here I've spent 8,000 dollars so far on this house; outside, I'd need 50,000, at least. And I'd need a license from the government, which I'd never get. But I hate life in the camp ktīr *(a lot). Camp life isn't life – no electricity, no sun, no clean streets, no proper school, no proper sleep." That is why he started seriously considering migration. And there was a girl.*

He first tried to purchase a fake visa[39] for the Schengen countries for 2,500 dollars. It did not work out. He started contemplating alternatives: "I really wanted to leave. There is something deeply wrong here. My father, for instance, almost 70, worked for his whole life. He goes on working. He is tired and sick and can't stop working. And I don't want my children to lead the life that I've had. I want to move to any country where I can have a life, my children can study and go to university [...], a country where I can age and have some kind of protection [...]. So I thought and thought and thought a lot. What can I do? I thought of marrying a Sunnite lady from abroad, German or European, Lebanese or Palestinian in origin. Lots of guys here in Shatila think of this.[40] It seemed like the perfect solution. [...] I had some connection with people with relatives outside. So I started asking. It isn't easy to do this, you know, to look for a candidate for marriage like this. Psychologically speaking, it isn't easy. Some people I asked even made jokes about me and laughed at me. This destroyed me."

He was finally introduced to a Palestinian living in Germany and with German nationality. She was 20 and spoke very limited Arabic. She came to Lebanon, to Saida, and an all-hopeful Halim rushed there to meet his prospective bride. The outcome was not what he expected: "When I saw the girl, I felt nothing. She wasn't beautiful; I didn't like her; she wasn't the right girl for me. True, I wanted to travel, to have a good life outside, with my kids attending school. But that wasn't the way." He asked her family to allow him a week to consider the subject. It was a difficult week for him: "Part of me said: get married. Maybe this marriage will work. And, even if it doesn't, you can get a divorce and go on living in Germany. But another part of me said: you know you didn't like her. It isn't fair to her. If you divorce, she'll feel bad for a long time. She may even come to like you: ḥarām (a shame)!" So, a week later, he called her and apologized for not going ahead with the marriage plans.

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[39] Palestinian refugees seeking visas express more worry about being allowed to board an airplane bound for Europe than with the arrival at a European airport. Without a visa, they are not allowed by air companies to board an aircraft flying out of Beirut. If they manage to show a legitimate-looking visa at the Beirut International Airport, they can proceed to board. During the trip, they destroy their travel documents and claim asylum upon arrival.
[40] This is what one of my interlocutors refers to as "passport marriages."

Retrospectively, he felt good about his decision: "I knew I wouldn't like her with time. All I'd get was the nationality. I'm happy I acted the way I did."

He told me that he had not given up the plans of migrating, but that for the time being, he was trying to settle down in Lebanon. I tried to push him a little bit further, to understand what precisely "settling down" implied:

> *Me: Yaʿnī,[41] you want Lebanese nationality?*
> *Halim: If I'm offered, yes.*
> *Me: But isn't that* tawṭīn *(nationalization)?*
> *Halim (after a moment of hesitation): Gustavo, with* jinsiyya *(nationality), I can work legally, I can own property, I can be part of social security. Having a* jinsiyya *is important. […] Gustavo, before being Palestinian, I'm human, I look at life as a human being. […] All the world is my country, not only Palestine. I'd go anywhere now where I can have a better life.*

Somewhat insensitively, I kept on pushing:

> *Me: That means you don't think of* ḥaqq al-ʿawda *(right of return)?*
> *Halim: Gustavo, I'm Palestinian. I love Palestine and stuff* (wa kida)*, but I also want to have a nice life. My heart is Palestinian, I can live anywhere and this won't change. […] But I don't have time in my life now to think about Palestine. I have more urgent matters calling for my attention. Palestine is far from me. […] True, I love Palestine and sometimes I feel like leaving everything and fighting against Israel. […] But I live in such tough conditions that I have first to worry about food, electricity, money. […] There's no such thing as the return.[42] I won't go back. Every year, maybe I think about this question only once or twice. I don't have the time for that. Not even these organizations*

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[41] See footnote 28.

[42] The blunt remark by Halim on the impossibility of the return creates a moral quandary for researchers like myself, who identify with what we take to be the Palestinian cause. Nevertheless, and although aware that what I write may have unanticipated consequences, never for a moment did I contemplate editing out Halim's comments, as that would mean not only falsifying my data but also not abiding by the informal ethical contract that researchers establish with informants. Indeed, Halim's disillusionment with the possibility of the return speaks of nothing else but of a very *realpolitk* understanding of the state of the (non-existent) peace talks with Israel. There is a subtle difference here that needs to be taken into consideration: thinking that the return will not happen – as Halim clearly does – does not automatically equal giving up the right to return, as enshrined in the UN General Assembly Resolutions 194 (11/12/1948) and 3236 (22/11/1974) and UN Security Council Resolution 242 (22/11/1967) (the latter calling for a just settlement of the refugee issue). Ethically, I feel very much committed to publicizing Halim's views and his perception of the price he pays for the maintenance of a certain discourse on the right to return, precisely because views like his are very much marginalized by mainstream Palestinian nationalism. For a similar discussion on the moral quandaries when dealing with this issue, see Allan (2007), who rightly argues that scholars, instead of focusing on refugee suffering, should contest powers that produce refugee immobility.

that keep talking about the return really believe in it. They keep talking about it because that's their job.

All Halim's girlfriends were Sunnite. He tells me that there was no special reason for that – being Sunnite and poor himself, he usually gets to know others who are Sunnite and poor: "I have relations with women (banāt wa niswān).[43] *I don't have money to buy nice clothes. I don't have money to buy a house either, so finding women to marry or to date isn't obvious. […] I don't always think of sex; I also think of love. […] But I'm not looking for a wife now. There are many conditions I need to meet to get married. […] I don't want my kids to lead the life I've had. I don't want them to go to an UNRWA school or to live in the camp. If my child is sick, I want to be able to afford a hospital."*

He is not convinced that life in the past was easier: "People say that life in the past was easier. There was money, there was thawra, *there was Abu Ammar, there was one clear enemy. But I don't know: if there was war, how is it possible that life was better? My father was a* fidāʾī *and he was always poor. […] But I don't have enough information about the* thawra; *my father speaks very little about it. Today there is conflict between Hamas, Fatah, Jihad, Democratic Front. Before we were one and there was one military force. […] If there is* thawra *today, it is very weak. If it still exists, it's because of the Palestinian people. Every Palestinian has* thawra *inside himself."*

To my usual question about whether he played any sports, he answered that he boxes and that served as a prompt for him to talk about not holding violence within himself and feeling weak and hopeless: "I like sports. I like boxing. Everyday I practice a little bit, here at home. Even though I smoke, you know me. There's no violence in boxing, you know? […] It's a strong sport, but it isn't violent. […] I have no violence whatsoever inside me. I never had and I wish I had. It's important to have violence inside; my problem is precisely that

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[43] Bint, plural *banāt* usually refers to younger women, who have not had sexual relationships yet. That is the distinction between *banāt* and the *niswān*, normally older and sexually experienced.

I haven't. Life is hard. If you're kind, people eat you; they think you're weak. […] I don't know if I'm really strong. I don't know for how much longer I'll bear this situation. One or two years ago, I felt stronger, but now it isn't the same. Life is becoming hard; I'm becoming weaker. Before I used to think: I'm young, I can work, marry, travel. But time is passing; chances are getting fewer. […] I remember when I was 18, I had so much hope. […] I had hope I'd marry and make my parents and friends proud of me. But I couldn't get that. I'm weak at this moment and I don't know if I have hope anymore. […] Life is sad, Gustavo. You just need to be human to feel sad. Inside, I feel a lot of ẓulum (injustice)."

In addition to boxing, Halim likes surfing the net. He spends hours navigating Google Earth, visiting virtually countries he knows will be very difficult to reach.

Some two years after this interview, I chatted to Halim over the net. He was in a detention center for refugees in a European country. For US$ 7,000, he purchased a package that included air tickets and a fake visa. Upon disembarking in Europe, he claimed asylum status. At the detention center, where he shared a room with five other asylum seekers, he complained life was extremely tough; he had no privacy and felt constantly scared. It took him almost a year to have his asylum claim approved. Once he got his papers, he moved to Germany. The last time we talked he was extremely cash-stripped, but sounded hopeful.

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Nothing in Mansur's life happened the way he wanted. At 29 and an accounting graduate, Mansur often saw his biography dramatically invaded by the events of history: "I've seen the Israeli invasion of 1982. My grandfather died in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. Between 85 and 87, I saw the Camp Wars. During the Camp Wars, we lived under the earth, all cramped, like

sardines in a tin. No room for anyone. Everyone slept together in the shelter: old, young, men, women; with bombs and bullets all around. [...] It was a life without dignity (karāma)." *At the end of the Camp Wars, the event that changed Mansur's biography forever took place: "A bomb exploded near us and the debris hit my father. He fainted, came back, opened his eyes for a couple of seconds, cried and closed his eyes again. Forever. I was only 8." Since then, Mansur has been looking for a compensation for his loss, a replacement. As it happens with other* shabāb, *his is a story of a missing father: "Maybe my life would have been different if I had a father or someone older, to pass on to me his experience* (tajruba) *and wisdom* (ḥikma)."*

Mansur attributed his interest in medicine to his father's premature death. He spent his high school years reading medicine books and hoped to become a doctor: "I think my interest was caused by the loss of my father. I was attempting to defeat death. Is death really the end? Life can be pretty silly, no?" He was never accepted into medical school.

He found some comfort at Beit Atfal Al-Sumud.[44] His mother became an employee there and he started attending the organization, through which he was "adopted" by a British Malay.[45] Sometimes, some money from his adopter reached Mansur: "It was a negligible amount, some 30 dollars, enough just to buy a pair of shoes or trousers. But it was nice to think that someone was remembering us. It offered us some kind of emotional compensation. We were compensated for not having a father."

Beit Atfal Al-Sumud also had a library, which lured the young Mansur. He rushed from school there and borrowed two or three books at a time: "As you know, Gustavo, in Shatila, we don't have the basics for life: electricity, clean water, silent spaces. I really wanted and want to leave Shatila. I want to

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[44] Originally set up in 1976, catering to orphans from the Tal Al-Zaatar massacre, Beit Atfal Al-Sumud continues operating in the camps in Lebanon. In Shatila, it provides a variety of services, ranging from education to dental care. More information about the organization can be obtained on their webpage: http://www.socialcare.org/AboutUs.aspx.

[45] Beit Atfal Al-Sumud runs a sponsorship program, through which donors can "adopt" a Palestinian child making financial contributions that help to foster her.

see the world. So I started travelling – through books. And, without a father or an elder to help me understand the world, I needed guidance. Books started filling in that role. And, you know, in Shatila and when you're Palestinian, you don't have wide horizons. Books opened those horizons for me. The journey of reading and writing started."

By spending quite an amount of time reading, Mansur believes he has become different from other Shatila shabāb*: "I was until then just like any other Shatila guy, but I may have become different since then. By virtue of books, my dreams and desires, I may have created a different personality. I isolated and differentiated myself. This happened concomitantly with me gaining consciousness of what it means to be Palestinian and deprived of rights."*

Upon failing to enter medical school, Mansur studied accounting at the Beirut Arab University. That was not his first career choice and it took him seven years to graduate: "Accounting was like prison for me. I didn't like the university, but I liked my university years, because I started meeting people from all walks of life and making friends with them. We talked about everything: sex; love; freedom; religion; Marxism. I became a member of the Communist Party. I read about history, dialectics, materialism. Everything, but accounting."

He failed his exams for three consecutive years, feeling increasingly embarrassed vis-à-vis his mother, who was helping him make ends meet. He also started reading philosophy at the public Lebanese University, but never managed to graduate: "My life is like this. I wanted to be a doctor, but haven't managed to. I like philosophy and started studying it, but never managed to graduate. Instead, my major is in something I never liked. And I graduated in 2006, two weeks before the outbreak of the war between Hizbullah and Israel, which made finding a job almost impossible."

Mansur could have migrated to Abu Dhabi, where his ʿam (FB) has been living for more than 25 years. He never seriously contemplated the possibility: "Some of my classmates from university travelled to the Gulf and I know how they live there. True, there's money, but I can't bear how they live, sharing a room with 5 people they don't even know. I like to have my privacy. I prefer to stay here; I like Lebanon, but of course I don't want to be a second-class citizen. Here, there are books. In other places, there's surveillance. And I don't like the sulṭa *(sovereign power).[46] In Lebanon, there's freedom. You can believe in whatever. I like the ethnic and religious diversity of Lebanon."*

It is not only the lack of appropriate financial means that has led Mansur to file, for now at least, plans of getting married: "No, I'm not thinking of marriage now. I don't like regimes, routines. I always think of living by myself, in a small place, outside the camp. If I have money, I leave Shatila. […] I think of having someone, but someone who thinks like me. Here, you don't marry a woman only, you marry the whole of her family. There are visits, obligations, burdens: it cuts your freedom. This I can't stand."

He cannot stand the prospect of having children either, and yet again, the reason is not only the lack of financial means: "Why does one want to have kids? Will I let my children grow in such an environment like Shatila, with […] no infrastructure? How do you put bits of yourself in a place like this? One has moral responsibilities (masʾūliyyāt ʾakhlāqiyya) *towards one's children." In this respect, a gift Mansur offered me once is very telling: a book entitled* The Trouble of Being Born, *by Cioran (1998 [1973]), a collection of pessimistic aphorisms about existence being meaningless. There one can read: "Not to be born is the best plan of all. Unfortunately it is within no one's reach." (223)*

In Ismail, an old philosopher living in Shatila, Mansur found much needed guidance. Born in Haifa in 1948, Ismail arrived in the camp as an infant. Having left school at a very young age, Ismail was self-taught. In 1971, he was imprisoned for political reasons and spent 21 years behind bars. In jail,

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[46] See footnote 13.

he read philosophy, history and psychology. In him, Mansur finally found an interlocutor: "I've always longed for a father. And with Ismail, I could talk about everything: life, death, sex, love. I started consulting with him about every issue in my life, about my plans for the future, and my classes. There was exchange between us and reciprocity (tabādul)*." Ismail was very sick, suffering from diabetes and high cholesterol, and due to gangrene, had one of his feet amputated: "I'd like to be able to help him, by buying him his medicine, for instance." Even that, however, Mansur could not afford.*

Mansur does not believe in the redemption of the return: "Talking about the ḥaqq al-ʿawda *(right of return) as something present is silly. There's Israel, there's no Palestine. There's, if you wish, Palestinian* sulṭa *in Gaza and the West Bank. We won't be given the right to return.* Khalaṣ *(enough)! You can talk about the* ḥaqq al-ʿawda*, but you can't achieve it, except by force. But is there any Arab country ready to fight Israel? I don't believe so. They have the money and could have the weapons to defeat Israel, but they don't have the intention. And the Palestinian* sulṭa *doesn't have the strength. It has the speeches only."*

Quite exposed to European secular philosophy, Mansur does not think of himself as religious: "I don't classify myself as a Muslim. I don't pray; I don't fast; I don't read the Koran and I'm not interested in any of these. [...] And I don't differentiate people according to their religion; I differentiate people according to their morals. On those grounds, do we all deserve to be called humans? Do we all have the ethics and the morality?" I was thus surprised when he volunteered that he believed in God, but just to add, a second later, the rather pessimistic note that "I also believe that we have been deserted and abandoned."

I still ventured one last question:

> *Me: You have no hope* (ʾamal)*?*
> *Mansur: I'm tired, Gustavo.*

In November 2012, when the UN General Assembly upgraded Palestine's status within the organization to "non-member state," I posted a number of celebratory comments on my Facebook page. Mansur's reaction came as fast and incisive as ever, through a message also on Facebook: "What does it really mean, Gustavo, a Palestinian state?" Since our interview took place, he has succeeded in securing a job as an Arabic teacher, but he is paid a low salary. Ismail has died from his multiple diseases.

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The above "ethnographies of the particular" (Abu-Lughod 1991)[47] depict Shatila *shabāb* not only "making mistakes, [...] enduring tragedies and personal losses, [...] and finding moments of happiness," but also "trying to make themselves look good." (158) Theirs is a moral quest – eventually but not necessarily admitting nationalistic or religious overtones[48] – to be good

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[47] In the ethnographies I have registered in this study, I have purposefully restrained my "editing faculties" in the sense that I have provided my reader with more data than is strictly necessary for developing my argument. My goal is to intentionally curtail my "anthropological authority" by allowing my reader not only to see where my arguments come from – thus enabling her to potentially dispute my conclusions – but also by providing her with the possibility of identifying trends in *fidāʾiyyīn*'s and *shabāb*'s narratives that I have decided not to explore or the existence of which I have not realized.

[48] In an "Islamic-informed" version of de Beauvoir's famous dictum, Ouzgane (2006) argues that men are also not born, but made, and, moreover, made within specific social and historical contexts. He coins the term "Islamic masculinity" when extending his invitation to scholars working in a social constructionist perspective to render "Muslim men visible as gendered subjects." (1) When I prompted research participants to tell me whether there were phases in the life of a man and, if so, what were those phases and markers indicating the passage from one to another, several of them directed me to a specific *ḥadīth*, sayings and acts attributed to the Prophet. In the *ḥadīth*, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Prophet Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, prevented the stoning of an insane woman, accused of adultery. He explained to Umar the reason for his action. According to him, Mohammed taught that three kinds of people should not be held accountable: the lunatic, until restored to reason; the sleeping, until awake, and *boys, before puberty* (*bulūgh*). In the different versions of the *ḥadīth* my informants shared with me or that I myself found, the idea of reaching puberty is sometimes replaced by growing up (*yakbar*) or achieving the faculty of understanding and wisdom (ʿ*aql* or waʿ*ī*) (on the subject, also see footnotes 7 and 37). From the website sunnah.com, accessed on 9/1/2013, I quote below the *ḥadīth* in Arabic, followed by the

men, even if and when it may not be possible to be good at being men (Herzfeld 1985). The failure to fulfill certain expectations placed on them, nevertheless, is in no way indicative of a "crisis of masculinity." Rather, as I now turn to demonstrate, it suggests the need to promote another crisis, of an epistemological nature: the crisis of gender and hegemonic masculinity discourses.

Nawaf's dilemma between finishing his university studies or making money fast to afford marriage with Jamila; Adnan's fears of doing wrong; Hilal's experiences with persecution by *jinn*; Ghalib's attraction to the pleasures and risks of the street and repetitive imprisonments; Halim's admission of weakness, refusal of the temptation of a "passport marriage" and distress over his self-admitted non-violent nature; Mansur's rejection of the idea of becoming a father, because of the "trouble with being born," bear testimony to the difficult of fulfilling certain ideals, not excluding gender ideals. While the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s recollections contribute to the ideology of hegemonic masculinity, the Shatila *shabāb* expose the difference between

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respective translation into English, from the same website (reference: Sunan Abi Dawud 4402, Book 40, Hadith 52; English translation: Book 39, Hadith 4388):

حَدَّثَنَا هَنَّادٌ، عَنْ أَبِي الأَحْوَصِ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا جَرِيرٌ، - الْمَعْنَى - عَنْ عَطَاءِ بْنِ السَّائِبِ، عَنْ أَبِي ظَبْيَانَ، - قَالَ هَنَّادٌ - الْجَنْبِيِّ قَالَ أُتِيَ عُمَرُ بِامْرَأَةٍ قَدْ فَجَرَتْ فَأَمَرَ بِرَجْمِهَا فَمَرَّ عَلِيٌّ رضى الله عنه فَأَخَذَهَا فَخَلَّى سَبِيلَهَا فَأُخْبِرَ عُمَرُ قَالَ ادْعُوا لِي عَلِيًّا . فَجَاءَ عَلِيٌّ رضى الله عنه فَقَالَ يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ " رُفِعَ الْقَلَمُ عَنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ عَنِ الصَّبِيِّ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ وَعَنِ النَّائِمِ حَتَّى يَسْتَيْقِظَ وَعَنِ الْمَعْتُوهِ حَتَّى يَبْرَأَ " . وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ مَعْتُوهَةُ بَنِي فُلاَنٍ لَعَلَّ الَّذِي أَتَاهَا أَتَاهَا وَهِيَ فِي بَلاَئِهَا . قَالَ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ لاَ أَدْرِي . فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلاَمُ وَأَنَا لاَ أَدْرِي .

English translation: "A woman who had committed adultery was brought to Umar. He gave orders that she should be stoned. Ali passed by just then. He seized her and let her go. Umar was informed of it. He said: Ask Ali to come to me. Ali came to him and said: Commander of the Faithful [i. e.: Umar], you know that the Messenger of Allah [i. e.: Prophet Muhammed] (peace be upon him) said: *There are three (people) whose actions are not recorded. A boy till he reaches puberty, a sleeper till he awakes, a lunatic till he is restored to reason.* This is an idiot (mad) woman belonging to the family of so and so. Someone might have done this action with her when she suffered the fit of lunacy. Umar said: I do not know. Ali said: I do not know." (original emphasis)

that ideology and their own (gender or otherwise) practices. If, as Kanafani (2005, 2008) indicates, the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s reminiscences reserve no place for the feminine, hegemonic masculinity discourses also operate through omissions. Within such discourses, *shabāb*'s current experiences disappear from purview: they come across as not worth considering. On an epistemological level, the result is to be expected: non-homosexual men with limited access to power have no place in hegemonic masculinity discourses. For an ethnographic analysis, however, this remains unjustifiable.

Inhorn (2012) contends that in studies of the Middle East, and I would add, in US media portrayals, "we need to rethink whether patriarchy [hegemonic masculinity, Middle Eastern style] should remain the dominant theoretical trope." (15) By nuancing (our) patriarchal polemics and opening them up to more closely reflect ethnographic findings, she anticipates that men in the Middle East will not necessarily show up as always "patriarchal, hypervirile, brutal and religiously fanatical." (54) Whereas ideals of manhood may reveal a certain obstinate persistence, the way manhood is lived in practice changes from place to place and time to time, as the social contexts vary – when men age, for example, or from one generation to the other.[49] The eventual gap between ideal and practice does not necessarily entail a "crisis of masculinity."

"Crisis of masculinity" discourses are required for the functioning of gender theories and "hegemonic masculinity" and patriarchy frameworks. If men, for whatever reason, cannot fulfill the expectations placed on them, their masculinity needs to be in crisis, at least discursively. Rather than tuning their analysis to changes in practices of manhood at varying times and spaces, "crisis of masculinity" scholars proceed to an epistemic freezing

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[49] Recent research from different ethnographic settings has registered similar tendencies for young men willing neither to follow the steps of their fathers – sometimes experimenting with ideas of conjugality and sexuality in the process – nor to attend to the expectations and demands of normative masculinity: for the Dominican Republican, check Padilla's (2007) work; for Mexico, Gutmann (2003, 2007) and Hirsch (2003), and for Japan, McLelland and Dasgupta (2005), Dasgupta (2012) and Cook (2012, 2013).

of the ideal: theirs is an ideological, politically-loaded and politically-motivated discussion of masculine values, either considered to be in decline – because real men are not in a position to live by them (Bly 1991; Campbell 1991; Gibbs and Merighi 1996; Faludi 1999) – or intrinsically pathological – because there is something wrong with them (Campbell 1993; Horrocks 1996; Clare 2001). Heartfield (2002) fustigates against such lines of reasoning: there is no crisis of masculinity, he contends, because "masculinity" is an ideological concept, methodologically suspect. He writes: "In posing the analysis of the condition of men in terms of masculinity the theories tend to make a fetish of sexual difference. [...] [o]nce the differences [in the division of labour] are relocated into the theory of 'masculinity,' they become mystified as psychological and cultural figures that defy empirical substantiation. [...] Considered as a crisis of masculinity the transformation of the sexual division of labour is conceived of with the two genders related to each other only externally, and in opposition." The popularity of "crisis of masculinity" discourses is due to the fact that they seem to capture an on-going loss of power by men. At the same time, however, we are not in the presence of a zero-sum game, of the "war-of-sexes" kind, in which men's losses necessarily translate into women's gains. Based on data from the UK, Heartfield rather shows that the transformation of capitalism in the last decades has forced a reorganization of both the production and reproduction spheres, with women entering the workforce in underpaid and part-time jobs. True, in relation to capital, working-class men have lost. Working-class women, however, have lost too: dual income families allow for twice surplus labour, without twice the cost, Marx has taught us. Overall, families have paid the price, with even this most rudimentary form of solidarity being incessantly assaulted by capital's rule. The real crisis, Heartfield concludes, is not of masculinity, but of the working class.[50]

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[50] This somewhat resonates with my data from Chapter 3. There, I argue that with the PLO leadership removed from Lebanon, the "service-economy" erected in the country could no longer function. The subsequent generations of Palestinian refugees have had to fight for positions in the dwindling Lebanese labour market, facing competition from Syrian workers and benefiting from almost no protection under the local labour law as a stateless foreign workforce.

The fact that "crisis of masculinity" discourses constitute a fetish does not mean that they do not produce effects in practice – and "toxic" ones, especially in the western media industry. The idea that men in (very) specific parts of the world are in crisis or cannot live up to the demands of an atavistic, misogynist and hypersexual masculinity, as in pseudo-anthropological and psychological-behavioralist approaches, feeds terrorology industries in the service of the neo-colonial enterprise of empire (Amar 2011). As such, it serves to epistemologically contain emergent social forces in the Middle East, while in the process racializing, moralistically-depoliticizing and misrecognizing them (Amar 2011). Seen – or more properly speaking, not actually being seen – against such a background, (some) actual men and their biographies become forever silenced: epistemically invisible, they cannot speak on their own terms. Rather, they are ever-present problems to be solved.

As argued by Puar (2007), the terrorist is taken to be a failed man. By framing terrorism as issuing from masculinities-in-crisis, often helping to promote the figure of the "stateless-monster-terrorist-fag" (100), a number of authors (Morgan 1989; Tiger 2001; Kimmel 2002; Tiger 2002)[51] depoliticize the phenomenon, remaining oblivious to the critique of political economies often expressed by the terrorists themselves. Here, rather than further faggotizing alleged terrorists, I aim to actually "queer" power – a point I further develop in the concluding remarks of this dissertation.

In the case of the *shabāb* from Shatila encountered a few pages back, their masculinity is neither threatened by their predicaments nor are they "terrorists-in-the-making" as a result of the difficulties in their lives. If the concept of culture risks a (further) exoticization of the Other (Abu-Lughod 1991), I should here insist that Nawaf's problems in concretizing the marriage with the partner he loves, or Hilal's committal for several years to

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[51] Morgan (1989) sexualises terrorism to the point of describing it as "ejaculatory politics." (84)

a job he does not particularly like to save for university fees,[52] or Halim's feeling of weakness vis-à-vis the obstacles he has to tackle echo situations other friends of mine, from other latitudes, also deal with, myself included.

In a sense, the "stateless-monster-terrorist-fag" and the non-homosexual Muslim man with limited access to power constitute the abject other of liberal feminism and LGBTIQ movements – and that is precisely the reason why they are "re-traditionalised" and their masculinity, stigmatized (Ewing 2008): mythologies of traditional Muslim men, who may not be in practice as traditional as liberal feminism's and LGBTIQ movements' prejudices and expectations want them to be, feed social fantasies, fear and anxiety about differences[53] and the "Other." In a two-moment episode he followed from close, Perdigon (2012) reports how a newborn infant, found soaking in blood in an alley of a Palestinian refugee camp in Southern Lebanon, was rushed to the hospital, followed by his young, single mother. Her father, whom Perdigon names Abu Ahmed, was in disarray and a whole group – including local leaders, a doctor, relatives and state security agents – intervened to break the news, of which he was unaware, about his daughter's pregnancy. Six months later, Perdigon meets the same Abu Ahmed, who elaborated on how he managed to control the impulse to murder his own daughter, while holding his grandson on his lap. This forced the researcher to investigate the "dense and mobile terrains of ethical [and] affective [...] life that one [finds] [...] in the Palestinian communities of Southern Lebanon, in lieu of the fantasy of a script of honor that would make the performance of violence a clear and binding obligation upon a man confronted with public whispers concerning the deviance of one of his female relatives." As he argues, the archetypal image of the hot-blooded Arab and Muslim man as ruthless in the protection of his honour and defense of his male pride fails to pay proper attention to the fact that there

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[52] After using my lifetime savings to finance my PhD in the UK, I can certainly relate to Hilal's predicament.

[53] It is thus legitimate to ask whether difference itself is not being pathologised by the discourse adopted by certain trends of liberal feminism and LGBTIQ movements, in the on-going exercise of exoticizing the Other (Puar 2007).

is a wound that bleeds in cases like Abu Ahmed's. Again, there is an epistemological reason why such a wound needs to remain invisible: it entails a move that is masculinizing and *effeminizing* at the same time, "as though he can't really be that much of a man, he whom a woman can wound so easily." In Perdigon's understanding, this invisibility is due to a liberal, secular and modernist rejection of the possibility that vulnerability to others is a legitimate way of living relationships and being-in-the-world.

The faggotization and/or hyper-masculinisation of the Muslim Other are required because their cooperative selves expose the limits of one of the ideals most cherished by political modernity, liberal feminism and certain LGBTIQ movements: "freedom from norms." That is precisely why "freedom from norms" – this "liberal humanism's authorization of the fully possessed speaking subject, untethered by hegemony or false consciousness […] and rationally choosing modern individualism over the ensnaring bonds of family (Puar 2007): 22-23)" – ends up by being regulatory. Nawaf's and other *shabāb*'s "being-in-the-world" has therefore become an epistemic impossibility; yet they insist on existing and on inviting us, Victorians, to reconsider some of our epistemological convictions.

We, the Victorians (and Some Arabic)

We, the Victorians, don't talk *sexe*.

As Sandford (2011) argues, the Anglo-Saxon *sex* does not capture what the French mean by *sexe* – and, I further contend, it does not translate well into the Arabic *jins* either. Sandford's point is that *sex* has increasingly come to be thought of in terms of its distinction to *gender*, since the latter's inception in the 1950s through the work of the American psychologist Robert Stoller. In the following decades, such a tendency has become all the more pronounced after the feminist movement seized upon both concepts. One of the unanticipated side effects of sex being strictly defined in reference to its difference to gender is that the former is hijacked by the

latter and hardly receives any proper theoretical attention. We, the Victorians, have never felt completely at ease with these *sexe*-talks: as Fraisse, cited by Sandford (2011), puns, gender is a *cache-sexe*.

The feminist thought produced in France makes the case that gender still produces a deficit in terms of meaning, despite its value in political struggles and wonders in fine theoretical thinking (Sandford 2011). Thus, the distinction between a biological sex and a socially constructed gender does not open a comfortable space for thinking of *sexualité* on the fantasmatic level of drives, or what the French call *pulsions*. Yet, both power and the lack thereof are realized through the most intimate, intersubjective relations (Foucault 1985, 1986, 1998; Hemming, Gedalof et al. 2006). As it goes, the *sexe*/sex-talk is indeed not only a problem of translation. In spite of all its inadequacies, there is an ideological reason for the persistence of sex as a concept, Sandford states, and, I would add, of gender.

On a clinical level, scientists come up again and again with the evidence that the physical distinction between male and female – or what Anglo-Saxons would normally label sex – does not function to describe the multiplicity of sexed forms bodies have or assume. Its descriptive shortcomings notwithstanding, the illusion of a binary division between male and female still informs medical practice to the point that bodies that happen not to fit into one of these categories are forced to conform, often through invasive and painful surgical intervention. This renders all the more evident that sex has no heuristic value in terms of description: its surprising persistence comes from its ideological strength as a prescriptive notion.

Thus, sex is an illusion, Sandford claims. It is a certain pervasive misreading, in the Anglo-Saxon world, of de Beauvoir's idea according to which one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, that has led to a certain naturalization of sex, as if it really existed. Nonetheless, de Beauvoir is read differently by her own compatriots: sex itself is created. If we, Victorians, face difficulties in *thinking* of sex, it is precisely because we tend

to reduce it to biology. By not opening the concept up for proper theoretical tackling and analytical thought, we tend to lose track of the fact that sex – the distinction between male and female – is a modern "natural-biological" invention.

The fact that sex is a modern illusion, though, does not mean that it does not produce effects in practice. The naturalization of sex, precisely because it reifies a distinction which has no purely descriptive value, serves as an ideological justification for oppression. Delphy (1991) effectively reminds us that, rather than a natural given, sex is a social relation, the reification of which as nature functions as a powerful leverage for the justification of what otherwise shows its true nature as dire exploitation.

Such reification, which hides the inescapable epistemological contradiction of sex as both a naturalized bicategorization and a denaturalized social-historical relation, is all the more bewildering in view of its endurance over time, the empirical evidence pointing to the limited applicability of the concept to practice notwithstanding. Sandford (2011) resorts to Kant when trying to make sense of the persistence of sex. In Kant's philosophy, reason has no other way to think but through giving objective forms to ideas. This leads to hypostatization: in the case of sex, in spite of it being an abstract idea, it appears as material, i.e. attached to anatomical difference, notably genitalia. Sandford goes one step further and claims that sex is not only a case of hypostatization, but also one of subreption, that is, it conceals facts in order to sustain a misrepresentation. In Bateson's vocabulary, with which I started this study, we are in the presence of a case of misplaced concreteness. This does not mean that the idea does not produce serious effects in practice. Yet we can only investigate these effects the moment we understand – and accept – that appearances notwithstanding, sex is not a natural, but a social phenomenon, thus open to changes through time (and space). A critical concept of sex, namely one that opens room to reflect political struggles, cannot remain alien to history: sex needs to be historicized.

Now, what happens to gender? While sex tends to naturalize a differentiation between male and female which has no foundation in reality without remainder, gender presents such a differentiation as an opposition and, additionally, one of a hierarchical kind. Gender implies and necessitates men and women holding different access to power. I do not suggest that gender provides yet another example of Kant's transcendental illusion; yet the case can be made that gender also needs to be historicized and "culturalized." Especially when accompanied by the pretension of universal and timeless validity, gender becomes the illusion of Euro-American societies, or of some liberational and academic movements within them at the very least.

Heterosexual men with limited access to power, as the Shatila *shabāb*, find no comfortable space within gender discourses. They constitute matter out-of-place, noise in the communication, and it comes as no surprise that they have become virtually invisible within the specialized and engaged literature on gender, prominently so in the case of Middle Eastern societies. While not intending to invite an over-culturalist interpretation of sex and gender, I still consider it useful to recall what Geertz (1980) writes in his *Negara*: "Impressed by command, we see little else." (121) Indeed, once we remove the (sometimes disempowering) blinkers of command and power, there is more to see.

I also have no intention of reducing the socio-economic-political-cultural complex of sex/gender to its linguistic dimension, but similar to the less-than-perfect match between the sex of Anglophones and the French *sexe*, the Arabic *jins* simultaneously and paradoxically means more and less than the Anglo-Saxon sex.[54] As the English teacher from the Mar Elias camp told us at a certain point in this chapter, if *jins* can be translated both as sex *and* gender, it shows enough of flexibility as a concept to accommodate both

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[54] Najmabadi (2013) engages in a similar exercise, mapping out the reconfigurations during the late 19th and 20th centuries especially of biomedical knowledge and marital practices, through which, in Persian, *jins* has come to mean sex.

meanings. On this front, *jins* keeps a similitude to what Fraisse argues for "différence des sexes," defined by her as a "philosopheme," which "implies the empirical recognition of the sexes without leading to any definition of content." (in Sandford 2011: 24) Nonetheless, while "différence des sexes" obviously entails difference – a difference which in the case of "sex," has been upgraded to an opposition and implies a hierarchy when it comes to "gender" – in Arabic this semantic universe is differently organized. *Jins* puts in relief what members of the same category have in common, rather than what differentiates them from members of another category. At a first glance, the Arabic *jins* – admitting renditions into English as "sex," "gender," "race," "class" and "nation"[55] – makes transparent what gender theorists have been taking pains to argue for a couple of decades already: that "sex" and "gender" are raced, "classed" and nationalized. At a second and more careful take, however, *jins* calls attention to what is lost in much of what has been written under the label of gender theories in the last decades: its emphasis is on the similarities and belonging-together among those pertaining to the same kind and not on the opposition between those and others, or the eventual hierarchy established among them.

The root of the word *jins* – j, n, s – is used for the construction of verbs, which allows for various translations into English, depending on the form (*wazin*)[56] adopted – all of them, however, emphasizing similitude. Following the definitions of the Hans Wehr Dictionary, the verb *jannasa*

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[55] Actually, even if less often, "gender" also originally had the sense of "type" in European languages, keeping its meaning closer to its Latin roots. In the case of modern Arabic, it should be remarked, for the fairness of the argument, that race is increasingly referred to by native speakers as ʿunṣur, class as ṭabaqa and nation as waṭan (even though nationality, *jinsiyya*, as well as nationalization or political categorization, *tajnīs*, retain the relation to *jins*). The case remains, however, that *jins* is used indistinguishably for sex and gender, the latter admitting no obvious rendition into Arabic, a point further explored in Chapter 6.

[56] From a root, normally composed of three letters, Arabic derives – through its transformation by the apposition of prefixes, the intercalation of long vowels or the utilization of different diacritics – up to ten different verbal forms, with changes in meaning. A good example – because it is faulty in just one form, normally referred to as Form 9 – is provided by the verb to cut (*qaṭaʿa*) (Form 1), which, by being transformed through the recourse to prefixes, long vowels or diacritics, can come to mean: to chop up (*qaṭṭaʿa*) (Form 2); to cut off (*qāṭaʿa*) (Form 3); to divide up (land, for example) (*ʾaqṭaʿa*) (Form 4); to be chopped up (*taqaṭṭaʿa*) (Form 5); to intersect (*taqāṭaʿa*) (Form 6); to be cut off (*inqaṭaʿa*) (Form 7); to take a cut of (*iqtaṭaʿa*) (Form 8), and to deduct (*istaqṭaʿa*) (Form 10).

means, in Form 2, to make alike, to assimilate, to naturalize, to class, to classify, to categorize; in Form 3, to be akin, related, similar and of the same kind or nature, or to resemble; in Form 5, to acquire citizenship or to be naturalized, and, finally, in Form 6, to be akin or homogenous. Other derivatives of the same root – j, n, s – are also telling, for the same emphasis on what is similar: *tajnīs* means naturalization; *mujānasa*, relatedness, kinship, affinity, likeness and resemblance; *tajānus*, homogeneity, and *istijnās*, homosexuality.

If *jins* can indeed work as a philosopheme, without any prior and mandatory definition of content, as is argued here, this does not only mean that the sex-gender complex needs to be raced and "classed." Open to re-signification in space and time, *jins* also needs to be "culturalized" and historicized. This implies and mandates both an ethnography and a history. *As Ahmad, the accountant we met in the previous chapters and also here, confided to me once, when reflecting somewhat nostalgically upon how his own life was different from that led by the fidāʾiyyīn: "I remember the fidāʾiyyīn so clearly. They were all powerful, walking in the alleys of the camp, with their guns. We so much wanted to be like them. They were like Conan."* Times are in flux and have moved, however, so the moment might have come to change the beat.

A Soliloquy

"Oh, Gustavo, it's stupid and hypocritical to ask someone from a diaspora where he belongs!" – this was Nadim, *late 20s, a chemist from the surroundings of Shatila, just being his usual self, a fierce critic of researchers' encroachments into his life. He carried on, pitilessly: "So, this is the moment when you'll finally get that ruler you're hiding in your bag to measure my head?"*

Nadim has never been "domesticated" as an "interviewee," a position he consistently refused to inhabit. This made me all the more aware of the

issues raised by "representation" – in both the meanings of *Darstellung* (or re-presentation, as in arts) and *Vertretung* (as in "speaking for," "replacing" and "substituting," as it happens in politics in so-called modern democracies), in the sense that the former is forever complicit with and helps the projects of the latter (Spivak 1988): anthropology, in its representational techniques, has always had political implications and has throughout sustained a problematic relationship with colonialism, including in its newest forms. Nadim simply objected and below he speaks with as little intervention as possible:

"I'm supposed to be from Haifa. [...] But, if you ask if I feel nostalgia towards this place, you're asking me where I belong. For me, it's different. I don't believe in this geography. What the fuck does a piece of land actually mean to me? I'm not from there [Haifa] and this only reminds me of a certain kind of geography that was imposed. I don't believe in the Sykes-Picot geography.[57] It doesn't function; it's odd. My belonging comes from people who think of me. Of course, I'm also Brazilian. Belonging depends on people who interacted with me to create a memory. I react against those who tried to hijack this memory from me. Those who've done that are my enemy. I know my history, my memory and my enemy. As a diaspora, we have diversity and this is what is beautiful about us: we belong to several places. That's why I can't say: I'm from Haifa. If I say that, what about the memories I have here, in Beirut? I'm from Haifa; I'm from Beirut. This geography of places and borders is constructed. They tried to impose a geography and a morality on us. [...] There's something schizophrenic going on here, in terms of who I think I am and who they want me to be. [...] You're Palestinian if you're part of this collective memory. We belong to a people, to ways of thinking, and not to a land. True, we need a place to translate this belonging but this place is more linked to history than to geography. And this history is constantly moving. So this is the question: to which history do you belong? Do we need to discuss what percentage of Palestinianess there is in someone? Is the blood that

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[57] Through the 1915-1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, the Middle East was divided between a French and a British sphere of influence.

matters? What makes us beautiful as a diasporic community is this: this huge quantity of information, this huge diversity, coming from all this mixture. So this isn't about belonging through religion or blood ties. This is about how you relate to people. I mean: religion is also a way of relating, right?"

[...]

*"Ḥaqq al-ʿawda (*right of return)*? Oh, yeah, that's something very nice; but ʿawda* (return) *to what? To Palestine? But is it the Palestine I want? I want the Palestine of before Sykes-Picot, now can you handle that? Of course, the ʿawda will happen. Palestine was lost to the Romans, to the Omayyads,[58] to the Crusaders twice, and it was always taken back. Normally, it takes some 200 or 300 years, but we take it back."*

[...]

"One of the deadliest mistakes of the thawra *was to try to forge a nation, where one already existed, and to try to normalize this nation, as any other nation. They had fighters, but tried to create a classic army; so they fucked up. They had a nation, but tried to define it as a nation, so they fucked up. And, then, we got Oslo, as a direct effect of all this. [...] The* thawra *tried to normalize things as others do, but we're different: we're stateless. They tried to mimic the system of states, but we're refugees. They tried to normalize everything as a state; to transform a guerrilla into an army. So they ceased to be a revolution to become a paper state. But the* thawra *doesn't end; it's like colonization: just as the post-colonial doesn't exist, because colonization goes on; the post-revolution never happened, because the revolution goes on. [...] I think that there is something called Palestine. But the moment Palestine becomes a state, you have the right to question me whether this Palestine*

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[58] The second Islamic caliphate after the death of Prophet Mohammed, the Omayyad dynasty in the seventh century expanded its rule from its base in Damascus to much of the present-day Arab East, as well as to the Caucasus, Maghreb and the Iberian Peninsula.

actually exists.[59] *[...] That's why I tell you: I don't belong to a land; I belong to a people. My identity is people."*

[...]

"Borders are meaningless to define my own belonging. Even for Shatila, I mean, which borders are meaningful? Shatila integrated, but it didn't fuse. When you say 'fusion,' the larger part exists and the smaller part fuses inside: it loses its identity, its characteristics and gets those of the larger part. Integration is different: new characteristics come out of the process. This is what happened with Shatila and it reflects on the level of the accent people from there speak, which is a mixture from all over. The physical borders of the camp exist because of the authoritarian regime around it. Now, there are classes even inside Shatila, because some people have a fixed income and a certain level of education. People from Shatila are more educated than those from Hayy Gharbie, for example, and some think they're superior to those. But, under siege, everyone is like everyone else. This is the beauty of war. They can put checkpoints, and so on, but it's obvious that there's continuity between Sabra and Shatila. [...] I don't know if I'd use the word 'community' to describe Shatila. There are certain characteristics to this space; there is a core to Shatila, which also moved out of the camp, to Wadi Zaina and Fakhani.[60] *Shatila expands into the surroundings and, at the same time, some people living inside are originally from somewhere else: for instance, the UN white*

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[59] Even though I have committed myself not to intervene in Nadim's flow of words, when listening to him, some remarks of Jean Genet come to mind. In *Affirmation of Existence through Rebellion* (Genet, Barrada et al. 1987), the title given to the publication of an interview with Genet in 1983, he says: "Listen. The day the Palestinians become institutionalized, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I will no longer be there." (77) "For now, I totally support Palestine in revolt. But I don't know if I [...] could support an institutionalized and territorially satisfied Palestine. [...] I think that the affirmation of their existence [Palestinians'] came with the very fact of their rebelling [...] [I]n following this road they continue to have the freedom to exist precisely through their acts." (82) "I never saw a banker I found beautiful. [...] I wonder if that beauty [present in what was happening in Lebanon back then] does not come from the fact that rebels have recovered a freedom they had lost [....] The beauty of revolutionaries can be seen in a kind of offhandedness and even an insolence in the face of those who have humiliated them." (68)

[60] Fakhani is an area in the surroundings of Shatila. Wadi Zaina is near Saida, south of Beirut.

buildings are for people from Tal Al-Zaatar, who used to live in Raouche and came in the 90s; they don't have the memory or the history of the camp [Shatila]. So you need mixed ways to understand this space. You need to go to Fakhani and Wadi Zaina to interview people from Shatila living there. Shatila before didn't have these high buildings, which led to all these problems of infrastructure that exist now. This is the intriguing thing about Shatila: it expands to the population of the surroundings; the physical borders of the camp are meaningless; it expands to Al-Tariq Al-Jadida[61] and Wadi Zaina; even to outside of Lebanon. Because of poverty, other people moved into the camp. So that's how the camp still has a population, but people from Shatila expanded to the surroundings. Due to my history, I'm a son of the camp. But some people would dispute it, because I live outside. But I feel I'm part of the camp. Sometimes I question it myself, especially when I see the generation that comes after mine. My belonging is to people who think of me, as I think of them. And some people from Shatila think of me. [...] During the War of the Camps, in 86, I lived in the shelter in Shatila with my Teta.[62] I have memories from Shatila. I suffered in the checkpoints. I went through the siege of the camp; my body is badly fucked up by what I went through. This new generation thinks their suffering is the utmost one. But this logic fails when it comes to describe me as not being from the camp. I've gone through a lot of suffering in Shatila and my body bears the marks of it. Thanks to God – and to NGOs – I have the money to cover my body, but there are marks all over. The camp is not mine, it isn't yours; there's no sense of property; rather I also belong to it. Recently, people have adopted this mentality that I'm class, that I'm different. Before, everyone was poor, so there wasn't this mentality about class. My mom has some property, true: [joking] she's a vicious landlady. If you want to look from this perspective, I'm privileged. But you can un-privilege yourself and this is how I was raised; that's what my mom taught me. You, Gustavo, you're respected in the camp because you did that: you undid your privilege. You can never understand the intensity of someone's suffering unless you put yourself in the same situation. True, my mom is Lebanese and I have a

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[61] Similarly, Al-Tariq Al-Jadida is an area in the immediate vicinity of Shatila.
[62] In colloquial Arabic, Teta is an endearing way to refer to grandmother.

passport from an Arab state. But what has nationality got to do with it? I've told you: belonging is about thought, memories, not about fucking passports."

[...]

"I dwelt in the shelter during my childhood. We were happy with small things; we didn't have this culture of games of today; we had no toys. So we made our own toys. For instance, the broken frame of a window would become what? Of course a kalashnikov, *man! [...] One day, the headmaster of our school was assassinated right in front of us. That was the first shock of my life. It was really sad; he had his head chopped off. [...] He was taken outside of the school and was shot. Everyone saw it. I think it was Harakat Amal who did it. Inside the camp, those days, there was the siege going on. And outside, they – the Syrian Army, Amal – fucked everyone. This was around 85. [...] I went to intermediate school in Shatila. It was nice to study in the camp; by then, we had moved out and, to go to the classes, I had to go through the Syrian checkpoint. I learned a lot by having to go through this humiliation; it's a memory to remember. [...] We could not make noise inside the school, because the Syrians would get annoyed and beat everyone: students, teachers. Today, when we talk among friends, we remember those times. [...] There was also rubble all over the camp. And we used to play the rubble game, throwing rubble against one another. [...] It was back then that some of my friends and I started to enjoy reading. There was a place where it was very cheap to buy books, books thrown out of houses. Sometimes, it was just half a book. It wasn't like now, with satellite. So we started to create a culture of our own. [...] Everything changed, with the war. You know, one adapts to war. Our natural life started being war, siege. No, I'm not normalizing war, but war became normal to us. In situations like this, your senses change. So, even when there's no more artillery, no more shooting, just checkpoints, the high intensity continues. You get used to this high intensity. [...] I'm not here using the word violence or extreme to describe the situation. The standards became different: as children, this intense situation became natural for us. Fighting was routine; it was happening all around me. This was the norm. Being held, being hungry,*

hearing screams, not being able to reach a certain place: all this became normal. The sense of time was different back then. I didn't understand it as being violent; if it kept on happening, it became normal for me. [...] Lebanon is fucked up because they stopped fighting but the war goes on. It hasn't reached its end. It goes on, between the same people, with the same problems. It's the same as when people say: we live in a post-colonial era, as if colonization had ended. It hasn't. The Lebanese suppressed the fighting, but not the war. And, when you keep on suppressing people, what happens at a certain point? Explosions. That's why we see these explosions happening again and again. People need it, because the war hasn't ended; it didn't get to its conclusion. The Lebanese were told by the Syrians, by their feudal lords, by the international community: the war ended, the war ended! And this is the dangerous thing: they've internalized it, without this being a reality. And they started acting based on this idea: that the war is over. But it isn't. You can see it happening; otherwise, why do we have all this going on? Why do they [the Lebanese] have this crisis of identity? Because they didn't get to the conclusion of the war. The war didn't fulfill its own purpose. [...] War also generates civilization. That's why, for me, it isn't good or evil."

[...]

"I started working at a very young age. First, I worked in a sweet factory. I was 12. I could combine studying with work. [...] Then, I worked as a construction worker, or, better said, I wasn't precisely a construction worker: actually, I carried buckets of cements. That was my favourite job, even if it was hard; I worked like that for two or three years. Then I worked as a blacksmith with my uncle and also as a painter. I even went high with the paint! [...] Then I got into... NGOs! As I was educated by the devil himself, I was good for the job. I knew precisely how to write the reports they wanted. And I had some background through the Palestinian Cultural Club[63] and previous contacts

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[63] The Palestinian Cultural Club is a club set up by *shabāb* from the camp who were tired of seeing their initiatives being chaperoned by NGOs, according to one of the research participants.

with some sections of the PLO. I was already matured so to speak, so I knew what to do: lick me, baby, and I'll milk you. [...] Working with NGOs... it's amazing how much money you can make. It's not exploiting, no: it's just creating jobs through people's suffering. I even question as to whether NGOs have a role in the distribution of wealth. What they create is dependency; they don't work in partnership. And, all the time, they portray the images of what funders want. NGOs are a system and they mimic bigger systems. When NGOs see something they can't understand, they need to define it, to box it. Theoretically, civil society creates NGOs to fix issues; NGOs aren't meant to change anything: this is a big lie. They aren't grassroots initiatives. Grassroots come from here, Shatila, not from Sweden. The clever NGOs create their own constituencies. [...] Political parties here also did that: they used NGOs to create support. Forgive me, but this is the white way of making things: the system feels it can't monitor one's own space; there's a limit as to how far it can go. The NGO mentality came from this – like in jails or mental hospitals. They try to work indoors and set up a system based on dependency. They create pets. And, then, when people reach a certain age, they can't accept this anymore. NGOs give no ability for people to survive; they just create some kind of artificial protection inside the camps; people can't survive outside. And then the NGOs ask: 'why did we fail?' And they do assessments. But the real issue is this: the big system will stop working properly if people are really prepared to survive outside. The way out: Frantz Fanon or let the people have it their own way. So it's a revolutionary moment that is needed."

[...]

"I've been to prison many times. In Jordan, in Syria, in Lebanon. In Jordan, twice: once for 15 days on the border; the second time, for two months. The reason was because I took part in demonstrations and because I had problems with my papers. In Syria, it was for 3 or 4 days because apparently they have some information about things I said. In Lebanon, it happens all the time for short periods, 3 or 4 days. I was beaten in all of these places. Well, in Jordan, more properly speaking, it wasn't beating: it was torture. They

deprived me of sleeping, but as you know and like yourself, I'm insomniac. So they tried to destroy my sense of time, by giving me food at different intervals. In Lebanon, it's just humiliating beating. They make you take off your clothes and then they beat you. […] Having gone to prison wasn't important to me. I didn't learn from it or get anything out of the experience. I was alone all the time and didn't interact. You know, the system works to make your punishment a model. Prisons are a disciplinary act; being imprisoned is a punishment; the idea is not at all to make you better or rehabilitate you."

[…]

"Of course, I've thought of migrating. But, when I travel, I know I can't survive outside, especially in Europe. Instead of migrating, I like the idea of being nomadic. That's different from migrating."

[…]

"Men are forever children. I mean, the system makes bastards out of us, as if we were bastards by nature. So we'd better go on being children, feeling innocent and good, self-indulgently. Otherwise, it's the system that pays the price."

[…]

Nadim: There is a big change happening in this region and I'm part of those changes. Everything is changing, my needs are different. My mental needs.

Me: And what are those changes you're talking about? And what are those mental needs?

Nadim (sigh): Oh, why do you ask, why do you ask? You'll go nuts and we'll never stop if you keep on asking me things like that.

[silence]

Me: Well, thanks, then.

Nadim: ʾakhūy [my brother], you're the most Brazilian welcome! [pause] You know, there is nothing particularly important about my life. I don't have anything to say to you, really.

I certainly could not disagree more, ʾakhūy Nadim!

5.

Pororoca[1] –
Thinking through Music: *Fidāʾiyyīn* and *Shabāb* Talk (Sometimes) Past Each Other

Figure 1 - The intrepid manage to surf the *pororoca*

Hardly had I finished playing Katibe 5's rap Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt *for a group of men above 30 years of age on that sunny afternoon of October 2009, in Al-Bass camp, in southern Lebanon, that criticisms came crashing down:*

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[1] *Pororoca*, meaning a loud roar in Tupi, a language formerly spoken by indigenous communities from Brazil, is the name given to the tidal bore that happens when very high sea tides rush up the Amazon River. It can last for up to one hour and a half and advance 50 kilometres upstream, at a speed of 30 km/h – sometimes even inverting the river current and creating waves four metres high. Its violence uproots trees by the banks of the river, which does not deter those brave surfers, who have learned not to struggle against the water movements, from surfing the *pororoca* for longer than ten minutes. Eventually, the *pororoca* subsides and the river current regains its normal flow – but, depending on the time of the year, when the sea tide rises again in a 12-hour interval, the phenomenon recurs.

"What kind of mind game is this one you're proposing to us here? First [when I played the 1980s' Romana, *by Samih Shokair], you make us feel all nostalgic, just to take us then in a completely different path and make us feel awful, with this new song. You took us to paradise and then pushed us into hell. This new music makes me feel frustrated. The lyrics are wrong and unrealistic,"* censured a 40-year-old Al-Bass resident.

A 50-year-old Palestinian from the Rashidyieh camp, also in southern Lebanon, concurred: "This music [Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt] is exaggerated and false. The singers are taking advantage of people's suffering. They take us away from the right of return, from liberation and from the new Palestinian state. We accept that we live in the camps so as to strengthen the right to return."

A neighbour of the latter, aged 44, was even more vociferous: "This can only be the work of the Israeli Mossad. Pay attention to the words; listen to the rhythm: this music is Zionist all over. It insults us and our people and is unrelated to the reality of the camps. The thawra *(revolution) will remain till the last Palestinian generation, even after a thousand years have passed. The Palestinian cause (*al-qaḍiyya al-filasṭīniyya*) is passed on from one generation to the next. This song doesn't call for the revolution and transforms our leadership into pirates."*

The previous session we held that morning, during which another group of Palestinian refugees was proposed exactly the same activity, did not prepare me for such strong reaction. The morning meeting went much more smoothly and participants did not attack the rap as pointless, Zionist or, even more seriously, Mossad-inspired. The "methodological bliss" I experienced when organizing this workshop ultimately proved to be ephemeral.

While setting up the workshop, at its outset, I started facing obstacles. To begin with, I thought of organizing the activity through an NGO, which has a branch in Shatila. The director of the branch, after listening carefully to what I

had in mind – inviting Palestinian refugees divided into two groups, one composed of those up to 29 years of age and the other of those 30 and over, to listen to a song dating from the thawra *period and to a present-day rap song and to express their views on both[2] – pointed me to the president of the organization. For his turn, the president also paid thorough attention to what I was proposing and yet was not precisely forthcoming: "Why Palestinian rap? You could very well play Zamzam,[3] which is also contemporary and won't invite too strong a reaction." Indeed, it was precisely the reaction that I was after.*

With my hopes of effectively conducting the workshop increasingly dashed, I shared my frustration with some of my friends, Shatila shabāb*. They volunteered to step in. I confess I had to overcome my initial suspicion regarding their organizational skills. In the end, co-organizing the workshop with Shatila* shabāb *was the "best methodological decision ever happened" – if I am allowed to make an expression they so often used, in deliberate broken English, my own. As if aware of my preliminary doubts, they themselves suggested that we lead pilot sessions with participants from the camps in southern Lebanon, prior to the one to be held in Shatila. We all rapidly settled on Katibe 5's* Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt *as the rap song we were to use; it depicts the lives Palestinians lead in the camps today, with all their*

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[2] In addition to the workshop described here, I also interviewed 16 pairs of fathers (in two cases, mothers), all of them ex-fighters, and sons (in two cases, daughters) to collect their life-stories and views on certain events and concepts, based on a list of words proposed to them. All were Shatila residents, with three exceptions: two pairs were middle-class Palestinians, living outside the camp, and one set lived in the Gaza Hospital, in the immediate vicinity of Shatila. I started by interviewing parent and child separately, and then, on a different occasion, paired them and prompted them to express their views on *Romana* and *Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt*, as well as on the following words: *Nakba*; Palestine; Israel; Lebanon; Palestinian Camps; Shatila; *fallāḥīn* (peasants); *fidāʾiyyīn*; *ʾayyām al-thawra* (the days of the revolution); War of the Camps; marriage; education; work; migration; religion; growing up as a man; growing up as a woman; mothers; sisters; daughters; fathers; brothers; sons; views of past generations, and views of present generation. My initial worries about a certain "artificiality" in prodding participants with these words proved short-lived: on several occasions, the words set off a dialogue between father (or mother) and son (or daughter), that eventually moved in unexpected directions, with the researcher just observing the interaction and only contributing when necessary to keep the discussion going.
[3] A singer from the Bourj Al-Barajneh camp in Beirut, Ahmad Zamzam – who is very much identified with Fatah, according to my friends from Shatila – revamps old Palestinian songs, presenting them in a new guise. I attended one of his shows in Shatila. He was accompanied by a group of young dancers, the girls dressed in traditional dresses (*ʾathwāb*) and the boys performing vigorous *dabka* (a folk dance from the Levant).

predicaments: unhealthy living conditions; dearth of social services; skyrocketing unemployment; migration attempts. It took us some time until we located Shokair's Romana,[4] *brought to our attention by Sami, who was taking part in our "ethnographic laboratory." Shokair's march-like composition portrays Palestinians' efforts at resisting the 1982-Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent siege of West Beirut, which culminated in the departure of Arafat and the* fidāʾiyyīn *from the country. After some discussion, we all decided to "go for it" – again to make use of an expression that the* shabāb *like.*

They provided me the lyrics of both songs and worked on their respective translations into English. I did some editing and below is the result of our combined efforts:

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[4] Annex 1 includes a CD with recordings of both *Romana* and *Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt.*

Romana* - Samih Shokair:

Romana..Romana on my waist
And a Kalashnikov in my hand
And the world is on fire (2x)
Their planes bring tons of death
They kill us, and we got no help to rescue us (2x)
We fought back as much as we could
We fought tanks with guns
Oh Beirut, witness that…

If you asked the south**
How many fighters it saw
If you asked Shaqif***
How many air raids tried to destroy it (2x)
Ask Saida and Tyre and Khaldeh**** (2x)
If they remember the challenges we defeated
We called and no one replied to help
So we fought with knives and hands
Oh Beirut, witness that…

We were besieged in Beirut
The fear became bigger but we defeated it
We challenged death
While everything around us was exploding (2x)
And when we left Beirut by sea
Beirut's tears covered us (2x)
We said goodbye to Beirut
And promised to return the favour
Oh Beirut, witness that…

رمانة ـ سميح شقير:

رمانة .. رمانة ع خصري وكلاشينكوف بإيدي ودنيي شعلانة
رمانة .. رمانة ع خصري وكلاشينكوف بإيدي ودنيي شعلانة
وطياراتن ترمي الموت أطنانه علينا ترمي والعون ما جانا
وطياراتن ترمي الموت أطنانه علينا ترمي والعون ما جانا
ردينا يللي بينزّرد
وقابلنا المدفع بالفرد
اشهدي يا بيروت علينا

لو تسأل الجنوب شو شاف طوابير وعسكر
لو تسأل الشقيف كم هجمة وغارة تتكسر
لو تسأل الجنوب شو شاف طوابير وعسكر
لو تسأل الشقيف كم هجمة وغارة تتكسر
واسأل صيدا وصور وخلدة بتتذكر وقفات التحدي
واسأل صيدا وصور وخلدة بتتذكر وقفات التحدي
وصوت ينادي وما في حد نقاتل بالخنجر واليد
اشهدي يا بيروت علينا

تحاصرنا ببيروت
كبر الهم وكنّا أكبر من عصفات الموت وكل شي حولينا يتفجر
تحاصرنا ببيروت
كبر الهم وكنّا أكبر من عصفات الموت وكل شي حولينا يتفجر
ولما طلعنا بالسفينة دموعك بيروت تغطينا
ولما طلعنا بالسفينة دموعك بيروت تغطينا
ودعناكي وقلنا عهد نردّ جميلك هذا وعد
اشهدي يا بيروت علينا

* Romana means grenade
** South of Lebanon
*** Famous Castle in Saida, a city south of Beirut
**** Lebanese cities south of Beirut

Welcome to Camps - Katibe 5:

For the lads who have had enough of life and of filling in emptiness
For a wall stands still in the camp holding memories
Last cent comes in, it'll be stolen by NGOs
They transformed their offices in political organizations
To the point of desrtoying everything in which we believe
The Leader's photo remains standing alone…
The meat is given to those who carry slogans
Officials keep lying to us
Enough with the nationalist songs, khalas, come on let's play the beat
Souls and ghosts of the dead remain in the air
Some people already forgot, and some people still remember
Some martyrs' photos are erased but more are coming on their way
While all the militants have slept, the kalishnikovs remain
Poems written on the wall and remains of bullets
For the lads who have had enough of visiting the embassies
For the homes built on inclinations
Tomorrow a new overpass will be built, and before it plenty of buildings
Behind the ugly clouds, the leader's photo will remain standing alone…

Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)
Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)

We saw the roofs of the camps, we saw them devout
Because Palestinian flags fly above it
The soul of the biggest cause resides in the narrowest alley
The small boy calls the pigeon flying in the sky
People in the camps are deprived by God
A man fights with his wife and then makes it up to her
Moms cursed their children, but still sacrifice for them
A student studies hard to please his mom
A painter draws the map of Palestine and its lands
A girl and her beloved hiding between the destructions
Guys turn up the music
And turn it off during the prayers, our youth are lost
They fight when people curse their country
An old man telling stories of Palestine to his grandchild
He laughs for good memories, and then a tear follows the smile
Homes with no colors
One warm sun, and Palestine remains it all

Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)
Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)

A dwelling with no roofs, going backward
Walls of advertisements, War of the Camps
Buildings have been destroyed by many bullets
Roads are like mazes full of insects
The sky is like heaven
All dead bodies are gathered in one cemetery
God bless their souls
They believe in UN, Ok, then bring in their aids
No one can hear their screams inside
In the hospital, waiting for death in death's hall
So decide between the people of beards or the people of slogans
From now on till the return…

Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)
Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)

Look, the camp I'm living in is still resisting alone
Its form has changed, but its struggle is the same
On the wall, obituaries announcing ordinary people's death
The memory of Palestine, the remains of militants
Look at the sky, and you'll see the electricity wires
If you didn't steal from them, how could you see? How?!
Ceilings are going to fall on the heads of their owners
Water please, stop flooding from underground
Lads are already drowning in unemployment
There's no work, there's no money, children are with no education
God bless UNRWA, we vote for it for presidency
They solve our problems with Panadol from their clinics

Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)
Welcome Bro to the Camps (welcome)

أهلا فيك بالمخيمات - كتيبة خامسة:

لشباب زهقوا الحياة عمال بيعبوا فراغات،
لحيط صامد بالمخيم هادا للذكريات،
و اخر قرش بيجي بتسرقوا الجمعيات،
غيروا المكاتب، بس عشكل التنظيمات،
لوقت منشوف كل شي عيدمر منحارب عشانو،
صورة الزعيم بتضلها صامدة لحالا...
و اللحمة ما تتوزع إلا للعم بحملوا لافتات،
و بعدن عم يضحكوا علينا صحاب البدلات،
خلصت الأغاني الوطنية خلص دقوا البيت،
أشباح و أرواح الميتين بعدن فلتانين،
في ناس خلص نسيوا، و ناس بعدن متذكرين،
في صور شهدا انمحت و في صور تاني جايين،
كل المناضلين ناموا، بقيوا الكلاشنك،
شعر عالحيطان و بقايا رصاصات،
لشباب كتير ملّت من الروحة عالسفارات،
لبيوت كتير زهقت من كتر الإنحدارات،
بكرا يبينوا جسر، و قبلا عمارات،
ورا كل الغيم البشع صورة الزعيم بتضلها صامدة لحالا...

أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)
أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)

شفنا سطوح المخيم، شفناها إنو خاشعة،
لأنو أعلام بلادي عم بترفرف فوق عليها،
نفس أكبر قضية بأصغر زاروبة فيها،
حمام بالسما و طفل عمال يناديها،
أكتر ناسها بالحرمان الله باليها،
رجل يتعارك مع مرتو بعدين يراضيها،
أمهات تدعي على أبنائها أرواحها تعطيها،
طالب يدرس عشان إمو يحاول يرضيها،
فنان يرسم خريطة بلادو و أراضيها،
بنت و عشيقها بالخراب يقوم يخفيها،
شاب لآخر حد بيعلي الموسيقى،
و عند الآذان يطفيها، شباب ضايع،
اذا شتّم وطنهم قلبوا عاليها واطيها،
عجوز يروي لحفيدو بلادو بحكاييها،
يضحك لذكرى شقية و الدمعة تتليها،
بيوت جميلة بلا ألوان تغطيها،
شمس دافعة واحدة، وفلسطين تبقيها... وفلسطين تبقيها...

أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)
أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)

مسكن بلا سقف، تقدم إلى الخلف،
حيطان إعلانات، حرب المخيمات،
بنايات مهدومة من كتر الطلقات،
طرقاتها متاهات مليانة حشرات،
سماها جنة، مجموعة بالكشاف،
بمقبرة وحدة إحتشدت الوفيات،
برحمتك الله إرحم الأموات،
متمسكين باليو- أن، طب إجمع الإعاشات،
ما حدا سامع بالداخل صرخات،
بالمستشفى انتظر الموت بقاعة الأموات،
إختار بين جماعة اللحى أو الشعارات،
من هلأ لموعد العودة عقبال الآذان...

أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)
أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)

ليك، بالمخيم اللي أنا في بعدو صامد لحالو،
إتغيرت أشكالو بس باقي نضالو،
عالحيطان في ورق نعوة لناس عاديين،
ذكرى فلسطين، بقايا مناضلين،
إطلّع عالسما شرطان كهربا،
اذا ما سرقت خط، كيف بدك تشوف؟ كيف؟!
عروس صحابا، رح توقع السقوفي،
يا مين من تحت الأرض ما عاش إطوفي،
الشباب غرقانين بالبطالة بالعطالة،
فش شغل، فش مصاري، الولاد بلا دراسة،
الله يخليلنا الأونروا عالرئاسة،
بيحلّو مشاكلنا بحبة بانادول من العيادة...

أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)
أهلا فيك أخوي بالمخيمات (أهلا)

Equipped with the music, we discussed the format of the workshop and the shabāb *agreed with my proposition to divide participants into two age*

groups, below 30 and aged 30 and above, invite each group to listen to Romana *and* Ahlān Fīk, *have an initial discussion with the groups still separate and then finally bring them together for an overall discussion. We used both the* shabāb's *and my own networks to find a venue in the Al-Bass camp, in southern Lebanon, and in Shatila, for the workshop. As far as the attendance[5] was concerned, their networks were of course infinitely superior to mine. Moreover, we decided that they conduct the activity and take notes. When the day of the workshop in Al-Bass finally arrived, after introducing myself and my research to the participants, it was obvious there was no other major role for me to play. I just sat on the margins and observed. Never for a second did I anticipate that being on the margins and undertaking* non-*participant observation could be so rewarding.*

The session on that pleasant October morning in Al-Bass was lively. The 23 participants – men and women, with ages ranging between 16 and 70 – engaged with the proposed activity. The younger cohort admitted to not being affected by Romana: *a 16-year-old girl from Al-Bass even confessed that she previously thought* Romana *was the name of a village in Palestine. Several acknowledged the lack of information about events of the revolutionary past and a young woman, aged 27, said that she only understood what conflict really means with the July War of 2006. Some admired the sense of pride (*fakhr*), which, together with rage (*ghaḍab*), they identified in the song – different from more recent lyrics, which were all about imploring and begging (*ʾistijdāʾ*), according to the same 27-year-old woman. Having remarked the political unity characteristic of times gone by, they deplored current Palestinian schisms.* Ahlān Fīk, *for its turn, immediately engaged the audience. "It expresses the lives we lead," one of the members commented, to which another added: "The beat captivates me. And we need space to breath."*

As might have been anticipated, it was Romana *that enthralled the older group, nostalgic about what they defined as the "the enthusiasm of the*

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[5] Participants agreed to take part in the activity voluntarily and graciously. All I offered them – obviously in no way compensating for the time they gave me – were some snacks and beverages during the workshop coffee-break.

struggle.” They regretted the failure to pass on the “meaning of fighting” to their offspring, who “are too busy, trying to move on with their lives, under the extreme conditions of the camps today.” A 54-year-old man sighed: “Oh, all these memories. I feel like putting on my uniform again,” seconded by the one sitting next to him, 42, who asserted: “We loved the struggle, different from the present generation.”

Ahlān Fīk sparked controversy among older participants. They aimed their frustration at what they characterized as the song’s lack of revolutionary content and supposed “chilling” purposes. They blamed themselves for not having properly transferred the thawra *heritage to the youngsters. Nevertheless, some common ground existed between the two age-sets, even though the elders preferred to turn a deaf ear to some remarks by the younger participants, who stated that they simply cannot be touched by* Romana *like their parents, who “lived the Palestinian cause (*al-qaḍiyya al-filasṭīniyya*) and the resistance (*al-muqāwama*) in all their intensity,” while the former have been reduced to “lives of refugees in overcrowded camps, with no electricity and increasing unemployment.” Gradually, the older age-set adopted a somewhat patronizing perspective: as stated by a 55-year-old, “we need to solve the problems challenging the youth today.”*

In the momentous afternoon session, however, I found no sign of self-assigned responsibility, or deaf ears to youngsters’ remarks, or patronizing perspectives. Instead, the clash between the two age-sets assumed full-gear. Two differences set the afternoon gathering apart from the one previously held. Firstly, among the 22 participants, eight were from Rashidieh, while in the morning there was only one participant who travelled the several kilometres separating Rashidieh – farther to the south, closer to Palestine and historically a PLO/Fatah stronghold – from Al-Bass. Word of mouth about the workshop, I gather, quickly reached Rashidieh: that is what explains the high turnout of Rashidieh residents in the afternoon. Secondly, participants in the afternoon were all male.

An outspoken 22 year-old from Rashidieh took the floor, after listening attentively to Romana*: "We're all singing for the revolution as those people who sing for the past and long-dead poets. [...] We need to start looking forward, instead of commemorating forever the victories of the past." He was seconded by a 19 year-old, also from Rashidieh: "How can we go on having faith in the cause when they [the* fidāʾiyyīn*] left Lebanon?" A 20-year old from Burj Al-Shemali added: "This song only talks about weapons. What we need now are new ideas for the* thawra *to move forward."*

Ahlān Fīk*'s lyrics just furthered their convictions. A 24 year-old from Al-Bass set the tone for the discussion: "You see, what this music shows are the results of the* thawra*'s failures. Up to today, we pay the costs for the previous generation's mistakes. What they've left us with, at the end, is suffering, deprivation of civil rights, humiliation (*khunūʿ*) and subjection (*khuḍūʿ*)." The remarks by the same 20 year-old from Burj Al-Shemali from the preceding paragraph were almost pitiless: "Let's just face it; the* thawra *has come to an end in the camps in Lebanon."*

Thus, it should not have come as a surprise that the over-all discussion, with the two age-sets together, neared open confrontation, forcing the Shatila shabāb *to exert their diplomatic skills. This is a sample of how the debate went:*

> *Al-Bass resident, 48: Rap came out of the gangs in America. The youth of today, they're rapping to make fun of our heritage. [...] Rap is stupid; it's for beggars. I'd kill my son if he listened to that in my house.*
> *Al-Bass resident, 24: Life isn't static. Things change, so the styles for one to express oneself also change. Of course, the reality we live affects the style in which we express ourselves.*
> *Al-Bass resident, 22: We aren't cancelling out the traditions (*turāth*) through rap. We're simply trying to express our current economic and social problems [...] through a modern style.*
> *Al-Bass resident, 24: [...] And let me ask: what has the Palestinian* thawra *given us? [...]*
> *Al-Bass resident, 48: The* thawra *gave a lot to us, Palestinian people. [...] The* thawra *has turned us from scattered populations to a people with a representation. We are even represented in the United Nations and there was some drawing of borders in the West Bank and Gaza. If we're here, it's because of the* thawra*. We have a sense of identity, in spite of what the world wants. The youth should complete what we have achieved before them.*

Al-Bass resident, 40 (addressing himself to the younger cohort): You should read the lyrics of Romana *and try to understand the history of the revolution. The fact that the* fidāʾiyyīn *left was an honour, and not a defeat. There are several reasons as to why we left Beirut. The youth doesn't know the history of the Palestinian revolution.*
Rashidieh resident, 39 (also addressing himself to the younger cohort): You're an extension of the revolution.
*Rashidieh resident, 41: The PLO gave us a sense of identity. That's why the Palestinian cause (*al-qaḍiyya al-filasṭīniyya*) is very much alive.*
*Burj Al-Shemali resident, 20: (ironic) Which great Palestinian cause (*qaḍiyya filasṭīniyya*) are you talking about? I can't even get an education! [...]*
Al-Bass resident, 24 (addressing himself to the older cohort): [...] I ask you back: which party has given us the chance to do or say anything?
*Al-Bass resident, 48 (addressing himself to the younger cohort): Please, do not kill the revolution and the martyrs (*al-shuhadāʾ*) twice. We have a case (*qaḍiyya*) so don't defend rap and tell me it's a natural evolution. Please, don't kill our heritage. [...]*
Al-Bass resident, 40: What now, music is for dancing?! Young people [...] don't understand the revolution.
Rashidieh resident, 41: And yet they [the youth] have a role to play, which is to maintain the struggle and our heritage and to preserve our identity.

In comparison, the session we held in Shatila some two weeks later – with 10 participants, all males,[6] with ages ranging between 14 and 80 – was almost anti-climactic. Indeed, politics does not live on dissent only. The younger cohort praised a certain sense of pride (fakhr) in Romana: "It encourages us to remain steadfast (ṣāmidīn) and to go on with the struggle (al-niḍāl)," a 22-year-old volunteered, however, adding immediately after: "We simply cannot compare the past to today. Romana displays even some sweetness, because of the sense of pride we felt back then. But today, it is as if we are subservient (dhalīl)." A 17-year-old concurred: "The very thought about the struggle changed, because of the sorrow (ʾasaf) we feel." And this was an 18-year-old speaking: "In the past, there was the struggle and there was power (quwwa), while today people need to go after foreign aid. We forgot the right of return." Ahlān Fīk confirmed their convictions, as was captured by the words of a 17-year-old: "You see, that's what we mean. We forgot the cause (al-qaḍiyya)

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[6] I can only speculate as to why, contrary to my intentions, women did not show up for the session in Shatila. The reason may have been that the workshop was ultimately organized by Shatila *shabāb* – among us, the organisers, there was just one half-Palestinian woman, but not a resident of Shatila. Another possible reason was the fact that I decided *not* to hold the workshop through the local NGO I initially approached for that purpose. The NGO may have discouraged participation by its own constituency.

because everyone wants the support [provided by NGOs]." He continued: "We're going backwards, aren't we? Yesterday, we could still do something and today we simply can't."

Romana *put our older cohort in a nostalgic mood, and yet this did not imperil the dialogue scheduled right after with the younger set. A 62-year-old triggered the discussion: "Together with the* kalashnikov, romana *(grenade) was the symbol of the* thawra*. I guess our community here today cannot even understand the words in this song. [...] The true problem is that we don't really like each other in this camp. The Palestinian schism is all over: [...] here in Shatila we have three different popular committees. Even within the camp, we're separated and it wasn't like that in the past." A 33-year-old echoed his opinion: "It was the Palestinian parties who destroyed Shatila. [...] The war on us today has a different tactic: they try to starve us, so that we need to seek bread and medicine. In the meantime, Al-Aqsa goes on being under siege and we, in the camp, are asleep."*

The analysis of Ahlān Fīk *by the older group translated some disapproval towards the younger, and yet again this did not endanger the exchange between the two age-sets. It was the same 62-year-old man who initiated the debate: "I just wish that those guys who are singing implement what they're saying. You see, they talk about steadfastness (*ṣumūd*), but they're the first ones queuing up at the embassies' gates. They criticize the organizations, but they're members of them." A 45-year-old considered the depiction of the camps in the rap song to be accurate: "The issues mentioned portray the reality in the camps. But they have been like this for a while. [...] The Palestinian parties, through their popular committees, brought the mafias into the camp."*

Once the two groups were put together, the information flow between them continued and did not lead to a clash. This is how the debate proceeded:

> *17 year-old: If they [the older cohort] object to the rap song because it isn't pragmatic, I'd agree that's true. But we have to shed light on the*

problems of the camp and the level of corruption before we can do something about it.

22 year-old: You see, these days, you find thousands of parties – Hamas, Fatah, Jihad – and non-governmental organizations. But we can ask: what do they really do [...] to find solutions to our problems?

22 year-old: Some people from the previous generation try to [...] marginalize us. They never allow us to play any role.

45 year-old: It is true that some older people from Shatila disregard the needs and contributions of youth. We're with the reform that is called for in the rap song. So young people should impose themselves on the parties. [...]

From the height of his 80 years, the eldest of our participants spoke, and it was his only intervention, which was enough to end the debate:

Some corrupt people got the control of the camp. And we call upon the youth to participate in the reform of the camp. Some elders mock the younger. But in reality we're tired and we need the younger to participate in the reform of Shatila. We want Shatila to be better with the young of this camp. We want the young to intervene and promote change.

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If the caesurae with certain regimes of authority may require the death of a father, commonly intertwined with the figure of the leader (Hammoudi 1997; Borneman 2004, 2007; Sawaf 2013), in Shatila – local leaders and NGO presidents patently excluded – there is little will to resuscitate him, and particularly so among the *shabāb*.

Appalled by the systematic neglect with which gender studies have traditionally treated age – as if so-called patriarchy is only about the relation between men and women and seldom about that between seniors and juniors – I briefly discuss in this chapter why that is so. Just as I have demonstrated in the previous chapter that "gender" falls short as a heuristic tool to make sense of today's *shabāb*'s biographies, here I aim to indicate that neither "age/youth" nor "generation" lead us to firmer analytical ground.[7]

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[7] By problematizing subsequently "women/gender" and "youth" as heuristic tools, I am inspired by Nadim's comments from Chapter 2, according to which European aid fashions dictated funding to be directed firstly to "women's empowerment" and, then to "youth." By

Indeed, the *fidāʾiyyīn* constituted a "generation" – for they shared the "drama of their youth" (Manheim 1952) – and were immortalized in it by a hundred accounts, ethnographic and others (Sayigh 1979; Chesnot and Lama 1998; Kanafani 2005, 2008). The Shatila *shabāb*, for their turn, do not fit comfortably in either category: "age/youth" or "generation." Their lives expose not only the frail foundations of the all-too-facile clichés about the "clash of generations" but also invite us to catch a glimpse of the heuristic limits of the increasingly popular category "youth." I take up the task of developing such argument by firstly showing how and why nationalistic songs have ceased to "capture" – in the multiple senses of the word: to record, to catch and to control – *shabāb*'s political imaginations.

Lords of the Palestinian Marches

Upon listening to the first lines of Romana*, 55-year-old Abu Hassan shared a generous smile:*

> *Even in the worst misery, one should seek for ways to continue with one's life. This song stirred in us the desire to continue fighting. [...] This song reminds me of my war and my enemy, who wants to take me away from my roots. [...] Revolutionary songs gave the strength for us to survive and stay firm.*

His son, 21-year-old Hassan, concurred:

> *This song talks about the departure of the* thawra *from Lebanon in 82. All these revolutionary songs give you the power to stay put, the motivation for the battlefield.*

He searched for a more recent and closer context to illustrate his thoughts:

> *The same happens in Gaza today. Different from here, there the* thawra *goes on.*

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not taking any of these categories for granted, I hope to have remained faithful to Nadim's remarks.

This father and son spoke in Palestinian dialect. They are new residents in Shatila. Originally from Nahr Al-Barid,[8] they moved to Shatila in 2007, upon the destruction of their home camp by the Lebanese Army combating a group of militants of Fatah Al-Islam,[9] who had infiltrated it. Both father and son described the event as a new Nakba.

The first notes of Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt *precipitated yet another smile: this time, Hassan's. He immediately identified the music:*

> *I know this one. It's by Katibe 5, right? I have others songs like this one in my mobile.*

Abu Hassan did not condemn his son's musical tastes:

> *These kinds of songs, they tell about what's going on now with us. It isn't only about fighting the enemy anymore; it's also about an inner fight. This music criticizes those responsible for the situation we find ourselves in now. [...] We need responsible leaders* (qāda), *ready to sacrifice* (bitḍaḥḥī) *and give* (taʿṭī) *and who care* (tahtamm). *You know what? I'm with these guys [the rappers].*

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Studying what Nattiez (2004) names as the "total musical fact" implies a semantic. Indeed, as appropriated by members of the group being researched, songs point not only to the syntax of relations between elements

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[8] Nahr Al-Barid residents spoke a version of Arabic closer to the one used in Palestine because of the relative isolation of the camp, some 16 kilometers away from the city of Tripoli. The "politics of language" invites an investigation by a researcher with more linguistic training than me. Some of the Shatila *shabāb* – especially the activists among them or those with jobs at NGOs – reported their pride in communicating exclusively in the Palestinian dialect (even though several dialects exist in Palestine), albeit they did not always do so. Others who also circulated among the Lebanese daily through work or education and have had their Arabic duly inflected, reflecting a pronounced Beiruti influence, said it would be artificial to switch back into Palestinian parlance. Others felt no artificiality when doing so – naturally switching back-and-forth into and from Palestinian and Beiruti according to the audience. Once, I remarked to a young Shatila hairdresser I was interviewing that what she spoke sounded very Beiruti to me. Her reaction to my remark showed that sometimes the "politics of language" opens space up for a "pragmatics of language:" "Yes, you're right. I do the hair of all these Beiruti madames everyday. It's just easier to speak Lebanese to them and not run the risk of inviting questions as to where I come from."

[9] Fatah Al-Islam is a Sunnite Islamist group, whose founder Shaker Al-Abssi broke with Fatah Al-Intifada in 2006.

of musical nature, but also to the involving context. If songs acquire meanings this way, there needs to be a reason as to why people opt to say certain things by singing.

In the case of the "Palestinian marches," Massad (2003) shows how their lyrics responded closely to the evolving exigencies of the nationalist struggle. Thus, the confidence that Arab unity – especially as expressed in the Nassirist revolution and in Abd al-Wahhab's martial hymns – would carry on the struggle for the Palestinian right of return in the 1950s was replaced by despair at the defeat of 1967 – that eventually set the tone for the Rahbani brothers' and Fayrouz' often lachrymose laments for the land beyond reach – and by the renewed hope aroused by the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s actions in and out of Lebanon from the 1970s on. While Fayrouz nostalgically sings of migrating birds[10] that can fly back to Palestine in *Sanarjiʿu Yawman* (We will return one day), songs celebrating the Palestinian militia's deeds assume a somewhat more defiant tone. As a rule, and as was evident in the cases of Egypt and Lebanon, only songs not deemed to be too threatening to a regime's interests would be broadcast by national TV and radio stations, showing the respective state's (qualified) support for the Palestinian issue. If the PLO allowed more leeway for composers, who would thus avoid the censorship by Arab regimes, it also ensured that lyrics remained faithful to certain canons and ideology. Upon its expulsion from Jordan in 1971 and relocation to Lebanon, the PLO established its own radio station: *Sawt Filastin Sawt Al-Thawra Al-Filastiniyya* (Palestinian Voice, Voice of the Palestinian Revolution). A group associated with Fatah and created in 1969, *Al-Firqah Al-Markaziyyah* (The Central Band) produced a true crop of martial hymns, sung with Palestinian rural accents. Illustrative of this crop is *Al-Fiddaya,[11]* the lyrics to which read:

> Our revolution will get stronger and stronger

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[10] The Shatila shabāb of today, instead of just lamenting their lack of freedom, compared with the freedom enjoyed by birds, play instead with the latter – and I would add, also partake, in some measure, in their freedom. This is one of the subjects of the next chapter.

[11] This is not to be confused with the song, by a similar name (*fidāʾī*), which became the Palestinian anthem. The lyrics of the latter, as yet another indication of how music may be forced to bow to varying political fads, opt for silence instead of being openly critical about the so-called "peaceful solution."

And lots of people are joining with their arms.

[...]

We don't agree with the peaceful solution

[...]

Revolution after revolution against the occupier
There's no other solution but the cannon
To get the Arab land back

[...]

This is our right
Fiddaya, fiddaya,
We will do anything to get back our right
We will force our will on the invader
And the revolution starts with our revolution

[...]

Fiddaya, fiddaya,
One blood, one destiny
We are one in the eyes of the revolution.

Yet today's Shatila *shabāb* do not see an obvious revolution with their eyes. In spite of what *Al-Fiddaya* preaches, it simply is not true – or not anymore – that Palestinians have "one blood, one destiny." The "Voice of the Palestinian Revolution" has ceased to be the "voice of Palestinians" (at least, as far as the Shatila *shabāb* are concerned)[12] and the "liberating songs" used as the very title of Massad's article (2003) have ceased to be liberating. As aptly remarked by Abu Hassan above, the fight itself has changed: it is not

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[12] My various visits to one of my favourite spots in Shatila – a corner-shop in the camp, selling Palestinian memorabilia (*kūfiyyāt*; necklaces with Naji Al-Ali's cartoon icon, Hanzalah; Palestinian flags, CDs and DVDs with songs and films related to the history of the Palestinian saga) – served to make it clear to me Shatilans' evolving relations to the "cause" (*al-qaḍiyya*). The owner came to really like this researcher and nicknamed me *qamīṣ* (shirt), making fun of the fact that once I dropped into his shop looking for a shirt, but pronounced the *qāf* of the word *qamīṣ*, a phoneme that only exists in classical Arabic and that has gone missing in Beiruti and various Palestinian dialects. As I was trained in classical Arabic before fieldwork, I sometimes mispronounced – or rather, pronounced too well – certain words, like *qamīṣ*. The memorabilia shop attracted a considerable number of customers during the summer, but remained almost empty throughout the winter. I asked the owner why: "Ah, *Qamīṣ*, people from the camp are too busy to care about what I sell. They only buy when they want to make a gift for a friend, especially a foreign friend. But during the summer, *Qamīṣ*, we have all these people from Shatila who live abroad coming to visit. So they buy from me to take the articles back home, in Germany or Denmark. Sometimes I even ship articles to Europe."

anymore about *the* Palestinian struggle (and analysts should be politically sensitive to the kind of authority needed to define and impose what counts as *the* relevant struggle at different moments in time), but rather struggles, in the plural, by Palestinians, also in the plural. The struggles include those rather unspectacular ones conducted, on a daily basis, by the *shabāb* – searching for a job, or having given up hope of finding one, or working unbearably and physically demanding long shifts for a low salary; searching for a bride, or having given up hope of finding one, or worrying about not having the means to start an independent household – those that do not bear the glamorous mark of the liberation.

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"I'd like to be like my father," this was the very first sentence uttered by Hassan when I met him alone for an interview, prior to pairing him with his father for yet another interview some two months later.[13] In Hassan, Abu Hassan found a loquacious admirer:

> *I wish I was with the* fidāʾiyyīn *and had the chance to fight with my father. Palestine without a gun is nothing. The revolution is getting stronger in Palestine but here it doesn't exist anymore. I wish I was there, to give my support, by any means.*

Abu Hassan taught his five children politics – "so that they know what to say and when" – but he did not want his two sons to join the fidāʾiyyīn*. To his mind, the logic of the struggle has changed:*

> *In the past, I fought with guns, to defend us, but today I fight with my mind. It maybe because I'm getting old. You know, my age is like the easing of the tornado. It's like childhood (*ṭufūla*), but with knowledge (*ʿilim*). Today, I can talk to everyone in the camp, as my father used to, when he was my age. Every age has its beauty and its own truth (*ḥaqq*).*

Being a bookish man (whenever I stopped by for a visit, he was reading about herbal medicine), Abu Hassan very much wanted his children to study,

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[13] See footnote 2.

but the latter dropped out of school. He was forgiving towards them: "You know, with the situation we have in Lebanon, it's difficult to get an education. Even if one studies, at the end one can't find jobs in the area one specialized." Instead, he made sure his children – including the girls – had the requirements to stand on their own feet. Only one daughter did not get any kind of training, because she married at a very early age. As for the other two, one was trained as a hairdresser and the second as a secretary. As for his two sons, he managed to pass on his craft – candy making – to them.

Abu Hassan owned a large candy shop in Nahr Al-Barid. It took him more than a decade of hard work – mainly as a construction worker – to put enough money aside to set up the shop. At 18, Abu Hassan had left Lebanon for Libya, where he stayed for three years as a construction worker, "working in the middle of the desert, under very high temperatures." With the outbreak of the Civil War in Lebanon, he returned, but did not stay for long. He got engaged to Um Hassan, whose family was from the same village in Palestine as his own, and flew back to Libya in order to work under the unrelenting sun yet again, to save money for the marriage. He stayed in Libya for an extra year and, once back, paid 2,000 Lebanese Liras in muqqaddam – *"a lot of money, back then" – and finally married Um Hassan. He set aside enough money to purchase a house and to renovate his parents' house. A leg injured during battle, however, forced him to cut short his years as a construction worker and to contemplate alternatives. He started working in a candy shop, while Um Hassan – a talented tailor – began working from home in order to help the family make ends meet. He used to take his sons to the shop in order to initiate them into the art of candy making. Some 12 years of hard work and careful family budgeting left Abu Hassan with enough money to open his own candy shop in Nahr Al-Barid:*

> *It was a nice shop. Our clients were from all over, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese. I had a big party when we opened it. We had a comfortable life. And, then, with the destruction of Nahr Al-Barid, all this was gone. Several years of work gone like that, in a month.*

Abu Hassan still tried to stay in Nahr Al-Barid for as long as his safety permitted in order to defend his property, but at a certain point he was forced

to leave. The family fled to Shatila, where his married daughter was living. Abu and Um Hassan were living in a one-room dwelling when I met them. He spent his days reading his books on herbal medicine, hoping in the future he may help healing the sick, while Um Hassan is back to sewing from home in order to raise some money so the family has at least enough for basic expenses. Hassan, for his turn, is painfully aware that his father's past golden days are something extremely difficult for him to replicate:

> *You know, once I was in love, but* al-ḥamdulillah *(thank God) it didn't work out. Marriage is expensive. One needs some 25,000 dollars to get married, and how can I have that kind of money? I'm paid 600 dollars a month. To marry, I need to have all the power (*quwwa*); I need to be respected as a man; I need to have a house and a future. I often think of the future. I'd like it to be like the past. I'd like to have what I used to have in Nahr Al-Barid: a good house and a good job. And I want to get married and have children. And to raise my children in a proper way.*

In a similar vein, Abu Hassan's golden days in Nahr Al-Barid are and may have always been beyond the reach of Shatila fathers. Abu Hassan was wise to retire from his military career and regain his productive life, even being able to instruct his sons in his craft. He speaks with pride about Hassan and his brother:

> *My sons are the light of my eye. When they were born, I felt they were me. I want them to be stronger than me. They're my descendants (*dhurriyatī*); they're my heirs. They'll keep my name forever.*

Comparatively, Shatila fathers' lot looks gloomier.[14] They have little to pass on to their children – apart from the memories of the glorious ʾayyām al-thawra.

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In her study of village history books written by Palestinians, Davis (2011) shows how memory is gendered – and, I add, aged. The majority of authors of the village books are elderly men, enacting what is framed as their

[14] Nonetheless, Abu Hassan's future as well, upon the destruction of Nahr Al-Barid, looks increasingly inauspicious.

responsibility: documenting village stories and passing them on in order to enable present-day and diasporic Palestinians to maintain a land-based national identity. Such histories are celebrated by subaltern studies as examples of alternative sources that bring to light stories by and of marginalized populations that do not normally find their way into official recording, yet they bear the mark of those authoring them. In this sense, while village history books are revealing as narratives of those who have been marginalized within the global state-system in the struggle for Palestine, they do not reflect perspectives of the entire Palestinian society: often enough, they are still the work of an elite, with specific interests and views, in terms both of gender and age. To give evidence to her argument, Davis carefully records how village history books in the main text remain oblivious to the fact that women held and trafficked in property, even though abundantly indicating that that happened *in their annexes*. Moreover, women hardly show up as working the land prior to 1948, a feature patently at odds with the reality: in this sense, the books are more telling of the class sensibilities of their upwardly and increasingly urbanized authors, whose economic conditions allowed them to spare their wives and daughters from engaging in labour. Making the "real" "true" requires certain abilities (White 1980): history itself has a certain historicity, compelling scholars to question "why certain narratives dominate at certain times despite the existence of other sources, counterarguments, and other narratives." (Davis 2011: 17)

Davis writes of how Palestinians entwine past and present through village books. Accordingly, the books serve as bases for a reconfiguration of present-day expressions of Palestinian identity, scaffolding specific forms of national identification in the future. Yet, for the retiring *fidāʾiyyīn* interviewed by Chesnot and Lama (1998), who used to live under the *motto* that "to combat is to exist," (7) the present has an "acid taste," (15) forcing them to temper their "past ardours." (7) Indeed, one may justifiably ask what happens when the past looks increasingly idyllic and cannot be replicated, as is the case with Shatilans. If the past is continuously recalled with nostalgia, it certainly has ceased to serve as a foundation for hope, because the future has

also stopped being imaginable. What happens then when there are no more reasons for the Palestinian marches to continue being sung?

Borneman (2007) diagnoses the recent lack of fine ethnography with political relevance on relations among men in the Arabic-speaking world. He rightly points out that anthropologists in particular, and for a couple of decades already, have attempted to compensate for the traditional neglect of studies on relations among women in the region. As a result, there has been a true *essor* on research on the lives of women in the so-called "Middle East."[15] Men, however, have not as yet received the same kind of analytical care. When trying to contribute to remedy such situation, by investigating relations between fathers and sons in Aleppo, in northern Syria, Borneman nonetheless faced an unanticipated obstacle: fathers were not precisely forthcoming to the anthropologist's advances. This is how he explains their relative silence:

> I suspect that fathers were reticent to explain themselves at length because the conditions of paternal authority in Syria have been severely compromised – in terms of an inability to procure jobs for their sons and daughters; an inability to reverse a trend in contemporary representation to reduce Arab men to terrorists, Islamic extremists, and ineffectual victims of Israeli politics; and an inability to assert any influence over the political sphere in their own country. (xiv)[16]

If, "in the Middle East the father never dies," (Borneman 2007: 11) as a professor friend remarked to Borneman, the Aleppo *shabāb* – and also the ones from Shatila – have had to learn how to make do without a father.

In such a scenario, what happens to "lineal masculinity" – the "perceived ontological essence flowing to and through men across the generations," which is pervasive in the region and serves for the transmission

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[15] To name just a few of those studies: Delaney 1991; Abu-Lughod 1983; Joseph 1983; Friedl 1989; Mernissi 1988 and Kapchan 1996.

[16] In Borneman's mind, Islam has begun to fill in the void left by the decline in paternal authority. While several of the Shatila *shabāb* are more religious than their fathers – who belonged to a generation that, at least back then and under the influence of leftist ideals, took pride in publicising their secularism – I would not go as far as to say that the youngsters are attempting to fill in an authority gap when turning to religion.

of identity, status and wealth from fathers to sons, according to King and Stone (2010)? What if there is little – or no – wealth or status to be passed on? In a series of successive skilful demarches, King and Stone manage to bring "gender" and "age" together as "mutually constituted domains." They can do so because, as they argue, "crucial dimensions of gender are transmitted through structures of kinship" across generations (324).

This is how their argument goes. Schneider's (1984) censure of kinship as being flawed by Western notions of reproduction and Collier's and Yanagizako's (1987) similar criticism of gender have led research to a position of radical relativism. Both kinship and gender were considered, at most, emic concepts, and as such, demanded investigation into each society separately, providing very fragile leverage for comparative analytical exercises. Yet King and Stone believe that analyses can allow proper consideration of local constructions of kinship as well as cross-cultural comparison.

Here they summon the help of one of the most ambitious comparative analysts in the history of anthropology: Jack Goody. According to Goody, in the Eurasian context, as opposed to sub-Saharan Africa, sons normally inherited land, and daughters, movable property. In Eurasia, the dowry played an essential role in enabling parents to "match" brides and grooms – or, more properly speaking, the dowries of the former and the inheritance prospects of the latter. In Eurasia, the dowry thus functioned for class maintenance. Although Goody did not thoroughly investigate the implication of such a system for gender patterns, he remarked that it was telling that the more propertied a woman was, the less freedom of choice of a partner she would enjoy, as far as marriage arrangements were concerned. Inappropriate relationships were further tabooed through the valorization of women's pre-marital virginity and the "honour complex." In any case, it is surprising that Goody and especially later writers inspired by his work have had so little to say about how class-stratified patriliny also affects men.

At this juncture in their reasoning, King and Stone resort to the work of one of the most productive writers on patriliny: Meyer Fortes. On the concept of *naam*, among the Mole-Dagmane-speaking groups from West Africa, they quote from one of his papers: "*Naam*, fluid-like, is all pervasive; it comes from the hero founders from the Mamprussi stock and body politic who first created it. By the lineal principle, all the patrilineal descendants, recognized or putative, of the hero founders, wherever they may have wandered, have a stake in it." (Fortes, quoted in King and Stone 2010: 327) Therefore, for the patriliny to work as what King and Stone name as "masculine," (327) it is not only the idyllic past of the heroic founders that is in question, but also the present, where descendants are expected to build on their received lineal masculinity, projecting it into the future. Already in the region my study here tackles, Fuad Khuri (1975) shows how male deeds kept alive in collective memory among Lebanese families assures identity along agnatic descent lines. Ideally (and here King's and Stone's findings correspond with Herzfeld's (1985); Connell's (1987, 1995) and Connell's & Messerschmidt (2005)), a man needs to be good at being a man and show performative excellence, crystallizing hegemonic expressions of masculinity. This way, not only is his mascu-line eternalized into the future, but he may establish *his* own patriliny by exceeding his forebears and rubbing out their endeavours: indeed, there is no other "ability more potentially hegemonic than that of putting one's stamp of identity on the next generation and multiple generations into the future." (King and Stone 2010: 330)

Not merely present-oriented, lineal masculinity has the past as its referent and points into the future – and one more time, my customary "heuristic troublemakers," the Shatila *shabāb*, with their predilection for giving people (and especially researchers) a hard time, expose the (false) idealism built into such a principle. Indeed, the analyst should not lose sight that both features brought together by lineal masculinity, kinship and gender, are ideas – imaginary systems – and as such necessarily admit all kinds of adaptation when put into practice (Bourdieu 1977). Thus, what happens to lineal masculinity, kinship and gender when, in practice, the past looks

simultaneously bright and unrepeatable; the present, increasingly dark, and the future, no longer conceivable? What happens, when the father – of sons (Borneman 2004, 2007), of nations (Borneman 2004; Özyürek 2006; Sawaf 2013) – die and there is no will or reason to revive him?

The sons who Borneman (2007) met during his fieldwork in Aleppo still aspire to patrilineal prerogatives: "I would rather have children than fly," one of them retorted to the anthropologist. In contrast with their Syrian counterparts, the Shatila *shabāb* have apparently opted to fly.[17]

Fermata[18] [19]

Source: Drawing by Antoine Badaoui
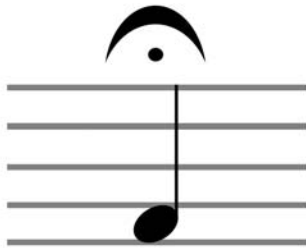
Figure 2 – Fermata: Too Long a Halt?

It took me quite some time to pay off the debt that I incurred while setting up the interview with Abu Kamal. While he did not ask for it directly, he let me know, through Malik, the friend who arranged our meeting, that he was looking for a complete

set of Brazilian shirts for the soccer team of the cultural club in Shatila that he was the president of. I did grab the first chance to have the shirts brought from Brazil, when my mother decided to pay me a visit in Lebanon. Abu Kamal's request became a family affair, with my mother counting on the help of her own sister to visit sports shops in Rio that would sell the whole set of shirts for a reasonable price. On the flight to Beirut, the set of 11 shirts took up half of my mother's suitcase. Once in possession of the gift, and not willing to make Abu Kamal uncomfortable in any way, I decided to use the

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[17] Borneman provides only anecdotal data about class belonging among the Aleppo sons. I suspect that, being less destitute than the Shatila *shabāb*, starting a family for them was less of an issue.

[18] A *fermata* – represented, on musical notation, by a cyclops' or bird's eye placed over the note – indicates that the note is to be sustained for longer than usual. It is left to the conductor (or the performer) to decide for how much longer. Should she decide to sustain it for too long, she runs the risk of losing track of the music tempo.

[19] With my very limited knowledge of music, I have extensively counted on help provided by two musician friends in the elaboration of this chapter: Dauro Soares and Luiz Otávio Sampaio. While I share with them eventual merits of the present chapter, its shortcomings are my responsibility.

same channel of communication he had selected: I asked for Malik's good offices to take the shirts to Abu Kamal. I waited for a couple of weeks for Malik to tell me about Abu Kamal's reaction. He did not bring the matter up himself, so I pressed him one day. This was an embarrassed Malik speaking:

> *I knew it was hopeless, Gustavo. No matter how hard I tried to avoid the subject, I knew you would raise it with me. Yes, I took the shirts to Abu Kamal. He complained that 11 shirts aren't enough, for the whole set also needs to include uniforms for the players sitting on the bench, on stand by.*

At 54 and a civil engineer, Abu Kamal is a proud man. His public persona inspires respect. He assumed a professorial tone when talking to me and lectured for several minutes on the eventful saga of the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon since the Nakba, before I was able to make it clear that I was also after his personal biography. Abu Kamal holds all the credentials for the authority he exudes: a former Fatah cadre, imprisoned and tortured between 1982 and 1984 – a period he described as a "huge experience (tajraba)*" -, he comes from a family of* fidāʾiyyīn*. Four of his brothers were* fidāʾiyyīn *and died in battle. His father was also a fighter. After the failure of his first marriage to a Lebanese Shiite, with the Palestinian-Shiite conflict of the 80s apparently having played a role in the couple drifting apart, he wed Um Kamal, a Palestinian and a* fidāʾiyya *like himself, "though she never held a gun, as her task was to bring ammunition and provisions to the camp." All this allowed Abu Kamal to claim a potent belonging to a deep-rooted chain of uninterrupted struggle, a chain that culminates in his own history and which is at odds with present-day trends:*

> *From the moment that the first Zionist Congress happened in Basel in 1897, the* thawra *started. This means 50 years of struggle that books rarely talk about. And from 1947, we had only two alternatives before us:* thawra *or slavery* (ʿubūdiyya)*. That's why I left Sur to Saida in 85 and, then, on to Shatila. Their intention was to destroy Shatila and my brothers-in-arms* (ʿikhwatī) *came here to defend the camp and our people's dignity* (karāma)*.*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *And today, what are they* [the enemy] *after? They want us to spend our lives smoking hashish and watching porn movies so that we lose*

our heads and forget the real question. They want to kill any hope of return on the horizon. Fighters today, they aren't true fidāʾiyyīn*. They're after a salary* (maʿāsh)*; they hold their guns while watching TV and smoking. [...] They have an empty life.*

In Abu Kamal's remarks, the struggle for return not only assumes a moral tone, but also admits a religious rendition:

We're Muslims. Our reference is the Koran. In the Koran, there's the promise that we'll return to Palestine, whatever the violence is and no matter how far Israelis have progressed. We'll return to our homeland (waṭan) *and this is a promise from God, in the Koran. We're believers and have no doubt. If not me, my son. If not him, my grandson. [...] Thoughts never change. Principles* (mabādiʾ) *never change. You may miss the purpose at certain points, but what's important is to wake up again.*

At 18, Kamal tries his best to live up to his father's expectations. He studied computer maintenance at an institute, but did not manage to find a job in his area of specialization. Employed at a firm that produces iron for air conditioning units, he works without a contract and without medical insurance. He talked to me about his memories of a nice and peaceful childhood. The July War of 2006 was the first one he witnessed. Kamal defines himself as a shāb. *In his opinion, a* shāb *is "someone who has a good way of thinking (*tafkīr salīm*) towards his country (*baladū*), his religion and his people (*ʾahlū*)." He has not been given any opportunity to prove his bravery; yet he dreams of being a* fidāʾī*:*

Kamal: If there's the chance, I so much wished to be a fidāʾī*. Today, there are still* fidāʾiyyīn*, but they don't show. In the past, everybody was fighting for Palestine. But now even the camp isn't Palestinian anymore, if we can say this, because there are lots of nationalities, all groups (*fiʾāt*) in Shatila. In the days of Abu Ammar [Yasser Arafat], it wasn't like that. There were weapons (*silāḥ*) and there was* thawra.
Me: Does thawra *exist today?*
Kamal: No.
Me: Why not?
*Kamal: Because today no one embraces (*ʾahl*)* thawra.
Me: What do you mean?
Kamal: For example, see the situation of my father. I feel sorry because no one mentions him, in spite of all that he's given to the thawra *and to the struggle (*al-niḍāl*).*

When I met father and son together, Abu Kamal assumed a professorial attitude towards both Kamal and myself. Maybe for lack of other options, we

both, *Kamal and I, surrendered. The following are excerpts of how our conversation went:*

> *Me: What can you tell me about the Nakba?*
> *Abu Kamal: It triggered all the wars. For us, it means diaspora (*shatāt*) and losing all the civil life essentials. It made revolutionaries (*thuwwār*) out of us.*
> *Kamal: It means diaspora.*
> *Me: How about Palestine?*
> *Kamal: It's the mother (*al-umm*).*
> *Abu Kamal: [to me] He means that the mother is Palestine and Palestine is the mother. [Asking Kamal] What does Palestine mean to you?*
> *Kamal: It means so much to me.*
> *Abu Kamal: [to Kamal] So tell Gustavo.*
> *Kamal: It means history. Past, present and future.*
> *[…]*
> *Me: How about the Palestinian camps? What can you tell me about them?*
> *Abu Kamal: Camps are the fuel (*wuqūd*) of* thawra*. They're a transitory station and not a replacement (*badīl*). They're transitory stations towards Palestine, now and in the future.*
> *Kamal: They're roads towards Palestine.*

I tried to encourage Kamal to speak first:

> *Me: And the* fallāḥīn *(peasants)? What would you say about them, Kamal?*
> *Kamal: Peasants… I don't know what to say. The word has a lot of meanings.*
> *Abu Kamal: But what does this word mean to you?*
> *Kamal: The* fallāḥīn *are symbols (*rumūz*) of strength (*quwwa*).*
> *Abu Kamal: Yes. Symbols of strength, patience (*ṣabr*), endurance (*taḥammul*) and hard work. Normally, peasants are described in books as full of vigor (ʿunfuwān)[20] and strength (*quwwa*). [to Kamal] Is that right? At the same time, they're generous (*kuramāʾ*), brave (*shujʿān*) and with a bond to the earth. He eats from the earth and defends it.*

Also with my next word – fidāʾiyyīn *– I addressed Kamal first. He was a bit more loquacious this time, but always under his father's monitoring eyes (and ears):*

> *Kamal: The* fidāʾiyyīn *are the revolutionaries, who see the cause (al-*qaḍiyya*) and defend it.*

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[20] ʿunfuwān is probably better translated as "zeal." In the Beiruti version of Arabic, at least, the word has often nationalistic, almost militaristic, connotations.

Abu Kamal: The fidāʾiyyīn *are planets in the sky and generous stones towards the ultimate goal (*al-hadaf al-aqsā*) which is freeing land and human being.*
Me: And how about the thawra? *Anything you want to tell me about the* thawra?
Abu Kamal: The thawra *is the past and the present. It didn't stop. It still is and will continue, in spite of all the twists (*munʿaṭafāt*) that happened. The* thawra *is the torch (*shuʿla*) for all the free spirits of the world. It's a torch that doesn't get extinguished.*
Kamal: The thawra *is not only about Palestinians, but also for all the free spirits of the world.*

Son kept following father from close, independent of the words I came up with:

Me: What do you want to say about the Camp Wars?
*Abu Kamal: It's a bitter event forced upon us. We aren't war-and-siege addicted. But we erected the banner (*shiʿār*) of the* thawra *to live with dignity (*karāma*).*
Kamal: This war was forced upon us.

I compelled, on purpose, Kamal to speak first, when we came to the word "father:"

*Kamal: He is the one who shows the road in life. He directs us. He makes us conscious (*ywaʿʿī*)[21] about life.*
[...]
Me: What would you say about your father's generation?
*Kamal: It set an example for the future. My own generation is empty (*farāgh*). The older generation was more conscious.*

Once the time arrived for us to discuss religion and for father and son to comment on the two songs – Romana *and* Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt *– Abu Kamal increasingly took control of the interview, alienating Kamal and myself from the activity:*

*Kamal: Religion is the straight way (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*).*
*Abu Kamal: [to Kamal] Be free in your answer. Gustavo didn't ask for an explanation about Islam. You, religion, what does it mean to you in general? The question is clear. Give a suitable explanation, without getting deep into details and differences about religions. Religion is a dogma (*ʿaqīda*) and a principle (*mabdāʾ*), my son. [...] Do all Muslims follow Islamic instructions (*taʿālīm*)? No.*

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[21] As we have seen in the previous chapter, achieving wisdom and conscience (*ʿaql* or *waʿī*) is a requirement for a man to come of age. It is telling here that Kamal transfers to his father that capacity of making him, Kamal, conscious.

Kamal: Religion is a principle and a dogma.

[...]

[After listening to Romana, Abu Kamal proposed a love song for us to listen, Sheikh Iman's Ya Philistinia]

Abu Kamal: [asking his son] What does this song mean to you? In life, one needs to mix between commitment (ʾiltizām) and personal stuff. To mix, for example, between sentimental songs and songs like Romana.

*Kamal: This song [*Romana*] talks about the life of the Palestinian people under injustice (ẓulum) and oppression (ʾiḍṭihād). It sings for the land and for steadfastness (ṣumūd). It's a song about the misery (taʿāsa) of the Palestinian people. It also talks about the right to return (ḥaqq al-ʿawda).*

As it may have been anticipated, Katibe 5's Ahlān Fīk *stirred Abu Kamal's resistance. Yet one more time, his son hardly had the chance to talk:*

Abu Kamal: First of all, this song is alien (gharība) to our society (mujtamaʿnā). This song doesn't belong to our heritage (turāthnā). Its lyrics are sharp, scornful (ʾistihzāʾ), negative and offensive criticism without proof. I'm suspicious about the people who wrote this song. [...] I mean that this song, instead of changing something, only criticizes. It doesn't offer new solutions.

Cornered, Kamal had to concede: "I don't like this song. It doesn't depict the reality." But not completely so: "Actually, some verses do."

When we were reaching the end of the interview, Abu Kamal took the word one more time and commented on my research, framing it in a way that I would hardly recognize as my own:

Your research is very important. The data or information which you're collecting from father and grandfather are true and transparent, because they were peasants and simple (basīṭīn). They always tried to stick to their land (ʾarḍhum). [...] No one sold his land. I'm telling you honestly. Those who sold land to the Jews were actually Lebanese, Syrian and Egyptian landowners. [...] Palestinians stuck to their land as much as they could.

It may be the case, as Abu Kamal stated, that principles do not change. In spite of Kamal's loyalty, however, thoughts do. What other Shatila *shabāb* sing is not music to everyone's ears.

Palestinian Rhapsody[22]

*Ibrahim doesn't sound 17. After having dropped out of school in Grade 6, he has already been working for a couple of years – first at a mechanic shop, under some of his relatives, then as a car painter, a job he both enjoyed and excelled at, and finally at a sweet shop in the immediate vicinity of the camp. He faces a very long shift at work, from 8am to midnight, and makes less than 10 dollars a day. As yet, he does not define himself as a grown-up young man (*shāb*), but dreams of reaching that threshold:*

> *Ibrahim: I'm a* walad *(boy) because a shāb[23] has enough money to build a house and look for a girl to marry. I don't think of marriage. What's the point? I need money for that.*
> *[...]*
> *Me: Have you got hope? Or dreams?*
> *Ibrahim: Hope to return, you mean? No, I have no hope to return to Palestine. Again, what's the point? But, yes, I have the dream of leaving the camp, marrying and living in my own home.*

Ibrahim censures his father for not living up to a number of responsibilities. The relation between the two, according to him, is not good:

> *My father makes no money. He doesn't work. He depends on his sons for everything. When he wants to buy something, he needs to borrow.*

He even denied that his father had been a fidāʾī. *And, yet, between 1982 and 1987, Abu Ibrahim, 43, claims to have been one.*

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[22] Simultaneously intriguing and revealing, the way "rhapsody" is defined by Wikipedia preserves the idea of freedom, which increasingly informs this study from here on: "A rhapsody in music is a one-movement work that is episodic yet integrated, free-flowing in structure, featuring a range of highly contrasted moods, colour and tonality. An air of spontaneous inspiration and a sense of improvisation make it freer in form than a set of variations." (accessed on 29/05/2013).

[23] Among my Shatila acquaintances, perceptions of age gradations have changed from one period to the other. Whereas in the past there was a smooth movement from being a *ṭifl* (baby), to a *walad* (boy), to *a shāb* (lad), to a *rajul* (a young man) and, finally, to a *khitiār* (an elder), in the present, Shatilans say that camp dwellers have no childhood (*ṭufūla*) or that the *shabāb* remain so forever, never acquiring the ʿ*aql* (see footnote 21) necessary to become a *rajul*.

Only for a very brief moment during our encounter did Abu Ibrahim allow himself to feel nostalgic. Never having set foot in Palestine, he saw it once, from the Fatima Gate, on the southern border of Lebanon: "I saw some relatives. But from a distance." He added, smiling: " And I could see the olive trees as well."

During the rest of our meeting, I found Abu Ibrahim embittered by the events that marked his life. The Israeli invasion of 1982 and the massacres of Sabra and Shatila forced a still young Abu Ibrahim, 16 then, to join the ranks of the fidāʾiyyīn, *for lack of options: "It was either fight or die. During the Camp Wars, we thought we would end up dying. So we defended ourselves." With the Camp Wars over and already a married man, he tried to get back to his civil life. Following his father's steps, he opened a bakery. He did not have the same talent for the business, however, and soon closed the shop's doors. Going back to the military service was not an option: "When the PLO was here, there was money coming in. But after Abu Ammar left, there was no money. The* fidāʾiyyīn *started being paid some 200 dollars per month. And that isn't enough when you have a family. Your life changes when you get married; you become responsible for a family." For a while, his family even endured living in what was (and, to a certain extent, still is) Shatila's poorest neighbourhood, the "stablat."[24] Today, his household counts only on his son Ibrahim's meagre salary to (hardly) make ends meet. While reflecting upon his predicaments, he extended to the whole of his people his disillusion:*

> *In a situation like this, how can we even think of fighting to get back our land? We're trying to survive, that's it. We, Arabs, are* maḥzūmīn *(defeated).*

When I brought father and son together, dissent often marked the interaction between the two, even if it did not properly lead to a clash. A self-confident Ibrahim often felt comfortable enough to talk ahead of his father:

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[24] According to research participants, the "stablat" were stables previously used for horse rearing. I heard that the animals went astray during the Civil War and people moved in. The area is still used for housing today.

Me: What would you tell me about the Nakba*?*
Ibrahim: I don't know anything about it.
Abu Ibrahim: Palestine is my country. I can't say I don't want to go back.
Ibrahim: Palestine is my country, yes. But I don't think about the return. I can't return anyway.
[...]
Me: And is there anything you want to say about the fidāʾiyyīn*?*
Ibrahim: They defended the camp and protected it during the war.
Abu Ibrahim: Fidāʾiyyīn *came because of the Israeli occupation. Every Palestinian is a* fidāʾī.
Ibrahim: My father wasn't a fidāʾī.
Abu Ibrahim: I'm not a fidāʾī *now, because I'm trying to find a way to live.*
[...]
[while listening to Katibe 5's Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt *on my I-phone]*
Abu Ibrahim: I don't like this music. Never. I don't want to go on listening to it. These singers are silly people (tāfihīn)*. They're Lebanese, not Palestinians.*
Me [in an unwarranted moment of over-directing my interviewees]: They're Palestinians. From Burj [al-Barajneh, a Palestinian camp in southern Beirut].
Ibrahim: And this is a very nice song. Why don't you send it to me right away via Bluetooth?

For better or worse, the Bluetooth of my mobile never worked properly.

———————————————

The humour characterizing the relation between Um Rafik, 40, and Rafik, 20, does not preclude a deep respect between son and mother. There is a telling absence in their interaction, however: Abu Rafik. While Abu Ibrahim does not display the same stature as Abu Kamal as far as paternal authority goes, in the case of the Abu Rafik family we have moved one step farther: the father is missing, and almost completely so.

In Um Rafik's matter-of-fact recollection, violence is such a daily affair as to sound banal:

> *This is what I saw in my childhood. People in the street being slaughtered all the time. The Camp Wars started. Our home was on the*

border of the mukhayyam (camp) *and Hizbullah and Harakat Amal*[25] *fought Palestinians then. Then there was the 6-month War. We helped the fighters (*muqātilīn*). We baked bread for them. But the oven was very far. Life was very harsh. Amal attacked the camp. My aunt (*khālatī, MZ*) was pregnant and preparing food. Suddenly, a projectile killed her. We took her to the Palestinian Red Cross; there she died. ʿammatī (FZ) was also injured. People passed by, greeted us and then we heard that they died or were injured. The six months passed. My husband*[26] *was taking lunch one day; a projectile hit him and left him handicapped in his leg. Life was very difficult. Then there was the war inside the camps between Palestinians. It was very difficult, because it was Palestinians against each other: Palestinians with Syria and Palestinians with Abu Ammar. My brother was killed during this time and ʿammī (FB) too. We escaped from the camp to the Gaza building.*[27] *Back then, the Gaza building was empty. Before, it was better than the American Hospital of Beirut. The building had nothing for us to live in it. But I continued my life here. And I did the best to give my children what I didn't have as a child. Then the Aoun War happened. Several projectiles were launched against us. All my life is war after war.*

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[25] Harakat Amal is the Shiite party that fought against Palestinians during a phase of the Camp Wars (1985-1987).

[26] That was the only time Abu Rafik was mentioned voluntarily during my *entretien* with the Abu Rafik family. On other occasions, his name only showed up when I explicitly prompted mother and son to talk about him.

[27] The Gaza building, located in Sabra, and close to Shatila, used to be a hospital, which was a reference in health services, in my informants' recollections. It was invaded by Amal during the War of the Camps and several patients were killed. It stopped functioning as a hospital after that. Upon its closure, several homeless refugee families moved in. Today a vertical shantytown, it is still used as housing. For the early history of the Gaza building, see Sayigh 1979.

Source: Author's Photo

The Gaza Building: Façade and Interior

Challenged by such an eventful biography, Um Rafik has developed her own coping techniques, which she is proud of having transferred to her children:

> *I have the habit that, when I hear fire exchange, I keep cool. It gives me a strange feeling of calmness, almost happiness, because that's familiar to me: I've gone through wars. My children don't know the meaning of war. But, in July 2006* [when Israel attacked Lebanon], *they learned the meaning of it. I had experience from before, so I tried to support them. Now they know the difference between fire exchange and fire works. During the July War, they went up to the roof here, on the Gaza building, to look at the Israeli airplanes attacking [nearby] Dahiya.*

Um Rafik also prides herself in having been a *fidāʾiyya, even though her career as such was cut short and replaced by that, less dramatic, of a tailor:*

> *Um Rafik: I was a flower (*zahra*) among the flowers (*zahrāt*).*[28] *I left school because of the war. And I became a* fidāʾiyya, *the only girl in my family to have done so, and had military training. In our society, boys and girls should have military training. But I never took part in real operations, just the training. There were women planning operations, but not taking part in them. Women conducted activities to trick (*takhdaʿ*) the enemy. Though some women conducted operations too. Dalal Moughrabi, for example, took part in military operations, without her family knowing. And there was also Leila Khaled, who hijacked airplanes. [...] There was a salary (*maʿāsh*), you know, for the* fidāʾiyyīn, *but I don't consider it to be work (*shughul*).*
> *Me: And how did your husband react to the fact that you were a* fidāʾiyya?
> *Um Rafik: He was a* fidāʾī *too, but he left when he was injured and went to Syria to work as a taxi driver there. And I left the* fidāʾiyyīn *when I was 14, because of my brother's pressure. He didn't think it was the right thing for a teenage girl. So I learned tailoring. This is our culture. But the* thawra *still exists and I swear, swear and swear: if I were in Palestine, I'd take part in military operations.*

Contrasting the nostalgic and romantic mood of his mother when she remembers her fidāʾiyya *years, Rafik has no option but to be very down to earth. He has a heavy routine, working as a cook from 5pm to 1am, without a contract, without insurance and with one day off per week. On three occasions, he had problems with the police, for having ridiculed them, and with the intelligence services, for having fought with one of their informants. As a result,*

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[28] *Zahrāt* (flowers) was *grosso modo* the female counterpart to the ʾa*shbāl* (lion cubs). See Footnote 11 of Chapter 4.

he ended up in prison twice, the first time for three months, and the second time, for four months. When I asked him, he described his relation to his father as haik haik *(so so): he thinks it was a mistake for his parents to have had children. It was a rather austere description of his routine and plans for the future that he gave me:*

> *As a Palestinian in Lebanon, I can't ensure my life like everyone else does. Everyone wants to work and live. But in Lebanon, I can't. I want stability (*ʾistiqrār*). […] I'm not thinking of marriage now. I need some 10,000 dollars for that. Here, in the Gaza building, people buy an apartment and divide it, so that several families can live in it.[29] And the wedding party alone costs some 4,000 dollars. […] My mother was a* fidāʾiyya *and I would not have a problem with marrying a* fidāʾiyya*. I like the* fidāʾiyyīn*. And a* thawra *is necessary when you have an enemy. Now, I don't approve of women working. But sometimes this is necessary, because life is very difficult. If women work, it should be in their field of education, as a secretary, or an accountant. If she isn't educated, she should work with embroidery (*kanfa*). […] No, I don't think about the return to Palestine. And I don't think about getting Lebanese nationality either. […] I'm tired here. I think of migrating to Europe.*

For a brief moment, he smiled when talking about what he does to "escape" from his routine:

> *I sing. I really like singing. Normally, I don't like international songs, but I like Katibe 5. I sing at home. And also at Sumud.[30] At Sumud, we sing traditional songs and some international ones. But I can't sing Katibe 5 over there!*

He kept on smiling when describing his relation to his mother:

> *She is like a friend to me. But, in serious situations, I respect her: she's my mom, after all.*

When I sat with mother and son together, the rapid ricochet of questions and answers, and humorous provocations between them, provided me with one of the most pleasant afternoons I had during fieldwork:

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[29] In Shatila, prospective grooms often build a new household on the roof of their parents' house. Such initiatives are partially the reason for the rapid verticalization of the camp. Of course, this option does not exist in the case of the Gaza building.

[30] Sumud is a Palestinian NGO, which has a branch in Shatila. Also see footnote 44 of Chapter 4.

Me: What can you tell me about Palestine?
Um Rafik: Palestine for me is everything. It is sacred for Arabs. And also for Christians. It's a pure land (ʾarḍ ṭāhira). And rich in everything. That's why the Jews occupied it. All the prophets were born in Palestine. Palestine is everything for me.
Rafik: [to his mother] Have you ever been to Palestine to say that it's rich?
*Um Rafik: It's got all the resources (*khayrāt*). It's everything for me.*
Rafik: Sabra is full of khayrāt *too.*
Um Rafik: Oh, yes? And where are you from?
Rafik: I'm from Syria.[31]
Um Rafik: What do you say? No, you're from Yafa.

[...]

Um Rafik: [answering to my question about the Camp Wars] During that period, no one could enter Shatila.
Rafik: Harakat Amal could.
*Um Rafik: How can you say that? Your uncle (*khālak, MB*) was hurt by Harakat Amal.*
Rafik: But he was creating problems, wasn't he?

[...]

Me: If I say the word fallāḥīn *(peasants), what does that bring to your mind?*
Um Rafik: Well, I'm a fallāḥa.
Rafi: And I'm a madanī *(urbanite). Ok, if my mother says that, she's a* fallāḥa. *What can I say? She tells me that the* fallāḥ *plants and gives food to the* madanī. *But I think they use chemicals in their crops.*

[...]

Me: Ok, the word I have now is fidāʾiyyīn.
Rafik: I don't know what to say.
Um Rafik: My son doesn't know anything about the fidāʾiyyīn. *We lived under very difficult conditions. Other countries conspired (*taʾāmar*) against us and took our weapons. They slaughtered us. The* fidāʾī *protects his land (*ʾarḍū*), his family (*ʾāʾilatū*) and his neighbours (*jīrānū*). [...]*
Me: And how about the thawra, *what can you tell me about it?*
Rafik: Think of a balloon, Gustavo. What happens if you keep pressuring it? It explodes, right? It's the same thing in a thawra: *if you keep pressing people, they explode in a revolution. Not only in Palestine, but all over. Now, the results of a* thawra *aren't always positive. In reality, there are more negative aspects to it.*
Um Rafik: Thawra till victory (*naṣr*).
Rafik: Mom, now it's thawra *till the end of the month [i. e., when the militiamen get paid].*

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[31] Rafik probably answered "Syria" just to provoke his mother. It is relevant, though, to note that Abu Rafik, while Palestinian, was working at the time as a taxi driver in Syria.

Um Rafik: But one should protect one's land (ʾarḍū). I told you that thawra *is to protect the land.*
Rafik: Oh, mom. Being a victim is stupid.

[…]

Me: Now, if I say "marriage," what do you tell me?
Rafik: [laughing] Yes, it's all very nice. Settling down (ʾistiqrār), caring about one's children and wife more than about oneself. But I advise you to be as free as a bird and fly from one place to the other. And I also advise you not to ask my mother this question.
Um Rafik: No one can say everything.
Rafik: But my mother is like Reuters.
Um Rafik: I advise everyone not to get married, because life is difficult. You who trust men are like water on a sieve (yā mʾammin bil-rijāl zaī al-maī bil-ghirbāl).³² Thanks God for having sent me good children. But I need to have patience with them.

[…]

Me: My next word is "mother."
Rafik: A mother is a school.³³ But mine is also Reuters.
Um Rafik: I talk to you so that you know how life is.

[…]

Um Rafik: [upon listening to Romana*] I like revolutionary songs. It gives one the motivation (dafiʿ) and the enthusiasm (ḥamās) and doesn't let one be afraid. During the war, I liked listening to these songs. Up to now, when I listen to them, I feel like joining the resistance (muqāwama).*
Rafik: I like songs like these, but I don't listen to them all the time.

Um Rafik: [upon listening to Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt*] The singers are talking about Palestine. We're said to be terrorists, but Palestine is our country.³⁴*
Rafik: Mom, they aren't talking about Palestine in this song. They're talking about NGOs.
Um Rafik: Ah, ok, but there are other songs talking about the terror issue.

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³² This a proverb, meaning that men are not to be trusted.
³³ Perhaps not precisely a proverb, this is a saying often repeated by various research participants.
³⁴ Probably, *Ahlān Fīk* made Um Rafik think of another rap song, *Min ʾirhābī?* (Who's the terrorist?), from 2001, by the Palestine-based group DAM. Jackie Salloum has documented in a movie, *Slingshot*, the history of Palestinian hip hop, from the late 1990s – when DAM pioneered the introduction of that musical style in the Territories – onwards. In August 2008, I attended the open-air showing of *Slingshot* in Shatila. *The reaction of my friends and acquaintances to the movie was very telling. Several of the shabāb liked the film, because it showed the lives of Palestinians living in Palestine. "We don't actually know a lot about them," one of them observed to me. Those working in NGOs, though, were very critical about the movie. "It's a movie for foreigners. It isn't made having us, Palestinians, in mind," one of them remarked. To which another one added: "And what's that? Palestinians speaking Hebrew! We don't recognize that language!"*

Rafik: Those songs are in Palestine. This one here is about NGOs.
Um Rafik: I don't like listening to these songs. With music like Romana*,*
*one feels like grabbing Palestine with one's hands. But this song [*Ahlān
Fīk*] is just talk.*
Rafik: I have songs by Palestinian rappers, talking about Israel. But,
here, in Ahlān Fīk*, they talk about the internal situation here.*
Um Rafik: Yes, the singers are talking about the internal situation.
About Hamas and Fatah. They're talking about the fact that they hate
each other.
Rafik: Reuters again…

———————————

A couple of reasons may be considered as to why rap is increasingly popular among the Shatila *shabāb*.[35] Basically consisting of words spoken to a rhythmic beat,[36] rap has always had a "hands-on" quality (Bennett 2001), meaning that the rapper, while undeniably needing to show musical talent, does not need to have spent long years at a conservatory to master an instrument and learn musical theory. In addition to that, rappers exhibit many of the features of what Lévi-Strauss would describe as *bricoleurs*, collecting musical bits and beats from different sources and mixing them up. In the words of a student of the style:

> This license to move across musical boundaries untangles fixed cultural artifacts and liberates rappers from the hegemonic into the hybrid world. […] This is the process of constructing, transforming, borrowing, taking it all in, and releasing new meaning back into the center. (Nassar 2011a: 362)

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[35] Writing in 2007, Puig (2007) reports a limited acceptance of rap among Palestinians from Lebanon. To me, in Shatila at least, the level of acceptance of rap is connected to age: while older generation Shatilans were divided in terms of whether they liked or knew *Ahlān Fīk*, virtually all the *shabāb* I got to know were familiar with the song and the vast majority actually liked it.

[36] The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* – which defines "rap" as "a type of popular music in which the words of a song are not sung, but spoken in time to music with a steady beat" (and "to rap" as "to say something loudly, suddenly in a way that sounds angry") – also registers other uses of the word, which are telling of the several prejudices, ethnic and otherwise, associated with this kind of music. Thus, in American informal English, "rap" is also "a statement by the police saying that someone is responsible for a serious crime," "take the rap" means "to be blamed or punished for a mistake or crime, especially unfairly" and a "bad rap" denotes "unfair treatment or punishment."

The formal and lyrical freedom achieved this way enables rappers – and *shabāb* – to say, or rather, to sing, through rap, what has hitherto remained silent.

Displaying such a potential, it should come as little surprise that rap music and hip hop culture rapidly expanded from their origins in New York's South Bronx, where, since their very beginnings in the early 1970s, they already provided a powerful (and critical) commentary on everyday life and ethnic tensions in American inner-city ghettos (Lipsitz 1994; Bennett 2001). As a technique, rapping is older and its features can be found in early rural music and religious songs in the US. From the mid-20th-century on, that is, from bepop to hip-hop, the so-called black music played a role in the "transmission and distribution of counter-hegemonic narratives," (Neal 1998:5) closely reflecting the vicissitudes faced by that community in America. Tellingly, it also provided the space for the articulation of a "counter-public" even *within* that community (Neal 1998), exposing some of the chasms characterizing it, as mass migration from the South continued to raise the anxiety of the liberal bourgeois black elite. The Harlem and Detroit riots of the 1940s revealed the distance between black youth and the mainstream black middle class, with the leadership not being able to address mounting stratification within the community, which curtailed the prospects for black youth, increasingly marginalized in public life. Capturing the ensuing discontent, rap in the 1970s gained a consistency and became a genre, serving to express dissatisfaction at the dim socio-economic perspectives for the youth of inner-city ghettos in New York. Eventually, from the 1980s onward, the style became mainstream, used to vent youth frustration at faint socio-economic opportunities, police surveillance, projects of urban renewal and neglect by the cultural industry in diffuse settings all over the world.

Soon enough, rap was deployed to express discontent by those marginalized in other latitudes (Bennett 1999; Condry 1999; Filippa 1996; Jamoulle 2005; Maxwell 1994; Mitchell 1996; Sharma 1996). In Lebanon, it is

the adjustable character of hip hop – both as music and lyrics – that allows young people to use it as a means of imagining and projecting other desired realities (Nassar 2011a, 2011b). In this sense, contrary to the widespread image of the Lebanese post-war generation as escapist, submerged in a culture of consumption, spectacle and kitsch, hip hop indicates that "pockets of resistance to the usual politics of the social order" (Nassar 2011b) exist in the country.

Among the Shatila *shabāb*, I propose, rap also serves as a way of expressing discontent with the present (and perhaps with the past) and imagining what may be defined as local and non-sovereign political futures (Arendt 1963; Jennings 2011 and Chapter 3). Drawing upon Barbara Hampton's and Cynthia Schmidt's fluvial metaphor, Mallet (2004/03) praises the heuristic value of what he names the "musical confluence" of the analytical category "jeunes musiques,"[37] for they allow us to interrogate concepts such as identity, tradition and belonging and to contemplate ideas like acculturation, syncretism and miscegenation, similar to a pidgin language. Such is possible also for Palestinians in a country like Lebanon, which has known over the recent decades a "rehabilitation of ethnicity" (Picard 1994) due to the all-encompassing and ever-present frame of explanation: the 1975-1990 Civil War. Hip-hoppers and rappers search for a way out:

> In Lebanon's cultural politics of music, hip-hop emerges as an instrument for contesting inherited forms of meaning. It socializes alternative discourse – with its own ideological terms, creative yearnings and lexicon of ideas – into the public sphere. [...] It is about testing the limits and pushing the boundaries of what is considered acceptable. Hip-hop in Lebanon emerges as a space of possibility. (Nassar 2011a: 360).

Indeed, the time may have arrived for us to finally move on.

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[37] Literally this means young music and I reckon rap can be included in such a category. Mallet (2003/4) makes the point that "jeune musique" is not to be confused with "musiques de jeunes" (music of the young). This is not a matter of age and even an ageing researcher like myself can enjoy the "non stabilized state, in movement," as well as the "multiple concordance" of the "refusal of over-exclusive belongings" of a "jeune musique" like Palestinian rap.

Malleable, Palestinian rap, rather than asserting itself as the guardian of a nationalist identity frozen in time, constitutes a discourse of the contemporary (Puig 2007). Neither nostalgic nor romantic, it does not celebrate a bucolic Palestine, eternalized by the so-called patrimonial music of the past in its pleasant rurality, its olive trees and its tiny villages. Palestinian rap is not purely nationalistic, rather it conveys an image of the nation that is not simply bound to a territory. Instead of glorifying the battles of the past, it concentrates on the everyday as sites of resistance as well. Not every resistance needs to lead to a revolution, the phantasms and fantasies of the 1960s and 1970s notwithstanding. Due to its attention to the everyday as an arena of struggles and its unrestrained exposition of the deficiencies of life in the camps, rap is characterized by Puig (2007) as infra-political. Yet, in fact, it is political to the full. It may even be suggested that the music of past – in its obsessive celebration of a pastoral Palestine and its litany-like exaltation of battles gone by – is ironically not political enough. Rather than opting to expose challenges facing Palestinian today (proper access to the labour market, to housing, education and health care), it adopts a conciliatory tone towards policies by Arab regimes (Puig 2006), including the Palestinian authorities. Yet, it is in the present that urban Palestinian youth from Lebanon are in anger.

While in *Ahlān Fīk bil-Mukhayyamāt,* Katibe 5 exposes the hurdles of camp life, in *Jamʿiyyāt*, they identify – and literally so, by naming them – one of the culprits: NGOs. Sarcastically and didactically the singers instruct how to start an organization of the kind:

> *How to found your NGO to support you in life:*
> *1st: read about human rights and memorize some terms*
> *2nd: evaluate miserable situations and list the reasons for that*
> *3rd: throw yourself in front of funders and activate the communications*
> *4th: accept offers without reading the goals*
> *5th: kill your humanity, kill your consciousness and of course you get the aid*
> *And tell us: volunteer*
> *And the 6th step is to attract means*
> *7th: pretend that you are sociable and attend lectures*

8th: fill your NGO with foreigners like you fill your car with oil
And last enjoy betraying the martyrs of the cause.

This, nonetheless, comes with a warning:

People are hungry
And the worst thing is when you manipulate people's hunger.

In *Until the Last Announcement*, the rappers of Katibe 5 – after urging listeners not to "capitulate to their peace" and lamenting the fact that "our blood became commercial" – resort yet again to a didactic tone, this time to tell the audience – from "Africa, Arabs, Asia" – how to make a Molotov cocktail:

With a bottle of glass
A piece of cloth
And some benzene
Say no to their democracy
And scream: "Viva Iraq, Viva Palestine"
Fill the bottom of the bottle
Burn the cloth like a fuse
Stand back and throw it at your goal
Start the fight
Burn a fire
Spread destruction and ruin, kill the enemy, burn a fire
Molotov, Molotov, Molotov

Another rap group, *Hawiyya Zarqa* (Blue ID, like the ones that identify Palestinians in Lebanon), from the Ain Al-Hilweh camp near Saida, in southern Lebanon, poignantly sums up in a song that goes by the same name the challenges faced by refugees. The music ends with a call for listeners to free Jerusalem and fight for the return, but independently of the sleepy governments:

Blue identity card, I'm called a refugee
I grew up in the discrimination and racism
We've been chased, we've been defeated
And we lived in camps
I'm no terrorist, no sweetheart, no passionate
I look for work and I'm asked for my identity

What's your identity?[38] *I'm Palestinian.*
[...]
Palestinian forbidden to express (himself)
Palestinian forbidden to strike
We can't buy a shop, nor a house
We can't talk, nor write on walls
[...]
I'll never cease to change the past into the present
[...]
Everyday plots against us
We have fallen into oblivion
[...]
Governors have no other interest but their cigars and drinks.
They're interested in money and dignity is crushed
[...]
And all over the world our Arab nation is ignored
[...]
We don't want to stay asleep as our Arab governors.
We want to stand up before we get the disease.
Our governors don't give a fuck and we try to do something
[...]
To liberate Al-Aqsa, we want no other but Palestine as a country
[...]
Keep the trust, Al-Aqsa lives in us
[...]
We raised our right hand and swore to God master of the worlds
*No to naturalization (*tawṭīn*), no to migration, but the return to Palestine.*

In the above, Hawiyya Zarqa insists on the traditional themes forever present in the Palestinian political agenda (refusal of nationalization, the return, liberation of Jerusalem), intermingling them, nonetheless, with the claim for rights here and now in Lebanon – to expression, to strike and to the job and housing markets. Katibe 5, for its turn, speaks of the need for freedom. In the highly poetic, and sometimes cryptic, "Womb Link" (*ṣilat raḥim*), an ode to the mother, the iconic figure so often present in Palestinian literature and song, the rappers establish a distance between their generation and that of their parents:

> *She [the mother] needed memories*
> *We needed freedom*

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[38] As in English, identity (*hawiyya*) in Arabic has multiple meanings. Thus, it refers both to identification papers and social belongings.

Accordingly, the song ends with birds – this other often-present image in Palestinian text and music –in a touching call to turn over the page:

> *A place [referring to the camps] filled with emptiness*
> *But with the first sunrays the birds returned*
> *And the smell of death began to die*
> *And what happened [in the past] kept on living but as memory.*

Rapper Yaseen,[39] from Burj Al-Barajneh Camp, describes his hybrid hip-hop as *ta-rap* (Nassar 2011). Here, he likens his music to an almost immemorial Arab tradition – according to which songs are to induce an ecstatic emotional state, or *ṭarab* in the listener – while claiming a distance from it. Puig (2006, 2007) recalls how older Palestinian music – revolutionary songs included – observed what he names as the formula of the three Ts: *turāth* (patrimony), *turāb* (soil)[40] and *ṭarab.*[41] Along with other, more directly politically motivated reasons, it is precisely the fear of a loss of identity in exile that explains an over-investment by an older generation in the three-T formula. By comparison, Palestinian rap, not disciplined by the institutionalization derived from party belonging, and not domesticated by the commercial drive of the leisure industry, enjoys freedom, functioning as a channel to express the subjectivities of several young camp dwellers. The "Palestinianess" and attachment to the "cause" (*al-qaḍiyya*), still and forcefully present, are nonetheless more nuanced and less direct. Puig (2007) has described this as follows:

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[39] I paid a visit to Yaseen, in his camp home, during my pre-field trip to Lebanon. Hardly aware, at that point, of the truism that camp youth and Euro-American youth are not the same, even when it comes to expressing discontent and defiance, and having misunderstood something Yaseen said, I made a joke of a clear sexual content. The very young Yaseen was not comfortable and I was to learn the hard away that rappers may abide by local sexual morality. By then, I was still to learn that over-arching categories – "rappers," "youth" and "women" to name but a few – may very well work as blinkers and blind both analysts and policy-makers to the myriad nuances glossed over when one opts to use or deploy them. Towards the end of my visit, Yaseen offered me a CD with some of his songs. In yet another moment of pronounced lack of ethnographic sensibility, I asked how much it cost. It was obviously a present, but I am a slow learner. Yaseen seemed to have come to like me, despite of or perhaps because of my clumsiness.
[40] *Turāb* denotes the concrete and material sense of "soil:" this is the term relevant to the *fallāḥīn* (peasants).
[41] In the Arabic alphabet, the "t" in *ṭarab* is emphatic, different, thus, from the ones in *turāth* and *turāb*.

A planetary musical form, rap is simultaneously a channel for subjectivation and a tribune for denouncing everyday problems and promoting the "cause." As far as this latter point is concerned, there is continuity between rap and the important current of nationalist and political song. But weaving the political in an indirect way, rather than entertaining large political mobilizations, rap individualises the cause and exposes itself to the criticism by members of various organizations concerned with the respect towards the classical modes of engagement. Similarly, by conveying an ethics of social transformation, it runs the risk of offending the existing consensus about the rhetoric of the struggle, addressing less universal and encompassing questions through the recitation, with no revolutionary flourishing or romanticism, of the everyday, its difficulties and its routines. (147)

Thus, for an older generation, rap can appear devoid of merits, both artistic and political (and sometimes religious).[42] Censured for being supposedly counter-revolutionary and inauthentic, rap appears both foreign and foreigner.[43] Here the relevant point is the characterization as to what precisely counts as *authentic*. Investment in certain identity markers – those of the land-bound *fallāhīn*[44] – by an older generation of refugees has an

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[42] Islam has always had a complex relation to music (Gazzah 2011; Landau 2011).

[43] Likewise, Van Aken (2006b) reports that, in Jordan, the incorporation into the traditional dance *dabka* of new movements – which came to be known as *al-jakson*, after the American singer – was met with resistance by older Palestinians. As it happens with the *shabāb* from Shatila, there is also a gender and generation dynamics at play. Van Aken (2006a) writes of a party in which older men – enjoying the fact that the music was being played by an increasingly rare *yarghoul* (a kind of double clarinet) musician – took control of the dance floor, with their harsher, less varied and more disciplined way of dancing *dabka*. They also resisted giving up the position of the *lawih* (leader of a *dabka* line) to one of the *shabāb* present. The *shabāb*, bored by a *dabka* too monotonous for their taste, left the floor one by one and eventually the party altogether.

[44] Shatila is home to a museum: the "Memories Museum." It celebrates the *fallāḥīn* saga. Visiting it was no obvious business. It took me a while to find out who held the museum key and to organize a visit. The collection – composed of chopping, weeding, harvesting and cooking utensils, lamps, cutlery, clothing, make-up objects, water-pipes, pieces of currency, photos, house keys, a radio, land-tenure documents, among other items – shows only daggers and an axe used by the 1982-massacre perpetrators as examples of weapons. A machine gun is partially hidden behind a cupboard and a cannon shell, left in one corner, is unidentified, unlike the rest of the collection. When I asked my host what that was, he replied that he actually did not know. Memory also operates through (politically-motivated?) elisions.

almost therapeutic role for those who have lost close to everything. Yet, with the technological advances in recording methods, place has become increasingly separated from space (Schade-Poulsen 2004 [1999]): music can follow migrants and refugees wherever they go and, sometimes, even travel independent of them. Music that forever celebrates origins, in monochord fashion, may end up contributing to cultural stagnation (Baily and Collyer 2006). Indeed, why are songs by Palestinian *shabāb*, commenting on their daily lives, the challenges they face and the hopes they nonetheless feel, taken to be in any sense less authentic than those by their parents and grandparents?
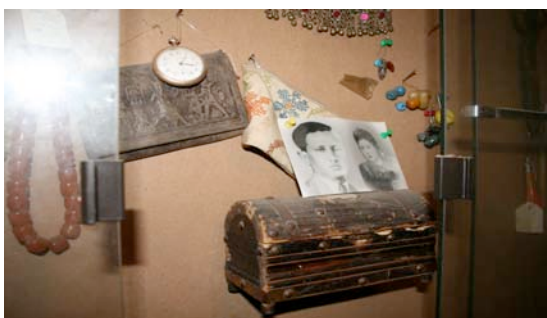
Source: Author's Photos

The Memories Museum in Shatila: Remembering and Forgetting

Furthermore, it is revealing how older songs freeze understandings of "resistance." Such understandings, as Schade-Poulsen (2004 [1999]) convincingly shows, obscure analysis about the social meaning of raï for young men from the Oran area in Algeria. Over-emphasis of the sexual tropes sometimes present in raï songs contributes to it being pictured by some scholars and media pundits as "a deliberate transgression of established powers." (191) Such framing – while remaining blind to the ethnographic evidence that the Oran *shabāb* were upholding a certain moral code, when listening to the earlier, lust-celebrating "dirty" raï outside of the home, preferring the later, domesticated versions of it when in company of family members – also helps to consolidate the vision, not at all naïve politically, that, outside of raï or the freedoms of sex, Algerians were the "depersonalized victims of a monolithic fundamentalism." (191)

Indeed, the relevant question is the following: how is resistance to be understood today? Why should Shatila *shabāb* (and scholars) forever pay respect to the way it was conceived by the older generation of Shatila *fidāʾiyyīn*? Why is the claim for access to the labour and housing markets and to health and education services, so forcefully depicted in Palestinian rap, any way less political and less resistant than the demand for the return eternalized in older songs? Why are the little camp stories, of students studying hard, mothers reprimanding their children and love-making in the debris, as so movingly described in *Ahlān Fīk*, less authentic than older music, celebrating the olive trees and the cactuses of Palestine and the *fidāʾiyyīn*? As the rappers sing: *"Enough with the revolutionary songs, khalaṣ, we play the beat."*

We Play the Beat (and Some Palestinian Arabic)

The differences in the ways the *fidāʾiyyīn* and the *shabāb* judge their music betray the sense in which youth is, in fact, a contested category. Actually, from a certain standpoint, it may be argued that, left by itself, "youth" does not actually or necessarily exist or yet that it has never always

necessarily existed. Historians contend, even if quite controversially, that childhood in its present form – and presumably youth as well – is a recent invention: prior to the modern period, one moved straight from miniature adulthood to adulthood (Ariès 1962). Paradigmatically, Bourdieu (1993) stated, in one venture, that youth is just a word, thus putting into relief how its deployment might actually serve to render opaque all kinds of class distinctions glossed over by that over-arching category. Words, nonetheless, produce effects in the real world – as we know from the previous chapter on "gender."

Contested and not taken for granted, age should be submitted to a Schneiderian revolution, Sawaf (2013) proposes. Schneider (1984) exposed the ethnocentric basis of kinship, stemming from its anchoring in sexual relations, a Eurocentric bias. This has offered the leverage for the later development of the much more flexible category of "relatedness" (Carsten 1995, 2000) and has given further impulse for the analytical disjointing of "biological sex" from "social gender." Similarly, and echoing the unrelenting binaries which defiantly show up again and again in anthropology, Sawaf recommends severing "biological age" from "social age." Here, she lines herself with an older tradition: in what is perhaps the only sociological study dealing with age deserving to be ranked as a classic, Manheim (1952) distinguishes "generation units" – which simply congregates people of around the same age – from "generation unities" – which have lived together the "drama of their youth." It is precisely in this sense that Collins (2004) claims that the *shabāb* of the first intifada of a million cable-wires constituted a real generation,[45] for they shared a drama that became the object of nostalgic narratives later, when the unity of yore was challenged by the "politics as usual" set in march by the Palestinian Authority once it acquired autonomy over the Territories with the Oslo agreements. The drama of *shabāb*'s youth as portrayed by Collins is eminently a political one and it is here that I want to take Sawaf's suggestion one step farther, offering also a

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[45] In a more loose sense, Bucaille (2004) also makes use of the concept of "generation" when trying to make sense of *shabāb*'s biographies during the first and, especially, the second intifada in the Territories.

revolution of "age," but not strictly within the Schneiderian frame. Indeed, the time has come to put politics back into youth studies, advises Mizen (2002).

Age and youth function as tools of governmentality. Mizen (2002) convincingly demonstrates how governments make use of age either to justify access to public benefits – as during Keynesianism, when it was an advantage to be young in the UK – or to bar it – as during Monetarism, when it became pernicious to be in such a category. Also at the international institutional level, during an age that Comaroff and Comaroff (2005) name as being of "futilitarianism," youth and, in particular, youth employment function for justifying the implementation of certain policies. Thus if the neoliberal agenda has come under increasing criticism, multilateral bodies such as the UN, ILO and, prominently so, the World Bank, give new guise to the same old procedures, as argued by Sukarieh and Tannock (2008): shrinking public expenditure, reducing government employment and downgrading labour protection are now presented as leverages for enhancing youth employment.[46] The ultimate rationale for following this credo is alarmist: in an age of apocalyptic fears, unemployed youth are depicted as ticking time bombs.[47]

The image of youth as "crisis in the making" was not always so omnipresent (Swedenburg 2007). Imagined as the civilizing vanguard and the future of the nation, youth was celebrated by their states in periods of political optimism, as in Egypt after the independence in 1952, Iran after the revolution in 1979, Kemalist Turkey and, relevant to me here, with the

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[46] In the specific case of the Middle East, a crude Malthusian rhetoric is used to scaffold the defence of such an agenda. Thus, Middle East experts and think tanks specialized in the area deploy rather prodigiously the language of "youth bulges," which are said to be forcing new generations of Arabs to live in "waithood." Typical of such a trend is the collection edited by Navtej Dhillon and Tarik Yousef and published by The Brookings Institution (Dhillon and Yousef 2009). For a different interpretation on the "youth bulge" in the Arab world and, specifically, on the phenomenon of "waithood" in Egypt, see Courbage (2011) and Singerman (2011), respectively.

[47] Palestinian refugees are also often subject to such unflattering depiction. To cite but one example, see the report by the International Crisis Group (2009). On the matter, also see Chapter 3.

fidāʾiyyīn in Lebanon during the *thawra*. The Comaroffs (2005) describe the quandaries of present-day youth as follows:

> It is on the back of those situated in the liminal space between childhood innocence and adult responsibility that modernist socio-moral anxieties have tended to be borne. For another thing, it is crucial, if we are to make any real sense of the contemporary predicament of youth, of its neomodern construction as a category in and for itself, that we stress its intrinsic bipolarity, its doubling. Youth is not *only* a signifier of exclusion, of impossibility, of emasculation, denigration, and futility. Nor, by all accounts, it is experienced as such. While they may not, for the most part, have captured the mainstream – and may, indeed, constitute an infinitely exploitable market, an inexhaustible reservoir of consumers, an eternal font of surplus value to be extracted – the young remain a constant source of creativity, ingenuity, possibility, empowerment, a source of alternative, yet-to-be-imagined futures. (229, original emphasis).

Including, I want to add, political – and yet non-sovereign – ones.

Here, the Shatila *shabāb* are particularly well placed to contemplate those futures. For, if they are definitely young, they are not necessarily "youth." With limited financial means, they do not fit well into the category of consumers; school drop-outs, the majority of them have not been disciplined by educational and other correctional institutions. Moreover, the Shatila *shabāb* do not constitute a generation either. In the same way that I indicated how "gender" was a pertinent heuristic tool to make sense of the *fidāʾiyyīn*'s biographies, but not that of their offspring, here I want to propose that the same happens to "generation." Romantically eternized in their youth, the *fidāʾiyyīn* were a generation, for they shared what Manheim (1952) calls the "drama of their youth:" the *thawra*. The *shabāb*'s dramas, however, are too daily, too vulgar and too un-epic for them to merge as a unity.[48] [49] If

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[48] No unity means also no obvious leader, detached from and paragliding over his subjects. In the radically anti-Hobbesian view of power and politics proposed here, I hope that what Borneman (2004) names an "anthropology of the end" – necessary to understand the political implications of the death of a father and a leader – can also be an anthropology politically committed to new beginnings.

[49] A generation probably only becomes so after the fact, when it is narrated or recollected. Even though it does not constitute good analytical practice to try to foresee futures, I propose that present-day shabāb will never come to be narrated as a generation, for I fail to see in which sense they share a saga-like "drama of their youth," in Manheim's sense.

"generations" signal moments of history, the *shabāb* appear as out of (nationalistic) history, their biographies crystallizing, on more than one level, the defeat.[50] This is nicely and acutely captured by Palestinian parlance, when referring to past generations always in relation to a historical frame, as in *jīl al-Nakba*, *jīl al-thawra* or *jīl al-ʾintifāḍa*.[51] Today's *shabāb*, in turn, are simply that: *shabāb*.

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[50] In a poignant interview, one of the historic Palestinian leaders, Georges Habache, Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) stated: "We need to recognize that we have been defeated." (Chesnot and Lama 1998: 226)

[51] *Jīl* means "generation" in Arabic.

6.

Re-Emerging –
Non-Cockfights[1]

"I hate having to do it, Gustavo."

My good friend Jihad, 28, was complaining about yet another workshop on "gender" he had to facilitate. Jihad was a social worker at a local Palestinian NGO, which was hosting a series of lectures on reproductive health for young Shatila residents, both boys and girls, in cooperation with its Italian counterpart. The Italian NGO financing the whole exercise provided the social workers with supporting material – a DVD and a guidebook, both in Arabic and English – that established the procedures for the workshop. Jihad thought it better to carry out some adaptations to the general guidelines, to render them more culturally appropriate:

> *I tell the participants that one of Prophet Mohammed's wives was his boss and that it's not a problem to have women in leading positions. The local director of our center here in Shatila is a woman. But it's true that it's taken even me forever to understand what "gender" is.*

Jihad also used another stratagem to help participants grasp the concept of "gender." On a white-board, he wrote the word "gender," arabicizing it by placing the Arab article "al" (equivalent to "the") in front: "al-gender." *He invited participants to share with others what they understood by the concept:* "People come up with the most unbelievable definitions. During one workshop, a participant said that 'gender' is a terminal disease."

I regretted not having taken part in Jihad's activity: as it happened all too often throughout my period in Shatila, I missed yet another golden

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter has been published in Portuguese, under the name "Briga de Galos pelo Avesso" by Universidade de São Paulo's *Revista de Antropologia* (Barbosa 2011).

opportunity. I did what an ethnographer-has-gotta-do: I invited myself to the
next workshop on "gender" Jihad was to facilitate in a couple of months.

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This chapter is written on the supposition that the aforementioned participant in Jihad's workshop – the one who defined "gender" as a terminal disease – may have had a point, even if the remark was probably unintentional. While "gender" may correspond to the power relations known by the older male refugees, who acted as *fidāʾiyyīn* during the *ʾayyām al-thawra*, as suggested by Chapter 4, its utilization is less appropriate when dealing with their offspring, the *shabāb* of today, with their very limited access to power. In this chapter, I make use of the workshop conducted by Jihad, which I eventually attended, as illustrative of the highly stereotyped and moralised views NGOs hold of so-called "gender systems" in settings considered conservative like Shatila. Then, I present an arena of sociality where the Shatila *shabāb* used to display sex-roles until recently: raising and hunting pigeons. I explore the differences between this "non-cockfight" – pigeon-raising among the *shabāb* – and the Balinese cockfights (Geertz 1973 (2000)): in spite of both involving men and birds, they deeply diverge, among other reasons, due to the fact that Shatila today houses several anti-state trends, whereas Bali is very much a "state-machine." Thus, I ask what happens when a state is not present to "organise" a "sex-gender system" and suggest that more studies are needed to clarify the exact relation between "gender" and "state-machines."

Gender Troubles

In contrast to what happened on the previous occasion, dramatic
definitions were not offered when Jihad wrote "al-gender" on the white-board
during the workshop I attended. The guidebook prepared by the Italian NGO
did anticipate that participants may not be acquainted enough with the
concept and reported that, in pilot sessions, some guessed that gender was a

telephone, a name, a law, a provocation and a competition – though, again, in the latter three cases, it is the suspicion of this researcher that the participants may not have been completely wrong. Jihad confided to me that the contribution of his own organization to the workshop was half-hearted only. His boss, herself also a Shatila resident, once expressed frustration with the topic to him: "Oh, these Europeans! They should give us their lives, so that we can implement their agenda. We lead lives very different from theirs!"

*Some 20 camp residents took part in the workshop, both boys and girls, some of the latter wearing headscarves, with ages ranging from 15 to 24. The boys clustered at the two edges of the table, with the girls in between; a female facilitator, Rola, worked together with Jihad directing the discussions. Only one of the participants, a boy, volunteered that "al-gender" was about roles (*al-ʾadwār*), which Jihad diligently wrote on the white-board. The others were somewhat more candid, stating that they simply did not know what it was, that it was the first time they were hearing the term and that "al-gender" was sex (*al-jins*).*

*Following the manual, Jihad divided the white-board into two columns, identified with the headers "male" (*dhakar*) and "female" (*untha*) and challenged the participants to enumerate characteristics of each. The participants suggested for "male" the following qualities: facial hair; huge muscles; Adam's apple; fertilizing capacity (*ʿamaliyyat al-talqīḥ*); hard work (*al-ʿamal al-shāq*); going out of the house; masturbation (*al-ʿāda al-sirriyya, literally: the secret habit*); not shy (*mā ʿindū khajal*) and harshness (*khushūna*); while, under "female," they ascribed: the headscarf (*al-ḥijāb*); breasts; work; pregnancy; the ability to give birth (*al-qudra ʿalā al-ʾinjāb*); cleaning the house; not leaving the house; child rearing (*tarbiyat al-ʾawlād*); menstruation (*al-dawra al-shahriyya, literally the monthly cycle*); the womb; shyness (*khajal*) and softness (*al-nuʿūma*). Using markers of different colours, Jihad differentiated between the features that were bodily traits (*al-ṣifāt al-jasadiyya*) – thus, "sex" (*al-jins*), he explained – from those that were "roles" (*al-ʾadwār*) or social types (*al-nawʿ al-ʾijtimāʿī*) – thus, "gender" (*al-jindir*), he*

added. He continued: "Gender changes from society to society." One of the young men thought it relevant to remark: "Yes, one needs to take religion into consideration."

*The next activity of the workshop, also prescribed by the manual and slightly adapted by Jihad, aimed at consolidating participants' understanding of "gender," as different from "sex." The white-board was once again divided into two halves, identified by a girl's and a boy's name, Hala and Jad. Jihad invited the participants to list what they would give as presents to Hala and Jad on their fourth, tenth and eighteenth birthdays. For their fourth birthdays, Hala would receive a Barbie, pink pyjamas, boots and earrings, and Jad, a bicycle, a Spider Man, black boots and a football. Hala's tenth-birthday gift would be a dress and a golden necklace,[2] while Jad's would be a scooter and, yet again, a football. Hala would receive a second golden necklace, together with other golden accessories, makeup, a car, a book and a computer for her 18th birthday; Jad, for his turn, would receive a motorcycle, a car, a book, a computer, a play-station and a silver bracelet.[3] Jihad remarked that the lists contained both common items and different ones, as some objects were considerate appropriate for a girl and others for a boy. Somewhat theatrically, Jihad asked his audience: "What is gender?" (*shū huwa al-jindir*?). The participants completely understood his point; nevertheless one of the girls reacted, "Boys always want more things than us," which triggered a wave of laughter.*

For my analytical purposes here, it is the third activity of the workshop that is particularly relevant. Jihad and Rola distributed green and blue cards to the participants, irrespective of sex. He explained: "Those with the blue cards can't do anything; apart from remaining seated. Those with the green cards can do whatever they feel like." A green-card holder turned on some loud

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[2] Golden accessories are normally associated with marriage for women and nine is the canonical age for marriage.

[3] One of the research participants told me that, while silver for a man was not a problem, the use of gold was frowned upon, for it was considered to take away his sexual potency. The *ḥadīth*, sayings and deeds attributed to the Prophet, condemns the use of gold by men.

music on his mobile; some others rushed out of the center, to stretch their legs and smoke much-needed cigarettes – the workshop was already into its second hour. Another male green-card holder opted to tease the unlucky girl holding a blue card. "Now, you'll swap your cards," Rola instructed. It was the girl's turn to take her revenge.

*Once the activity was over, Jihad prompted the participants to share with others the way they felt when in possession of the differently coloured cards. Faithfully observing the manual's guidelines, Jihad divided the white-board once more into two columns, labelled "no power" (ḍaʿīf)[4] and "power" (*quwwa*). While in the "quwwa" position, participants stated that they felt special (*mumayyazīn), that they gained their rights and were able to express themselves. Under the respective column, they suggested the inclusion of the words freedom (*al-ḥurriyya), mobility (*al-ḥaraka) and safety (*al-ʿamān). The content under the heading "no power" was considerably more dramatic. When holding the blue cards, the Shatila boys and girls reported that they experienced boredom (*al-malal); humiliation (*al-dhill); restrictions (*al-quyūd); emotional stress (*al-ʾinfiʿāl); rage (*al-ghaḍab); and being blocked (*al-ʾiḥtiqān) and forced into silence (*al-ṣamt). At the end, Jihad and Rola conducted the activity very well and the Italian NGO's objective was attained. Indeed, the manual reads: "Make the point that gender relations are power relations, and that subordination (power-over) should be replaced by cooperation (power-with) and empowerment (power-to)."*

On my way out of the center, I bumped into another friend of mine, Omar, a 28-year-old greengrocer, in the alleys of Shatila. He grew up hearing about workshops similar to Jihad's and asked where I spent the whole morning:

> Me: I've attended a workshop at an NGO.
> Omar: Oh, what was the workshop about?
> Me: Al-gender.
> Omar: And what's that?

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[4] *ḍaʿīf actually means weak.*

Under the influence of Jihad's workshop, I replied with the expression, probably even more bizarre in Arabic than in English:

> *Me: It's the "social sex" (*al-jins al-ʾijtimāʿī*).*
> "Ah, that bullshit," Omar reacted, in English.

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Difference does not necessarily lead to the establishment of hierarchy – and, when it does, the ranking of superiority may contradict the outsider's expectations, and change through time and context, even *within* the same community. Shatilans do not require a workshop to teach what is tautological to them: that men and women are different, both physically and socially, whether they have a word for the latter or not. Rather, it may be the case that some of us need a workshop to understand how Shatilans conceptualize and practice that difference.

During a previous meeting I attended at Jihad's NGO, a group of Norwegian photography students came in order to make a first acquaintance with camp residents, before going around Shatila and taking shots for an exhibition back home. After making us wait for a good couple of hours, the students, some 15 boys and girls, finally arrived: to general bewilderment, almost embarrassment, all the Norwegian girls were veiled, while barely half of their Palestinian hosts were dressed the same way. Awad, in his mid-twenties, did not resist the obvious joke and whispered to me: "I didn't know that Norway is a Muslim country!" At a certain point, a female organizer discreetly encouraged one of the Norwegian girls to remove the hijab: all the others followed, to reveal a fiesta of different haircuts and colours – including pink – much to the amusement of Shatilans.

The workshop on sex/gender described above is indicative of some of the expectations of international NGOs concerning sex/gender systems. First, the workshop was part of a series on "reproductive health;" it medicalised sexuality in a setting considered conservative like Shatila.

Second, all the activities of the workshop followed a strict dichotomizing logic – sex/gender; Jad/Hala; power/no power – as if difference necessarily entails an opposition and the creation of a hierarchy. Last, the utilization of the coloured cards introduced the idea of gender as a disparity in terms of access to power. This is a hasty transposition of a notion of gender informed by important but nevertheless geographically circumscribed political struggles in Euro-America. The automatic transplantation of the notion into settings like Shatila, where both women *and men* today have very limited access to power, raises serious issues. Indeed, not all fights are about cock.

Non-Cockfights

Figure 1 - Pigeons over Shatila

This image is not infrequent in Shatila today. Every warm afternoon the sky over the camp is swarmed with flocks of pigeons. That the breeders of the birds are Shatila shabāb*, however, is unusual. The practice of raising pigeons was common among the* shabāb *until some 15 years ago; since then, it was largely discontinued.*

I was really sad and angry when the guy of the Security Committee of the camp, together with my brother, killed Hanun.[5] Hanun was my favourite pigeon, with its red feathers. He hatched at our place here in Shatila and was the leader of my bunch. He used to come to me, whenever I called, sit on my knees and eat right from my hand. Hanun was just like a dog.

*This was my friend Ahmad, whose biography was portrayed in Chapters 2 and 3, telling me about the tragic end of his years as a pigeon-raiser. His father did not anticipate the annoyance for himself and his neighbours when he brought teenager Ahmad a female pigeon one day. After a while, Ahmad remarked to his father that he was worried the pigeon was feeling too lonely and might die if not provided with a partner. His father was always willing to comply with his studious son's demands. After all, often referred to as a weapon (*silāḫ*), education was a matter of pride for an older generation of refugees, and Ahmad deserved to be rewarded for scoring among the top students at the local UNRWA school. Thus, his father bought him a male pigeon. A very talented handy-man, his father also constructed a coop (*al-qunn*) on the roof of the house to accommodate the "couple." It should not have come as a surprise to Ahmad when a few weeks later, he opened the gate of the* qunn *to feed the pigeons and found newly-laid eggs. He celebrated his pet's fertility: "The female was like a machine, man. She was very fat; she couldn't even fly. But every three months, she laid two eggs."*

After a while, Ahmad had six pigeons and the flock was further enlarged by yet another two, given to him by a friend, who lost interest in his pets, saddened by the death of one of them. Very soon, Ahmad was raising, mating, buying and selling pigeons. He developed his own expertise in the activity. He was delighted to try to initiate me into the art of differentiating the various kinds of pigeons: Chefar, named after the word Chevrolet, for being big; Buaz, after the name given to a brand of falcons, because they are very tall; Carcandiat, possibly after the word "carcand," deer, in spite of the absence

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[5] Hanun, which I have anglicized to facilitate reading, should have been transliterated as *ḥanūn*, following the IJMES system. The word admits several renditions into English, invariably with positive meanings: affectionate, compassionate, motherly and tenderhearted.

of any apparent similitude between the two animals, and, finally, the Yahudiat (Jews), because, Ahmad clarified, "those pigeons come from Palestine." In a year, the qunn *was running the risk of over-population: at the peak of Ahmad's crop, it housed 37 birds, which ate away, in corn, wheat and penicillin when needed, 50 dollars of the family's relatively limited budget. "All very loyal to me," Ahmad rejoiced. "They never ran away." By then, he began to fly his pigeons.*

And the problems started.

"It's just like in life," Ahmad told me, exploding in laughter. "The male always goes after the female." He was explaining to me how to fly the pigeons. First, the birds are set free. Always following a leading male, they take off. But they tend to come back too quickly, so the raiser, in order to keep them airborne, throws stones at them and whistles, which is what soon started to generate protests from Ahmad's neighbours. Once it is time to get the band down, the raiser waves the female of the leading male to attract him back. The flock comes down in circles and, once on the ground, the birds hum.

What attracted the Shatila shabāb *to the practice was not only flying the birds. While in the sky, pigeons from different flocks eventually mix. And, then, there's the hunt (*al-ṣayd*). If one's bird gets into someone else's flock, the former will try to attract the birds of the latter the next time the respective bands are simultaneously in the sky. This soon led to all kinds of problems and accusations of theft among the* shabāb*.*

To avoid the escalation of tensions, one of the pigeon-raisers, a married man, came up with a timetable, setting different times for the various breeders to fly their bands. For quite some time, a year perhaps, the system worked wonderfully. The source of the new difficulties was precisely Ahmad's household.

His younger brother, Abbas, kept on flying the birds outside of the time-slot that was allocated to Ahmad. The other owners became very angry and sent a menacing message to Ahmad: "We're in a hunt." This effectively meant that they would not restrict themselves to the timetable and would try to catch Ahmad's birds. As a good ʾibn al-mukhayyam (son of the camp) and Shatila shāb, Ahmad, of course, would not step back in the face of menace:

> A war started among us. We were all flying our pigeons at the same time and trying to get each other's birds. But my pigeons were very loyal to me and normally I was the one who caught other owners' birds. This is like theft, it's ḥarām (forbidden). By law, a pigeon-raiser can't even give testimony in court. I caught three birds of one of my neighbours. They promised revenge, but I was young and stubborn, and retreat was simply not an option.

The settling of scores among the contenders happened just after. One day, Ahmad went up to the roof and found the qunn *gate wide open, one pigeon killed and ten missing. Suspicion lay on Ahmad's neighbours. Originally restricted to the skies, the dispute soon enough landed, leading to a direct confrontation among the* shabāb*. When Ahmad's older brother asked him how he would react, he replied: "I'll do what needs to be done." The brother accompanied him to the neighbour's house. The neighbour was challenged to go outside. A fierce fight followed, which left the neighbour with a broken leg.*

By then, the Security Committee of the camp came to the conclusion that the situation was beyond acceptable and decided to step in. Since the Security Committee knew people were too attached to their birds, however, they came up with a lie, Ahmad explained. The lie consisted of a story about an accident that supposedly almost happened in the not-so-far-off International Airport of Beirut. As the story goes, a pigeon was sucked into the propeller of a jet and as a result the plane almost fell. According to the Security Committee, Ahmad reported, the Lebanese government decided to imprison everyone who insisted on continuing to raise pigeons. So breeders had to stop flying their birds, which should be exterminated altogether, or at least have their wing feathers carefully trimmed, so as to preclude any flight. This was not enough to make people revise their old habits. Guards of the Security Committee started

visiting homes and killing the birds they found. Ahmad's household was not an exception. A guard came by, in the company of Ahmad's older brother. To set an exemplary model for the neighbours, he selected three pigeons to be sacrificed. Hanun was one of them. With sadness, Ahmad recalled:

> *I was so angry, so completely out of control that, after, I cut the throat of all the remaining pigeons. And I yelled at my brother saying that we weren't siblings anymore. My mother cleaned the pigeons and, for a month, they took up almost all of our refrigerator […]. But, after a month she had to throw the pigeons away because none of us would take a bite.*

*It took Ahmad a couple of years to recover from the trauma. He made another attempt with raising birds, a falcon the second time. He took care of the bird, which had been shot by a Syrian guard. He fed the falcon on hot-dog sausages beyond their expiration date, which a nearby shopkeeper was going to throw away. When it grew big, the same older brother sold the bird for 50 dollars. Ahmad gave up: "That's the end of it (*khalaṣ*): this is my story with pigeons, my falcon and my brother."*

Nasir, 39, a house-painter, still has six pigeons on his roof. But he does not think of himself as a breeder anymore. He was one of the largest pigeon-raisers in Shatila and at a certain point his flock, which he started setting up some 20 years ago, included 51 birds. He used the strategic advantage of his roof being higher to consistently hunt other shabāb's *birds, to the point that he became the "king of capture" and gained control of the sky. Yet, with the exception of one occasion only, he did not have disputes with the other breeders. He kept a good-neighbour policy: whenever one of his animals was "stolen" in a hunt, he paid a visit to his contender, sat down and drank tea. On the other hand, in certain cases, when he himself caught someone else's bird, he did not mind giving the pigeon back to its original owner. Nasir managed to keep his birds, in spite of the restrictions imposed by the Security Committee. He was rather evasive as to why one year ago he went to Saida, a pleasant seaside town some 40 kilometers to the south of Beirut, and sold all of his flock to a local breeder. "I had some problems," was all that Nasir volunteered. I*

knew that in several instances some wives, feeling neglected, censured their husbands' breeding activities: Nasir is married and has a 10-year-old daughter. I was intrigued by the presence of the six pigeons on his roof:

> Me: *You told me you sold all your birds.*
> Nasir: *But the ones sleeping over our heads now are actually some of the birds that I sold in Saida. They've flown back here.*
> Me: *They've found all their way back, from Saida?!!*
> Nasir: *Yes. A pigeon always comes back to his prison (ʿalā ḥabsā).*

The presence of the six pigeons triggered new ideas in Nasir's mind:

> *I'll start again with pigeon-raising. I can't give it up. I don't have any other hobby. Pigeon-raising is a* sūsa *(a vice).*[6]

Moreover, it is a vice difficult to give up. Ahmad told me Saqr's story. Saqr, some 15 years older than Ahmad himself, was taken to prison because of the pigeons – in Germany. He had also been among the biggest breeders in Shatila. At a certain point in his life, the opportunity presented itself for him to migrate, a dream cherished by several of the shabāb. Once in Germany, Saqr was perplexed to find out that pigeons do not belong to anyone in Europe. He gathered a bunch from the street and took them to his house. After a while, he was flying them, without being encumbered by any competing hunters. His German neighbours, however, were even less understanding than the ones back home of the needs of a shāb. *In reaction to the stone-throwing and constant whistling necessary to flying a flock, they called the police. Saqr ended up behind bars.*

About five years after his departure from Lebanon, already with German nationality, married and with children, Saqr paid a visit to Shatila. Unsurprisingly – and in a poignant commentary on al-ghurba, that is, longing for a place left behind *– one of his first actions in the camp was to climb to his family's household roof and fly some pigeons, at a safe distance from the apparently more treacherous German skies.*

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[6] *Sūsa* literally means pest.

Paraphrasing Geertz (1973 [2000]), it may very well be the case that the identification of the Shatila *shabāb* with their *non*-cocks is unmistakable – and the double entendre here is probably more radical than with the Balinese of Geertz's classic text. Actually, it is remarkable that the word for "pigeon" in Arabic – *ḥamāma* – has a sexual connotation, not completely dissimilar from the English "cock."

A dramatization of local anxieties about social prestige, Geertz's Balinese cockfights are an *affaire d'honneur*. "Joining pride to selfhood, selfhood to cocks, and cocks to destruction," (444) the Balinese strive to protect their esteem, honour, dignity: in one expression, their social standing. In Bali, nevertheless, only those entitled to prestige and honour can take part in serious cockfighting. It is not an activity for social outcasts: women, subordinate, youth. The situation cannot be farther from Shatila. My informants of this chapter are all refugees, young and poor. In Shatila, non-cockfighting is not a privilege of those with prestige. The Shatila *shabāb* insist on keeping their flocks airborne because they also have their pride to protect: when asked by his brother how he would react to the stealing of his pigeons, Ahmad clearly indicates his disposition to do "what-a-man-has-gotta-do."

There may indeed be a tension between the "a-sociality" of the *shabāb* in their efforts at self-expression through bird hunting and the disciplinary measures of a state-like institution like the Security Committee, which asserts itself violently in the episode of the pigeons. Yet, it is only up to a certain extent that the Security Committee can be characterized as consolidating a "state-like" environment in Shatila. Shatilans have actually learned how to live without counting on state-like institutions. Here, it is telling that, well beyond clearly defined sources of state authority, it is the *shabāb* themselves, and a married one among them, who tried to organize pigeon-flying in a way to avoid disputes. Upon marriage, a man is

considered to have finally achieved ʿaql, the imminent social faculty of judiciousness and prudence, and to have come of age.

Geertz (1973 [2000]) also presents the Balinese cockfight as a means of expression: through the medium of feathers, he states, social passions are *displayed*. The same happens, I believe, with the non-cockfight in Shatila: it is a means of *displaying* the shabāb's sexual roles. It is true that pigeon-raising is a male matter; women are expected to be kept at bay from such affairs. Yet, it is not about *performing* gender. In order to perform, one necessarily needs to display, but the contrary is not always true. Performance theory often betrays a certain voluntarism and it is not possible that people everywhere can do, re-do and un-do their "genders." In most settings, people need to display proper observance of adequate sex-roles, and the inability to do so comfortably, as our *shabāb* know all too well, leads to genuine anxiety. In this sense, it is revealing that Shatila *shabāb* chose pigeon-raising as a pastime, and that they selected birds, among all animals, as objects of their affection. Immersed in the social immobility dictated by utter poverty, without the means to travel, in spite of constantly queuing up in embassies in Beirut only to have their visa applications turned down by foreign service officers, and with the capacity to dream of a future overshadowed by the political-economic complexities of the refugees' situation in Lebanon, it is not difficult to understand why the Shatila *shabāb* have come to think of pigeons, with their unencumbered freedom to fly, as so appealing.[7]

In another aspect, Balinese cockfighting and Shatilan non-cockfighting are opposites. In Bali, an umpire is called upon to ensure that the "civic certainty of the law" is strictly observed throughout, in spite of the

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[7] Links between disadvantaged teenagers and birds have been observed in other settings. For a literary rendition of a similar case in a decaying mining town in northern England, see Hines' *A Kestrel for a Knavel* (Hines 2000), which was adapted for cinema as *Kes*, by Ken Loach.

passions aroused by the fight. Cockfighting in Bali is ultimately a state affair, a matter of men with political prestige:

> [W]hen there were no bureaucrats around to improve popular morality, the staging of a cockfight was an explicitly societal matter. Bringing a cock to an important fight was, for an adult male, a compulsory duty of citizenship; taxation of fights, which were usually held on market day, was a major source of public revenue; patronage of the art was a stated responsibility of princes; and the cock ring, or *wantilan*, stood in the centre of the village near those other monuments of Balinese civility – the council house, the origin temple, the market place, the signal tower, and the banyan tree. (424-425)

In Shatila, where some NGOs house bureaucrats to align local morality with "modernizing" discourses on "gender," the umpire, the council house and all other state-like figures are either obsolete or simply non-existent.

Shatila nowadays lives in a post-revolutionary, post-utopic non-state order, where sometimes very dated ideologies and various "isms" – socialism, nationalism, feminism – have, for the most part, and rather depressingly, all but vanquished; isolated brave spots of resistance notwithstanding. Politics has to be dramatically redefined in such a setting, and indeed there may be something deeply and unashamedly political about insisting on the simple display of adequate sex-roles. Because this is what today's *shabāb* strive for: to find a bride; to construct a house, and rather than *perform* a gender, to actually *do* and make sex.

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One may wonder what "agency" in such a context has come to mean. In social life, whether in Shatila or Bali, a person needs to "play the game," even if not in possession of all the cards. In *Un Captif Amoureux* (Genet 2004), Jean Genet writes about the period he spent with young Palestinian commandos in Jordan during the 1970 war. Genet's story goes like this: one night, before leaving for his bed, the commander left strict orders that his

subordinates should not play poker, this "bourgeois game for bourgeois people." Yet, what Genet witnessed was the young men rejoicing precisely in the forbidden game with "scandalously realistic movements." Through their hands though, no kings, queens nor jacks – "all the figures symbolising power" – passed: the commandos were playing poker, yes, but *with no cards.*

7.

Resurfacing –
The Anti-Love of Empire

Figure 1 - Looking Back at the City, Maddafakazzzz!

Welcome to Shatila, Maddafakazzzz!

The short movie barely runs for two minutes and a half. The director, Raad Raad, counted on the help of other Shatila *shabāb* to complete *Welcome to Shatila* on time in order to present it as the final piece of work for a course on film-making he was attending. Studio Camps – an art collective working out of the Gaza Building,[1] which has the goal of fostering artistic projects among Palestinian refugees – has made the movie available on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uvu-hrtc4LE.[2]   Raad remained oblivious to my persistent request to have him explain his movie, so what I offer here is my own interpretation. *Welcome to Shatila* shows numerous anonymous feet, maybe what certain trends in feminism would label as "bodies." Faceless, mindless, displaying no specific markers, these "bodies" could be easily lumped together in some kind of overarching category, such as "refugees" or "Palestinian." Yet, multiplicity forces its way

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[1] See footnote 27 of Chapter 5.
[2] *Welcome to Shatila* is also available on the CD that comes as an attachment to this thesis.

in. There are the feet of an old lady's – one can say so, by the dress she is wearing and by the fact that she placed her cane next to a shopping bag – maybe she stopped for a breath, before getting back home? Then there are the feet of a young girl, framed by nice-looking clogs – maybe she is ready to visit a relative? And then, in a rapid sequence: the feet of a mother and her child, still in their pyjamas, maybe they over-slept?; those of a *shāb*, sitting next to an electric heater – Shatila is freezing during winter and there seems to be electricity, for a change; or the feet of what is probably an older man, fingering a *masbaḥa,*[3] while sitting on the short staircase leading to a shop: rather than praying, he seems to be letting time pass. And there are also the feet of a teenager, sitting on a motorbike, while smoking: letting time pass as well; or those of several friends, smoking too, this time a *narguileh*: maybe resting after a hard day at work or just chatting to others and regretting the several months of unemployment? And there is the mandatory young man in military gear holding a rifle, or the feet of the hairdresser in his salon, with his sandals surrounded by copious quantities of hair. And so on.

Welcome to Shatila ends with the scene depicted in the figure above (Figure 1). After scrutinizing through the "feet-full, but head-less and mind-less bodies" in the camp, the spectator is invited to *invert* the gaze. In calm and almost elegant moves, a man, standing on the roof of a taller building (Shatila is increasingly becoming a vertical shantytown these days), puts on his shoes and, from up there, looks at the camp and, beyond, to the city. Can the spectator accept what for me looks like an invitation to put on those shoes and at least try to see what the camp and, beyond, the city look like *from there*? The credits of the movie finally display its title – first in Arabic, *Ahlān wa Sahlān fī Shatila* and then in English: *Welcome to Shatila*. In the English rendition, however, so that spectators are not allowed the option (and the luxury) of misunderstanding this hospitality, the following word is added, after a couple of seconds: *maddafakazzzz*.[4]

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[3] A string of prayer beads, the *masbaḥa* helps Muslims keep track of counting during the *tasbiḥ* (short utterances repeated several times to glorify God).
[4] *Maddafakazzzz* stands for motherfuckers, in plain English.

Indeed, what happens when we, *maddafakazzz* – journalists, NGO workers, activists, sympathisers of the cause, researchers and this ethnographer – look at the camp? What do we see or, more appropriately, what are we willing to allow ourselves to see? How do the city – and citizenship, one might add –, several "grand-narratives" (El-Mahdi 2011; Sawaf 2013) – including nationalism, socialism, Marxism, feminism – and "master-words" (Spivak, in Olson and Worsham 2003) – including "woman," "youth," "working class," "refugee" – look like when gazed upon from Shatila? How willing are the *maddafakazzz* to let those grand narratives go to engage in an anthropological exercise that truly functions as a two-way bridge (Clastres 1968) and to accept that the master-words – "gender," "youth" and "generations" – will necessarily come out transformed from this encounter? This study has attempted to seriously engage such a platform.

As queried in Chapter 4, does "gender" have a very specific grounding in the history of Euro-America, serving as leverage for the exercise of empire, when automatically transplanted to other latitudes? Is "woman" one of these "master-words" claiming to represent a group, when, "out there," we find no woman, just women? There is thus a space open for an academic-political platform of de-construction (Derrida 1976), and a de-centring and "provincialization" of Europe (Chakrabarty 2000) as well as of America, through the "reversing, displacing, and seizing [of] the apparatus of value-coding." (Spivak 1990: 228) The Shatila *shabāb* have suggested a tactic (Certeau 1984) to me for sustaining – both on the analytical and political fronts – such a platform. The older questions ("within the Lebanese legal framework, what constitutes a "refugee" and what are their entitlements?," as in Chapter 3, or "what is the average salary of Shatila dwellers and what is the unemployment level in the camp?," also from Chapter 3, and, in Chapter 4: "how can a man come of age and act as a patriarch in the absence of material means?") of my disciplines (statistics, gender studies, Marxism) were disavowed for being incommensurable with my observations "from the field." I began with numbers, surveys, pieces of legislation,

revolutionaries and military-political power and ended with pigeons flying (Chapter 6). Life itself – and the ordinary and daily desires and disappointments of trying to find a partner, secure a job, save for a house and engage in a hunt *(*al-ṣayd*)* with one's birds – became wholly political (Bayat 2010).

Impurity and Danger or Queering Power

The attempt in May 1817 at conversion of Indians under the shade of a tree grove outside Delhi, as registered by Bhabha (1985), did not lead to a good end (or, depending on the perspective, that was actually a good end). The audience did not refuse conversion on religious grounds – that would have been accepting the very terms of the debate – but rather because the attempt was being conducted by a meat-eater. The "colonial discourse" was disavowed for being incommensurable and the subjects – never truly completely subjected - retained, and creatively so, their capacity to act, through a certain ironic mimicry of the catechist's discourse. Chapter 4 poses the question regarding the extent to which gender – as a binary understanding, informed by power – is a neo-catechism. Along with "human rights," it can serve as a tool of empire, providing justification for war machines: we kill, but we have the good intention of saving children and women and gays and lesbians, the perennial victims of the supposedly patriarchal regimes overseas. Confronted by the immense power of empire, the weak lose if they follow the rules of the game. Thus, they "creatively play different, more flexible and constantly changing games," (Bayat 2010: 24) so that the logic of the ordinary may appear in representation. As seen in Chapter 6, the Shatila *shabāb* set their birds free, not because they want to resist or to affirm power. There certainly is a poetics of manhood and maybe even a performance of masculinity at play here; however, the aim is not to consolidate hegemonies (that would be rather innocuous an exercise, if that were the goal) but to have fun or, more ambitiously and perhaps ironically, to flirt with freedom (even within severe constraints). Irony, we learn from the deconstructionist literary critic Paul de Man (cited by Spivak 1999:

430), functions for the "sustained interruption from a source relating 'otherwise' to the continuous unfolding of the main system of meaning," and as such, it never puts the ethics of alterity to the service of a politics of identity – a lesson for the struggle, Spivak (1999: x) proposes.

The purity of categories – necessary for identity politics and cherished by scholars, statisticians and policy-makers alike – implies dangers for what is left out, teaches Douglas (1991). Indeed, as a "dispositive" for governmentality, the purity of categories and associated notions of hygiene have played a role in struggles over the meanings of the city, scaffolding binary divisions between inside/outside and enclosure/exclusion and orienting "purification impulses." (Sennett 2008) Nonetheless, what is left out also endangers the purity of categories, forcing their transformation.

As men with limited power or none, the Shatila *shabāb* act as "space invaders," (Puwar 2004) disturbing the neatness necessary for the consolidation of certain discourses, including those of gender as a binary opposition, as seen in Chapter 4. I collect the notion of hybridity from Bhabha's (2004 (1994)) reading of Fanon. While Fanon (1970) has shown how the phobic image of the Negro – the abject other – is deeply woven into the psychic pattern of the West, producing the Manichaean delirium that characterizes the colonial space of consciousness and society, Bhabha opts to cut the Manichaeism short. Rather than arguing along the lines of self and other, he shows the otherness of self and how self and other are tethered to each other: assemblages of pigeons and *shabāb* (Chapter 6); fathers and sons (Chapter 5); *shabāb* and researcher (Chapter 2). Colonies – and, in the case of Palestinian refugees, there is often no celebratory "post" to be attached to the word – produce new habits of the heart (Stoler 2002).

When an essentialised and individualized subject-agent ceases to be obvious, what happens to agency? Here the Foucauldian paradigm reaches its limits, because it is constructed for the most part around what McNay

(1991, 2000) describes as "a primarily negative paradigm of identity formation – of subjectification as subjection." (2000: 2) If an original situation of constraint is at the basis of subject formation, the purchase of agency within such a framework is limited. Bodies either become docile – and the (mindless) feet of Raad's movie are bound to an uncreative replication of the same acts, again and again – or bravely defiant to domination – and then common everyday actions or attitudes that actively pursue submission (Mahmood 2001, 2005) are not regarded as agential in any sense. In his later works, Foucault (1988) attempts a correction, through the proposition of the notion of "technologies of the self" (and the pigeon stories of Chapter 6 can also be read along those lines): through an "aesthetics of existence," some space is open for gestures pointing to autonomy and creativity, and yet Foucault asserts such possibility rather than explain how it works. His reasoning ultimately vacillates between voluntarism and determinism.

Asad (2000) is not convinced that endeavours to solve the philosophical problem resulting from the clash between free will and constraint constitute a productive course of investigation for anthropologists. He shows how "agency," typically considered as "resistance to power," is dependent upon a teleological notion of history, one that nurtures the goal of promoting universal emancipation from suffering, and an ethnographic-specific psychology, according to which empowerment, understood both as having the power to act or giving that power to someone, is indispensable for human subjectivity (even though increasing self-empowerment, as astutely remarked by Asad, does not precisely tend to the practical requirements of social life). Agency thus forms part of what Asad describes as the paradox of representation – that the figure represented is both absent and present. Is she who represents and re-presents acting in her own capacity or someone else's? Arendt (1963) and Jennings (2011) (Chapters 1 and 3) show how, by accepting the seminal distinction between constituent and constituted power, we have ceased being able to imagine non-sovereign political futures (Chapter 6). Spivak

(1988) in turn cogently accuses us – scholars included – of complicity with constituted powers, when we end up consolidating the supposed legitimacy of *Vertretung* (representation, as in politics) in our efforts at *Darstellung* (re-presentation, as in art or philosophy). Then, as Marx has taught, small peasant proprietors "cannot represent themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, an unlimited governmental power which protects them from other classes and send them rain and sunshine from above" (Marx, quoted in Spivak 1988: 276-277). In this study, I have tried not to succumb to such collusion.

If the constituted power has become increasingly estranged from the constituent power in Western political philosophy and tradition, plunging us right into the paradox of representation, it is because agency is forever taken to be as external and resistant to power, the latter often thought of as repressive of the agent (Asad 2000). This may, nonetheless, contrast with other traditions and political philosophies, as argued by Asad:

> Assuming, then, that agency need not be conceptualised in terms of individual self-empowerment, or universal historicity, how should it be understood? One might begin by looking at usages of the term (or what we take to be its equivalents) in different historical contexts. This would indicate not merely that agency is not a natural category, but that successive conceptions of agency as a discursive category have opened up or closed very different possibilities for acting or being. (33)

Interested in opening up other possibilities of acting and being, I have sought usages and understandings of the term – agency – in the ethnographic setting of this study, in an exercise similar to the one I conducted with *jins* (sex/gender) and *jīl* (generation) in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively. In this, agency is not necessarily understood as external and resistant to power, but rather, as Asad suggested, as saturated with it, which saves us, in one move, from the complicated distinctions between constituted and constituent powers and the paradox of representation

depicted above. I asked friends of mine – native Arabic-speaking anthropologists and Shatila *shabāb* – and they all told me agency does not admit an obvious translation into Arabic, which is probably the reason why NGO documents and personnel prefer to use the word in English (in the case of NGO staff, on the rare occasions they speak Arabic at all, that is, and can think of alternatives to "agency" in local idioms). We all settled that *wikāla* is inappropriate – too material, it serves to indicate an office and not an action (as in CIA, a friend remarked). I myself suggested *qudra*, which, following the Hans Wehr dictionary, means "to possess strength, power and ability," and convinced an anthropologist friend, who nevertheless preferred to also add a second word in order to fully grasp the sense of agency: ʾ*irāda* (will). Nadim, whose story I recounted in Chapter 4, provided the most intriguing definition, as it so often happened throughout my period in Lebanon: "That's a difficult one, Gustavo. Maybe ʿ*abbada* is what you're looking for." ʿ*abbada* is the form 2 of the verb ʿ*abada*, the religious overtones of which is captured by the Hans Wehr: "to serve, worship, adore, venerate, idolize, deify." Forms 2 in Arabic are often a causative version of the original verb, so that ʿ*abbada*, standing for "to make serve, to make worship, to make idolize," is defined by the Hans Wehr as "to improve, develop, make serviceable," but also "to enslave, enthral, subjugate, subject." Thus, agency, in this rendition at least, is not heroically opposed to power, but conspires with it: indeed, as Spivak (1988) wants, "there is no fixed subject except by repression." (273)

That is precisely why I adopted the methodology the *shabāb* suggested: when one has limited power or none, better to *queer* it. Both on an epistemological and methodological level, queering is *not* the most recent incarnation of gay and lesbian studies, nor does it have as sole object of interest homosexuality (Amar and El Shakry 2013). Rather, it designates a movement *against* appropriation by mainstreaming LGBTIQ and feminist movements, both of which provide, unwittingly or not, ideological scaffolding for the mantra of a neo-colonial "civilizing mission," a bare

disguise for intervention and war (Jacob 2013).[5] Queering refuses the all-too-facile freezing of purified identities, forces analysts to interrogate their categories (woman, refugee, Palestinian) and rejects exclusionary binaries that can serve to pathologize the categorically non-normative (such as heterosexual men with limited power or none, as discussed in Chapter 4).

Anti-identitarian and anti-programmatic, queering is disruptive: it liquefies frozen identities and renders bare, not life, but structures of power – academic or otherwise. It exposes genealogies of the invisible within dominant histories (Sedgwick 1991), such as *shabāb* with limited power or none. Through constant intervention to avoid identitarian paralysis, it places movement before position (Massumi 2002; Puar 2007) and is forever a verb: to queer. Anti-categorical, it does not allow domestication through submission to *one* nationality, *one* legal status, *one* race, *one sex*, *one* sect, *one* gender, which so easily nurtures the statistical hunger for grids (as shown in Chapter 3). More exactly, it proliferates nationalities, legal statuses, sexes, sects, genders, races: a thousand tiny sexes (Grosz 1993; Deleuze and Guattari 2004)), a thousand tiny races (Saldanha 2006), a thousand plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 2004), a thousand feet, as in Raad's *Welcome to Shatila*. Instead of the reproduction of the same, it envisages the regeneration of the multiple (Puar 2007). Against purity (Gedalof 1999), queering allows the contemplation of open-ended horizons, non-sovereign political futures, other modes of living, engaging and relating, alternative modalities of belonging and connectivity, new communities and politics based on "affective confusion." (Rai, cited in Puear 2007)

Sex and the Citizen

By queering sex and gender in Chapter 4, I have opened up space for contemplating new possibilities of manhood. I have not treated "men" as an

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[5] Based on such a framework, it is as if Afghanistan needs to be invaded so that its women can be liberated and Israel needs to continue its settler policies so that Middle Eastern gays and lesbians can have a safe haven in an otherwise supposedly homophobic region (Puar 2007, 2013).

internally coherent category and have used age and historical experience to fracture it, mapping out alternative masculinities: the *shabāb* may have limited or no economic and political or military power, but they are not emasculated. I have avoided succumbing to these binarisms that serve to scaffold "battle-of-sex" dystopias (Eltahawy 2012). Chapter 5, in turn, attempts to queer youth. It shows how youth works as a tool for a neo-colonial governmentality: remove your barriers to free trade, reduce labour protection standards, trim down state controls, so that youth can blossom, prays the neo-liberal agenda.

Following in the steps that the shoes of the last scene of Raad's movie are about to take, Chapter 6 seeks to queer citizenship. Citizenship normally rests on oversimplifying categorizations, reducing variation so as to fit into grids (Chapter 3). Difference, however, is often intransigent (Mikdashi 2013). Chapter 6 invites the reader to gaze at and set free citizenships of the otherwise (Povinelli 2006, 2011). The exploits by the pigeon-raisers and non-cockfighters illustrate how Foucault's "care of the self" has ethical-political dimensions. The "care of the self" is an art – an "art of presence" (Bayat 2010) – and is used to describe those who, having ascetically gained possession and control of oneself (Shatilans would say, those who have acquired ʿ*aql*, as seen in Chapter 4), submit to no other and can thus take his rightful place in the community (Foucault 1988; Gaonkar 1999). In this sense, the "care of the self" is a practice of freedom, but here I want to take it one step further and suggest that it is also an "act of [queered] citizenship." Instead of being an entitlement, "acts of citizenship" designate those moments subjects constitute themselves as citizens (Isin 2008).

It is at this point that Hannah Arendt comes to Shatila. By distinguishing political power and sovereignty, Arendt, in an Anti-Hobbesian move, shows that there is a politics beyond the sovereign (Arendt 1963, 1973; Jennings 2011). Hobbes assumes that the sovereign and the tyrant are one and the same. The whole of the revolutionary tradition tries to come to terms with the fact that the constituent power of the people is forever gone

the moment sovereignty is instituted. Sovereignty is thus nothing else but the constituted power over which we, the people, have ceased to have claims. Arendt does not pay homage to the philosophical fiction at the origin of this edifice, according to which men in the state of nature have agreed to give up their power and submit to Leviathan. Arendt prefers history to fiction and brings examples, such as the *commune* in 1871 Paris, the soviets in 1917 Russia and the workers' council in 1956 Hungary, which give proof that, when states collapse, people are not pushed back into a war of all against all and actually may govern themselves. This is so because the constituent and constituted power have never been external one to the other, and there is no pristine moment, other than in philosophical fiction, of brutalised wolf-men giving up their power to become equal, but under Leviathan. That is why in the *polis* as described and envisaged by Arendt each one lives up to her political role; there is no anarchy and there is freedom, freedom not simply understood as liberation from oppression. Over Shatila, the pigeons can fly.

If camps have traditionally worked as laboratories for political experiments, allowing for the containment and imprisonment of those considered dangerous, suspicious and abject, first in the colonies, but eventually also in Europe (Panourgiá 2009; Petti 2013), Chapter 6 considers the possibility that they may also work as sites for political invention, enabling the contemplation of non-sovereign political futures. If there is no clear functioning source of political authority in Shatila, no state that is one (De Cesari 2010) and no Leviathan to keep us all in awe (we are not easily terrorized nor amazed), Shatilans have learned how to do without. They manage to keep their birds airborne, and here their experiments meet those of other Palestinians from the Dehesha refugee camp, in Bethlehem. There, the refugee community has appropriated a site, which once functioned consecutively as a military compound for the British army, the Jordanian army and the Israeli army and was to become a prison under the Palestinian Authority, and has effectively put an end to the disciplinary history of the place (Petti 2013). Instead, the community uses it nowadays as a culture

center and has named it, quite evocatively, *Al-Feniq*, Arabic for phoenix, after the mythological bird that rises from the ashes of its predecessor. *Al-Feniq* is a multifunctional facility and hosts weddings, a library (dedicated to Edward Said), a gym, a guesthouse and the *Campus in Camps*, a university in exile, which brings together participants from several places to "explore and produce new forms of representation of camps and refugees," in the words of one participant.[6] It does not produce, however, new forms of representation of camps and refugees alone. As the acting director, Alessandro Petti (2013) adds: "It [Campus in Camps] aims at transgressing, without eliminating, the distinction between camp and city, refugee and citizen, center and periphery, theory and practice."

In her effort to dissolve sovereignty and to separate the nation from its supposedly-mandatory founding on a territory, Arendt believes in "modes of belonging" and polities that are not reduced to the concept of the nation-state (Butler 2007), the latter a stratagem that has consistently produced enormous numbers of stateless people. When chastised by Gershom Scholem for showing "no love of Jewish people," Arendt says that being a woman and being a Jew are indisputable facts of her life and states that "there is a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is, for what has been *given and not made*; for what is *physei* and not *nomo* (cited in Butler 2007, original emphasis)." Yet, as argued in Chapter 4, there is always a making of what is supposedly given – a "woman" – and thus the distinction *physei* and *nomo* is never completely clear-cut. Indisputably a Jew, Arendt still takes a political stand that would not conform to what a Jew should say according to Scholem's binary-logic of "with us or against us." Here is her answer to Scholem:

> You are quite right – I am not moved by any "love" of this sort, and for two reasons. I have never in my life "loved" any people or collective – neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love "only" my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons. Secondly, this "love of the Jews"

would appear to me, since I am myself Jewish, as something rather suspect. I cannot love myself or anything which I know is part and parcel of my own person. (cited in Butler 2007)

For Arendt, hence, there is love beyond Narcissus. A love of difference is possible and serves as a basis for politics.

The Anti-Love of Empire

Figure 2 - Looking for the Way Out:
Nada Sehnaoui's Installation/Zaytouna Square, September/October 12

I want to conclude this study in a similar manner to the way I started it. I invite my reader to find our way back to downtown Beirut. There, once again, we can admire another installation by Nada Sehnaoui, *Light at the End of the Tunnel*. The installation was exhibited from September 12 to October 14, 2012, at the Zaytouna Square, a promenade of restaurants and fashionable shops bordering the Mediterranean, not far from the space where Sehnaoui exposed her 625 lavatories in her work *Haven't 15 years of hiding in toilettes been enough?* some four years earlier (Chapter 2). This time, Sehnaoui created maze-like structures by piling up or lining 360 wooden parallelepipeds, painted bright red (Figure 2). Once again, the

artist's ambition was to provoke passers-by. The hollow structures thus spoke to the obstacles of navigating the labyrinths of the conflicts in Lebanon (Taylor 2012). Once inside the red maze, one could see through it and realize that there is a way out, despite the difficulties of manoeuvring, or one could let oneself be entrapped by a vicious web. Moreover, on-lookers could simply grab one of the parallelepipeds and put it in a new position, contributing to reshaping the labyrinth. The artist explained: "The way out can be horizontal, vertical, that isn't important. It is necessary always to try to find it. No doubt that the enclosure is on the level of the city, but also on that of our thoughts." (Khalaf 2012)

In today's tragic times of disenchantment, when the intellectual and political certainties of the 70s are bygone and missed, we – this and other researchers; Shatila and other *shabāb* – are looking for a way out. Here, I want to propose putting on the shoes offered by Raad Raad, the film-maker, to imagine an alternative musing. Instead of paying homage to structuralism's highly sophisticated abstractions (Lévi-Strauss 1986), I want to suggest a move from metaphor back to metonym. As challenging as it may be to think with, at least within certain canons, metonyms are good to act politically. The logics of belonging explored in this study do not depend on exclusionary, precise and purified categories: the anti-love of empire – academic or otherwise – may bring us all – including *shabāb* and researcher – metonymically together in what Genet (2004) would call love. For, ultimately, I have challenged the immemorial wisdom of the Arab proverb, according to which "*man ʿāshara qawmān, raḥala ʿanhum aw ṣāra minhum* (he who lives with a people either leaves them or becomes one of them)," for I have left and yet sustain the hope and fantasy of remaining "one of them." When I shared with Ahmad, whose story I told in Chapters 2 and 3, the difficulties I was facing to renew my visa to return to the UK in order to finish my doctoral work, he commented: "Oh, Gustavo, you lived for too long among us. Now you know not only how difficult it is to live here. You also know how difficult it is to leave Lebanon and Shatila behind." Indeed.

I want to finish this study the way I started: with music. I quote below from a song by Marcel Khalife, originally a poem by Mahmoud Darwish. With the goal of keeping unscathed the necessary estrangement – and, thus, "empower," of course in an ironic manner, my reader – I provide no translation.

يطير الحمام
يحطّ الحمام
...
وأنت بداية عائلة الموج
حين تشبّث بالبرّ
حين اغترب
وإنّي أحبّك
وأنت بداية روحي
وأنت الختام
يطير الحمام
يحطّ الحمام

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